comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 1
From Reading to Understanding

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I love the title of this lesson—*From Reading to Understanding*

It immediately brought to mind a quote from the book *Christ's Object Lessons:*

> Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought **he must learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles. COL 59.5

This is the key to all Bible study—not knowing the original words, but the intended meaning.

When doing paraphrase this was one of the key principles I applied—what is the true meaning. I received some emails taking issue with some verses because the English words I chose were not in keeping with the Greek. But to me it isn't the word that matters, but the meaning, so I challenged those who emailed me to tell me what the verse means.

This is what we want to do all throughout the Bible, but even more importantly when dealing with symbols, metaphors, similes, images, parables or any other representative expression.

I have some basic guidelines that I have found to be quite helpful in rightly interpreting Scripture:

1. We must understand the overall context of Scripture (not just the immediate context which is what many focus on and thus lose the forest for the trees—they lose the true message for the local message) and that context is a cosmic reality in which God is love all the time and Satan is a being of selfishness who seeks to destroy what God has created.
2. The battle between God and Satan is not a physical battle, but a battle of ideas, concepts, beliefs. God's prime weapons are truth, love, and liberty. Satan's prime weapons are lies, fear based selfishness, and coercion.
3. The Bible is the revelation of the truth about God, His character methods, and plans to send Jesus to save humankind. It also exposes Satan as the source of evil, death, pain, suffering and reveals throughout human history the problems that deviating from God's design causes.

4. Some specific rules of interpreting Bible prophecy are:
    - If one part of a passage is symbolic or metaphor, then the rest is symbolic or metaphor unless clear reasons to be literal are expressed in the text.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- The Bible will be used to interpret itself (i.e. symbol interpretations will use Bible definitions before other definitions).
- The general theme is that of the conflict between Christ and Satan.
- God's character of love never changes, therefore interpretations will never result in God being represented in a character other than love.
- God's law of love never changes, therefore interpretations will always be in harmony with God's law of love.
- God's other design laws never change therefore interpretations will not violate God's design laws for life.

The lesson points out that Christ is at the center of Daniel—absolutely true. The context of Daniel is what? Christ at the center of Daniel doing something, working to achieve something—and what is that? Our salvation. Christ is battling Satan and satanic agencies for the purpose of healing His creation.

The lesson wants us to also recognize the difference between classic and apocalyptic prophecy:

- Classic prophecy is a message specifically for the people at that time with limited or little metaphor or symbols but with direct simple to understand message. Example: Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh—repent or the city will be destroyed.
- Apocalyptic prophecy is prophecy that tells of future events and often contains symbols, metaphors, images that require interpretation to understand the reality behind it.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks the question, "In what way is Christ the center of Scripture?"

Is it merely about revealing God's character or is it more—that not only is Christ God the Son, but that He is actively working to achieve a specific goal?

Does Scripture reveal Christ? Does it do more? Does it reveal the truth about the Father? Does it do more? Does it reveal the truth about God working through Christ to achieve an outcome? What is that outcome?

Would that outcome be the coming of Jesus to overthrow Satan, cleanse His creation from sin and cure the sin problem?

- Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29 NIV84) –Is this more than revelation of God's character?
- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14,15, NIV84)
- But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (1Timothy 1:10 NIV84)

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1John 3:8 NIV84)

Does the Scripture reveal more than the truth about God? Does it reveal what God, through Christ, was achieving? And what was God achieving? The destruction of sin and the healing of His creation!

Then, when we read Scripture do we see the conflict between good and evil being played out with Christ the member of the Godhead who is acting throughout human history to destroy sin and evil and heal His creation?

So, do we interpret the Bible stories through this lens?

Would this mean we could understand Satan working to obstruct God while God working to fulfill His promise to Adam and Eve of a Messiah?

From the book *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> "By leading Israel to this daring insult and blasphemy to Jehovah, Satan had planned to cause their ruin. Since they had proved themselves to be so utterly degraded, so lost to all sense of the privileges and blessings that God had offered them, and to their own solemn and repeated pledges of loyalty, the Lord would, he believed, divorce them from Himself and devote them to destruction. **Thus would be secured the extinction of the seed of Abraham, that seed of promise that was to preserve the knowledge of the living God, and through whom He was to come—the true Seed, that was to conquer Satan. The great rebel had planned to destroy Israel, and thus thwart the purposes of God.** But again he was defeated. Sinful as they were, the people of Israel were not destroyed. While those who stubbornly ranged themselves on the side of Satan were cut off, the people, humbled and repentant, were mercifully pardoned. The history of this sin was to stand as a perpetual testimony to the guilt and punishment of idolatry, and the justice and long-suffering mercy of God" PP 335.

This is a key concept to understand in Scripture as it helps us understand how love intervenes throughout human history—always working to heal and save, to keep open avenue for the Messiah.

Let's give some examples and tell me where you see Christ:

> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. [2] There **the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush**. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. [3] So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."
> [4] When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
> And Moses said, "Here I am."
> [5] "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." [6] Then he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham,**

> **the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob**." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1-5 NIV84)

Who is talking to Moses here?

This is Jesus—and did He tell Moses what He wanted to do? What was Jesus' plan?

It was to deliver Israel from bondage, have them become a nation of emissaries who rightly represent God's kingdom, bless them to draw attention of the world to God, convert the world to true worship of God and prepare the way for Messiah to come to cure the terminal sin condition.

The lesson demonstrates that Christ is the center of every chapter of Daniel. Let's review this:

- Chapter One: Nebuchadnezzar takes captive Israel's leadership and carries off articles of the Temple—this is a loose metaphor for Satan taking humanity captive and contaminating the Spirit temple with fear and selfishness. Daniel and his three friends stay true to God, and keep their Spirit temples pure and stay faithful to God. The represents Christ, who came to this world and kept His Spirit temple pure.
- Chapter Two: The kingdoms of the world fall one after another eventually they end up fragmented and unable to find unity until Christ returns and establishes His eternal kingdom here on earth
- Chapter Three: Christ walks with his faithful servants through the fiery trials of this world and the smoke if sin in this world will not contaminate those who walk with Christ.
- Chapter Four: Christ therapeutically intervenes to heal Nebuchadnezzar of selfishness and pride.
- Chapter Five: Christ reveals that the methods and practices of this world result only in death, foreshadows the coming of Christ to cleanse the world from sin
- Chapter Six: Daniel is still captive in a pagan kingdom but stays true to God, keeps his Spirit temple pure and stands up to evil and is sentenced to death for it all based on lies; is thrown into the pit but comes out alive. This loosely represents Christ who came to earth, kept His Spirit temple pure, revealed God's truth, was sentenced to death all based on lies, went into the grave but destroyed death, and came out of the grave to bring life and immorality to light.
- Chapter Seven: Jesus in heaven receives His kingdom and reigns over the universe.
- Chapter Eight: Christ as High Priest applies His remedy to cleanse His people and prepare them to live in His presence.
- Chapter Nine: Reveals Christ wins the victory by becoming the sacrificial lamb of God who destroys the infection of selfishness and establishes a new sinless and perfected humanity.
- Chapter Ten through Twelve: Represents Christ as Michael leading His agencies to fight forces of evil ultimately delivering His people from death.

MONDAY

The lesson provides an outline, a structure, an overview for the book of Daniel:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

A. Nebuchadnezzar's vision of four kingdoms
    B. God delivers Daniel's friends from fiery furnace
        C. Judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar
        C'. Judgment upon Belshazzar
    B. God delivers Daniel from the lion's den
A. Daniel's vision of four kingdoms

The lesson suggests that such a structure puts the main point in the center, in this case Judgment upon the two kings.

What law lens do we read Daniel through? Do we read it through imposed law and thus we read it to say that God inflicts punishments for sin upon people and forces His way?

Or do we read it through design law that God is evaluating reality and working to heal and save? Thus, God diagnosed Nebuchadnezzar as having a serious condition of selfishness and pride, but he was not beyond healing—so God diagnosed him and *judged* what intervention was necessary in order to save Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. bring him to repentance.

Later God diagnoses Belshazzar as having the same serious condition of selfishness and pride, but diagnoses him as being beyond healing, so God judges there is nothing God can do to save him, so God sets him free to reap what he chose—which was death.

Does this provide an object lesson for us today? God intervenes to bring discipline to those who are healable and provide them with opportunity to repent and experience healing, but sets those who harden themselves against God free to reap the destruction their sin-condition brings.

Read last paragraph, "In the book of Daniel…" I agree that Daniel uses repetition, no question about it. Prophetic periods are repeated and retold with greater details.

But the lesson suggests this is to show us God's ultimate sovereignty. What do you think about this?

I am unclear what they mean by this?

Hmmm… I looked up the meaning of sovereignty and this is what the dictionary says:

> the status, dominion, power, or authority of a sovereign; royal rank or position; royalty.
> supreme and independent power or authority in government as possessed or claimed by a state or community.

I absolutely agree God is sovereign over the universe—no question about that. I am just a little confused when we suggest the purpose of these prophecies was to show us that He is sovereign?

Is it the fact God knows the future that shows His sovereignty or are they saying that the end results of the prophecies show He is sovereign? Maybe, that is the what is meant, the end results promise us that God is sovereign.

Okay, the prophecies certainly do. So it isn't the ability to predict the future they are suggesting shows us God's sovereignty but the end results, how the future actually turns out that shows God's sovereignty? Is that what they are saying?

I think it must be, because the power to know the future alone would not make one sovereign, it would make one knowledgeable.

TUESDAY

The lesson differentiates classical prophecy from apocalyptic prophecy, with apocalyptic displaying the following features:

- Visions and dreams
- Composite symbolism often of things not found on earth
- Divine sovereignty and unconditionality

Read fifth paragraph, "Divine sovereignty and unconditionality…" What do you think of the last sentence, it rests on God's foreknowledge and sovereignty and will happen regardless of human choices?

Does that mean God makes it happen? Or could it be God foreknows the human choices and is able to give the prophecy because of His foreknowledge of human choice—so it is dependent upon human choice—which God foreknows and foretells?

When the Medes and Persians invaded Babylon were there no human choices involved? When Alexander the Great led the Greek armies to overthrow Persia are we saying Alexander didn't actually make any choices?

Were all of these people just puppets that God was acting through?

This issue brings in to our discussion the question of God's foreknowledge.

Some argue God doesn't actually know what people will do before they do it only what possible things they could do. They argue this because they falsely believe that if God foreknows then we are no longer free to make the choices that we make. They have formed a false belief that for God to foreknow something then it preordains it to be that way and we are no longer free we are slaves to some fate or destiny and we are not free beings. So, they reject the idea that God has foreknowledge because they want to protect the character of God and the principles of love and liberty.

I appreciate their heart and motive and desire to protect God's reputation and the principles of love and liberty. We do also!

However, they make several key errors in their understanding of reality. One is that they treat foreknowledge as causal—it is not. Foreknowledge is merely that, knowledge it is not causation.

If we had a time machine and traveled into the future and watched the next Super Bowl and come back to today. We now know who does what, what the final score will be, who fumbles etc. Does our knowledge cause it to be this way?

Those who believe God can't know our future choices because it would take away or freedom might site quantum experiments that demonstrate the observer effect—which is when we measure or observe something our measurements or observations actually determine the outcome. So, they might suggest that if God were to look into the future His observations impact or cause the outcome. The problem of course is that they forget God doesn't live in our reality. He is not constrained to a linear existence. He does not live within the flow of time. He is the Creator of space, energy, matter and time. He lives outside and above it, thus He is not in the stream or flow of time when He observes things, like we are, thus His observations of time don't impact things like ours do.

Metaphorically, we are in a pool of water, no matter what we do, we are impacting the water around us. God lives outside the pool of water and can observe what is happening in it without interacting with it.

It is a question of understand time—which we understand very poorly. God who is the Creator is the Creator of time and lives outside and above it. We are finite beings and live in a linear existence, meaning we move through time. We lived yesterday but today is a different point in time. Further, we move only one way through time. This is God's design to allow our freewill choices to have consequence and permanence and for us to grow and learn from life experiences. In other words, because of time life becomes consistent and predictable.

God is an infinite being and lives outside of time and to Him all points and time are experienced equally.

Isaiah wrote:

> Remember the former things, those of long ago;
> I am God, and there is no other;
> I am God, and there is none like me.
> I make known the end from the beginning,
> from ancient times, what is still to come.
> I say: My purpose will stand,
> and I will do all that I please. 46:9,10

One Christian writer put it this way in *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

> He that ruleth in the heavens is the one who sees the end from the beginning—the one before whom the mysteries of the **past and the future are alike outspread**… 43.1

So, how do you understand Bible prophecy, including apocalyptic prophecy—that God is forcing His way, or despite the decisions of human beings, which God foreknows, God's methods of love, truth and freedom are being carried forward and will one day be victorious because God is true to Himself and carries out His actions for the good of His creation?

What then is the purpose of apocalyptic prophecy? Would it be to encourage us? To give us confidence? To help build our faith?

WEDNESDAY

Multiple different ways to interpret Bible prophecy exist:

- preterism views the prophetic events as happening in the past
- futurism has the events awaiting fulfillment in the future
- idealism holds the prophecies are symbolic of general spiritual realities without specific historical reference
- historicism holds that the prophecies reveal unbroken history unfolding, reality as a sequence of historical events happening linearly

Which view do you believe is most accurate?

Can we have both historicism and idealism simultaneously, meaning we believe these are real historic events but also see spiritual meaning?

The lesson also points out that based on Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5,6 that in Bible prophecy time is symbolically represented where days stand for years and it is calculated on the Jewish calendar year of 360 days.

THURSDAY

In the second paragraph the lesson points out something we have been discussing for some time—that the Bible records real people who did real historical things, but these lives are also metaphor to tell a larger reality, the great controversy.

The lesson states, "The experience of Daniel in Babylon, resembles that of Joseph in Egypt and Esther in Persia."

First question—why was Daniel in Babylon, Joseph in Egypt and Esther in Persia?

Because Satan was trying to destroy the avenue for the Messiah. God worked through His loyal followers and was able to deliver them:

- Joseph becomes ruler to provide food in time of famine to save the family line.
- Esther intervenes to prevent the slaughter of the family line.
- Daniel and his three friends were used by God to enlighten the pagan leaders to the Creator God and to eventually have the people restored to their land thus preserving the family line.

There are more lessons:

- Joseph was sold by His brothers into slavery. Philippians tells us Jesus left heaven to become human all the way down to being a servant or slave.
- Joseph was faithful to God and persecuted and falsely accused and put in prison, the dungeon, pit metaphor for grave but arises to rule and save. Jesus was faithful to God and falsely accused and sentenced to death, goes into the grave, but arises to rule and save.
- The story of Esther gives a different object lesson—where were the people of Israel supposed to be at the time of Esther? Back in Israel. They had been set free and God called them to return to Israel and rebuild the temple and reestablish their nation and fulfill their mission to prepare the world for Messiah. Mordechai and Esther were among the Israelites who did not obey. Who did not go where God told them. And thus were exposed to attack by Satan through Hamann. Did God abandon them or did God still stay with them and help them? How many times have we heard that if you do this or that God will not be with you? The book of Esther tells us that God doesn't give up on us even when we make choices that go against His revealed will. He only gives up and lets us go when we are beyond healing, not when we choose something we know isn't what He would want.
- Daniel—already discussed above as metaphor for Christ.

Read third paragraph, "God steers the course of history…" What do you think about the statement that God stands in control?

If a person you know comes to you and tells you either they or their child was molested—do you say—well God is in control? Why not? Is God in control or not?

If a person comes to you grieving the death of a child in an auto accident do you say, well God is in control? Why not, is God in control or not?

And if you say in such situations that God is in control, what does it mean? Does saying God is in control mean God controlled the molester? That God caused the accident?

A blanket statement that God is in control is, in my view, a way to introduce confusion, misunderstanding and lead some to reject God.

What is a better way to say this? God is in control of what God controls!

The question is, what does God control?

The key to understanding the saying "God is in control," as well as essentially all theological questions, is how one understands God's law.

If one views God's law functioning like the laws that humans make up—imposed rules requiring the ruling authority to impose punishments—then people view God as making everything happen, which inevitably leads them to form wrong theology. A variety of different errors are formed, such as the teaching that when tragedies occur, it is God who is bringing the pain—such as God controlling the molester who abuses people, or God directing the hurricanes, earthquakes, or God hardens certain hearts.

Some who reject a punishing God but don't reject the imposed-law view embrace and promote Universalism. They teach that because God is love, wants all to be saved, and is ultimately in control, all will be saved in the end. Like the error before, this one also stems from the lie that God is imposing His imperialistic will to maintain "justice" within His government by enforcing His law.

One's level of spiritual maturity—the level through which one comprehends right and wrong—plays into this.

But briefly, levels one through four are immature levels; in each of these, right and wrong is in some way determined by performance and the individual seeks security in rule keeping of some kind. Those operating at one of these levels find safety in the belief that God controls everything, so they don't fear getting into trouble as long as they follow the right rules. But this invariably fails as a rational belief, as history is replete with bad things happening to good people. And when the child is molested rule-keeping doesn't answer the question why did God allow this if He is in control.

Also, the book of Job makes it explicitly clear that bad things are not God's doing.

The truth is realized when we accept that God is Creator and His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, such as the laws of physics, law of love, law of truth, worship, liberty, exertion, laws of health, the moral laws, and so many more. It is how reality works.

Thus, God is in control of what God controls—and God controls Himself and all His laws.

He sustains reality; He keeps the universe running upon the protocols and laws He established. And one of those laws is the law of **liberty**, which grants real freedom to sentient beings. Why? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

This is how God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3) *yet* Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32).

How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By presenting the truth and leaving Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. The accepting or rejecting causes the end result—healing or hardening. The act of choosing to accept or reject truth; to embrace love or embrace selfishness; to steal, lie, cheat, or be honest, truthful and loyal, changes the person who makes the choice. Without the truth presented and the freedom to reject it, Pharaoh's heart would not have become as hardened. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through the laws of truth and freedom; He presented truth and left the ruler free. God controlled His laws, but Pharaoh exercised his own will and controlled his own choice, and in choosing to reject the truth, he hardened his own heart. This is how reality works and how God is in control.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month.

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

The New Paradigm about the Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment Has been Changed: The new title is *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World.* It has a new cover, new introduction, the call to action section has been removed and other edits to clarify potential misunderstandings have been made throughout. It is already up on our website and print versions will be available November 14. **Please throw away any of the first edition you may still have in your possession and use this version going forward.**

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

January 17-19, 2020: The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. If you would like to be prepared to more effectively share this message then come to this course. More details will be forthcoming shortly. Allen Texas (30 miles north of DFW airport). See events.comeandreason.com for more details and to sign up.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 2
From Jerusalem to Babylon

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title?

When you hear this do you think of Israel going into captivity in Babylon? In our modern mind we think of Jerusalem as the capital of the nation of Israel, yet after Solomon's death in 931 BCE, the kingdom split into the northern and southern kingdoms.

The northern kingdom (comprised of Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun) was known at Israel and the southern kingdom, which included Jerusalem and which remained loyal to David's line, was comprised of Judah and Benjamin.

Israel was conquered and its 10 tribes absorbed by Assyria in 722 BCE. Babylon conquered Judah in 598 BCE.

Why did they go from Jerusalem to Babylon?

Is there a lesson for us today beyond the historical realities?

Do Jerusalem and Babylon provide not just historical facts but represent spiritual kingdoms? And how would you describe the differences between these two spiritual kingdoms?

Jerusalem (think New Jerusalem)	**Babylon**
Holy	Unholy
Unified	Confused
Practices God's law	Practices man's law
Healing for people	Destructive to people
Values truth, love freedom	Values, lies, selfishness, coercion
Led by Jesus	Led by Satan pretending to be Jesus

Is being a part of either God's kingdom represented by Jerusalem, or Satan's kingdom represented by Babylon, determined by genetics? Or denominational affiliation?

What determines whose kingdom one is a part of? Would it be the condition of the heart?

Does God have some of His people in systems that are part of the confused system that practices the methods of Babylon?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of Babylon, my people, so that you do not participate in her sins and suffer from any of her plagues. Revelation 18:4 God's Word Translation

Can one change denominations and still be part of Babylon?

So how would you describe being part of Babylon? Is it primarily about denomination, or about the character, the heart, mind, motives and the methods one practices and picture of God one presents?

And is there a danger in people going from Jerusalem to Babylon spiritually today?

How did ancient Jerusalem get taken captive by Babylon? What was the cause?

They were unfaithful to God—they rejected His truth, they chose the methods, practices and beliefs of the world, and God set them free and they went into captivity.

What happens to our hearts, minds, and characters when we reject the truth of God's kingdom, methods, principles and accept the world's? Does God set us free to reap what we insist upon? And what happens to our hearts and minds if we choose the world over God? Does God use His power to inflict the damage upon us?

So what is Babylon actually today? Here is what one of the SDA founders wrote:

> In Revelation 14 the first angel is followed by a second proclaiming: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8. **The term "Babylon" is derived from "Babel," and signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate religion**. In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the **symbol of a church**, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church. GC 381.1

Do you agree that Babylon is the systems of false religions that misrepresent God and cause confusion and that any Christian group that embraces the lies about God and promotes them would be part of that confused system?

What is the cause of the confusion? What is the basis of the multitude of conflicting doctrines, beliefs and religious groups?

Because there is a root lie, a false premise that underpins the other lies—and the root lie upon which the false systems are all built is: God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed punishments, rather than worshiping the Creator whose laws are design laws.

How many human laws are there in force in this city, county, state and nation? How many more if we added up all the municipalities in this nation? How many more if we added all the countries of the world? And why are there so many? Because they are made up, imposed, not design laws. And do any of them disagree—oppose each other? Can the laws cause confusion? Is the human law system so convoluted, complicated and confusing that most people need lawyers—professionally trained law experts to navigate it—to tell them the rules and what is legal and not legal?

When we have theology built upon human law we have all kinds of made up beliefs that are not grounded in reality and are often contradictory and confusing. Have religions made things so complicated and confusing that many believers falsely believe they need a theologian, pastor, priest to study the Bible for them and tell them the rules, the requirements, what to do to avoid legal jeopardy?

But, if we think through design law is there confusion in the world, among different groups over:

- the benefits of clean air and clean water?
- the damaging effects of tobacco smoke?
- the results of jumping off buildings?

But is there still confusion over dietary practices? Why?

- Because in many religions dietary practices are not built on the laws of health, but religious rules or codes—such as not using the same utensils to cook food with milk and meat
- Because people misunderstand Scripture and apply instructions over ceremonial practices, which were all theater, to actual health practices. For instance, doing away with ceremonial laws after Christ's resurrection, some misunderstand forgetting the laws of health were not done away with, thus they eat without regard to health because they know they won't be condemned for breaking ceremony.

When we confuse God's law for man's law, a system of rules, what is often the result for religious people? They not only end up fragmented into many groups with contradictory rules, but seek to pass laws to enforce their rules upon others, for this is how they believe God functions.

From the same book quoted earlier:

> Many of the Protestant churches are following **Rome's example of iniquitous connection with "the kings of the earth**"—the state churches, by their relation to secular governments; and **other denominations, by seeking the favor of the world**. And the term "Babylon"—confusion—may be appropriately applied to these bodies, **all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided into almost innumerable sects, with widely conflicting creeds and theories**. GC 383.1

What is it that moves people from God's kingdom to the Babylon? Rejecting God's design laws, accepting imposed law as God's law and thus practicing the methods of the confused world. This causes a multiplicity of different doctrines and religious laws or rules to be formed, and then uniting with human governments to pass these upon others.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

From the book *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> In the professedly Christian world **many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables**, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven. [Why? Because they have already accepted the lie about God's law and thus falsely believe they can create laws or religious rules or requirements] Men hang with admiration upon the lips of eloquence while it teaches that the transgressor shall not die, that salvation may be secured without obedience to the law of God. **If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension**. [What is God's standard? His design laws, love, truth, freedom and others] **The existing confusion of conflicting creeds and sects is fitly represented by the term "Babylon,"** which prophecy (Revelation 14:8; 18:2) applies to the world-loving churches of the last days. PP 124.1

Revelation also calls the confused system of Babylon the harlot:

> I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. [4] **The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold** and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. [5] And on her forehead a name *was* written:
> MYSTERY,
> BABYLON THE GREAT,
> THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. Rev 17:1-5

The Harlot of Revelation is adorned in Purple, Scarlet and Gold. The Harlot is a counterfeit for Christ and God's people.

In the old Testament the High Priest, who represents Jesus wore four colors:

> "They shall take the **gold, *blue*, purple, and scarlet *thread*,** and the fine linen, and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, *and* scarlet *thread,* and fine woven linen, artistically worked. Exodus 28: 5,6

The harlot only has three colors, what color does the harlot **not** have? Blue—what does blue represent in this system and why does the harlot not have this color?

Blue represents the law of God, the harlot and those who identify with Babylon reject the law of God, which is design law, and embrace the imposed-type law of the world. (See Exodus 24, 9,10, 12, Numbers 15:37-39).

The High Priest wore a breast plate with 12 stones—what did that represent? The peoples of the earth tied to the High Priest's heart—and what was used to tie this symbol of the people of the earth to the High Priest's heart?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> They shall bind the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, **using a blue cord**, so that it is above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod. Exodus 28:28

And what does the blue cord represent? **The law of love**! God's law of love is what binds us to Him, only His design does this.

From the book *Desire of Ages*:

> **The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love** revealed in Eden, **proclaimed upon Sinai**, and in the new covenant **written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God**. {DA 329.3}

The false religions of the world, including false Christianity deny God's design law of love; they don't deny the 10 Commandments but they replace the 10 Commandments with an imposed view of the law—rules enacted and enforced by a ruling authority. Thus, they teach religious obligations, ceremonies, rituals, at the expense of loving people. Thus, they are represented by the Harlot with no blue thread.

Today, God is waiting for a group of people to take the true message of His character, law, and government to the world calling people back to worship Him who made the heavens, earth and waters.

SUNDAY

The title for the day is God's Sovereignty—what does this mean? Is God in control? Of what? God is in control of what God controls—and what does God control?

God controls Himself and His design laws.

Does God ever take control of people forcing their wills, making them puppets?

Why not? It would be a violation of the law of liberty—love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. If God were to violate someone's freewill then they would have their individuality overwritten, their capacity to love destroyed and would become a robot. God will not do this.

Thus, God doesn't control people—this is why bad things happen in this world in "which God is in control." Because God is not in control of what people choose; He is in control of Himself and His laws, and one of the laws He controls, by sustaining its existence and operation, is the law of liberty, which gives people freedom to act—including to act against God.

Thus, rightly understood, when we see someone choose evil, we realize they are only able to choose it because God is in control of the laws of the universe, including the law of liberty which allows this person to choose evil.

But, when people choose evil they choose to damage themselves—always—because sin is damaging to the sinner, because it violates the laws upon which life and health are built.

So, with this in mind, how do we understand the description in Scripture that "the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his (Nebuchadnezzar's) hand?" (Daniel 1:2 NKJV).

We understand that God set the king free to reap what the king chose, to be free of God and God's methods and ways. And when God set him free the king of Babylon did what selfish people naturally do, they seek to dominate others and Babylon invaded and took Judah captive.

The lesson asks, "Why does God give Judah and Jerusalem into the hands of the Babylonians?"

Was God punishing them? No!

What is the context of the Old Testament? Remember Genesis 3:15, God promised Adam and Eve a Savior was coming to crush the serpent and save humanity. The context of Scripture is the coming Messiah to save us and Satan working to obstruct that plan.

Remember the 10 tribes to the north have already been successfully erased, assimilated and no longer available to be a special people teaching the truth about God or be the avenue for the Messiah. Only two tribes remain and they were being infected with pagan worship practices that threatened to destroy them as a people also.

Did the Babylonian captivity destroy the last two tribes, or did it work to stop the slide into paganism and establish a remnant who retained a knowledge of Scripture and an avenue for the Messiah?

So, God's permitting of this captivity was not for punishment of sin, but for the obstructing of Satan's plan; it was to keep open the avenue for Messiah. It was therapeutic—though painful, it was an act of love and mercy.

Read the last paragraph, "As we face the challenges…" What do you think of the idea that God drives the forces of history through His sovereignty?

Does this mean God drove Judah into rebellion so that Babylon would take them captive?

No! In my view, to rightly understand these things we must realize there are two antagonistic systems fighting it out on planet earth—God and His kingdom of truth, love and freedom, against Satan and his kingdom of lies, selfishness and coercion. If we forget this, then we invariably end up attributing the evil originating with Satan to God.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Upon arrival…" Tuesday's lesson points out that the captives didn't object to the name changes like they did the food—why?

Why did they draw the line of no compromise where they drew it? What is the underlying principle? What can we learn for application to us today?

Was it primarily about vegetarianism? Do we think Daniel and his three friends were vegetarians before being taken captive? Would they have celebrated Passover? Doesn't the Passover celebration require eating the sacrificial lamb?

So, it doesn't seem the issue is primarily one of a vegetarian diet—even though diet has a huge health impact and thus a mental wellness impact.

What was it about? It was about character, about choice. The line they drew was the line of their choices in governance of themselves.

The goal of a corrupting power is to get the person to ***willfully* choose to participate with the corruption**, even in small, seemingly insignificant ways. It isn't initially about the potential damage of the initial choice, but to get them to choose to violate their standards, **because in choosing we change ourselves**.

The issue with the names was not what Daniel and his three friends chose, but what others chose to call them. The issue with the food however, was what they choose to do in governance of themselves. They didn't seek to get others to conform to their way of living or practicing, but it was their choice not to cross lines they believed would violate their conscience, which was sensitive to God's design.

This is why Satan had to get Adam and Eve to choose to take of the Tree of Knowledge—it wasn't that the Tree of Knowledge was poisonous, but the choice of distrusting God is what changed them.

It is always Satan's goal to get us to choose, even on something that seems in itself harmless—like a piece of non-poisonous fruit—the act of choosing changes us.

Brain science of those who become physically addicted to substances involuntarily, (i.e. they were given an IV infusion of the addicting meds) were compared with those who chose to take the opiates.

In the brain regions where we experience pleasure and reward both groups had the same negative brain changes. However, in the orbital pre-frontal cortex, where we experience a conviction of wrong-doing (i.e. our consciences) only those who chose to self-administer the drugs experienced negative brain changes here. (The Journal of Global Drug Policy and Practice:

http://www.globaldrugpolicy.org/Issues/Vol%202%20Issue%202/Neurobiology%20of%20Addication%20and%20the%20Adolescent%20Brain.pdf

Surg Neurol Int. 2011; 2: 19. Published online 2011 Feb 21. doi: 10.4103/2152-7806.76977)

The point, we must choose in order for our consciences to be seared and characters corrupted.

So the lines we draw are the lines in governance of self—we do not choose what other people do or what others call us.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out the conflict over diet and Daniel and friends challenge of a 10-day test. The concern of the overseer was that Daniel and his friends would become unhealthy—why did the Babylonian captain have this concern?

Because, being a product of his culture, he believed a lie about what was actually healthy.

Today, we see this all the time, where people are raised to believe a certain practice, idea, way of doing things and are resistant to change:

- Germ theory was resisted by physicians when proposed by Pasteur and Lister
- Hypertension as a medical problem that needed treatment also resisted
- The health damaging effects to most people of most animal products, is resisted (Why did I say to most people of most animal products, rather than all people of all animal products?)
- The rejection of the legal views of the plan of salvation and the embracing of design law—worshiping the Creator and His plan to heal His people.

Read last paragraph, "As we look into the interaction…" "After all, what could be a better diet than the one God originally gave us?"

Of course—there can be no better diet than the one God originally gave us—but what is the problem with this statement?

It assumes that we can have that diet today—we cannot—who has access to the Tree of Life? Who has access to any plant-based food that has not been tainted by genetic and environmental decay and corruption?

All nature groans under the weight of sin—plants are not as God created them. In Eden; there were no thorns, thistles, or toxic, poisonous plants in Eden. There was no poison ivy, no death angel mushrooms, no nightshade or hemlock. There was no genetically modified foods, which evidence suggests contribute to obesity and inflammatory diseases.

Despite the fact that we do not have access to the diet that God originally gave us, the evidence supports that plant-based whole food, organic, non-GMO diets are healthiest for MOST people. But

some people have genetic or other health issues that require them to eat various animal products to maintain their best health.

I will include only one quotation from one of the founders of the SDA church who initiated the entire SDA health practices:

> **Do not go to extremes in regard to the health reform.** Some of our people are very careless in regard to health reform. But because some are far behind, **you must not, in order to be an example to them, be an extremist. You must not deprive yourself of that class of food which makes good blood**. Your devotion to true principles is leading you to submit yourself to a diet which is giving you an experience **that will not recommend health reform**. This is your danger. When you see that you are becoming weak physically, it is essential for you to make changes, and at once. **Put into your diet something you have left out. It is your duty to do this. Get eggs of healthy fowls. Use these eggs cooked or raw.** Drop them uncooked into the best unfermented wine you can find. This will supply that which is necessary to your system. Do not for a moment suppose that it will not be right to do this.... CD 204.1

This is what I love about this author—she always promotes principles of health, not conformity to rules.

The bottom green section asks what is it about Daniels' free choice that opens the way for God to act?

What do you think of this question? Why does Daniel need to choose if God is sovereign in working out His will?

Because God is sovereign over God and God's laws—and God's sovereignty is in running God's universe upon God's design laws, one of which is the law of liberty.

What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion and restoration to His perfect design. This is only possible in us by our choosing—it is our exercising our freewill choices to participate with God that we experience God's presence and healing power and are actually healed and transformed. thoughts?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Daniel and his companions…" Why do you think in the OT Levitical system people who served in the Temple could have no blemishes?

Because it was theater—it acted out or represented a larger reality—what?

It represented sinners restored to righteousness. Thus, within the theater, only the healthy, those without blemish, could represent those who have been healed from sin. If people had blemishes then it would send the false signal that God will take to heaven those who remained sinful in character.

Why don't we require this of all who hold church office today? Why don't we require all our pastors and church leaders to be without any blemishes, no skin cancers, no strokes, no vitiligo, no rosacea, no blindness or deafness—why not?

Because we are not acting out theater, we are living out reality and physical deformities or health problems were just symbolic of sickness of heart, mind and character, they are not actual character defects. Today it is about reality that matters. Today we should NOT allow people with untreated malignancy of character to be in leadership of our churches, only those who though infected with sinfulness, are actively partaking God's treatment and being healed should be permitted into leadership positions.

If we don't apply the OT rules prohibiting those with blemishes from being in leadership in the church, why do we apply the rules prohibiting women from being in leadership?

Read second paragraph, "God honors…" How do you read this? What does it mean?

Does it mean because they kept the rule God gave, God used His divine power to miraculously give them better health? Or, is this a result of living in harmony with God's design laws, which bring us ever closer to our Creator, which is always healing to us?

Why do the commandments say the sins pass down three and four generations—is God using His power to inflict suffering on our children and grandchildren for our sins—or is it describing design law—the law of genetics, epigenetics and the influences of parenting?

Is it just the physical laws of health—of eating nutritious foods that are at work with Daniel and his friends?

I would suggest no—it is even more about having a clear conscience, doing what they believe is right. When we violate our consciences, we make negative brain changes that impair pre-frontal cortex activity and critical reasoning skills. Further, we activate stress circuits which increase inflammatory stress on the body contributing to further negative brain changes which undermine thinking and learning. Further, stress impairs sleep, and memories consolidate in sleep, so clear conscience with sound sleep improves not only thinking, but memory retention.

Are such blessings only because God acts in a supernatural way to give abilities, or are they a result of living in harmony with God and His designs for life?

And when we live in harmony with God and His designs and seek Him with a sincere heart, do we place ourselves in a position to receive from God greater insights, wisdom, understanding, abilities, knowledge, than we would ever be able to learn on our own?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that Daniel and his friends, in their education in Babylon, had to learn about the Babylonian gods, their mystical and pagan practices and become knowledge experts in these systems of thought.

What lessons do we learn from this?

Isn't it a law, that by beholding we are changed? (The law of worship) Why were Daniel and his friends not corrupted by studying these subjects?

Because Daniel and his friends made it their daily routine to submit themselves to God, open their minds to God, seek FIRST the truth about God and then filter all they learned in Babylon through the truth of God. Thus, anything in Babylon that was true they could believe and practice, and anything that was false they could understand but categorize as false and not practice.

In my residency, I had to read all the major psychiatric theorists (Freud, Jung, Adler and many others). Their writings are essentially godless and very intellectual. They absolutely have the ability to change a person and this is one of the reasons that the field of psychiatry has the highest percentage of physicians who do not believe in God than any other specialty.

I could feel the pull, the pressure, these writings were having on me, so during my residency for every hour I spent reading these theorists I spent two hours reading the Bible and other Christians writings. I worked to filter what I was reading through Scripture retaining that which was true and rejecting those parts which were not.

This was quite difficult, but doable with, deep study and continual mindset of prayer seeking the leading of the Spirit of Truth. My book *Could It Be This Simple?* was a result of these years of study.

I realized Freud was correct about the ID, the carnal nature, and its primary drives of pleasure-seeking and aggression that lead us to temptation. Sullivan was right that we have a primary drive to seek relationships—which I understand was built into us by God. Beck was right that our feelings follow what we choose to believe and thus by identifying unhealthy thoughts and replacing them with healthy thoughts we can experiencing healing.

I think Daniel and his friends did this, they studied these systems of the Babylon, but stayed grounded in the truth about God first and this is how they were blessed with wisdom to discern the truth from the error.

The last paragraph states the Cyrus was chosen by God to liberate God's people. What does this mean? Does it mean that God over-road Cyrus's freewill?

Why was Cyrus chosen? Was it because God, in His foreknowledge, knew Cyrus would have a heart sensitive to the Holy Spirit and seek to do that which was right, in harmony with God's kingdom, and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Class will NOT meet January 18 due to the Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. We will discuss lessons 4 and 5 on January 11. Lesson 4 will be discussed from 9:20 to 10:20 and lesson 5 from 10:30 to 11:30. We will resume meeting again at our regular time on January 25.

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

REASONETTES: Recently I began drawing cartoons and have started a new section on our website entitled *Reasonettes.* They are illustrations designed to make a point inviting you to think and reason about an idea or issue. Be sure to visit our website or Facebook page each Tuesday for a new cartoon. I hope you enjoy them.

January 17-19, 2020: The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. If you would like to be prepared to more effectively share this message then come to this course. More details will be forthcoming shortly. Allen Texas (30 miles north of DFW airport). See events.comeandreason.com for more details and to sign up.

February 8, 2020: Come and Reason Class will meet at Bake Crafters at 10673 S Lee Hwy, McDonald, TN 37353 for this Sabbath only. Class will start at our regular time.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 3
From Mystery to Revelation

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What does the title, *From Mystery to Revelation* bring to mind?

Do you think merely of the infinite knowledge of God and our finiteness and all the mysteries of the universe we seek to understand?

Is God the revealer of mysteries? Is the Bible one of God's primary means to reveal mysteries to us? But what mysteries is God revealing through the Bible?

- Is it all mysteries?
- Are some mysteries not especially revealed by God but left for us to discover on our own?
- What type of mystery is God actively revealing—especially in the Bible?

I read this quote from the book *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students,* what do you think?

> **So also Christ presented the principles of truth in the gospel**. In His teaching we may drink of the pure streams that flow from the throne of God. **Christ could have imparted to men knowledge that would have surpassed any previous disclosures, and put in the background every other discovery. He could have unlocked mystery after mystery and could have concentrated around these wonderful revelations the active, earnest thought of successive generations till the close of time. But He would not spare a moment from teaching the science of salvation**. His time, His faculties, and His life were appreciated and used **only as a means for working out the salvation of the souls of men**. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, and He would not be turned from His purpose. He allowed nothing to divert Him. CT 385.7

Does this suggest there are different types of mysteries and God is not actively revealing all of them?

What truth is God actively working to reveal?

Before we specify what the mystery of God is—what is the theme of Scripture?

It is a war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan; truth, love, freedom versus lies, selfishness and coercion.

Satan is the father of lies—what would lies create in the minds of people who believe them? Misunderstanding, confusion, distortion, falsehood, i.e. things not understood, mysteries.

God is the God of truth, of light, of openness. God is the revealer of truth, the source of truth and God is constantly shining truth out for our understanding.

Satan is the father of lies, the creator of falsehood, the obstructer of understanding, the founder of superstition and thus the promoter of mystery, and mysticism, and spiritualism.

And what is spiritualism—it is a form of mysticism, that purports to pursue knowledge but its method is to seek knowledge without evidence and without reason—which actually darkens the understanding.

Spiritualism seeks to know something via:

- the lines on the hand
- the selecting of cards
- the shape of tea leaves
- the falling of bones
- the entrails of animals
- the declaration of a fortune teller

None of the methods of spiritualism is based upon evidence, facts, or reality, but merely claims—thus it is the ground of the deceiver and liar who has no truth on his side!

Satan the creator of lies is the creator of confusion and mysteries in regard to God, God's design law, God's character, God's method, God's purposes, and God's plan of salvation.

God is the source of truth and is the revealer, the one who makes known, the one who provides light, evidence, facts, and reality to free our minds from lies. God wants us to think, to reason, to understand and to follow the truth for the truth will set us free.

Now, let's examine a little more closely the specific mystery that Satan's lies have created and the truth God is revealing.

> "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times **He might gather together in one all things in Christ**, **both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him**." Eph 1:9,10 NKJV

What is this mystery, this thing that was not known or understood and which God is revealing?

That the universe will be unified by Jesus—He will be the One who brings us all into unity as we unite with Him.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

In Daniel Chapter 2, Daniel in revealing Nebuchadnezzar's dream says:

> [27] "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the **mystery** he has asked about, [28] but there is a God in heaven who **reveals mysteries**. [notice God is a revealer, One who makes known, not one who obscures or creates confusion] He has **shown** King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:
> [29] "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the **revealer of mysteries showed** you what is going to happen. [30] As for me, this **mystery** has been **revealed** to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

- What was this mystery that was revealed to the king through Daniel? "**In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed**"
- What was the mystery revealed? All the universe being brought back into unity through the Rock, and that Rock is who? Jesus Christ

Notice this mystery in the New Testament:

- Romans 11:25,26: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this **mystery**, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. [26] And so all Israel will be saved…"
  - What is this mystery? Bringing Jews and Gentiles together into one group of unified saved—the same mystery—God's eternal kingdom.

- Romans 16:25-27: "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery hidden for long ages past**, [26] but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that **all nations might believe and obey him**—
  - What is this mystery? Bringing all nations into unity—the same mystery.

- 1Cor 15:51-52: "Listen, I tell you a **mystery**: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— [52] in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."
  - What is this mystery?
  - The fulfillment of eliminating sin and restoring His creation back to perfection and thus bringing us back into unity with the rest of the universe—the same mystery—just a little more detail

- Ephesians 3:2-6: "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, [3] that is, the **mystery** made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. [4] In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the **mystery** of Christ, [5] which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. [6] **This mystery is that through the**

gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."
    - What mystery? The same mystery—bringing all back into unity through Christ!

- Ephesians 5:25-33: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her [26] to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, [27] and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. [28] In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— [30] for we are members of his body. [31] "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." [32] **This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church**."
    - What mystery? Bringing all people back into unity or oneness with Christ as Jesus prayed in John 17—the same mystery!

- Col 1:26-27: "the **mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. [27] To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this **mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**."
    - What mystery? Healing of our hearts and minds by the indwelling Spirit who takes the perfection of Christ and reproduces it in us who choose to trust Him—and thereby bringing us all unto unity with God and His design laws for life.

So what is the mystery of God? It is bringing the universe back into unity—but how? What method does God use? God wars against the liar and deceiver by revealing the truth about Himself, His character, His methods, His design laws, and the truth purges the lies and wins us back to trust. In trust, we receive a new heart and right spirit, become partakers of the divine nature—the victory of Christ applied in us.

So, the mystery of God is His plan and actions to remove sin, selfishness, lies, corruption, and all deviations from His perfect design of love and restore His character of love, methods of truth and freedom into the hearts and minds of all who trust Him, thus bringing us into genuine unity with him and the unfallen universe.

Why is this a mystery? Because our minds are infected with lies that obscure the truth about God. God is the revealer, the source of truth who is warring against the liar in order to fix the damage in our hearts and minds.

And when will God's ultimate completion of this mystery, this healing and restoration of all who trust Him occur?

Consider this text:

- Revelation 10:7: "**But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished**, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Do we find ourselves nearing this time? Do we see more truth being revealed today than ever before in human history? Remember the prophecy of the "Sun of righteousness arising with healing in his beams"?

Do we have a role to play? What is our role?

SUNDAY

The Immanence of God

Immanence means: to remain with, to indwell, to be inherent

So, the immanence of God would refer to God with us, God remaining close to us, God indwelling us.

The lesson focuses our attention on Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the multi-metal statue and his inability to remember the details, yet the conviction that it was extremely important. The story unfolds with Nebuchadnezzar demanding his wise men tell him the dream and its interpretation and how they argue this is impossible, culminating with the death sentence and then Daniel's petition for time, Daniel's prayer to God and God's revelation to Daniel of the dream and its meaning.

We all know the story—what I want to focus upon are the methods of God revealed in this story.

What is the context of OT Scripture? It is the war between good and evil: God working to eradicate sin and heal His creation and Satan opposing Him. The one single requirement upon which God's plan hinges is the coming Messiah. Without Jesus, God cannot save planet earth.

Thus, the OT is the record of God working to bring the Messiah and Satan warring to prevent His arrival.

But Satan failed to stop Jesus from being born, so once Jesus was born to Mary, Satan's war had to shift focus. During the 33 years of Christ's life on earth the war shifts to Satan trying to either kill Jesus before Jesus can accomplish His mission on earth (which was to reveal the truth about God AND to develop a perfect, sinless human character thus eradicating the infection of sinfulness) or to get Jesus to corrupt Himself with sin and thus fail in His mission.

Thus, Satan inspired Herod to try and kill baby Jesus. When that didn't work Satan tried to deceive Jesus, bribe Jesus, coerce Jesus but praise God, all of that failed and Jesus accomplished His mission!

After Christ's resurrection Satan's warfare strategy shifts again—no longer is he trying to stop Jesus from being born as a human; no longer is he trying to stop Jesus from accomplishing His mission as a human because those events have happened. So, Satan begins his new strategy to try and destroy all those who know the truth and are followers of Jesus. But that strategy fails, so Satan initiates is final war strategy—he wars to prevent the application of what Jesus accomplished into the hearts and minds

of people. In other words, Satan works to infect Christianity with a false view of God so that we fill our Spirit temples Satan's methods and principles i.e. view of God, thereby obstructing the partaking of the truth of God which would restore us to trust and open our hearts to receive the indwelling Spirit to cleanse and restore us.

Satan teaches a false religious system built upon imposed law in which salvation is a legal process occurring in books in order to obstruct people from experiencing the mystery of God—Christ in you the hope of glory.

So, in this story of the dream—notice God's methods? He reveals truth to Nebuchadnezzar—God is a revealer of truth. But God prevents Nebuchadnezzar from remembering the details—why? Because it inspired a real passion, interest, desire in the king do know the truth.

Remember, we will find God when we seek Him with all our hearts. God works to instill a desire for truth, for good, to put enmity between Satan and people. We see this in this story.

God simultaneously, through this method, exposes the counterfeit of Satan, the soothsayers, mystics, fortunetellers as frauds. God does this to undermine the king's confidence in the methods built on deceit and lead the king to value actual truth.

Did God use force to coerce Nebuchadnezzar to believe a certain thing or to take a certain action? No, God used His power to reveal truth to the king which triggered within the king a desire, but the king made freewill choices on how he responded.

While God was working to expose the frauds and to reveal truth, was Satan also working through his agents to try to obstruct the truth? Did the king have to decide how he would respond to the appeals and ideas presented to him by the soothsayers?

What is the application for us today?

MONDAY

The lesson points out that when we face problems we need to remember we are not alone, that we have a God who loves us, who is interested in us personally, who wants to dwell with us and is eager to help us—so we do well to seek Him and to seek His direction, insight, wisdom, will, and direct involvement in solving our problems.

As we do this, however, how can praying to God for His intervention be misused?

- Praying to God for healthy lungs while one continues to smoke
- Praying to God for a healthy marriage while one…fill in the blank:
    - cheats on their spouse
    - physically or verbally abuses their spouse

    - Or—is being physically or verbally abused and one prays for a healthy marriage, but NEVER sets any boundaries, just submits to the mistreatment when they have the ability to leave.
- Praying to pass an exam but not studying when one has the time
- Praying for good health but refusing to eat healthy foods or exercise

What is the point I am making here about prayer?

We err in prayer when we pray for God to overrule the choices we make that He has put into our control. God has given us control over the decisions we make in governance of ourselves. We err when we pray for deliverance but refuse to choose what we know is in harmony with what has been revealed.

God provides us with truth, wisdom, opportunities, but God never does the choosing for us. So to pray to God to act in places where it is our responsibility to act is to misunderstand reality and to stay trapped in some destructive situation.

Sometimes we are faced with opportunities that we don't have sufficient evidence to determine which is the path God would have us take—a job offer comes—should I take it, should I move to a new city etc. In this situation it is quite proper to pray to God for wisdom, discernment, and evidences to seek where He is leading. We ask God for insights, conviction of the Spirit, and ultimately to overrule, we might pray "God, this seems the best given the facts that I currently have. If this isn't your will, reveal to me the evidences to show me and/or simply overrule by closing the door to this opportunity."

I have personally experienced God's answering my prayers in this fashion. But notice, the action one is asking of God is not to act in to make your choices for you, but for insight, wisdom, facts, evidences which you currently don't know, or to overrule if there is something beyond your awareness that would be counter to God's will. God honors these prayers.

In the case of Daniel and his friends, they needed information they could not obtain by study, by research, or from any means within their power. The only way for them to get this information was for God to reveal it to them. So they went to God and asked Him.

The lesson points out two types of prayers—the request for what is needed, and then after the prayer is answered, the prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

Why are these two types of prayer important?

More precisely, *for whom* are these types of prayer important? Does God need our prayers?

Do our prayers have some impact upon us? What impact to these two types of prayers have upon us?

First type of prayer—the prayer of need—brings our hearts and minds into the truth of our own helplessness, our own limitation, our own inability, and our own hopelessness without God in our

lives. It is a prayer of humility that opens our hearts and minds to God, to connect with God, to seek God's presence in our inmost being. This is more than the pursuit of knowledge, such prayer seeks the will of God in our lives and thus opens us to the healing and recreating presence of God. Our fears and insecurities are replaced with love and trust in God. It is part of the process of being transformed as we come into connection with our Creator.

The second type of prayer—the prayer of thanks and praise—solidifies our hearts in love, adoration, appreciation, affiliation, confidence and faith in God. Again working to eradicate our fear and selfishness in the bonds of love and trust.

In other words, prayer is real and has real impact upon those who pray. It is not wishful thinking, it is not magic, it is not mystical, it is tangible and practical, the operating of the mind and heart of a sentient being connecting with our Creator God.

The lesson asks us to read Psalms 138 and consider how it can helps us learn to be more thankful to God. I thought we could compare the NIV to *The Remedy* for a few verses*:*

Verse 1:

> **NIV:** I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise.
>
> **REM:** With all my heart I give you thanks, O Creator God, before the heavenly assembly I sing your praise.

Verse 2:

> **NIV:** I will bow down toward your holy temple, and will praise your name
> for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things, your name and your word.
>
> **REM:** I humble myself to your healing presence as taught by your holy temple,
> and I praise your character of love; for your methods of truth and love never change, and your promise confirms that your character of love is supreme over all creation.

Verse 3:

> **NIV:** When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.
>
> **REM:** The day I acknowledged my need and called for help, you answered me; you gave me confidence and strength to do what is right.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Verse 7:

> **NIV:** Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.
>
> **REM:** Though I live in the midst of a world of troubles, you heal me to live eternally; you send your Hand to stand against my enemies — through the One at your right hand you save me.

Verse 8:

> **NIV:** The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands.
>
> **REM:** The Lord will complete his healing work in me; your love, O Lord, gives life forever — don't give up on restoring your creation.

TUESDAY/WEDNESDAY

The lesson reviews the history foretold in the prophecy:

- Head of gold—Babylon
- Breast of silver—Media-Persia
- Belly of Bronze—Greece
- Legs of Iron—Rome
- Feet of Iron and Clay—Post Rome Europe

What does this prophecy mean to you? Why do you value it?

Does this prophecy give you confidence in God? Does it give you confidence in the Bible?

In Wednesday's lesson the first paragraph says, "It is an apocalyptic prophecy: a definitive prediction of what God foresaw and would actually bring to pass in the future."

I find this language a little troubling. It appears the way it is written it could be construed as merging foreknowing with causing. In other words, it sounds like if God foreknows it then God will make it happen. This idea is what those who reject God's foreknowledge are objecting to.

They object to the loss of freedom because they realize if we are not free to make our own choices then:

- love doesn't exist
- God is not love

- what we experience in our lives is fraudulent, fake, pretend, preordained to look like we have a choice, but we really don't
- God is a sadistic creator of evil as He makes things happen the way they do

So, to me there are many problems if we merge foreknowledge with causality, which this statement could suggest.

I think a better way to say it would be apocalyptic prophecy is a definitive prediction of what God foreknows people will do along with what God foreknows He will do—i.e. God brings to pass the establishment of His eternal kingdom and the eradication of sin. But God, does cause people to make the choices they make; thus He doesn't bring about their choices, but foreknows their choices.

THURSDAY

The focus is on the stone that destroys the image, let's read Daniel 2:34-35:

> While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

What does it mean? What law lens do you read it through?

Is it describing the use of might and power to physically overwhelm and destroy?

Are we still reading a prophecy? Does the prophecy use symbols? Do we need to interpret the symbols?

What does a hand or hands represent in Bible symbolism? When we think of the "hand of God" are with thinking of an appendage at the end of God's arm, or does the "hand of God" represent God's power?

So, would a rock cut out without human hands represent without human power?

And the context is in the rise and fall of nations—and how to human kingdoms arise and fall? What power is used? So, does the prophecy reveal a kingdom that doesn't come about by the power humans use? This is an amazing revelation of God's kingdom which will be established but not by the power and methods that human governments use.

What power and methods do human governments use? Lies, coercion, force, power-over to exalt the rulers—selfishness. Destroy one's enemies to protect oneself.

But this kingdom is a rock—would it be the rock of salvation? Would it represent Jesus the rock from whom Israel drank in the desert?

And what power did Jesus use to establish His kingdom, which is NOT of this world? Truth, love, freedom—including giving us the freedom to kill Him.

Thus, there is a kingdom that is coming that will destroy the kingdoms of the world, but it will not use the methods or power over others, the methods of the world to do it. It will not use physical might to kill its enemies. Understand, this is exactly the opposite of what all the false religions of the world teach—including much of Christianity.

Thus Paul writes,

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84)

Daniel goes on to interpret the meaning of this rock, set up without human power in verse 44:

> In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

What do you think? It will crush those kingdoms—do any other Bible texts come to mind?

> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will **crush** your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15 NIV84)

Jesus will crush Satan's head—the ruler of the kingdoms of this world—how? What power did Jesus use to crush Satan?

Hebrews 2:14, 15:

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

What power did Jesus use? The power of truth and love presented in an atmosphere of freedom.

> The God of peace will soon **crush** Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Romans 16:20 NIV84)

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

How does God crush Satan under our feet? By restoring in us His character and methods of love.

God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love and freedom. It is built upon the design laws of God, the supreme law being the law of love. Love cannot be coerced or forced. Thus, the kingdoms of this world are crushed—lies are crushed by truth, selfishness and fear are crushed by love and coercion is crushed by freedom.

The Rock, Jesus, establishes His kingdom, but not by human power or methods.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month.

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

January 17-19, 2020: The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. If you would like to be prepared to more effectively share this message then come to this course. More details will be forthcoming shortly. Allen Texas (30 miles north of DFW airport). See events.comeandreason.com for more details and to sign up.

February 8, 2020: Come and Reason Class will meet at Bake Crafters at 10673 S Lee Hwy, McDonald, TN 37353 for this Sabbath only. Class will start at our regular time.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 4
From Furnace to Palace

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The title of the lesson from Furnace to Palace, immediately draws our mind to Daniel's three friends. As we have discussed many times, the Bible records the events of the lives of real people, real, historically accurate—yet the lives and events chosen are often chosen because they also illustrate or represent larger realities in the Great Controversy. How does the events of the fiery furnace, from furnace to palace represent the larger war?

- These men were captives in a land hostile to God. We are captive in this world hostile to God
- These men were faced with a choice to worship the gods of Babylon or to stay faithful the God of heaven. We are faced with the choice to worship the imperial dictator god of this world who imposes laws and inflicts punishment or to worship Him who made the heavens, earth and fountains of water—the Creator God.
- These men were thrown into the fire, but Jesus walked with them and the only thing that burned away were the ropes that bound them, even their clothing did not smell of fire. We will be thrown into fiery trials and Jesus will be there with us and burn away our fears, insecurities, doubts, destructive habits, so that we may be purified and ready to stand in His presence.

Revelation reads:

> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Re 3:18 NIV84).

Isaiah 55:1 says:

> "Come, all you who are thirsty,
> come to the waters;
> and you who have no money,
> come, buy and eat!
> Come, buy wine and milk
> without money and without cost. (NIV84)

- The water is symbolic of the water of life, which cleanses and restores us to trust—it is the pure truth of God that sets our minds free and cleanses our minds of the lies. It also represents the love of God which is pure and frees us from fear.
- The wine symbolic of the perfect life of Jesus of which we partake—we become partakers of the divine nature

- the milk is the milk of truth which the newborn in Christ is to partake to grow up and eat the solid meat of truth, the flesh or bread of truth revealed by Christ (bread is listed in the next verse)

But how do we buy these things without money? The Bible says without money, but it still says we must buy, what does it mean and how do we buy it?

Is there a difference in how you value something when it is given to you and when you buy it?

Can we do any work or bring anything of value that can actually purchase salvation? No! It is achieved by Jesus and it is freely offered to us—yet the Bible still uses the language that we are to buy it—why and with what?

When you buy something of value—a new car, a new home, do you invest time and energy researching, examining, studying the various possibilities, evidences, and facts in order to choose. Do you have a desire to obtain? To you commit yourself to the possession of the object?

We are to buy it in the sense that we are to study, understand, examine and pursue it, seek it with all our hearts:

- Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (Mt 7:7,8 NIV84)

- And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13 ASV)

- "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Mt 13:44 NIV84
- "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Mt 13:45,46 NIV84

So, first we must have a heart attitude that we want to obtain salvation, we want to actually have Jesus in our heart. But, even with that, we still must buy and with what do we buy if not with money?

It is a barter system—we must pay with the thing *of ours* that we value most that which is most important and precious—our own selves; we must *exchange* our life for His.

We exchange our:

- sinful life for His sinless life
- corrupt character for His pure character
- our terminal condition for His eternal life
- our guilt and shame for His purity and holiness
- our hearts of stone for His heart of flesh

It is through the fire of life's difficulties and problems that we face our own weaknesses, sinfulness, ugliness of character and we seek God with all our hearts and say to Him:

> Take away my heart of sin, take away my desire for the things of this world, take away my fear, insecurity, doubts, selfishness and write in me your design law of love, a real knowledge of you, give me a new heart and right spirit, that I might partake of your character and be renewed by the Spirit of love and truth. Wash me with the waters of truth, fill me with the love and life of Christ and burn away all the defects so I may stand clean, pure and perfected in your presence Oh Lord!

This is our prayer!

The first paragraph describes how these three worthies made a stand for truth and for God, but how and when did they make their stand public?

In both the issue of food choices and the question of bowing to the idol, did these men go out seeking to make a public statement?

Were they carrying signs marching through Babylon protesting the pagan systems of religion?

Were they standing on the street corners handing out tracts?

Were they holding public meetings to teach the truth about the Hebrew God?

Or, did they take public stands when they were put in positions in which external pressures were brought to bear to try and get them to compromise?

Do we make the most effective witness for God's kingdom by standing on the street corner calling out people's sins, or putting up billboards calling out what we believe are people's sins?

What are the three methods of Satan that were used to try and get the three worthies to compromise their faith?

I want you to see these methods because Satan uses them over and over again and we all get faced with them. The specific temptations are different, but the methods are always the same.

- Deceit—they were faced with constant false pictures of God and pagan ideas about God
- Inducements—some type of a payoff, reward, positive reinforcement—the proverbial carrot. When the issue of food was presented, they were being tempted with position, power, esteem, recognition, and blessing of the king's own food. But when deceit and inducement don't work, what does Satan always resort to?
    - These first two were used to tempt Eve—deceit and inducement to gain knowledge. Satan couldn't tempt Eve in Eden with the third method, but he can us.

- Coercion, threat, infliction of some pain—economic, loss of power, position, humiliation, and ultimately threat to physical wellbeing—torture and death.

Consider how Jesus was tempted of the devil:

- Deceit—Satan pretended to be an angel of light and misquoted Scripture
- Inducement—Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world
- Coercion—infliction of pain, rejection by His friends, physical torture and crucifixion
    - Notice Jesus had to bear temptations that Adam and Eve did not have to bear.

In the Dark Ages these methods were used:

- Deceit—all the lies which infected, and still infects Christianity
- Inducement—indulgences, buying salvation with money or deeds, the church offering lands, titles, or salvation itself to get its way
- Coercion—torture and execution

In our day these same methods are used:

- Deceit—the many pictures of God which teach He runs His universe like Caesar runs Rome—imposing laws, which require the infliction of punishment, so God must be paid off with the blood of His Son not to kill us. Thus trust in God is undermined—and many other lies that infect Christianity to this day.
- Inducement—money, power, position, awards, recognition, just agree to the world's view of things.
- Coercion—no one can buy or sell save him who has the mark of the beast. If we want to keep our position in leadership, schools, universities, government—we must agree to the lies—that there is no God, life evolved from lower organisms. Or, we must worship the dictator god who inflicts punishment. In other words, worldly systems do NOT present truth, in love and leave people free. Worldly systems present their distortions and then ultimately coerce to get compliance and if economic coercion doesn't work then it turns to other coercion, loss of position, power, resources and eventually freedoms and life itself.

SUNDAY

The first paragraph points out that Nebuchadnezzar was not satisfied being the head of gold and didn't want his kingdom to end…

The second paragraph states, "This attitude of pride calls to mind the builders of the Tower of Babel, who, in their arrogance, attempt to challenge God Himself. No less arrogant is Nebuchadnezzar here."

It seems clear the king did struggle with pride and arrogance as revealed in later chapters.

Is it Nebuchadnezzar's fault that he was infected with pride and arrogance? No! He was born infected with it, as we all are because of Adam's sin. We are born in sin (Psalms 51:5).

And, given Nebuchadnezzar's upbringing in Babylon as the heir to the throne, would it be easy for him to gain a knowledge of the true God? What would be the things he was taught about himself in their system? Would he be taught all people are created equally—or would he likely be taught that he was a royal and blessed by the gods and was better than the masses?

When Daniel and the three worthies arrive in Babylon, was the king likely to know God or not know God?

But, as evidenced by the rest of the book of Daniel, does the king have a heart that is still healable?

So, do we read the events transpiring in Daniel as God seeking to punish an arrogant king or as God working to save the king?

Did God foreknow what Nebuchadnezzar would do after he was given the dream of the multi-metal statue? Yes, so why was the vision given? To plant a seed, an idea, to open the king's mind to something more than what he was taught that the king needed to work through to recast the king's understanding of reality and come to know the God of heaven?

Did God foreknow not only that the king would order the statue of gold and command worship, but that His three friends would stand firm and this would provide an opportunity to reach Nebuchadnezzar with more truth?

When we read the OT stories do we see the larger reality being played out? God trying to save while Satan is trying to destroy?

All of this happening under the governance of God—meaning God's control over Himself and His design laws. One of those laws being the law of liberty, thus God respects the choices of people and acts within those choices to bring about the eradication of sin and the healing of His creation.

MONDAY

Again, the lesson not only acknowledges the historical facts and realities of what happened to Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego, but leads us to see these stories teach a larger reality in the conflict between Christ and Satan.

What is the object lesson for us?

We are facing and are going to continue to face pressures to conform to the world, to accept the world's view of God and those pressures will increase until we either lose things precious to us, or comply. If we comply we might keep things of this world, but what will we lose?

I want to point this out very clearly: When we are faced with choices of conscience, when pressures are brought to bear—whether peer pressures, or pressures to reputation, position, economics, or relationships—we are faced with a decision that has price to it.

If we stay loyal to God we might lose something of value—we might lose friends, we might be rejected by family, we might lose property, position, wealth, we might even lose our mortal lives. But what to we retain? We retain our dignity, our virtue, our integrity, our purity of heart and mind, and ultimately our connection with our Creator who gives us eternal life.

But, if we choose to keep the things of this world, if we choose to compromise to keep a human relationship (Samson and Delilah), property, position, wealth, health or even our mortal lives, we will lose our purity of heart, damage our integrity, sear our consciences, destroy our virtue, corrupt our character and if not repented of we sever our connection with God and lose eternal life.

Satan is a deceiver and one way he deceives is to get us to lose sight of eternal reality and focus on temporal reality.

Read second paragraph, "Today, we are bombarded…" What is the basis of God's authority and what is the basis of the authority of all false gods—including Satan?

Does God's authority come from the Bible? In other words, is the Bible the source of God's authority? No! The Bible is a tool, inspired by God to reveal reality to us, to lead us to a knowledge of God, to expose the lies of the enemy and the results of believing Satan's false view of reality. The Bible communicates God's authority, but is not the source of that authority.

Upon what does God's authority rest—is it power? If we say power, then what kind of power?

Is it the power of physical might and force? No! This is the authority of all false gods—all false gods rest their authority on the ability to inflict punishment on those who do not worship them or obey them. Thus, any place you find in Christianity that God's authority rests upon physical might and power and the ability to punish sinners—you have identified the infection of Satan's lies about God.

So, what kind of power does God's authority rest upon?

Zechariah said, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." (Zech 4:6 NIV84)

How does the Spirit work? He is the Spirit of truth and love. Why is this power?
What is Satan the father of? Lies, and what destroys lies? Can you destroy lies by threating to kill those who are lying or those who believe the lies? No! You destroy lies by truth, presented in love and leaving people free.

Thus, Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

And in the book *The Desire of Ages* the author beautifully describes this reality:

> God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; **but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's** government. **The Lord's principles are not of this order**. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing *power***. DA 759.1

Why is truth and love the prevailing power? Because God wants our love, our trust, our loyalty, our devotion, our friendship—can any of this be obtained by threatening to kill us if we don't give it? Thus physical power cannot be used to win hearts because physical power does not win hearts.

It is the beastly system that uses physical power to coerce. Watch for it and no matter the issue if this method is being used it is not from God.

Please be sure to differentiate coercion from restraining power. Love does use power to restrain:

- Doctors restrain a person who is psychotic and trying to gouge out their own eyes—but restrain only to protect the person and others, not try and force them to love, trust etc. And intervenes with treatments designed to restore the individual to self-control so they can be set free.
- Doctors and governments will quarantine people with contagious diseases, not to force love and trust, but to protect and to treat
- Governments will imprison people who would injure and exploit others, but this restraining power is not designed to force love, trust, or friendship but to protect. In addition to protecting the innocent, incarceration does provide an opportunity for the individual to reflect on their choices and consider their heart motives. Many in prison have turned their lives around and been reborn into God's kingdom of love. Thus the restraining power was an act of love, not a coercion.
- God has used power in this way—holding back the principalities and powers of darkness, the four winds of strife, providing a hedge of protection to prevent evil forces from destroying all who love God. All of this to keep open the avenue for Messiah and provide opportunity for healing.

So, God's authority rests upon truth—reality, the design laws upon which He built all life to operate. To the degree we speak truth we speak with authority—because the truth is authoritative, whether people accept it or not.

But some really struggle with the use of physical power. They understand design law and that God doesn't have to inflict punishment for sin because the punishment is inherent in breaking God's law, and they attempt to teach God that because God never uses physical power to coerce consciences, or to inflict punishment for sin that He never uses physical power that puts people in the grave, i.e. first death of sleep, for other reasons.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

I have received multiple emails from people concerned with the idea that God sometimes used physical power to put people to death—first death, which is sleep death, and not the second eternal death. This death is not the punishment for sin, and in fact isn't considered death by God—Jesus said those who believe in Him never die, even though they sleep in the grave.

I received the following email from a sincere person who had read my recent blog on the flood and this question of whether God ever puts people to sleep in the first death:

> *I have fully read your article three times and in our group we use your materials and other materials from other proponents on God's Character message.*
>
> *Let's reason together little by little based on your article on the Flood and see whether we can arrive at a common understanding.*
>
> *First question on the flood and probably Sodom:*
>
> *If God was merely putting people to sleep, *why did He make it so painful*, such as using flood to drown, fire to roast people alive, including kids? Couldn't He have used a less painful means? Does God need to use violence and the most fearful events in the whole universe before He can put people to sleep?*
>
> *Again, why was the flood worldwide and not limited to only the inhabitants of the then world? Why has the flood left huge devastations of our planet and destabilized our ecosystem if God had to merely put the humans to sleep?*
>
> *With the idea that God's power is destructive has lead many people to believe that God is the source of death. Aren't they right to conclude it in that way without the idea of the flood and its subsequent consequences on our ecosystem?*

I appreciate so much these emails because they are good questions, probing questions and questions that give us opportunity to reflect, rethink, examine the evidence, reason together and hopefully grow in our understanding.

How would you answer these questions?

Take each point one at a time and examine them and use evidences to respond:

> *If God was merely putting people to sleep, *why did He make it so painful*, such as using flood to drown, fire to roast people alive, including kids? Couldn't He have used a less painful means? Does God need to use violence and the most fearful events in the whole universe before He can put people to sleep?*

Notice the question introduces an idea that is not in the Bible, it is assumed, or read into the events—that God *roasted* people slowly torturing them.

But the Bible account is that the fire that destroyed Sodom was so intense the buildings were wiped out. It wasn't a slow burning but instant—vaporization.

How painful is it to be vaporized in a nuclear explosion? So, God acting to vaporize Sodom was not a painful thing. So, it is right to reject the idea that God roasted and tortured people—because He didn't. But, we can reject that misunderstanding without rejecting the truth that He did put those people to sleep.

What about the flood? Drowning in those waters wasn't instantaneous, so didn't this cause suffering and didn't it affect the entire planet, its ecosystem, and all subsequent generations? Yes.

Why? The reason the flood was worldwide was because, according to Genesis 6, the problem was worldwide and, thus, the therapeutic interventions needed to be worldwide.

And what were those therapeutic interventions—besides keeping open the avenue for the Messiah?

First Therapeutic Reason for the Flood: Providing Every Opportunity for Repentance

Didn't God warn, through Noah, for 120 years of a coming flood, of their sinfulness, of their need to repent, of their need to turn to Him for salvation? How did they respond to the message of Noah? Ridicule and rejection. What would allowing the flood to occur over a period of time (rain, fountains of water breaking through, etc.) allow for? Would it allow for some people to reflect and to reconsider? Would the evidence of what was transpiring confirm to them that Noah was right? Would that give the people outside the ark the *opportunity* to repent? Whether they accept it or not isn't the question I'm asking here; rather, I'm saying that wouldn't a God of love give every *opportunity* for repentance even if that opportunity was physically painful?

Did the thief on the cross have many truths presented to him throughout his life—yet persistently rejected God, pursuing a sinful life until he ended up in a state of suffering leading toward death? Did that situation give him opportunity to reflect and repent, even though he was destined to die at that point?

Thus, the flood was brought not only to keep open the avenue for Messiah, but it also allowed those who refused to get on the ark one final *opportunity* for repentance and eternal salvation. Just like the thief, their earthly life was going to be over, but their eternal life didn't have to be.

Second Therapeutic Reason for the Flood: Putting Obstacles in the Way of Future Worldwide Apostacy

What were the factors, besides humans being sinful, that contributed to the entire world hardening against God so quickly after Eden? What happens to sinful people when everything is given to them and they don't have to work for anything? What happens over time to people who are self-indulgent and lead hedonistic lives? What happens if such people live hundreds of years? What influence would such people have on their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and multiple generations down?

Would altering the environment to make it harder to survive be a punishment for sin or, rather, a therapeutic intervention that would help slow the corruption of human character? Have you ever heard that "idle hands are the devil's workshop?"—i.e., useful labor is protective against temptation.

The Edenic-like conditions on the earth prior to the flood permitted more indulgence of the carnal nature and, thus, accelerated the corruption of human character. The changes to the earth by the flood made it harder to put food on the table and, thus, increased the need for useful labor, which also protected people from sinful indulgence.

Further, the changes to the earth resulted in shortening human life from about 900 years to 120 years, which also limited the pace of the spread of evil, as those who hardened their hearts against God could not corrupt as many generations with their influence. So, putting all these variables together, we see a beautiful God of love who acts in mercy and therapeutically to keep open the avenue for Messiah and slow the progress of the disease of sin.

The story of the flood serves as an excellent example of the difference between facts—flood, ecosystem changed, lives shortened—and the interpretation of facts. Satan works to get us to misinterpret the facts in order to distort the character of God. When we return to design law and understand how reality works, we realize that God was not inflicting punishment but was acting therapeutically to heal and save.

If we don't understand the context of what is actually transpiring in the great controversy, the reality of humanity dying of a terminal condition, of God working to bring the Messiah to save, and Satan working to prevent that plan, then we will misunderstand what we read in the Bible.

Consider observing an ancient battlefield on which you see evil people with swords killing and maiming—sometimes cutting off arms or legs. But on the battlefield, there are also medical personnel who *appear* to be doing the same thing. They are holding people down, people who are screaming because no anesthesia available, and cutting off their arms and legs (amputating to save the life) or cutting open their bellies (to heal the wounds inflicted). But as the observer, you perceive two groups of people using sharp instruments to cut off limbs and cut into people. You don't realize the two groups are working toward two different goals. You might wrongly conclude, "My doctor would never use such methods; it is evil."

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "For the three Hebrews…" I am not sure what they mean by "they cannot join the ceremony." Didn't they show up for the ceremony? Weren't they on the plane of Dura with the rest of the people when the music played? So, it seems there were there for the ceremony, but they didn't "join in" meaning they didn't participate in the worship of the idol. Perhaps the editors left out the word "in"?

So, what lessons for us? Are there times where we might attend programs, events, or ceremonies that we don't agree with but at the same time don't participate in the process?

Can we make hard and fast rules about what we should attend and not attend, or do such situations have to be evaluated on a case by case basis?

The bottom green section points out that the three worthies knew what God *could* do. He could deliver them from the furnace. But they didn't know what God *would* do, so even if God didn't deliver them they would not bow. Meaning, they were ready to die for their faith. The lesson asks where does such faith come from?

What are the reasons people are willing to die for something?

Ultimately, it comes down to living would be worse to them than dying, or another way to say it, death is preferable to living in those circumstances. This can be driving by love for God or others, but is not always driven by faith in God or godly motives, here are examples:

- Dying for someone you love or value (parent for child, soldier for buddy)
- Dying for love for God (martyrs)
- Dying for one's ego—the idea of compromise would cause one to feel so bad about who they are they would rather die than give in to what is asked of them
- Dying for a cause one believes in—righteous or wicked (consider suicide bombers)
- Dying to escape pain or suffering—the right-to-die suicides
- Dying to achieve a mission—Samson

Which of the motives was likely the motives of the three worthies?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson identifies that the fourth man in the fire was Jesus, and then goes on to ask a poignant question in the fifth paragraph:

"Though we love stories like these, they do raise the question about others who are not miraculously delivered from persecution for their faith."

It also raised the question of those not miraculously delivered from sickness, accidents, or exploitation—despite prayers for healing, protection or deliverance.

What do you say to those who have such questions?

What is the context—the real context, the larger context, not the immediate context? We are in a war between good and evil for our eternal lives.

Is the primary issue in this war what happens to our mortal bodies or whether we are reconciled to God and have eternal life?

From God's perspective what is He most concerned with? All the people Jesus healed while on earth, where are they today? Was Jesus primarily concerned with their mortal physical health, or their eternal salvation?

If you had a rope from our sun to earth, which was 93 million miles long and every inch on that rope represents 1 year of human life. Is there any significant difference between 15 inches and 969 inches? What if the rope was an infinite rope?

From God's perspective He created humankind to live eternally, to never die. From His perspective, whether we die at 1 or 20 or 969 we all die young. Additionally, we must remember what we call death God calls sleep—so it isn't this sleep death that concerns God most, but the condition of the heart. Has the person been healed in heart so that they have eternal life. This is the question.

So, in this context, for whom do most of the miracles happen—do they happen for the benefit of those with the greatest faith or for those whose faith needs help?

- Gideon and the fleece—did he need to miracle because his faith was strong or his faith was weak and needed encouraging?
- When Elijah called fire down at Carmel—was this miracle for Elijah's benefit, or was it to help people whose faith was weak?
- Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego—did they need the miracle in the furnace to stay faithful? While I am sure they were pleased, and they did benefit from the miracle, was it for them that the miracle was given, or was it to reach Nebuchadnezzar?
- Job is described as perfect and righteous in all his ways—did he receive miracles to protect his children, property and health? No! Because his faith was of such quality miracles were not needed to strengthen it.
- When Jesus performed miracles were they for Him or for those who were struggling to establish their faith in Him?
- When the Apostles performed miracles were they for the Apostles or for those who were struggling to have faith in Jesus?
- How did all the Apostles except John die? As martyrs, why no miracles to deliver them? Because their faith didn't require boosting.
- But John was miraculously protected from boiling oil—was it primarily for John, or was it for the spreading of the gospel and the writing of two books of the Bible (John and Revelation)?
- Jonah's miracles (fish and plant)—for whom were they given? For both Jonah and the people of Nineveh—to advance the plan of salvation.

So, my view is that miracles happen when:

- A person or group needs the miracle to strengthen their faith
- God's plan of salvation needs a person to fulfill some mission or purpose (John)

- God is teaching and revealing truth (Jonah and the plant, Balaam)
- To maintain connection with people (Elijah)
- To oppose the spread of evil and to advance the gospel—confusing the languages at Babel, the gift of languages at Pentecost

So, for me, it is about the great controversy and winning the war, which on individual terms is about the character of the person, their faith and their usefulness in God's cause. Sometimes the death of the one who trusts God helps spread the gospel—consider Stephen—so God doesn't miraculously intervene to prevent it. I pray to have such faith if that were ever God's need of me to reach more for Him.

THURSDAY

The lesson talks about the strength and function of faith.

Read second paragraph, "In order to develop…" thoughts?

I think this is well said, real faith doesn't put God to tests, but trusts God with how things turn out.

- The just shall live by faith. (Romans 1:17 KJV)

What does this mean? Other versions render it this way:

- The righteous will live by faith. (Romans 1:17 NIV84)

What does it mean?

With what law lens to you read it through? Through the false human law lens it is read as the just or righteous are those who live by faith in the legal payment of Jesus who is in heaven pleading His blood to the Father to pay or legal debt. If we have this faith then God declares us to be righteous, even though we are not, and thus we are the just i.e. among those legally justified.

This is all a lie—it is a fraud built upon the lie that God's law functions like human law. When we return to worship our Creator God, Him who made the heavens, earth, fountains of water we realize His laws are design laws, protocols upon which reality is built. And the righteous are those who are actually restored to live in harmony with God. Thus the law is written upon their hearts and minds (Heb 8:10).

So, through design law we realize the Just shall live by faith means:

those who have been set right in heart with God, i.e. made righteous, put right, or justified, live by choosing in governance of self to do that which is right or just (i.e. live in harmony with God's design law of love, truth, liberty) and then *trust* God with the outcome.

The three worthies had to decide in governance of self whether they would bow or not bow—that was their decision. The just or right action in harmony with God's law of love, truth, liberty and worship—was not to bow. They made this righteous or just choice, and then trusted God with the outcome. The just shall live by doing what is right in governance of self and then trusting God with how things turn out.

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

February 8, 2020: Come and Reason Class will meet at Bake Crafters at 10673 S Lee Hwy, McDonald, TN 37353 for this Sabbath only. Class will start at our regular time.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 5
From Pride to Humility

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read second paragraph, "Pride leads to…" We fallen beings are absolutely dependent upon God for our existence, but all living beings—unfallen as well as fallen—are dependent upon God for their existence. He is Creator and sustainer of all life.

However, we fallen need reminding of this and the unfallen do not—why? Because we humans on earth have our minds clouded to reality. Many don't even believe in God any more, don't know about God, or have such distorted views about God they don't realize their life is from Him. Or, pride and selfishness and the survival drives cause them to think they are self-sustaining.

What do you think of this sentence, "Any gifts we have, any things that we accomplish with those gifts, come only from God."

How is this true and how could this statement be misunderstood?

Did God give Samson strength? Yes, then was everything Samson accomplished with that strength from God? If we mean everything Samson did was made possible because God gave the gift and without the gift of strength Samson couldn't have done some of the things he did—then yes, it is from God. But if we mean the specific actions were God's will then no, it wasn't from God.

Has God given human beings the gift of pro-creation, the ability to have children?

Does that mean when a man rapes a woman and she becomes pregnant, that it was an act of God or a gift from God or God's will?

My point is that all life and all talents, gifts, abilities ultimately do come from God as He is the source of all Creation—but that doesn't mean all actions or accomplishments that people do with those gifts are from God. People can abuse the abilities and gifts God has given them to accomplish things that are not God's will and do not come from God.

Consider giving your child a gift of a new car—they only have the car because you have it to them. They then use the car to smuggle drugs across the border—are the smuggled drugs accomplished by you?

The first sentence in the last paragraph states that it took a long time for Nebuchadnezzar to recognize the importance of humility.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is healthy humility and what is unhealthy humility?

Healthy humility is a recognition of truth—one's own finiteness, one's own infection with fear and selfishness, one's own limitations, vulnerabilities and weaknesses—yet under the umbrella of one's calling and purpose in God's plan and in that relationship with God there is confidence and strength that we receive from God as we acknowledge our dependence upon Him.

Unhealthy humility:

- feeling worthless, useless, and of no value
- humility that leads to helplessness
- humility that leads to dependency on others such that one doesn't act but follows others
- humility that makes the humility their point of pride—acting in ways to draw attention to their humility—I'm humble and proud of it
- humility that resides in the heart as humiliation

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a great tree that is cut down for 7 years, the king's pride and then 7 years of insanity and living like an animal and then restoration.

What do we learn from this story?

Who did Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream? The holy watchers—and it is from this story that we got the title and idea for *The Journal of the Watcher*.

Who are the watchers? Some type of heavenly being—are they angels, seraphim, cherubim, or are they some other species of heavenly being? We are not told. But they are involved in the events transpiring upon earth—why?

Because they were involved before the events moved to the earth—because the war between God and Satan is a cosmic war.

What do you make of the fact that they are described as watchers and holy ones?

The names describe function and condition of being. These are beings who are not defiled by sin, yet are watching—what is implied by this description?

Why would holy, sinless beings be watching? Is it because they don't know everything, more than that, is it because some things have actually been mispresented by Satan and they are watching for evidences, for answers, to observe to see God in action?

And what do we learn when we realize that it was these watchers who suggested the 7 years of insanity upon Nebuchadnezzar?

What law lens are we viewing this through? Was this to punish or was it to save the king?

It was to save, to bring him to repentance and eternal salvation, then this was not punishment for sin, but a therapeutic intervention to heal him and to spread the truth about God.

Do we learn of the methods and character of God—that God intervenes to heal and not to inflict punishment?

Do we learn that God's holy ones are on our side working to help us?

> **Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?** Hebrews 1:14-2:1
>
> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. **Even angels long to look into these things.** 1Peter 1:20-12

And one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> If you are in communion with Christ, you will place His estimate upon every human being. You will feel for others the same deep love that Christ has felt for you. Then you will be able to win, not drive, to attract, not repulse, those for whom He died…COL 197.1
>
> **In this work all the angels of heaven are ready to co-operate. All the resources of heaven are at the command of those who are seeking to save the lost. Angels will help you to reach the most careless and the most hardened.** And when one is brought back to God, all heaven is made glad; seraphs and cherubs touch their golden harps, and sing praises to God and the Lamb for their mercy and loving-kindness to the children of men. COL 197.2

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Daniel not only interprets…" What was Daniel's advice to the king? Why did Daniel give this advice? Does Daniel's advice suggest that Daniel thought this prophecy was conditional, that it depended on the king, that if the king humbled himself and repented this prophecy may be averted?

Does this mean that not all prophecy in the book of Daniel is apocalyptic? Remember, apocalyptic is what God brings about and doesn't depend upon human choice. Did this prophecy depend upon the arrogance and pride of Nebuchadnezzar?

Whether we see it as punishment (the legal adherents) or therapeutic intervention (design law), is either action necessary if Nebuchadnezzar repents? So, isn't what is foretold in this prophecy a direct result of Neb's choices and condition of heart?

Read second paragraph, "Nebuchadnezzar performs…" What method of ruling others is employed by Nebuchadnezzar? Power over, coercion, force, enslavement, exploitation.

Notice the contrast between Satan's method of governing and God's:

Lucifer in heaven sought to raise his throne above the Most High in order to rule over all beings, the power over others and make the masses serve him.

Jesus did not think equality with God was something to be grasped but humbled Himself to become one who serves others…God's method is to give to build up others.

The governments of the world have historically all used Satan's methods with a few ruling elites dominating and exploiting the masses:

- Pharaohs of Egypt
- Emperors of China
- Shoguns and Emperors of Japan
- Kings of Babylon, Persian, Greece, Rome
- Kings and Popes of the nations of Europe

Notice through all human history human governments model after Satan—power over—a few ruling elites dominating the masses. This type of governing is only possible by oppressing the masses in such a way that prevents the image of God from being developed in people. In other words, the elite can only stay in power if they keep the masses from developing their own individual God-given potential.

I propose that such actions, to destroy the image of God in people is evil and governments that act in such a way as to prevent individual development, growth, advancement, autonomy, reasoning, etc. are part of Satan's kingdom not God's.

Specific methods used in history to injure the image of God and keep the masses subjugated include:

- Denying education—multiple cultures throughout history have done this, and some continue to do this today.
- Control of education to indoctrinate into conformed thinking

- Falsehoods and propaganda, such as divine right of a few to rule the many or superstitious teachings like the fear of hell, with religious authorities possessing the power to send people to heaven or hell, or lies like one group or class of people are inferior or subhuman.
- Control of the media to promote false narratives and propaganda
- Enslaving, imprisoning, and killing
- Control of resources, such as food, water, housing, and healthcare
- Structured impoverishment, such as high taxes; laws limiting ownership of property to the elite; feudal systems in which homes were owned by the aristocracy and the peasants worked simply to have food and shelter with proceeds going to the landowner; coal and railroad barons in the early U.S. history; sweatshops for illegal immigrants today.
- Practices that keep wages low

In response to the abuses of the elite aristocracies socialism and communism arose purporting to be interested in the welfare of the masses, but these forms of government—*in every instance*—removed one ruling class only to replace it with another that continued to exploit and abuse the masses. (Whether Soviet Union, Communist China, Nazi Germany, Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, in every instance an elite ruling class exploited the masses.)

Only one government in the history of the world was established with the express purpose of preventing an elite ruling class from dominating and controlling the masses. Revelation prophesied that this government would arise with lamblike rather than dragon-like principles; a government in which the articles of incorporation were constructed to not only give the power to the people, but to obstruct any attempt toward an aristocracy arising that would dominate the masses—the United States of America. (Of course, since its inception, other governments have arisen that model themselves in some fashion after the USA.)

With the rise of the United States, a radical new form of government was formed. Its constitution was specifically structured to protect the individual citizens and states from a centralization of power into the hands of a few ruling elites. It was designed to protect the individuals—the masses. This is exactly opposite of the exploitive methods of Satan. And ever since its creation, the U.S. Constitution, with the liberties contained within, has been under attack by those who wish to establish a government in which a minority of elites rule the masses.

Some people view the rise of the USA as the fulfillment of the lamblike beast of Revelation 13, which arises with principles of religious and political freedom and yet that eventually those freedoms will be taken away and the lamblike beast will speak like the dragon, meaning a ruling authority that coerces and dominates.

What makes the U.S. Constitution specifically hated by Satan and those who wish to dominate the masses are the following:

- Decentralization of power into three equal branches (legislative, executive, judicial)

- The limitation of congress to remove the president except for specific listed crimes (treason, bribery, high crimes and misdemeanors). The framers did not want the U.S. government to be parliamentarian, as in Britain, in which the prime minister *serves* at the behest of the parliament and can be removed for political reasons at any time by a majority vote of the parliament.
- Formation of an electoral college, rather than simple majority vote, to determine the national election of a president, which is another way to decentralize power and protect the rights of the minority.
- The separation of church and state—having seen the abuses in Europe when religious institutions controlled the power of the state, the framers specifically sought to limit the power of religions to control state agencies in order to enforce religious dogmas.
- The right of the citizenry to carry and bear arms—purposefully written into the constitution as a means for the citizens to protect themselves from threats, including those of an abusive government. (Many people are rightly concerned about the rise in mass shootings, but wrongly believe that removing guns is the way to protect the masses. History has documented in multiple societies that when guns are removed from the citizenry and socialism or communism enters or dictators or despotic sovereigns take over then millions die violently). The problem with increasing violence is because love is being destroyed in our society, not because of gun availability. When people love each other, they don't kill each other. And love is decreasing because people are becoming ever more godless.
- The right to a free and independent press, intended to investigate and expose corruption in government so that the people could act via their power to vote to bring about change. (When the press no longer operates independently but aligns with one group or party it is a threat to the liberties of a country).
- The right to privacy, including no search and seizure without a warrant—again, giving power to the citizen and requiring the ruling authority to have legitimate justification to overrule individual liberties.
- The right to not self-incriminate. During the Inquisition, if an inquisitor asked you, "Did you steal from the church?" and you refused to answer, it was considered the same as an admission of guilt. The framers took power from the state and gave it to the individual.
- An educated citizenry who could read and write in order to be informed and to think for themselves and understand the processes involved to help elect qualified leaders.
- The requirement of elections every two years for the house, six years for the senate, and four years for president, thus, ultimately putting the power into the hands of the electorate and preventing an elite minority from ruling over the majority
- High hurdles to amend and change the constitution.

The USA, with its constitutional protections specifically designed to limit the power of the ruling class, is the most significant governmental obstacle in the world today to the ruling elites who seek to implement a world body to control the nation states. This is quite significant to the informed Christian who understands that before Christ returns, a global-coalition governance will form to subjugate the masses. This is one reason why Satan hates the U.S. Constitution—it obstructs his method of power over the masses.

Thus, we can be "watchers" who are vigilant to observe the movements of forces that are undermining the liberties contained in the Constitution.

The next paragraph points out that God seeks to bless and uplift the poor, which is the exact opposite of the practices of Satan which exploits and dominates the poor.

Let's examine one issue that has been hotly debated in the US over the last three years and consider the impact upon the poor.

> **What impact does an unregulated border have on a society—particularly the poor in a society? (Notice, an unregulated border, i.e. open borders allowing anyone to enter without any conditions)**
> Do wages for those with the least education, least social connections, and least skills rise or sink? Would suppressing wages result in people developing and advancing, or would it result in them becoming dependent on those with resources and power (either wealthy people, corporations, or government) to provide for them? Would social resources, such as Medicaid, low-cost housing, mental-health treatment programs, social support systems, student aide, etc., be more available or would those systems be overwhelmed and, thus, those with the least resources find themselves with less opportunity to get assistance to develop and advance? Would an unregulated border tend to diminish the number of poor in society or perpetuate and expand masses of people to be ruled by those in power?
>
> What if such open borders also allowed in immigrants who were from cultures that did not value the principles of the U.S. Constitution, but rather believed in having a supreme leader who would direct and govern the masses?
>
> If immigration was unregulated and migrants could enter freely without conditions, what impact would it have upon the countries they are fleeing? Would the people fleeing be those persons most content in their countries of origin or those most likely to seek change? And if a critical mass of people who want change is constantly siphoned off by migrating to another country, does this prevent the overthrow of abusive governments? Do open borders perpetuate the abuse and exploitation of the masses in other countries? Would the original nations and their people ultimately be better off by forming governments modeled after the USA or by the continual removal from their society of those who would bring about positive change?

Can there be people who love God and want to uplift others, help them grow and develop to the fulness of their God-given abilities who are on the exact opposite sides of an issue like how to deal with a national border and immigration?

Does any government on earth rightly represent God's government? No!

What then is a healthy approach for those who want to implement Godly principles?

My current understanding is to create opportunity. The role of human government—at its best—is to restrict evil, to set boundaries that create atmospheres for maximal opportunity for individuals to thrive. To set limits on the use of power, just as the US Constitution does.

Thus we have the right to life, liberty and the *pursuit* of happiness. Government can protect life, can protect liberty by restricting the power or ability of others to take your life and liberty—but government cannot give happiness, it can only create an atmosphere most conducive to the pursuit of happiness. It does this by removing obstacles to our liberties.

Understanding these principles, we understand that it is healthy in societies to surrender absolute freedoms as long as in so doing it results in greater opportunity for individual development and advancement.

One example is that we give up the absolute freedom to drive our cars any way and anywhere we want, choosing to cede such freedom to traffic laws and to participate in a society that recognizes the authorities that enforce those laws. Such surrender protects us from accidents and physical harm and, thereby, increases our health and ability to develop and grow.

Other examples of the same principle exist regarding food and water regulations, as well as having a standing army for common defense.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the truth that God rules, and in the second paragraph states, “In fact, the ultimate lesson God wants to teach to the arrogant king is that ‘Heaven rules.’” Do you agree this is the “ultimate” lesson?

Is the ultimate lesson in the universe that God rules? Or, is it *how* God rules?

Not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord Zech 4:6

Why is how God rules important?

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. DA 759.1

> **The law of God is immutable**. Were it otherwise, no confidence could be placed in his government. God rules the world in omnipotence, and **all that His love inspires He will execute. He who rules the world in wisdom and love is a God who changes not.** He does not abolish today that which He enforced yesterday. RH June 4, 1901, par. 7
>
> **Through all the ages Satan's work has been the same,—to make of none effect the law of God**. He has infatuated men and women, leading them to mistake darkness for light, and error for truth. He began this work in heaven, and ever since, he has been trying to deceive. **He tells men and women that God has abrogated all law**, and will now open the gates of heaven to transgressors…RH June 4, 1901, par. 8
>
> **Those who accept Satan's reasoning are terribly deceived**. They accept a position which has no true foundation. **God is unchangeable. He is satisfied with nothing short of perfect obedience**. [Why? Because God's law is the protocol of life and God is satisfied with nothing less than perfect health, which is only possible in harmony with the protocols upon which life is built] Perfection is the only title which will gain admittance to heaven. The law is the only standard of character. RH June 4, 1901, par. 9
>
> **The law of God and the law of Caesar have come into collision, and will come into collision again. The question we have to answer is, Shall we obey God, or Caesar?** [What type of law is God's and what type of law is Caesar's?] RH June 4, 1901, par. 10

So, is the question of whether God rules, or *how* God rules? And how does God rule? Design law, truth, love, freedom—"not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit says the Lord." Zech 4:6

Why does God rule this way? What is it God wants from His intelligent beings? Is it the obedience of a well-trained dog? Is it the programmed actions of a robot? No, it is understanding friendship, love, loyalty, devotion, and willing and eager obedience to live in harmony with God's design laws.

WEDNESDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "But this story is not…" Do we see that while the king did not humble himself after seeing the exceptional wisdom of the Hebrews, after the dream of the statue, after the fiery furnace, nor after the dream of the tree, that each of these events were seeds planted in the king's mind that worked together to bring him to repentance along with the 7 years of insanity?

In other words, God was working mercifully for the salvation of the king and the spreading of His healing truth the entire time. And these events unfolded as God knew they would to maximize the opportunity for the king's repentance.

I would say the exact same principles were at work with Moses and Pharaoh—God presented the events to Pharaoh in the way that was most likely to bring conviction to Pharaoh and bring Pharaoh to

repentance, but in the case of Pharaoh, after each conviction and acknowledgement of truth, Pharaoh turned around and rejected the truth and chose to believe a lie—thus hardening his heart.

Both stories, Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar reveal a God of truth, love and freedom who is kind, gracious and compassionate seeking to heal and save. These stories reveal how God works, how His design laws operate and how God governs the universe.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "How do we know…" I like the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar repented and was saved. What lessons can we learn about God and God's kingdom and how God operates from realizing that Nebuchadnezzar was brought to salvation?

- God is the God of all humanity
- God loves all people
- God's plan of salvation is for all people and God is working to reach all people
- The OT focuses on the Jewish people because they are the branch of the human family through whom Jesus the Messiah will come, not because they are the only ones God cares for or who God wants to save or because God loves them more than any other human
- That the OT ceremonial laws were not necessary for salvation—they were only theater, teaching tools, to teach the larger reality. Nebuchadnezzar never sacrificed at Temple or partook of Passover, as far as we know he was never circumcised in his body—and why didn't any of that matter? Because it was all symbolic, theater. Nebuchadnezzar was circumcised in his heart, i.e. died to self and had the law of God written in his heart. This is the reality.

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, "God's purpose…" Consider the theme of the Bible. After Adam and Eve sinned the human race has a terminal condition and will die if the Messiah doesn't come. Jesus is promised in Genesis 3:15 to come and crush the serpent's head.

The focus of the OT is the battle between God and Satan with God focused on bringing Jesus to earth to save humanity and Satan trying to stop the plan.

After God chose Abraham's family to be the avenue for the Messiah, Satan focuses his attention on destroying this branch of the human family:

- Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel are all sterile—think about that. These people were still closer to the perfection of Eden than we are today. Sarah at 90 was still beautiful enough that Pharaoh wanted her for his wife. Abraham lived to be 175 years of age, yet the first two women in the Messiah's Abrahamic line were sterile and Rachel had Joseph who was the representative of the Messiah and who saved the family from starvation? Is this just random chance, or is it possible Satan was working here to stop the plan? Is there evidence Satan can effect physical

health? Consider the story of Job. But God overrules and heals their infertility and uses the events of their infertility to advance His cause.

- Do you think the conflict between Jacob and Esau was because of God's love in their hearts, or Satan working to inflame fear and selfishness and jealousy? What method did Jacob use—deception—who is the father of lies and deceit? Was Satan at work in this family to cause conflict? Did Jacob's actions anger Esau? Would Satan like to flame up anger in Esau to get Esau to kill Jacob? Was this a real threat? Did Jacob flee for his life? Did he later, when returning still have fear for his life? Was Satan trying to get Esau to kill Jacob and Jacob's family?
- What about Jacob's sons? When God gave Joseph dreams why didn't the brothers celebrate this? Where did the jealousy come from? What about the famine, is it possible Satan worked on nature to try and kill the family of Jacob and destroy the avenue for the Messiah? Did God allow the events to transpire, and in fact send the dreams to Joseph as part of the plan to place Joseph where he could save the family and keep open the avenue for Messiah?
- They go down to Egypt and eventually a Pharaoh arises that doesn't remember Joseph. Who inspired the Pharaohs to enslave the Hebrews? What was Satan trying to accomplish—was it the destruction of the avenue for the Messiah? But God sent Moses and delivered the people in a way that brought renown to God by demonstrating all the gods of Egypt were false and kept open the avenue for the Messiah.
- After establishing Israel in Canaan, did Satan work to infect Israel with pagan gods and get them to rebel against god and what happened to the 10 tribes to the north? They were assimilated and disappeared.
- Did Satan, not only infect Israel with false god worship but also inspire the various nations to continually attack Israel and Judah seeking to destroy the avenue for the Messiah?
- Did God allow the captivity in order to keep open avenue for Messiah, to bring the truth through his faithful friends to Nebuchadnezzar who sent royal decrees throughout his empire proclaiming the truth about the God of heaven.

This is the focus of Scripture and as we see it and understand it things become much more reasonable.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

February 8, 2020: Come and Reason Class will meet at Bake Crafters at 10673 S Lee Hwy, McDonald, TN 37353 for this Sabbath only. Class will start at our regular time.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 6
From Arrogance to Destruction

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

In the aftermath of our POL seminar, I received the following email asking I share it with the class and answer it:

> *Good morning, Tim. I know you can be misinterpreted, so I thought I'd ask you to confirm a statement you made as an answer to someone's question at the end of the meetings. Did you say that if people are operating on a level lower than level 5 that they cannot be saved? The lives of some Bible characters and personal experience with other Christians seem to refute that statement. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior and have given your heart to him and live an other-centered life, then do you have to "climb" through the levels of moral development before you are able to be saved? I can see that operating under Level 1 may prevent you from recognizing your need for God because you are self-focused, but I cannot see that the other levels necessarily prevent you from truly giving your heart to the Lord. Many I know love the Lord with all their heart and understand that the Holy Spirit is bringing them into all truth and helping them to develop their character, yet believe that the unconverted will be punished by God. It seems to me that the levels above level 4 bring freedom that the other levels have not yet experienced.*

This is a good point to clarify—my point was that salvation by definition is a change of heart from enmity to God to trust in God, from selfishness to love and trust. If this change in heart hasn't happened then a person hasn't been saved.

To me, this is when a person moves from level four to five, which is an issue of the heart, not an issue of the answer one gives on a Bible quiz. I know many people who have been reborn, converted, changed from fear and selfishness to love God and others, but have never been taught theology above level four. So they *practice* level five while giving Bible answers at level four or lower.

Read first paragraph, "In Daniel 5…" What do you think about the sentence, "Such an act of desecration is tantamount not only to a challenge of God but an attack on God Himself."

Does it mean if one were to attack God then the righteous response from God is to use force to attack back and kill them?

Hmmm… what methods would that be? What kind of law would that operate under—imposed or design?

Do we have evidence of what God does when He is attacked?

When Jesus was bound, beaten and crucified, did He use power to punish His enemies? What is revealed?

Understand, Satan thought this would work; Satan's method is imperialism, rules over, power over, force to comply. Satan thought the most reasonable response to being threatened was to use force to protect self and kill one's enemies. This is Satan's way.

But Jesus showed God's way "Greater love has no man than he give his life for his friends."

Jesus said, if we have seen Him we have seen the Father—in other words if we could spit in the Father's face and curse Him and beat Him, He would also turn the other cheek and forgive us.

God in human form showed us how God responds.

But in heaven when Lucifer started His rebellion against God, did God kill Lucifer?

So, what is transpiring—was Belshazzar actually attacking God personally?

What was Belshazzar doing? He was defaming God, belittling God's reputation, name, disparaging God—and where do such actions have an impact?

If we call God names, ridicule God, deny the existence of God—have we hurt God? Or, do such actions have their impact in the minds of people?

And what would God's actions here teach? That God intervenes to protect and heal His people from those who would try and corrupt them.

This is revealed on another level—by interpreting the symbols of the sanctuary.

Remember, everything associated with the sanctuary was an object lesson, a teaching tool, a symbol of some larger reality. The lamb was a symbol for Jesus, the white robes symbol for purified Christlike character, daily priests symbolic of the priesthood of believers.

What were the vessels that Belshazzar used symbolic of?

God called Paul, His "chosen vessel." Acts 9:15.

Vessels carried the blood of the sacrifice or the wine of the drink offering. Both the blood and the wine are symbols of the life of Christ. We are to drink the blood or wine, which means we are to partake of the life of Christ and then share Christ with others.

Using the vessels for vile activities would be symbolically saying he is corrupting God's people, perverting their character, infecting them with Satan's views of God, using them to lie about God—

thus God acts to protect His people from having their hearts and minds corrupted with lies, selfishness and worldliness.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to compare how Belshazzar's actions in using the golden and silver vessels from the Temple for debauchery is like the harlot of Revelation 17 using the golden cup to intoxicate the nations.

The last paragraph states, "Like Belshazzar the woman in end-time Babylon holds a golden cup and offers polluted drink to the nations. In other words, my beams of false doctrines and a distorted worship system, modern Babylon lures the world into evil (Rev 17:4-6), oblivious to the judgment that will soon fall upon her."

What does the wine in the cup of the woman represent? False doctrines, lies, false beliefs that the entire world accepts and is confused by.

What would be the core false belief that the entire world has accepted?

That God's law functions like human law—this is the root think about how all the world believes this is who God is.

- All Christian religions teach God in order to be just must use His power to inflict suffering and death upon the wicked—why is this just? Because the law model they have accepted is the lie of Rome, that God's law functions like human law and therefore God must inflict punishment.
- Islam arose to protest many of the abuses of the Roman Church, yet it accepts the same lie that God in order to be just must use His power to inflict punishment on the wicked.
- Judaism has been infected with this view of God for millennia.
- Those who reject God do so because they compare the god presented in these various religions to how reality works and finds a conflict. They see nature and science and see laws that are design laws, constants, and then they look at the gods of the religions of the world and see a dictator who makes up rules and punishes rule breakers and they reject that god. In other words, they are also reacting to the lie, the wine of Babylon.
- Governments who claim God is on their side embrace the imposed law model—the wine of Babylon and believe using coercion or compelling power to force one's way is godly.
- And we believe as the future unfolds that our freedoms will be taken away by those who think they are doing God's will. Why? Because they believe in an imperial god who imposes punishments, the wine of Babylon.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Daniel 5:5-8:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. 6 His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.
> 7 The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."
> 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. (NIV84)

What was the purpose of the handwriting on the wall?

Was it to punish Belshazzar—in other words to cause the king emotional torment before he is killed by the invading army because he needs to suffer a certain amount of mental anguish before he dies?

Was it an act of grace, mercy, one last intervention by God to give the wicked king an opportunity to repent?

Do you think this would have caused the entire party to suddenly go from merriment to somberness and seriousness? Do you think the music stopped, the laughing stopped, and things got quite serious?

Would this be an opportunity for everyone in attendance to rethink their situation and repent?

Why did the king call astrologers and enchanters?

Do you think the king was looking for the truth or for an explanation that would sooth his anxiety and fears?

If any of our modern presidents were having a state dinner and something like this happened, a hand appears and writes on the wall—who do you think any of our presidents would call?

Why do you think the diviners could not read the writing? I find it quite strange—most of these types of people are very good at making things up to sound true even though they are not. I have seen similar things in many settings, someone speaks in tongues, just gibberish, hysteria, but another person gives a bland interpretation of some generic message that one could get on a Christian fortune cookie. Never anything that can be disproved and never anything that is actually testable or meaningful, yet most believe the interpretation.

Fortune tellers are very good at conning people with their so-called interpretations—so why do you think that these fortune tellers couldn't give some made-up explanation?

Is it possible that the Holy Spirit impressed them with such uncertainty that they thought it best not to try?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

Read Daniel 5:9-12:

> So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. 10 The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. 12 This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means." (NIV84)

Do you think the king didn't know about Daniel? Is it possible that the king never heard the stories of the three worthies and the fiery furnace, didn't know of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and their interpretation, didn't know of the king's insanity and restoration and declaration of the God of Daniel that went to the entire kingdom? Is it possible that Belshazzar didn't know that Daniel was the chief of all the sages in the land?

Or, is it more likely, that Belshazzar did know but also knew Daniel served the God of heaven and not the gods of Babylon; that Belshazzar knew Daniel was Hebrew and the items just desecrated were from the Jewish Temple, and that as with ALL violations of God's law there is a response of fear, anxiety, guilt, shame and truth magnifies this self-condemnation and Belshazzar, on some level knew he was wrong and knew Daniel would expose his wrong and didn't want to hear from Daniel. Is it possible, the king called the other soothsayers because he wanted to cover his guilt with more lies and flattery?

Do we see God acting in grace to give the king one more opportunity to repent?

The lesson in the bottom green section asks us to read Romans 1:16-32:

> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. [What kind of power is the power of God? The good news about God—His methods of truth, love and freedom. It is the power to demolish strongholds of lies that set themselves up against the knowledge of God. It is the power to win to love and trust and love and trust cannot be compelled, thus it is not by might, nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord.] 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." [What does this mean? The righteous, or just, are those who choose in governance of self to do that which is right, in harmony with God's design laws, methods and character, and then trust God with the outcome.]

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be **known about God** is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities**—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. [Why are people without excuse? What kind of law is described here? Can people know from nature what the tax code is? Can people know from nature what the speed limit is or any other imposed law? So, again God's laws are the design protocols upon which life is built—this is understood from what has been made. But people are free to reject it, but they cannot avoid the results of rejecting the truth. People are free to reject the truth about the dangers of smoking and believe it is healthy to smoke, but they cannot actually get healthy by smoking. In fact, they will get sick and die. This is exactly what is described in the following passages. The sad reality is that the world is intoxicated with the wine of Babylon and falsely believes God's law works like human law and thus misread these passages to teach the very lies that nature refutes. In other words, people teach that God's laws function like human laws and that God uses His power to inflict punishment for sin]

21 For although they **knew God**, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images** made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 **Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires** of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 **They exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

26 **Because of this, God gave them over** to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

28 Furthermore, **since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind**, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (NIV 84)

What type of law is being described? Design law—and what happens when we violate design law?

This is from *Hard Sayings of the Bible* about this passage:

> In some sense, God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause or own disintegration. P 542
>
> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). P 543
>
> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves. P 543
>
> In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. P 543 Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996,

WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY

Read Daniel 5:13-28:

> So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? [14] I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. [15] The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. [16] Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."
>
> [17] Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

18 "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness
and glory and splendor. 19 Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations
and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he
put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted;
and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. 20 But when his heart became arrogant and
hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. 21 He was
driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and
ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged
that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he
wishes.

22 "But you his son,[d] O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. 23
Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his
temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine
from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which
cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your
life and all your ways. 24 Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.
25 "This is the inscription that was written:
mene, mene, tekel, parsin[e]

26 "This is what these words mean:
Mene[f]: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.
27 *Tekel*[g]: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.
28 *Peres*[h]: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (NIV 84)

So, Belshazzar did know all about Nebuchadnezzar's reign and therefore, most likely knew about Daniel—but didn't originally call him.

Do we believe Belshazzar was overthrown by the Medes and Persians because he used the vessels of the Temple?

Or, was the use of the vessels, just another example of the prideful heart of the king?

If Belshazzar for some reason was unable to use the Temple vessels that night, say the servants couldn't locate them during the party, do we think that Babylon would not have been overthrown?

How long after Daniel's interpretation did the kingdom fall? Evidently, that very night. If the kingdom fell that night, how long had the attack on the city been in preparation by the Medes and Persians?

[d] Or *descendant*; or *successor*
[e] Aramaic *UPARSIN* (that is, *AND PARSIN*)
[f] *Mene* can mean *numbered* or *mina* (a unit of money).
[g] *Tekel* can mean *weighed* or *shekel.*
[h] *Peres* (the singular of *Parsin*) can mean *divided* or *Persia* or *a half mina* or *a half shekel.*

Weren't preparations going on for months if not years, preparing arms, organizing, training, traveling, planning, preparing and then attacking?

If this was due simply to using the Temple vessels that night, would the army have been in place that night?

So, do we see the Persians were about to overthrow Babylon—whether the party happened that night or not, the Persian army was going to attack. God knew this and God loves all humans, including prideful and arrogant humans like Nebuchadnezzar. And just as God intervened with Nebuchadnezzar to give him opportunities to repent, God intervenes here and gives Belshazzar and all his household one final opportunity to repent before the enemy kills them.

What do we think about the "judgment" that happened that night?

What judgment was this?

There are four judgments:

1. Our judgment of God (Romans 2:4; Elijah at Carmel; Rev 14)
2. God's judgments of our condition, what therapeutic actions are needed to heal and save and eliminate sin, who trusts Him and what to fix in each heart and mind (this includes the investigative judgment)
3. Our judgment of angels during the 1000 years
4. The Great White throne judgment at the end of the 1000 years

What judgment was happening here? God judged or diagnosed the actual condition of Belshazzar's heart and judged that the handwriting on the wall would give Belshazzar one more opportunity to reflect and repent before the Persians came and killed him.

If we don't understand God's design law and instead read the story through human imposed law, what false spin do we put on this story?

FRIDAY

Read the second paragraph, "The history of nations…" What does it mean, "To every nation and to every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan."? And how does God assigning people a place balance with "All are by their own choice deciding their destiny and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes."?

Do we have a choice or not?

I think the story of Jonah reveals this quite perfectly.

- Was Jonah the only person in all Israel who was willing to work with God?
- Is God able to read the hearts of people?

- Did God know Jonah hated the Ninevites?
- God calls Jonah—was Jonah free to follow or run?
- When Jonah runs God overrules and sends a storm
- Did Jonah understand what was happening?
- Who chose for Jonah to be thrown in the sea?
- Do you think Jonah's choice was to jump ship and get picked up by a submarine? Or was Jonah basically saying, kill me? Was Jonah saying he would rather die than give a message of hope to Nineveh?
- Did God love Jonah? Did Jonah have hatred issues in his heart that needed working out?
- When Jonah was thrown in the ocean did God overrule and send a great fish?
- Did Jonah have time for reflection? Was Jonah forced by God to repent, or did Jonah realize in this circumstance that he needed to change?
- Who was the God of the Ninevites? Dagon the fish God.
- Was all of this accidental, that a messenger from God to Nineveh, the people who worshipped the fish god was delivered by a great fish?
- And did God further intervened for Jonah with the vine?

Do we see in this story the balance between free choice and God overruling for His purposes?

What about President Trump, has God assigned him a place?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

February 8, 2020: Come and Reason Class will meet at Bake Crafters at 10673 S Lee Hwy, McDonald, TN 37353 for this Sabbath only. Class will start at our regular time.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 7
From the Lion's Den to the Angel's Den

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "After the Medo-Persians…" Isn't this quite remarkable? It really says something about Daniel that the conquering kingdom also put him in a leadership role.

Read second paragraph, "However, as the chapter unfolds…" What is being described with the sentence, "And we can be sure that to a great degree, his faithfulness to God directly impacts his faithfulness in these other areas, as well."

This is the law of worship—by beholding we become changed. Worshipping the God of truth, love, freedom caused Daniel to grow to be more like God, to practice more of God's principles as they were assimilated into his character. Thus, Daniel practiced the same principles of honesty, integrity, faithfulness in all his activities, not just in his religion.

This is one of the problems with the imperial version of Christianity in which people have accepted the lie that God's law works like human law and justice requires forcing people to comply and punishing rule-breakers. This leads to Christians who practice the enemy's methods in the name of Jesus—in the Dark Ages burning people at the stake, the Salem witch trials, Galileo being imprisoned, slavery, Nazi Germany, Rwanda; and what about here in the US, are there those who, in the name of Christ, would be willing to take the freedoms of others?

Does that mean then that Christianity is wrong and we should oppose Christianity? No—it means the world needs to know the truth about the God of love whose laws are design laws—the 3 Angels' Messages!

Does it mean society is better off with a humanistic and godless worldview? No, it means the world needs to know the truth about the God of love!

Read the last paragraph, "Daniel's experience with persecution…" What comes to mind when you think of potential persecution?

Does 1Corinthians 10:13 come to mind?

> "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it.*" (NKJV)

Have you ever had this promise fulfilled in your life?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

But what about this promise for Stephen or for Paul? Was it fulfilled for them?

Consider Matthew 10:28 "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." (NIV84)

What does this mean?

People can hurt us physically, emotionally, psychologically—but they cannot damage our souls—our souls only get damaged by us when we choose to give in to temptation, to believe the lies, to reject truth, to harden our hearts.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Even in heaven…" In heaven, what method of leadership did Lucifer come to think was the right way to rule?

> For you have said in your heart:
> I will ascend into heaven,
> I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
> I will also sit on the omount of the congregation
> On the farthest sides of the north;
> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
> I will be like the Most High.' (Is 14:13,14 NKJV)

What method is this? To rise above and rule over.

But what is God's methods of rulership as revealed by Jesus?

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

> Who, being in very nature God,
> did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
> but made himself nothing,
> taking the very nature of a servant,
> being made in human likeness.
> And being found in appearance as a man,
> he humbled himself
> and became obedient to death—
> even death on a cross! Philippians 2:5-8 NIV84)

What method does Satan apply to governance? Imperialism, imposed law, rules over, and force—the masses must serve him.

What method does God apply to governance? Love, giving, beneficence, God gives of Himself to uplift and bless His creatures.

Thus, one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> But turning from all lesser representations, **we behold God in Jesus.** Looking unto Jesus we see that **it is the glory of our God to give**. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe**. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, **in His ministry for all created beings**: through the beloved Son, **the Father's life flows out to all**; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the **circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life**. {DA 21.2}

What method of governance does God use? Truth, love, freedom—which means God gives for our good, He does not take from us for His good. He only accepts the service of love:

Historic Adventism taught this:

> **Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God**, [why? Because God is love and God does not take from us for His good. God gives to us for our good. To take from us without our free giving to Him would cause resentment in us, incite fear, destroy love. God wants our health, happiness, wellbeing and will not accept that which destroys His creation. Thus He only accepts the service of love.] the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. **The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan**. [What was just described? Did the writer say in God using power to destroy Satan who would have otherwise lived eternally in sin? No! In the destruction of Satan—the unanswered question in the paragraph, and what angels didn't know, and sadly many Christians don't understand is from where destruction comes. What law lens do you use to understand this? Destruction comes from sin, from choosing to put oneself out of harmony with the laws upon which life is built. To sever one's connection with the source of life.] **Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love**. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. [From where is God working to destroy sin and eradicate it? From the hearts and minds of His intelligent beings, not from historical record books!] **For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question**. PP 42.3 [How many have asked why Satan wasn't destroyed when he rebelled—here is why—because

sin happens in minds. Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and broken love and trust results in fear and selfishness—thus God doesn't want to destroy Satan, God wants to destroy sin and this can only be done by exposing the truth in order to destroy the lies which had broken the circle of love and trust. This takes time for beings to be fully persuaded in their own minds. Just see what is happening in the world and news cycles right now.]

Paul seeks to impress upon our minds the fact that **the foundation of all acceptable service to God, as well as the very crown of the Christian graces, is love; and that only in the soul where love reigns will the peace of God abide.** Sanctified Life 87.2

The law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to Heaven. **God has granted freedom of will to all,** endowed men with capacity to appreciate His character, and therefore with ability to love Him and to choose His service. So long as created beings worshiped God they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. As there was no transgression of the law, which is the transcript of God's character, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies. TMK 366.2

So God governs upon truth, love, freedom, gives to us doesn't take from us, but accepts the service of love—why? Because when we give in love we are not actually providing God something God needs, but we are exercising our God-given capacity to love and thus we grow in love and develop our godly attributes solidifying ourselves in love. God accepts that which is good for His creation, and that is always harmony with Him, His design law and principles.

But Satan's government works on power over, with a ruling elite exploiting and dominating the masses. Throughout all human history the governments of the world have been this way—a few ruling elites, aristocrats, exploiting and dominating the masses and demanding fealty, taxes, service for the benefit of the elite at the expense of the masses. Pharaoh's, Emperors of Japan, China, the kings/emperors of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and the nation states of Europe. Only one government in history was established to give the power to the masses and prevent a ruling elite from arising and that government was the USA with its constitution. And the constitution with its protections of liberty has been under assault since its inception.

It is the most important legal document in the world that stands in the way of a one world government. And this is one of the reasons the US will lead the world in forming a one world government, ultimately speaking like a dragon in the end. Why? Because God's methods always heal, strengthen, build up and as the principles of liberty were practiced this nation became stronger and the constitution held back the elites from forming a one world government.

But that is changing, whether from right or left, the principles of constitution will be set aside in order to establish a ruling elite to dominate the masses and when that happens, the strength of the US will lead the world to form the one world coalition.

The principles under attack right now are:

- The right to bear arms
- Free speech
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of the press

The devil's methods are the methods of lies, fear and selfishness. What I see happening in the world is that fear is incited from both the right and left and that both extremes are dishonest in their portrayal of the other side. Dishonest in distorting facts and twisting evidences to cause their base to view the other side as an existential threat—a threat to the very existence of the nation and the world. Thus, because life and existence is being threatened, and the world is intoxicated with the wine of Babylon—meaning they believe God's law works like human law and it is right to punish law breakers, then it is right to use power to violate liberty to protect self, to protect what is right, to protect the nation, to protect the world and both sides are seeking the power of the state to force its way and destroy the other side.

This is because both sides are driven by the principles of fear and selfishness and imperial law and most Christians accept the idea that God's law is like human law and will go along if the "right" laws can be passed.

If you have read my blogs over the last two weeks you have seen how some responses given evidence of this in their responses. They are so fearful and so filled with animus that they lose the ability for reasoned discourse and seek to silence voices they don't agree with—the freedom of speech under attack.

It seems very much like the Jewish leaders methods when Peter was preaching Jesus after Pentecost. Use the power of the state and intimidation to silence voices you don't agree with, rather than let people speak and allow the truth to win the day.

The Christian however, who has Jesus in their heart doesn't live in fear. Doesn't need to seek the power of the state to advance the cause of Christ. The Christian presents the truth, in love, and leaves others free. It is okay with me if others see and practice things differently. Because over time the violations of design law will become evidenced.

When we live in harmony with God's design laws we cannot avoid the benefits that result. We do grow and get healthier and advance in wisdom and understanding. When we live in violations of God's design laws we cannot avoid the damaging consequences, our minds will get darkened and depraved just as Paul writes in Romans chapter 1.

What is the root of jealousy? It is a lack of love. When we love others, we are not jealous of their successes, but we celebrate them and rejoice in them. But when we love ourselves most we see other's successes as a threat to us and are jealous and envious.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Daniel 6:6-9:

> So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! [7] The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. [8] Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." [9] So King Darius put the decree in writing. (NIV84)

What do you think about this?

Why would Darius go along with this?

What was the motivation of those who sought to get this law passed?

What happens when selfishness rules in the heart?

Do we have this problem in the world today?

I saw a movie recently called The Last Full Measure which is the true story of Airman William H. Pitsenbarger, Jr., who was an air force medic during the Vietnam war. When an army platoon had their medic killed Pitsenbarger left his helicopter and saved a number of people but was killed in the process. In the aftermath he was nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor but it was downgraded to the Airforce Cross. The movie documents the 30 year battle of the soldiers he saved working to get the medal upgraded to the MOH. In the movie, it depicted how various bureaucrats and politicians obstructed the process, not because it wasn't merited, but for their own political reasons or career advancement, but eventually the MOH was awarded.

It was a powerful depiction not only of the heroism of this young man, the regard in which he was held by those he saved, the powerful bonds of brotherhood forged in combat, but also of the corruption in politics and the selfishness in which people will manipulate others for their own gain.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Of course…" Are there lessons in this story for us?

Do we believe what Daniel said in 2:21: that God "sets up kings and deposes them" applies to rulers of governments today?

What do you think of this quotation from one of the founders of the SDA church in the book *The Great Controversy*, do you believe it?

> But so long as Jesus remains man's intercessor in the sanctuary above, **the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is felt by rulers and people**. **It still controls to some extent the laws of the land**. **Were it not for these laws**, the condition of the world would be much worse than it now is. **While many of our rulers are active agents of Satan, God also has His agents among the leading men of the nation**. The enemy moves upon his servants to propose measures that would greatly impede the work of God; **but statesmen who fear the Lord are influenced by holy angels to oppose such propositions with unanswerable arguments**. Thus a few men will hold in check a powerful current of evil. The opposition of the enemies of truth will be restrained that the third angel's message may do its work. **When the final warning shall be given, it will arrest the attention of these leading men through whom the Lord is now working, and some of them will accept it, and will stand with the people of God through the time of trouble**. GC 610.3

What did you hear? Did you hear God's agents are godly people? Hmmm…according to this author, those acting for God's cause, who are responding to God's influence are working to hold back the policies and practices that would undermine the laws that restrain evil, i.e. hold back the forces that would undermine our constitutional liberties.

But notice, these men, WHEN the final warning is given, will accept it—then and stand with the people of God. It sounds to me that these men that are referred to as God's agents value the principles of liberty, but are not necessarily converted to God at that time, but are converted later.

Does this sound like Nebuchadnezzar—a arrogant, prideful, pagan yet who was called by Jeremiah God's servant, but who wasn't converted to God until many years later?

I think it is dangerous for us to try and judge the hearts of people—especially people we don't personally know or have experience with, but only see through the lens of their public persona and the media.

What other lessons are there for us in this story of Daniel?

Daniel can also be an object lesson where he represents the people of God:

- He was a foreigner in a godless nation
  - We are foreigners in a godless world
- He was in Babylon and Persia but not of Babylon and Persia
  - We are in the world but not of the world
- He kept his eye fixed on God
  - We keep our eyes fixed on Christ
- He practiced God's principles and remained loyal to God's kingdom
  - We practice God's principles and remain loyal to God's kingdom

- He came under attack from the enemies of God
  - We come under attack from the enemies of God
- He turned to God in prayer, trusted God with the outcome and God closed the lion's mouth
  - We live in the time when the Bible says, Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But for those who, like Daniel, turn to God, trust Him with the outcome, God closes the lion's mouth and we will be eternally delivered.
- Daniel's witness converts the king
  - Our witness will convert others—even some of the leading statesmen
- Daniel is rescued and the plotters of evil die by the lions
  - We will be rescued from sin and the wicked will die by the power of sin along with Satan in the end

Read the bottom green section, "Read Acts 5:27-32…" This is the account of Peter being told by the Sanhedrin not to preach Christ anymore and Peter saying he had to obey God and not man.

Is history filled with people like Peter who found themselves in the situation where they chose to obey God and not the laws of man—like Daniel, like the three worthies?

But is history also filled with people, who thought they were following God and thereby broke human law, but who were in actuality not following God?

Examples:

- All the terrorists and suicide bombers who acted in the name of their god?
- Pro-life advocates who have bombed abortion clinics or shot doctors who perform abortions?

How can we know whether our actions are in harmony with God and His kingdom or violating God's law?

Would it depend on our understanding of God and His kingdom?

Would our understanding of God's law have an impact in our ability to discern right from wrong?

What about those who look to others to tell them the answer? Recently I received an email that informed me of a conference president who received a copy of our Heavenly Sanctuary pamphlet, but instead of studying out the evidence for himself, he sent it off to a theology professor and asked the theology professor to tell him whether it was okay or not. The theology professor answered that he **did not do an extensive review**, and was only sharing his **preliminary** thoughts, but listed several doctrines he believed I taught incorrectly. The conference president took this as conclusive evidence and sent out an email warning his constituents that I teach error. But every point the professor made was in some way factually wrong.

What do we learn from this?

It is difficult to persuade people with truth, if those people don't actually know how to evaluate truth for themselves, or value truth, but instead have surrendered their thinking to some human authority to tell them the answers.

Why do people do this? Because they are operating upon imposed law—and at level four and below, one doesn't think for themselves, one looks to someone in authority to tell them the answer.

We see this all the time—rather than reasoned and evidenced-based explanations, we get authoritative claims:

- The pastor says…
- The *theological institute of right thinking* says…
- The Bible says—with a quoted text without understanding the meaning
- EGW says…

In other words people memorize the "right" answers but not why they are the right answers and are intolerant of any deviation from those rules.

It's like memorizing the answers to a math exam, but never learning how to do math.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph, "The biblical text…" From last Friday's lesson we read:

> The history of nations speaks to us today. To every nation and to every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being tested by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes. PK 536.2

How do we understand the balance between our freewill and God's sovereignty?

- Did God want Daniel to be betrayed?
- Did he want the hearts of the Persian leaders filled with jealousy and envy?
- Did God want them to throw Daniel to the lions?
- Did God foreknow it would happen?
- Did God intervene to protect Daniel?
- Did God choose for Daniel to maintain his prayer routine?
- Did God choose for Darius to trust Daniel?
- Would God have had the opportunity to reveal truth to Darius in the same profound way without Daniel and Daniel's choice to trust God?

Do we often struggle when in the middle of trials in our lives with the question of where God is? Can God have plans that reach beyond our awareness?

Do our actions and choices ever provide God opportunities to act that He wouldn't have if we didn't make the choices we do?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "Yes, Daniel is miraculously…" Were the evildoers punished? By who and for what?

Were the evildoers punished by God? No, they were punished by Darius, for what? For being traitors to their king and trying to trick the king.

Is this how the evildoers at the end of time are punished?

What is the punishment for sin? Is it torture or is it eternal death? From where does the eternal death come?

Is the devil right when he says, "There isn't anything wrong with sin itself, there is only something wrong with God who will torture you and kill you for it. If we could just get God some anger management classes so God doesn't use His power to hurt us we could live forever in sin because sin doesn't harm, it is God who harms." Is this reality?

No! That is a lie! Sin harms, sin kills, breaking God's law destroys those who do it unless God heals them. Thus the Bible says:

- sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:15 NIV84
- The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction… Gal 6:8 NIV84

And based on these texts and others one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> **We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself**. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. **Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death**. {1SM 235.2}
>
> **The law is an expression of God's idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea. It lifts us above** the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119: 165)--cause them to stumble. {1SM 235.3}
>
> "We read of chains of darkness for the transgressor of God's law. We read of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched. Thus is **represented** [it is a representation of

something, of what?] the **experience** of every one who has permitted himself to be grafted into the stock of Satan, who has cherished sinful attributes. [What does the worm and fire represent? The **experience** of those who join with Satan in heart, mind, attitude and principles] When it is too late, **he will see** that sin is the transgression of God's law. **He will realize** that **because of transgression, his soul is cut off from God**, and that God's wrath abides on him. **This is a fire unquenchable**, and **by it every unrepentant sinner will be destroyed**. [What is the fire unquenchable? Sin and rebellion solidified in the character of the wicked!] Satan strives constantly to lead men into sin, and he who is willing to be led, who refuses to forsake his sins, and despises forgiveness and grace, will suffer the result of his course" (ST, April 14, 1898 par. 13). [the suffering is in the minds of people, it is represented as fire etc.]

This case [Pharaoh's] is placed on record for our benefit. Just what took place in Pharaoh's heart will take place in every soul that neglects to cherish the light and walk promptly in its rays. **God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence.** When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, **his conscience becomes seared**, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. – {5T 120.1}

We want all to understand how the soul is destroyed. **It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved.** He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. Oh what a harvest of sinful indulgences is preparing for the sickle! – {5T 120.2}

What about the suffering that we experience from sin in this life, like sickness from addictions, or broken relationships from betrayal, or fear and guilt from exploitation—are these punishments? Or, are these painful consequences of sin mercies to alert us that something is wrong, to make us less satisfied with the course we are on, to give us opportunity to stop our sinful course, reflect, reevaluate and seek God?

Is there a punishment for sin? Absolutely, and what is that punishment? Ruin and death, and from where does that punishment come? From sin itself!

What do we make of the fact that the Persian king not only had the plotters thrown to the lions, but their wives and children also?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

February 8, 2020: Come and Reason Class will meet at Bake Crafters at 10673 S Lee Hwy, McDonald, TN 37353 for this Sabbath only. Class will start at our regular time.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 8
From the Stormy Sea to the Clouds of Heaven

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "The vision of Daniel 7…" Adam was given dominion—how was Adam to govern earth before sin? What method was he to use?

How do the kingdoms of this sinful world govern? Do they use methods different than God uses?

When Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world, was He speaking primarily of geography or of function—how the kingdoms work, what methods and laws they use?

What is the primary difference?

What of the idea that what Adam lost the Son of man recovers in the heavenly judgment?

I just don't like this language because it seems imprecise. When did Jesus win the victory over Satan? When was Satan cast out?

> Now is the time for judgment on this world; **now the prince of this world will be driven out**. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John 12:31-32 NIV84

So, Jesus wins the victory at the cross and yet there is an application of what He achieved to mop up or completely eradicate all the damage Satan and sin have caused.

When you hear the term judgment, what law lens do you hear it through—human imposed law, or God's design law?

Judgment under human law means a legal examination of broken rules and determination of guilt or innocence, followed by the imposition of a punishment or reward.

Judgment under design law is diagnosis of what is actually the condition of the person and judgment of what is the best therapeutic action to take. In Wednesday's lesson we will unpack the judgments more fully.

SUNDAY

The overview of Daniel 7 is a vision in which four beasts are seen followed by a little horn with eyes that uproots 3 horns and speaks great words and seeks to changes times and laws.

The general interpretation of this is that the beasts represent successive kingdoms as follows:

- Lion with wings represents Babylon
- Bear with ribs in mouth represents Medo-Persia
- Leopard with four wings and four heads represents Greece
- Dreadful beast with iron teeth and claws represents Rome
- 10 horns the 10 kingdoms Rome devolved into
- Little horn with eyes represents Papal Rome

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the Little Horn and the war it is waging against the saints until the Ancient of days comes and does something—what?

Daniel 7:21,22 reads:

> Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given** to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:22 KJV

What law lens do you read this through? If imposed human law, then it is read as God having a judicial review of events and giving a legal pronouncement in the favor of the saints. If design law, then it is understood as God imparting judgment to the minds of the saints—in other words the ability for the saints to make a right judgment.

The Hebrew word translated "pronounced" in the NIV version actually means "to give" or "to impart" and thus the KJV would be more accurate in this context.

Why do the saints of God need **judgment** (another word for discernment) given or imparted to them? The Daniel text tells us the horn warred against the saints and was defeating them. What kind of warfare was going on?

> For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:3-5

What kind of war? Where is it being fought? This is a war between truth and lies, centering on God's character, and being fought in our minds!

The lesson rightly connects the little horn of Daniel 7 with the man of sin in 2Thessolonians, and notice what is described:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets **himself up in God's temple**, proclaiming himself to be God. 2Thes 2:1-4

What do you hear?

What does the "man of lawlessness" mean? An intelligence who goes outside of law, who denies God's law, who seeks to overthrow, invalidate, disregard, deny God's law—what does the little horn do? Seeks to change times and laws.

Further, this little horn power sets itself up in God's temple proclaiming itself to be God—what does this mean?

In the aftermath of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, did this man of lawlessness ride into heaven overthrow God, set himself up in God's temple in heaven, and proclaim himself to be God? No, where did this happen? In the Spirit Temple! In our minds—when Rome changed the way we understand God's law from design law to imposed law. Once this idea was accepted then it could go about implementing all kinds of irrational rules, regulations, rituals, doctrines, creeds, all based in imposed law and all of which intoxicate the world.

If the Spirit Temple is contaminated with lies about God, would those lies need to be cleansed?

Malachi 3:1-3 describes the same event as Daniel 8:14, the cleansing of the sanctuary, but notice the additional details of what is being cleansed:

> Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. **He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.**

What is getting cleansed during the **investigative judgment**? The Levites. And who are the Levites? The Priesthood of believers (1Pet 2:5,9).

God is cleansing His people from what?

1) the lies about Him which keep us from trusting Him and
2) when we are won back to trust, He cleanses us from sin. God writes His law of love into our hearts. He restores His character of righteousness in us.

This is what is happening during the **investigative judgment**.

There are several elements involved simultaneously during the investigative judgment so focusing on one action doesn't invalidate other simultaneous actions, and we will explore these as the lesson unfolds.

TUESDAY

Some struggle with the idea of cleansing the temple in Daniel 8:14 being the same temple referred to by Paul in 2Thessalonians, even though, as the lesson has recognized, the little horn and the man of lawlessness are the same.

They struggle because they still try to understand all these things through the lie that God's law functions like human law and the process of judgment functions like human law courts.

Thus, they interpret the seating of the court in Daniel 7 as a legal court.

If we take a more straightforward approach and ask what is being described in the context of Daniel 7 another idea emerges

> "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened…."In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:9,10,13,14

What is actually being described here?

Those who accept the lie that God's law functions like human law falsely believe we are in legal trouble with God and interpret the passage to mean a legal court. They see the word "court" as a place of judicial rulings, a courtroom.

But what is being described is not a judicial proceeding. Instead what is described is a Royal Court! It is the Royal Court of the universe which is holding the Coronation of Christ! Some are uncomfortable with this conclusion and rest their entire position on the Hebrew word "diyn," which is translated "court," claiming this Hebrew word refers to a judicial proceeding. I refer them to The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament published in 1980 by Moody Press, which says:

> This word, with its derived noun diyn is nearly identical in meaning with šhaphat {shaw-fat} (q.v.) and its derived noun mišhpat {mish-pawt} (q.v.). It appears only twenty-three times, a fraction of the times šhaphat and mišhpat appear. Of the twenty-three appearances, five are in parallel with šhaphat (Jer 5:28; 22:16; Prov 31:8; Ps 7:8 [H 9]); 9:8 [H 9]) and twice more it is associated in the text with mišhpat (Ps 72:2; Jer 21:12). Thus nearly a third of its occurrences show how closely the idea of diyn was identified or associated with the root šhaphat. The verb also occurs in Ugaritic and in parallel with tp (the cognate of šhaphat) (Fisher, RSP, vol. I, p. 166). Likewise a similar—nearly identical as far as it goes—list of terms is associated with diyn, demonstrating the near identity of meaning: with mêyšhar {may-shawr} "uprightness," "equity" (Ps 96:10; cf. Ps 75:2); and with gaša (Ps 54:1 [H 3]; cf. Ps 72:4). As with šhaphat it represents God's government as both among his people (Israel) and among all peoples (Ps 135:14 "people"; Ps 7:8 [H 9] "peoples" cf Ps 72:2; Ps 9:8 [H 9]). As far as the small number of occurrences allows a test, the range of meanings is exactly the same**: to govern, in the whole range of activities of government: legislative, executive, judicial, or otherwise**. See the discussion of šhaphat and mišhpat. The difference between the terms is simply that diyn is poetic, probably also an archaic and more elegant term. Of the twenty-three occurrences, only one is outside the Protestant grouping of poetical and poetical-prophetic literature. The exception is the single passive form—a Niphal participle (II Sam 19:9 [H 10]). The chief theological significance of this word is that apparently like šhaphat it embodies the idea of government, in whatever realm, in all its aspects.[1]

Once we recognize that the court seated is the Royal Court of the universe convening for the governmental action of coronating Christ then we realize something more is going on than a judicial process.

Why is Christ being coronated? Wasn't He always God? Wasn't He always the rightful ruler? Then what is going on that a coronation of Christ is happening at this time in history?

Satan had alleged Christ was not worthy to rule or it wasn't right for Christ to rule and thus the coronation represents the recognition in the minds of God's intelligent beings of the truth that was always true—the everlasting gospel—the eternal good news of who God and Jesus are.

Let's read Revelation Chapter 5 and I want you to consider—is this a description of the same event occurring in Daniel 7?

> Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. [what is another name for a scroll? Would it be book? And is what described next about someone coming who is able to open the scroll or book? Is that is what is described in Daniel 7?] 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne,
encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which
are the seven spirits[a] of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the
right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures
and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were
holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new
song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands,
and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the
elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and
all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped. NIV84

What is being described? The intelligences in the universe recognize Jesus as worthy and Jesus receives all power and authority and reigns sovereign. He was always sovereign, but now the lies of Satan are refuted in the minds of the intelligences in heaven and all heavenly beings acknowledge the truth about God, and it is NOW time in **human** history for a message to go forward on earth with that same truth:

> Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **eternal gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice,

[a] Or *the sevenfold Spirit*

> "Fear God and give him glory, because the **hour of his judgment** has come. **Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water**." Rev 14:6-7 NIV84

This is the message, the truth about God which is eternal good news, make a judgment and worship Him who made…

WEDNESDAY

The lesson acknowledges this is not a human legal court in the second paragraph where it reads, "The Son of man also is a royal figure. He receives "dominion and glory and a kingdom" and "all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him."

It further says that, "The judgment portrayed here shows that true worship is eventually restored."

What is required for true worship to be restored?

Where are changes required to be made for true worship to be restored?

Can true worship be restored by God examining record books and rendering legal judgments?

Or, does restoring true worship require that those who are deceived by the little horn and are worshipping a false conception of God have those false conceptions removed from their minds so they can worship God in truth and love?

- Would the removal of lies from their minds result in their gaining insight, wisdom, discernment or judgment?
- And would they reject the false views of God and judge God to be trustworthy?
- And in trust would they open their hearts to God and invite Him in?
- And would God come into their hearts and minds with His transforming Spirit to cleanse them of fear, selfishness, lusts, and sinfulness—thus recreating them with new hearts and right spirits?

Would this be the cleansing of the temple, the temple of which Paul said the man of lawlessness had set himself up in?

So, what do we understand is happening during the investigative judgment?

Who doesn't know the truth—God or sinful people on earth?

Who needs to investigate to discover truth God or people on earth?

What does the Bible mean when it says:

> Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "***so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged***." Romans 3:4 NET

Who was lied about in heaven? Who believed the lies? —angels and humans, and who needs to decide what to believe now?

When Elijah at Carmel said to the people: ""How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." (1Kings 18:21 NIV84), what was he asking the people to do?

Were the people to make a judgment? About who?

When we read Revelation 14:7: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of **his** judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (NIV84), do we hear the Elijah message calling for people at the end of time to decide: Is God like Baal an imperial dictator whose laws are like human laws and makes up rules and then punishes rule breakers, or is God the Creator whose laws are design laws?

When we read about the judgment, do we differentiate the different judgments in Scripture or do we mix them together?

There are four judgments:

1. Our judgment of God (Romans 2:4; Elijah at Carmel; Rev 14)
2. God's judgments of our condition, what therapeutic actions are needed to heal and save and eliminate sin, who trusts Him and what to fix in each heart and mind (this includes the investigative judgment in heaven)
    a. So during the Investigative Judgment we are investigating the truth about God and deciding whether we can trust Him or not. God is imparting truth into our minds and giving us discernment or judgment in order to make the right judgment about God.
    b. When we trust God we invite Him in and He enters and transforms us cleansing our hearts and minds from lies and selfishness preparing us to live in His presence
    c. Simultaneously, Jesus in heaven opens the records of each person who has died. What is recorded in the books of heaven, according to Scripture? The name, and the name is Bible symbol-speak for character. He examines each person's character, individuality and makes a judgment—who has trusted me and given me permission to heal them and who has refused me. And then, for those who have trusted Him He makes a second judgment: What needs to be healed to restore them to my perfect ideal. And Jesus cleanses them so that when they rise at the first resurrection they rise in perfect sinlessness. NOTHING judicial is going on it is all actual, real, restorative, healing!
3. Our judgment of angels during the 1000 years
4. The Great White throne judgment at the end of the 1000 years

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is the truth about Jesus being our Mediator?

What law lens do you see it through? If we use the human imposed law view then mediation is legal advocacy in which Jesus is our heavenly attorney to represent us legally before the heavenly tribunal and plead our case to God to get God not to execute us.

But if we use design law understanding we understand that God has been lied about and Jesus is the Father's envoy, representative, and agency to interface with His creation to achieve the purpose of refuting the lies and healing the damage caused by Satan's rebellion. Thus, Jesus is mediating God's remedy to sin to us and the unfallen beings.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> "While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is **mediating** in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his **mediatorial** work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?" {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4}
>
> In the purity of his life **he [Jesus] had revealed the Father**, and the glory of God had beamed forth from his character. The perfection of the Father had been displayed before unfallen worlds, before heavenly intelligences, and to sinful men. **In the mediatorial work of Christ, the love of God was revealed in its perfection to men and angels**. [What is mediation here? What is Christ doing? Is He pleading to God not to kill us, or is He actually doing something to negate Satan's lies and cleanse the minds of God's intelligent children in order to confirm angels in their loyalty and reconcile sinners to God? But do sinner need something more than the angels in heaven? Notice what else Christ does as mediator.] Having overcome the temptation and borne the test in the wilderness, having overcome in our behalf, he bends his steps toward Calvary, and **in the perfection of humanity he grasps the world, and in the fullness of his divinity he lays hold upon the throne of God**, [What is being described? Do you understand this as mediatorial work?] and proclaims the result of his terrible conflict with the enemy, exclaiming, "**Now is the prince of this world cast out,**" now is the last enemy destroyed.[from where is the enemy cast out?] The usurper to the throne and kingdoms of the world is put to flight; his confederacy of evil is broken and scattered. With his human arm he encircles the race of Adam, and with his divine arm he grasps the throne of God, and unites finite man with the infinite God, and earth with heaven. **He sees as a result of his victory a new heaven and a new earth, from which every trace of evil is removed**, and where God is all in all to its righteous inhabitants. {ST, June 27, 1895 par. 7}

Jump to **FRIDAY's** lesson and read the second paragraph:

> In his own strength, man cannot meet the **charges of the enemy**. In sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus, our **Advocate, presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him**. He **pleads** their cause, and by the mighty arguments of Calvary, **vanquishes their accuser**. His perfect obedience to God's law has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims from His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. **To the accuser of His people He declares: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan**. These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." And to those who rely on Him in faith, He gives the assurance, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Zechariah 3:4. PK 586.2

What do you hear? What law lens do you hear it through? To whom is Jesus pleading?

Is God confused by the arguments of Satan? Does God need Jesus to educate Him and present evidence to God to get God to understand reality and make the right decision?

Who are the beings that have been confused by Satan? When Satan points out our sins who is impacted by that history? Who gets discouraged, guilt ridden, ashamed and fearful?

The same author wrote the following:

> Through the plan of salvation, **Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. [What is Satan's power? Heb 2:14 Jesus destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil. Life eternal is knowing God, what is eternal death? Not knowing God, then what is Satan's power? The lies he tells about God that we believe that keep us from knowing God. Jesus is breaking Satan's hold and rescuing us from his power—how?] All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation. {LHU 234.2}
>
> **He leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love**; [Again, who is being impacted by Satan's lies, and accusations?] he tempts **them** to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it; **therefore he presents their sins *before them to discourage them***. [to whom is Satan' presenting their sins?] He is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt. **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their condemnation.** [by whom? Whom does Satan seek to get us condemned? Is it not in our own minds, that we conclude we are beyond salvation, too sinful to be loved?] Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and**

> **faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary**. [To whom is Jesus pleading? Who needs to have the allegations of Satan refuted? Who needs to believe that God loves them and Jesus' righteousness is sufficient for them? Does God need to be persuaded that Jesus righteousness is sufficient to save a sinner? Who doubts? It is you and me that need to hear Jesus' plea!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. [notice now to whom Jesus speaks] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.' These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." Those who rely upon Him in faith receive the comforting assurance: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."** [to whom is Jesus pleading? He rebukes the accuser and pleads for us not to listen to his lies and to trust in Him!] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. . . . **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own** (Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 470-472). [To whom does Christ's plea need to effect? you and me!]

Jesus pleads before the Father, carrying out the Father's purpose to save sinners, the Holy Spirit listens to Christ and works in you and me communicating the love, grace and pleas of Christ to you and me to win us back to trust, so we will open the door to our hearts and let Him save us from fear and selfishness!

THURSDAY

Speaks of those who are saved by Christ as being the holy ones of God.

What do you think of this historic quote:

> When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. **In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor**. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old. GC 614.1

When we have been healed by Jesus, restored to His perfection by His work in us, then He can step out from between us and the Father because we are restored to unity with the Father. Jesus intercessory work has been completed! Praise God!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 9
From Contamination to Purification

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

As we get into this lesson there will be a lot of details and many people get confused or disagree over the details—but there really isn't any need for that, because we simply need to remember, irrespective the details, the big themes which are:

- God is Creator who built the universe upon design laws
- Adam sinned and infected humankind with a terminal condition
- Jesus is promised in Genesis 3 to be come and save humanity—to provide the remedy to our sin condition.
    - This means that humankind could not be saved without the life death and resurrection of Jesus as man's substitute (2Cor 5:21)
- After Jesus' victory He works from heaven to apply His victory into the lives of believers—this is known as the sanctuary message, in other words, Jesus works to prepare His people to be ready for His return. Thus the sanctuary is a metaphor, a lesson book, a teaching method, a way to describe the reality of God bringing sinners back into perfect at-one-ment with God. This is only accomplished by cleansing sinners from sin.

That is the big overview—all the rest are details, which we will explore, but it is okay that people see certain things differently as long as we don't contradict the big themes. It is okay to see the details differently, because we are developing and understanding at different rates, like some understand math differently than others because of their ability to comprehend more complex elements of mathematics than others. This is why Paul says, "let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind."

The title, From Contamination to Purification: What has been contaminated that needs to be purified?

What contaminates? Would it be sin?

What is sin? Transgression of the law, or lawlessness?

Can physical matter transgress the law?

Can molecules choose to disobey?

If we have a piece of wood, or stone, or metal can that substance sin?

What if that substance were carved or molded into an idol and worshipped by people—has the wood or stone or metal sinned?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

When Aaron shaped gold into a calf—was the golden-calf sin or sinful?

If we should have that collection of physical matter, the idol, would we have sin in our hands? Does the universe need to be cleansed of the wood, stone or metal used to create idols?

What does need cleansing? Would it be the minds and hearts of people who worshipped the wood, metal or stone? And from what would the minds and hearts of people need to be cleansed of?

Can physical matter be sinful?

What does Paul mean when he says all nature groans under the weight of sin?

Does he mean the physical matter that makes up the earth is sinful or that sin has damaged God's design and creation is suffering from that damage?

Is there a difference between eradicating a disease and healing the damage caused by the disease?

Can a person who is delirious, because they have viral meningitis, drive their car right through their house?

- Will curing the meningitis fix the house?
- Is the house sinful because it was damaged by the delirious person?
- Does the virus that caused the delirium need to be eradicated?
- Does the house also need to be fixed?
- Does the house need to be cured of the viral meningitis?

So, what has been contaminated when Adam sinned and what needs purifying?

Do the physical non-living, inanimate structures in heaven need to be cleansed from sin?

Read memory verse: And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed." (Daniel 8:14 NKJV)

To what is the text referring?

Does this text tell us what the sanctuary is or which sanctuary is to be cleansed? What information does this text give us?

- A timeframe
- A cleansing event
- A sanctuary to be cleansed

Does this text tell us when the 2300 years starts or ends?

Does this text tell us what type of cleansing is going on (i.e. physical like washing dishes or bodies, or spiritual cleansing of minds from lies, fear and selfishness)?

No, we need more information to figure out what is actually happening.

One of the founders of the SDA church, who is central in establishing the sanctuary doctrine, wrote the following:

> **The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14;** the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and **the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event;** and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25 (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 426).

Do these other Bible texts give us further insights into what is actually happening?

According to Malachi what is being cleansed? The Levites, which means what?

Why would the Levites need cleansing?

Where does sin happen—does sin happen in books or does it happen in hearts and minds?

Can hearts and minds be cleansed by a legal review of historical records? Can hearts and minds be cleansed by erasing ink from parchment?

In the book *The Desire of Ages* the same author wrote the following, do you agree or disagree?

> **In the cleansing of the temple**, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator**. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the **heart of man becomes again His temple.** God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high **destiny open to every soul.** But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly **the temple of the heart,** defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.** "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in:

> behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appears? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages,* p. 161).

What do you hear? Does this sound like a legal process?

God wants to cleanse the hearts and minds of people from lies, fear and selfishness, sinfulness, lusts, evil habits, to restore His perfection in us. Once we are cleansed in heart and mind, it is a simple matter to fix the physical damage done to creation.

Remember from last week's lesson we discovered that the little horn power of Daniel 7 and the man of sin in Thessalonians 2 are the same and that the man of sin set himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God.

We discovered the man of sin did this by waging a war of lies about God. The primary lie being that God's law functions like human law and this resulted in God being worshipped as a dictator who is the source of legal infliction of pain, suffering and death to punish sin.

God foretold to Daniel that it would be 2300 years until enough truth was recovered for people to make a right judgment about God and reject the imperial view of Him and have their minds (sanctuary) cleansed of the lies about Him.

Thus, the same author wrote in the book *The Great Controversy:*

> Both the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," and the first angel's message, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of **His judgment** is come," **pointed to Christ's ministration in the most holy place, to the investigative judgment,** and not to the coming of Christ for the redemption of His people and the destruction of the wicked. p. 424

It is the hour in human history when we finally stop viewing God as a dictator and start worshipping the Creator who made the heavens….

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "As in Daniel 2…" What kind of judgment was going on during this time? Is this a judicial process of legal accounting done by a heavenly magistrate, or is it a judgment of what is diseased, what is misunderstood, what is wrong in heart, mind, character and who trusts Jesus and who is open to have their hearts and minds cleansed by Jesus?

In the book *The Great Controversy:* After referencing Daniel 8:14, Daniel 7, Malachi 3, Revelation 14, the author writes the following about this time in human history:

> Says the prophet: "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Malachi 3:2, 3. **Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator.** Their robes must be spotless, **their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling**. [what is to be purified, their characters or their records in heaven?] Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. **While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14**. GC 425.1

What is the connection between cleansing the records in heaven and the cleansing of the people on earth?

What is recorded in the records of heaven?

- But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Daniel 12:1 NIV84
- Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Philippians 4:3 NIV84
- He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. Rev 3:5 NIV84
- All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. Rev 13:8 NIV84

What does name represent in Scripture? Character, and what is recorded in the records of heaven? Again, one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> **Remember, your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven**, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. **What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character** to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing your robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" [Revelation 22:12]. . . . {TSB 62.1}
>
> Remember that **this world is God's daguerreotype office**. **The pictures of all who live here**, old or young, **are being made in the books of heaven**. What shall the likeness be?—Letter 78, 1901. 3MR 352.3

So, how do we put all of this together?

Imagine your child is dying of leukemia and the doctors say there is nothing they can do, but you hear of a doctor out west who has 100% success rate. Every person that goes to him comes away with a clean bill of health. You get an appt, and you take your child to see the doctor. You take the MRI scans, the pathology reports, the biopsies, the lab results and give all these medical records, which document in precise detail the extent of this terminal disease.

And the doctor takes the records, opens them, removes all the record of illness and inserts clean, blank, white sheets of paper and hands it back to you saying, "Here, no more record of disease." Are you satisfied?

This is the fraud of the legal theory of salvation and the investigative judgment.

What is the truth? Once you go to the doctor he examines all the record of disease but then goes to your child and intervenes in your child with a remedy that puts the cancer into remission, remission—the cancerous cells remit back to their previous cancer free state. Without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no remission of sin—without the victory of Jesus sinfulness in humanity would not remit, we could not be changed back to God's perfection as He created Adam to be.

And, so, the doctor intervenes in your child and actually puts the cancer into remission. The medical records accurately document the extent of the cancer, but also accurate documents the remedy applied and then accurately documents the healing, transforming, curing of the cancer and that your child is actually well.

The only way we get our records in heaven cleansed is for us to trust Jesus with our hearts and minds here on earth and give Him permission to "create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me."

Thus, the quote above, while the IJ is going on in heaven there is a putting away of sin in the people of God on earth!

MONDAY

We talked about the little horn last week so won't spend time on it this week.

TUESDAY

The first paragraph helps us understand how the little horn power makes war against the saints. When we put this together with other texts, like 2Cor 10:3-5 we understand that the war is not physical, but a war of ideas, truth versus lies, love versus selfishness, freedom versus coercion for the hearts and minds of God's intelligent beings—who will we trust and who will we become like?

The primary attack of the little horn was to get people to believe the lie that God's law is like human law.

Once that happened, then all kinds of arguments happen over various theological ideas, with opposing sides arguing against each other, but both actually supporting the same lie. From my book *The God Shaped Heart:*

> A few years ago I received an email with a link to a Christian talk show on which a Catholic priest and a Protestant theologian discussed the Eucharist and transubstantiation. They went back and forth over several points, then the Protestant honed in on the allegation that transubstantiation sacrifices Christ again and again whereas the Bible teaches Jesus died once for all.
>
> To this the Catholic priest responded:
>
> > There are two elements to any sacrifice: the immolation and the offering. The immolation is a bloody death. The lamb is slain. What is precious about that is the life in the blood of the lamb that is precious and pays back God. That's how the Old Testament rituals used to work. The immolation happened once but the offering is something Christ does for all eternity. He is right now in the presence of the Father, in the holy of holies, in the eternal presence, offering himself to the Father for the forgiveness of our sins. . . . Christ isn't killed again and again and again, he is offered [in the Eucharist] in the same eternal presence as Christ offers himself.
>
> The priest said it was by this *offering* of his sacrifice over and over again that the sins were paid for. So each time we sin, we must take mass in order to have the sacrifice of Christ pay the Father for that sin.
>
> How do you think the Protestant theologian responded? He argued that Christ is in heaven not offering his sacrifice to the Father over and over, oh no! He emphatically stated that Jesus is in heaven offering his *merits* to the Father over and over again to remind the Father that he has already paid for our sins.[1]
>
> In the Protestant view, all human sins were placed on Christ at the cross and paid for there. When we pray for forgiveness, Jesus goes to the Father and reminds him of what Jesus has already done in paying for the sins and makes the *legal application* of his "merits" as the payment he offers to the Father into our individual accounts.
>
> Do you see it, the deep infection of the imposed-law construct? Here we have two sincere people, both desiring to live in harmony with God through the victory of Jesus, arguing over whether Jesus is presenting his *sacrifice* or his *merits* to the Father to *pay for our sins*, **yet missing the fact they are both worshiping a dictator god who requires some payment in**

> **order not to punish**. **Why do they think God needs a payment? Because they both accept the idea that God's law functions like human laws—imposed rules**, and if God doesn't punish, then there is no justice. Their doctrine is based on the idea we need protecting from God. Thus, trust in God is undermined and Christians, rather than being reconciled to God in heart and mind, are separated from God by beliefs that keep them fearful and distrusting of him.

This is what happens when we accept the lie that God's law works like human law, imposed rules that require God to punish rule-breakers. We end up arguing over irrelevant points while both sides still misrepresent God.

See if you can see this problem in the third paragraph, "In Daniel 8:11, the daily…" Were sinners forgiven through the OT services? Were sins actually dealt with through the OT sanctuary?

> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Heb 9:13-14 NIV84

What is the reality?

> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure wate**r. Heb 10:19-22 NIV84

What is actually happening? We are being cleansed by receiving the life of Christ into our hearts and minds.

If we retain the legal lie, the imposed law lie, then we have two sides arguing against each other:

- We must go to priests on earth to intercede with God to get our sins forgiven by presenting to God the sacrifice Jesus made and having those bad deeds removed from God's record book
- We must go to our heavenly High Priest who represents us in the court of heaven so He goes to God reminds God of the legal price He already paid and then removes the record of our bad deed from the books of heaven

Do you see they both teach the same lie about God and God's kingdom and keep people trapped in a system that prevents them from being healed and restored as God desires? Their spirit temples are not being cleansed.

Let's talk about forgiveness: could God, from His heart, forgive us without Jesus coming to earth as our Savior or did God need Jesus to die and offer Him the blood of a human sacrifice in order to get God to be willing to forgive?

> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jn 3:16 NIV84

Did God forgive us before or after Jesus died?

But is forgiveness from God sufficient to fix the sin problem? Or, even with God's forgiving attitude toward us, did humankind, after Adam sinned, have an actual sin-condition that required fixing and if not fixed would result in death, despite God forgiving us?

This line of questioning exposes again the fallacy of the legal approach. In the legal approach the problem is not our condition, but our legal standing before the court of heaven, and God may have a forgiving heart, but the law of heaven will not allow God to forgive us unless someone pay the penalty. Thus Jesus died to pay the penalty so God now has the legal right to act on the forgiveness that was in His heart. The entire construct is fraudulent because it is built upon a false premise, that God's law functions like human law.

When we understand the truth about God's law we understand that God's forgiveness was automatic because of who God is—God is love. But His forgiveness didn't change the reality of the sin-condition, that required Jesus to come and reverse the damage Adam did, to restore God's perfection into humanity. Thus EGW wrote:

> The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. **Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.** More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "After the devastating attack…" What law lens is being used to describe these events?

This is based on misreading Daniel 7 as a judicial process rather than the same event as Revelation 5, a coronation of Christ, which is recognized in the minds of intelligent beings, including those of us on earth, seeing the truth of who God is and judging Him to be Creator and not dictator.

I want to read a larger section from *The Desire of Ages* before and after the section I just read:

> **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; **man could not be forgiven**. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. DA 761.4
>
> **But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory**. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. **For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God**. DA 761.5
>
> Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; **but mercy does not set aside justice**. [what does justice require? What law lens? What is the just thing if the law is human law? What if it is design law?] The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and **not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition**. [why? Because it is the protocol for life, like saying the law of respiration cannot be changed to meet a man under water] **God did not change His law**, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. DA 762.1
>
> **The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character**; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all** who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they **have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God**. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God**. He **builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2
>
> **God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy**. [justice, what law lens? When we understand that justice is doing what is right, which is healing the damage from sin, and also letting those who refuse healing to reap what they chose, then we see how this is

love] Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. **He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace**.[how? By teaching the law is imposed, thus to enforce the law requires the law giver to use power to punish lawbreakers thus it makes God out to be the source of death and violence and enemy to peace] But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10. DA 762.3

By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, **but that sin could be forgiven**, [forgiven not paid for, but forgiveness alone doesn't save, we needed the remedy described above a righteous character developed by Christ] and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love. DA 762.4

Another deception was now to be brought forward. Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law. [What is the lie based upon? This idea that God's law is imposed, same lie, just presented in a different way. Jesus died to pay the penalty and now the law has been set aside for law breakers. No, it is design law and God restores law breakers to harmony with the law through what Christ has achieved.] **Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died**. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because **man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts**, [What does this mean? Under the imperial lie, God could only legally pardon with a sinless offering to pay the penalty to make sure the integrity of the law and divine government are sustained. The truth of design law is that only in harmony with the law is life possible, thus we had to be restored to live out the law] that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. **Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan**. DA 762.5

That the law which was spoken by God's own voice is faulty, that some specification has been set aside, is the claim which Satan now puts forward. **It is the last great deception that he will bring upon the world**. He needs not to assail the whole law; **if he can lead men to disregard one precept, his purpose is gained**. For "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10. [Why is this true? Because if we set aside one precept we accept the lie that the law is changeable, which means we accept the lie that God's law is imposed not design law, which means we believe Satan's version of God's character] By consenting to break one precept, men are brought under Satan's power. **By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world.** This work is foretold in prophecy. Of the great apostate power which is the representative of Satan, it is declared, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand." Daniel 7:25. DA 763.1

> **Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men.** DA 763.2 [notice the principles described. Is anything said about Sabbath here? It certainly could be the day of worship that is involved in this, but it doesn't have to be, it could be any coercion, because THAT is how imposed law works!]
>
> **The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time**. **Every man will be tested**. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. **All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion**. DA 763.3

Do you see clearly the issue is about worshipping the Creator whose laws are design laws and developing Godly character, which is the cleansing of the Temple in which the man of sin has set himself up in, or rejecting the Creator God and accepting the imperial dictator god who requires legal payment and must use power to punish law breakers—regardless of which day one goes to church upon.

So, is there a temple in heaven? Yes, and what is the material it is constructed out of? According to EGW, the central figure in the SDA Sanctuary doctrine, she writes, which is consistent with many Bible passages the following:

> The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. {3MR 231.3}
>
> Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. {3MR 231.4}

The problem with the penal legal lie is that it makes the temple in heaven out of dead substances, elements of matter than cannot sin and cannot be contaminated by sin and cannot be cleansed by sin. It teaches people a lie—that the sin problem is not in their hearts and minds, but in record books and cleansing is not cleansing our hearts and minds but erasing facts of history out of books in heaven.

This is quite different than erasing sinfulness out of the heart, character, motivations, passions, drives of people.

Thus, from the Heavenly Sanctuary and the Investigative Judgment for the Modern World, we have taken some passages from EGW and shown their true meaning. See page 16 of that document.

THURSDAY

Merely goes into the way the year 1844 is reached.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 10
From Confession to Consolation

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text: "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name." Daniel 9:19 NKJV

What was Daniel praying for? For deliverance and return to the promised land.

What lesson is there in this for us? Is it more than trusting God and praying for Him to help us deal with life's problems?

Is there an object lesson for us in this? Remember the OT not only records real lives of real people who did real historic things, but are object lessons of a larger reality—what is the object lesson for us?

- Daniel was a captive in a foreign land
  - We are captives of sin in a foreign land
- Daniel trusted God with his life and God protected him
  - We trust God with our lives and God protects us
- Daniel studied Scripture and understood the time had come for Israel to be set free and return to Jerusalem
  - We study Scripture and understand the time has come in human history for God to act to set us free from this world of sin and take us to the New Jerusalem
- Daniel understood the people had failed in their mission for God by accepting the false Baal view of God and misrepresenting God
  - Do we understand that as Christians we have failed in our mission for God by accepting the imperial law view of God (which is the Baal view) and thus have misrepresented God? Or do we believe we have taken the right gospel to the world?
- Daniel confesses the failing and asks God to act to bring about the result
  - Do we confess our failing and are we willing to ask God to act to bring about the end-time events?

Why has God delayed the second coming of Christ?

> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. [9] The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2Pet 3:8-9 NIV84

What would cause the delay? What has prevented people from coming to the knowledge of God and being saved? A false gospel that people have accepted and that Paul says has a form of godliness but no power.

How would you describe the false gospel that has gone to the world?

What is the true gospel?

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following, regarding the message that is to prepare the world for the coming of Christ:

> "**It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character**. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. **At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world **is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love**." Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

Do we believe the gospel of the kingdom of love, of the God who is love, of the Creator Designer and Builder of reality, whose laws are the laws upon which life is constructed to exist, has gone to the world? Or, instead has the lie of an imperial god who imposes rules and inflicts the death penalty gone to the world?

From the book *The Great Controversy*:

> **It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God**, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His **sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law** and gives men license to sin. [How? By the imposed law lie, that sin is a legal problem taken care of in legal ways outside the sinner. We don't have to keep the law, in fact we can't, Jesus kept it for us, paid the penalty and now we just life by faith in His legal payment to the Father so the Father won't kills us] **At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love**. [This is the result of the legal lie, God becomes the source of inflicted punishment and the One whom we need to be protected from.] The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; **it is embodied in systems of religion and expressed in modes of worship**. [These lies of Satan are embodied in our religions and worship—how? Through the legal lie that God's law is like imposed human law and all our theories and doctrines about God become corrupted to teach the lies of Satan.] Thus **the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God. By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity;** and horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. GC 569.1 [And today's Christianity teaches the same thing, that we must present to God the blood of a sinless human sacrifice in order to secure the favor of the Deity.]

Tuesday of this past week as I was riding to work I was listening to Christian radio in my car and a well-known Christian evangelist had a short homily in which he said, that all of us are under "God's death penalty" and Jesus took all the death for all the sins of the world to free us from God's death penalty, so that God could forgive us and not punish us.

He made it clear the problem with sin, in his view, is that we are in legal trouble with God and that God in order to be just must use His power to inflict punishment upon those who would not otherwise reap it. Thus, the problem with sin is breaking rules, upsetting the rule-giver and receiving the punishment from the deity. This is pagan—it is the infection of Rome, it is the wine of Babylon and Christianity is powerless to do its mission until we reject this legal fraud and returns to worship the Creator, Him who made the heavens earth sea and fountains.

This means we reject the idea that God's law is like human law and accept the truth that God's laws are design laws, that sin is being out of harmony with God and His laws and that no human could remedy this situation and that Jesus is our Remedy and will heal and restore all who trust Him. But God justly leaves all those free who reject His free remedy to reap what they have chosen, separation from Him the source of life. Thus death, as the Bible teaches, comes out from unremedied sin, not from God.

So, are we praying for God to fulfill His promises and open the way for the final message to lighten the world, to remove barriers to communication, to remove obstacles to the light of heaven and empower those who are willing to take the truth forward to do so?

SUNDAY

The lesson points out that Daniel was a student of Scripture and as such was aware that the time of Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy was coming to an end. Daniel was looking for God to act.

Read the last paragraph, "As we approach the last days…" Are we to be like Daniel and study God's word? For what?

Do we study to:

- know the right rules or to know the right God?
    - Did the Jews at the time of Christ know which day was the right Sabbath?
    - Did they know the Lord of the Sabbath?
- know the right rituals or know the right realities?
    - Did the Jews in Christ's day know the right rituals such as circumcision?
    - Did they know reality to which circumcision pointed?
- know the right predictions or know the right principles and purposes?
    - Did the Jewish leaders at the time of Herod, know the right prophetic prediction of where the Messiah was going to be born?
    - Did they know the right purpose of Christ coming to earth and the principles of God's kingdom?

What about today—why do we study Scripture? Does it matter?

And what helps us study Scripture correctly? Understanding design law, understanding the Great Controversy context, and understanding the purpose of Scripture.

So why do we study Scripture?

- To know God
- To know God's methods, purposes and principles
- To be reunited with God and become part of His team and be transformed to be like Him in character.
- To fulfill God's purposes

How can sin be obliterated?

Can sin be obliterated by the use of might and physical power?

If God were to use fire to melt the entire earth and every sinner into nothingness, would that eradicate sin?

Is sin a physical element that can be physically eliminated? Is sin made out of molecules?

This is critical for people to understand, because the imperial law lie about God has God using physical power to eradicate sin. It alleges that sin must be punished and that God in order to be just will use power to torment and kill sinners. But what would using physical power to get rid of sinners actually do? Notice God can use physical power to get rid of sinners—but does doing that actually get rid of sin? What would it do?

In the book *The Desire of Ages* one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> **God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order**. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** DA 759.1

Then later in the same chapter, and this picks up from a quote we used in last week's lesson,

> **The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven**, will be continued until the end of time.[What law? How did Satan war against God's law? Could Satan go into some legislative body in heaven and pass new laws? Could Satan change God's laws? What could Satan do to war against God's laws? Lie about what the law of God is, to get angels to believe the laws of God are imposed rules, like created beings make, rather than design protocols that

are for our health and welfare.] **Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world.** [When you hear this to you get anxious? Why? Which law lens do you hear this through? If imposed law, imperial law, then we hear performance, and pressure to perform, but what do we hear through design law? Healing, living in harmony with life as God built it, and this is achieved only through trust in God who heals us.] **All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men**.[What kind of laws are God's laws and what kind are the laws of men? How are do the operate? What is the way they are enforced? What happens if you break either kind? What do people do when they believe the lie about God's law in dealing with a law-breaker? It is the beastly system of coercion that results.] Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. **Every character will be fully developed**; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. DA 763.3 [What is the difference in the end, is it a legal accounting or the actual character of people? Who have trusted and worshipped our Creator God and been transformed in heart to be like Him, and who has worshipped the satanic view of god and become like Satan?]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. [How does God vindicate His law? Would God be able to vindicate design law by using power to inflict punishment upon lawbreakers? No, this would sustain Satan's charges. So the entire Christian community that teaches God must use power to punish sin, is presenting Satan's view of God and obstructing the final message to prepare people to meet Jesus.] Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion **will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch**,[What does cut off mean? What kind of law is being described? When a branch is cut from the vine does the vine have to use power to kill the broken off branch? And what cuts the people from God? Is it an act of God that cuts people off, or is it their sin and their refusal to let God graft them back in to unity with Him?] (Malachi 4:1),—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, "Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; ... I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." Then "the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;" "they shall be as though they had not been." Ezekiel 28:6-19; Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16. DA 763.4

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. [What does this mean? What kind of law is arbitrarily enforce? Imperial/imposed law, the punishment is just made up, fines, imprisonment, even death sentences are arbitrary. However, this is not so with design law, the punishment is always the natural result, what one reaps if not healed. So, notice how the quote continues.] **The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death."** [Do you see design law clearly being described here? Do you see how the common view in Christianity denies this and sustains Satan's lies about God and His law?] Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may **develop their character and reveal their principles**. **This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place**

> **themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them**. DA 764.1[Why do they die? Is it because God inflicts death on those who would otherwise live eternally, or is it because of their actual state of being, the character they have developed is incompatible with life as God designed it? They are out of harmony with God, God's law and the law of life! Now, notice this, understanding why they die the next paragraph.]
>
> **At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this**. [What did angels not understand? The nature of God's law, the nature of sin, why death happens.] **Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin.**[Why do Satan and sinners die? Because they are out of harmony with the laws upon which life is built. And why didn't God allow Satan and the rebellious angels in heaven to experience this in the very beginning of Satan's rebellion? Because sin is not a physical entity, but a belief system that undermines love and trust, so notice the last sentence.] **A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.** DA 764.2

Can God obliterate sin by using power to kill all sinners? NO! It is only by truth, love and freedom that sin can be eradicated. And until Christians effectively present these truths then Satan's kingdom of lies continues to hold minds captive and prevent the healing remedy from doing its work.

This is why the message of the 3 angels is to go forward—a message of eternal good news—always true in eternity past and future. This good news is about God, and when we come back to this eternal good news then we are in awe of God and give Him glory by revealing the truth of His character so that people can make a right judgment about Him and worship Him who made the heavens earth and fountains of water…

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "First, nowhere in Daniel's prayer…" Daniel knows that the people were in captivity because they had failed to stay faithful to God—but is that the full understanding? Was something more going on than: well they weren't faithful so they were being punished?

Does our understanding of God's law make a difference on this?

For instance, was God acting to cause this event using divine power to inflict punishment upon them for sin, or was God withdrawing protection and allowing evil forces to attack them? If one believes it was the active infliction of punishment—I would ask, Then, was God forcing Nebuchadnezzar to invade against Nebuchadnezzar's will? Neb was really a peaceful man, humble, kind, who wanted to set up humanitarian health clinics around the world, but God forced him to become an invading tyrant?

No, God didn't use His power to make it happen in this way, but God surrendered rebellious Israel to go their own way, like a prodigal child leaving home, God let Israel go their own way without His interventions to protect them. And what happened?

Babylon invaded and took them captive.

Jeremiah writes "I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations." (Jer 26:9 NIV84)

If God didn't force Nebuchadnezzar then what does this passage mean? How do we understand it?

Did God know Nebuchadnezzar's heart, mind, character, and plans? Did God also know the hearts of Judah's leaders? Did God know the future? So, God knew what Neb was going to do and God could have acted to stop it like He did with the 185,000 Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah, but this time God didn't. Why not?

Did God make a judgment of what action was best for God to take?

And how do we understand God's judgments?

If we understand judgment through the lie that God's law is like human law then we think God is inflicting punishment.

But if we understand design law and the Great Controversy, and the fact that after Adam sinned the Messiah is promised (Genesis 3) and humankind could not be saved without the Messiah, and God was working to save humankind and end sin, then we understand the OT is the record of this battle between good and evil for the salvation of the species and the arrival of the Messiah.

In this light, we can understand that God judged that Judah was persisting in rebellion against God, and that rebellion would destroy the people who would be the avenue for the Messiah—it would destroy them by corrupting their characters and hardening their hearts so none would remain loyal to God.

Thus, God judged that they needed to repent—so He sent prophet after prophet to warn them and call for repentance. But they rejected His prophets and preferred the false prophets that opposed God's prophets. So God judged that the only way for them to retain a faithful remnant, in harmony with His methods, principles and laws, was to withdraw His protection—to give them their freedom to reap what they had chosen and allow the captivity which would sift the people destroying many of the hardened and keeping a remnant that would be faithful to Him. God could no longer protect the nation, but God could and did protect the individuals who were faithful to Him. And this painful, but therapeutic judgment, worked. The avenue for the Messiah was secured.

And God revealed this was the plan to Daniel—What did the vision given to Daniel reveal about what was to come?

- 490 years for his people to continue to be the ambassadors of God and the avenue for Messiah
- In the middle of the last 7 years the Messiah would end all the rituals and provide the remedy for sin
- The evil one would counter-attack and war against God's people with lies which infected their minds, the truth of Daniel's little book wouldn't be understood until much later in human history
- It would be 2300 years until the people recovered enough truth to have their minds cleansed of the lies and prepare themselves to be united with God

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Daniel's prayer…" How is "judgment" used here? It is understood as punishment, i.e. under the human-law model. But if we understand judgment to be God's therapeutic actions to bring about the plan of salvation, why would praying to God result in staving off judgment? Because their hearts changed and when their hearts actually changed and they were won back to loyalty to God, then the need for the impending therapeutic "judgment" was not needed thus it is averted.

But not always, consider Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham prayed for God *not* to bring "judgment" upon these cities, but Abraham's intercession didn't make a difference why? Was the prayer of a righteous man not sufficient to influence God to lay off? No, it wasn't about God's attitude it was about the reality of the hearts and minds of the people in Sodom, and the plan of salvation in bringing the Messiah.

What is shown in this story is that God was quite eager not to destroy Sodom, if only there were any people there with hearts that were healable, hearts that were not fully hardened against Him. But there were not; since there were no hearts to turn back to Him, God judged or diagnosed that the condition was necrotic, unhealable, and if this cancerous lesion of sinfulness remained it would infect His people down the road and obstruct the avenue for the Messiah—thus, God acted therapeutically to excise this lesion and keep open the avenue for the Messiah. God also gave an object lesson, as Peter later informs us, that the wicked will not suffer and be tormented for all eternity.

> God did not allow the gangrenous ancient world to completely cut itself off from him but brought the flood to excise the necrosis and save Noah–a teacher of the Remedy–and seven others.[6]He diagnosed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as beyond healing, and in mercy, he cauterized those festering lesions to ash, making it clear that the unhealed will not be made to suffer eternally, but the torment of sin will mercifully be ended; 2Peter 2:5-6, *The Remedy*

Let's talk about the intercession of Moses—did the intercession of Moses truly change God's mind?

- Does God know the end from the beginning?
- Did God know that when He told Moses that He was going wipe out Israel how Moses would respond?
- Did God know how He would respond to Moses?
- Then, was God ever really planning on destroying Israel?
- Then, what was the purpose in telling Moses He was going to wipe out Israel and start over with Moses' family?
- Can angels read hearts and minds? If they could would any have been deceived by Lucifer in heaven?
- What was it looking like at this time in human history to the angels? Was it looking like God was winning? After the 10 plagues, after the Red Sea, the fire by night and cloud by day, what were the people doing? Worshipping a golden calf—and do you think Satan was taking advantage of this?
- So, what might God want the angels to know—that they didn't understand? That God cannot win by might and power, but truth, love and freedom really does work. God wanted to help the angels see the evidence of His methods healing and transforming a sinner. What is revealed to the angels in heaven, and to us who read the story today?
    - That Moses, who at age 40 murdered an overseer, revealing that at age 40 Moses had a heart willing to use force to kill others to get his way, but, after 40 years with God Moses was now willing to give his life to save others—God revealed that God's methods work for those who trust God!

This is what was really happening. Sadly, those stuck in the human law lie, read this story and falsely conclude that Moses needed to plead to God to get God to back off. Think about that—Wow, sure glad we had good old Moses there because God was having an off day and we couldn't trust God not to kill us, but Moses the murderer, him we can trust to get God to do the right thing. How pathetic is that line of reasoning?

What about the story of Elijah—did God need Elijah to pray to God to get God to send rain? Or, was the entire 3.5 years of drought part of God's plan to expose Baal (the god of weather) as a false God and turn the hearts of the people back to the true God? So Elijah wasn't praying to God to get God to do something, but Elijah was God's agent, God's spokesperson, praying to God so the PEOPLE could see and understand that the rain was coming from God and not from Baal!

The lesson says that in this case that Daniel plays the role of an intercessor or mediator…hmmm… does that mean if Daniel doesn't make this prayer then the people would have to stay in captivity longer?

Read bottom green section, "If you would…" What does the quote mean? What law lens do you read it through?

Why would attempting to present your good works to God as meriting your salvation be treason to God's government?

Here is the dictionary definition of treason:

1. the offense of acting to overthrow one's government or to harm or kill its sovereign.
2. a violation of allegiance to one's sovereign or to one's state.
3. the betrayal of a trust or confidence; breach of faith; treachery.

How is presenting our good works to God for salvation treasonous to God and His government?

What type of law would such an act be based upon? What would such an act suggest about the government of God and the laws of God's kingdom?

What is Satan's primary weapon against God—Satan is the father of lies! And Satan's prime attack is on God's law, that God's law functions like human law.

So, the act of presenting good works to God to merit our salvation is sustaining Satan's lies about God and God's law and government—thus it is treasonous it is an act of war against God's methods of truth, love and freedom.

It would be like getting Ebola infected tissue and offering it to people as a remedy to make people healthy.

What about not offering our good works to God to merit our salvation, but instead offering God the blood of His Son to merit our salvation?

WENDESDAY

> Let's examine the meaning of the prophecy here in Daniel 9:24: "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish (restrain) transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. NIV84

Read second paragraph, "1. 'To finish transgression…" What law lens do you read this through? If we think through the imposed law lie, then we read this as taking punishment and paying penalties, but what does it mean through design law? That an end to the sin-condition in humanity would occur—that Jesus would cure the condition, that Jesus would restore God's law into the species human and eradicate the infection of fear and selfishness and become the remedy for the species.

Read next paragraph, "2. 'To make an end of sins…" What do you understand this to mean? Do we see this as legal accounting, or actual fixing? Was Jesus, as the second Adam, tempted in every way just as we are yet without sin? Did Jesus destroy the infection of fear and selfishness in the humanity He assumed and purify that humanity rising as a perfected human? Heb 5:9, "once he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him."

3. to make reconciliation or atone for wickedness—what does this mean? Do you read it as legal, or actual? Was God, through Christ, doing something to God, or was God, through Christ doing something in humanity to fix the sin condition and restore humanity to oneness with God?

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [Does the Bible say he is declared a new creation and the old record of sin is erased from the record books and a new record is written down in heaven's ledger? No, it says we are actually renewed, recreated, reborn, this is real happening in the hearts/minds/characters of those who trust God] 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [Who is being reconciled to who? Is God being reconciled to man or is man being reconciled to God? The penal lie says that God was also being reconciled to man because God, after sin, was filled with anger and wrath and Jesus had to dissipate this from God's heart in order to enable or prepare God to be reconciled to us. This is paganism and false. God never changes, is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. God is perfect always and needed no changing. No, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself!] 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. [What? But surely God is keeping an accurate record of sins to do exactly that, to count them against us. No, God keeps an accurate medical record of our condition in order to heal and restore all who let Him, and to reveal why those who are lost are lost—because they refused all actions from God that would have healed them and die of their own terminal condition.] And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2Cor 5:17-21 NIV84 [Here we have Jesus as our substitute! Yes, Jesus was our substitute—but for what? Not to pay a legal penalty but to fix the condition so that we may *become* the righteousness of God! Just as the prophecy of Daniel says, the very next element in the prophecy is…

4. to bring everlasting righteousness—how? What does this mean?

> The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

5. To seal up the vision and prophecy—what does this mean? To fulfill and confirm, to make it happen, part of history that cannot be changed.

6. To anoint the most holy—what does this mean?

Two views are possible—the most holy being anointed refers to:

- Jesus when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit
- The Heavenly Sanctuary when Jesus ascended victoriously

Most Christian and Jewish theologians believe this refers to the Messiah being anointed, but the SDA commentary reads:

> In view of the fact that the Hebrew phrase cannot elsewhere be shown to refer definitely to a person, and in view of the fact that the heavenly sanctuary is under discussion in the larger aspects of the vision (see on Dan. 8:14), it is reasonable to conclude that Daniel is here speaking of the anointing of the heavenly sanctuary prior to the time of Christ's inauguration as high priest.[1]

Well a couple of concerns about this view:

The SDA commentary in the paragraph immediately preceding the one just read, states:

> ***The most Holy.*** Heb. *qodesh qodashim*, "something most holy," or, "someone most holy." The Hebrew phrase is applied to the altar (Ex. 29:37; 40:10), other vessels and furniture pertaining to the tabernacle (Ex. 30:29), the holy perfume (Ex. 30:36), specified meat offerings (Lev. 2:3, 10; 6:17; 10:12), trespass offerings (Lev. 7:1, 6), the shewbread (Lev. 24:5–9), devoted things (Lev. 27:28), the holy district (Num. 18:10; Eze. 43:12), and the most holy place of the sanctuary (Ex. 26:33, 34). **The phrase is nowhere applied to persons, unless, as some suggest, it is so applied in the text under consideration and in 1 Chron. 23:13. The latter text may be translated, "Aaron was separated to anoint him a most holy one,"** although it may also be rendered as in the KJV. Jewish expositors and many Christian commentators have held that the Messiah is referred to.[2]

So, the commentary acknowledges that in one place this language is applied to a person, but then suggests in the next paragraph that it isn't applied to a person.

And, its second argument is that the context of Daniel, references 8:14, is about the heavenly sanctuary. However, that ignores the immediate context in this case. Note, Daniel 9:24,25:

> Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to **anoint the most holy.**

---

[1] Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1977). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Vol. 4, p. 852). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Heb. Hebrew

KJV King James Version, 1611, formerly called the Authorized Version

[2] Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1977). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Vol. 4, p. 852). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

> 25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decreed to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the **Anointed One, the ruler, comes**, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' Daniel 9:24-25 NIV84

So, if we consider the immediate context, the focus is not on the entire 2300 years in these passages, but on the portion of the 70 weeks allocated to Daniel's people. Further, within this time frame of the 70 weeks the most holy is to be anointed and there is a person referred to as the Anointed One, the ruler who is to come. So, it seems to me it is more reasonable and consistent with the scripture to consider this phrase to refer to Jesus' anointing by the Holy Spirit.

EGW suggests this when in *The Desire of Ages,* after quoting this prophecy in Daniel she writes:

> The time of Christ's coming, His anointing by the Holy Spirit, His death, and the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles, were definitely pointed out…DA 234.1

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 11
From Battle to Victory

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

From **TUESDAY** last week

Read bottom green section, "If you would…" What does the quote mean? What law lens do you read it through?

Why would attempting to present your good works to God as meriting your salvation be treason to God's government?

Here is the dictionary definition of treason:

1. the offense of acting to overthrow one's government or to harm or kill its sovereign.
2. a violation of allegiance to one's sovereign or to one's state.
3. the betrayal of a trust or confidence; breach of faith; treachery.

How is presenting our good works to God for salvation treasonous to God and His government?

What type of law would such an act be based upon? What would such an act suggest about the government of God and the laws of God's kingdom?

What is Satan's primary weapon against God—Satan is the father of lies! And Satan's prime attack is on God's law, that God's law functions like human law.

So, the act of presenting good works to God to merit our salvation is sustaining Satan's lies about God, and God's law and government—thus it is treasonous it is an act of war against God's methods of truth, love and freedom.

It would be like getting Ebola infected tissue and offering it to people as a remedy to make people healthy.

What about not offering our good works to God to merit our salvation, but instead offering God the blood of His Son to merit our salvation would that be treasonous?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Lesson 11: SUNDAY

Read Daniel 10:1-3:

> In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. [What war?] The understanding of the message came to him in a vision. 2 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. (NIV84)

Why was Daniel fasting?

- What is the purpose of fasting?
- What impact does it have?
- Is it to somehow influence God to do something?
- Or, does it do something to us so we are more focused, more attuned, more receptive to hear God?

Does our desire *for* spiritual truth have anything to do with our growth *in* spiritual truth?

Does our busyness with life, engagement in entertainment or real-life responsibilities ever interfere with our connection with God?

Could the foods we eat or the things we drink affect our ability to discern spiritual truth?

- Will intoxication on any mind-altering substance impact our ability to discern spiritual truth?
- Studies show that high sugar diets interfere with normal synaptic function in the brain and impair memory—omega 3 fatty acids DHA have protective affects improving memory (*J Physiol*. 2012;590:2485-2499.)
- What physical exhaustion, failure to rest, failure to take care of the body?
- What about over study?
    - "**Intemperance in study is a species of intoxication, and those who indulge in it, like the drunkard, wander from safe paths and stumble and fall in the darkness.** The Lord would have every student bear in mind that the eye must be kept single to the glory of God. **He is not to exhaust and waste his physical and mental powers** in seeking to acquire all possible knowledge of the sciences, but is **to preserve the freshness and vigor** of all his powers to engage in the work which the Lord has appointed him in helping souls to find the path of righteousness."—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 405-406 MM 81.4
    - The law of restoration—physical and spiritual rest, sleep for the body, Sabbath for the mind
- What about poor food choices, junk foods, fast foods?

Does Daniel's fasting potentially have a real physiological impact on his brain's attention, focus, and ability to be sensitive to spiritual truths, to be receptive?

- Fasting increases brain activity and alertness, being well fed slows brain activity and promotes being sedentary, memory and learning is enhanced by fasting.
- Intermittent fasting enhances synaptic plasticity and increased production of new neurons from neuronal stem cells
- Both exercise and intermittent fasting turns on BDNF (a gene that produces *Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor)* which is a protein that is like fertilizer for the brain, it enhances the growth of neuron to neuron connections and learning (*Cell Metabolism Volume 19, Issue 2, 4 February 2014, Pages 181–192)*

From *The Aging Brain:*

> research has documented that caloric restriction or intermittent fasting slows aging, improves brain health and prolongs life.[i] [ii] The mechanism for this appears to be via a reduction in oxidation and inflammation.[iii]

Is there both a literal and an object lesson for us in this?

Literally: it is beneficial for us to make choices that are physiologically healthy, the healthier we are the more capable we are in growing in godliness, in being sensitive to the movements of God's Spirit.

Object lesson: in addition to physical healthy choices, such as intermittent fasting, we fast spiritually, by being selective in what we taking into our minds and taking time to fill our minds with godliness resources on a regular basis, and regular resting from mental work and mental exertion.

Additionally, we have a mindset of understanding where we stand in earth's history, at the precipice of the second coming and seek God's direction and enabling to advance His cause and hasten the day He appears.

Read second paragraph, "We know from…" What is the object lesson for us, the application to us today of what is revealed in these historical facts?

Israel was captive in Babylon—in the Bible does Babylon represent something beyond an ancient kingdom?

Babylon represents a system of confusion that exists at the end of time—a system that God's people are called to come out of, to be set free from—just as Israel was called to come out of Babylon and return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls and the temple.

Let's define some of the object lesson symbols:

- Israel—represent the people of God
- Babylon—represents the false belief systems of the world—confusion, imperialism

- The temple in Jerusalem represents the plan of salvation, bringing human hearts and minds back into unity with God, where each person is a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. As our Spirit temples are cleansed from sin we are reunited with God and are built into a community of believers thus the temple also represents the church.
- The walls of Jerusalem represent the law of God which acts as a hedge of protection for those who embrace and apply it

As Israel went into captivity to ancient Babylon because of unfaithfulness, Christianity, because of rejecting the truth about God's law, because of accepting Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, is in the captivity the confusion of religious superstition and myths. The minds of people are held captive—this is the Babylon that Revelation refers to. The confused system of false Christianity, based on imperial law, that we are to come out of.

There were three decrees setting Israel free or three different groups that came out of Babylon before Jerusalem was actually rebuilt—before the walls were repaired and the temple rebuilt.

Israel was called to repair the wall and rebuild the temple; but are we are called to repair the breach and rebuild the temple? How? What temple?

It wasn't until the 3rd calling out or group left and returned to Jerusalem that the Temple was rebuilt, what about for us today, are there three callings out that occur for us, and is it the third group that finishes the work?

I would suggest the possibility that we, this generation with this message about God's design law, is the third and last group to be called out, the ones who will finish the repairing of the breach in God's law and rebuild the temple.

- The first calling out, the Midnight Cry, began in the early 19th Century with William Miller and led to the Great Disappointment of 1844.

- The second calling was 1888 with the Righteousness by Faith message, but it met opposition, and also didn't result in the repair to the breach in God's law.

- And we today are the final group that repairs the breach to God's law and work with God to rebuild the temple!

What is the breach in God's law? That God's law functions like human law, with all the subsequent imperial distortion to God's character and the plan of salvation. We are calling people back to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, and fountains of water. This is Creator worship—and the repair to the breach is to reject the human law construct and return to design law and all that it entails.

This is the message of Revelation 18, the message that is to be joined to the message of the 3 angels of Revelation 14 to lighten the world for Christ's return.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider this quote from *The Great Controversy:*

> The prophet thus points out the ordinance which has been forsaken: "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and **call the Sabbath a delight**, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and **shalt honor Him**, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." Verses 12-14. **This prophecy also applies in our time**. The **breach was made in the law** of God ***when*** the Sabbath was changed by the Roman power. But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. **The breach is to be repaired** and the foundation of many generations to be raised up. {GC 452.4}

Do you hear this through imposed law lenses, as an arbitrary day to go to church upon—or do you hear a battle between design law and imposed law?

How was it possible for the church to change the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday? Why isn't there one church, given the state of our world, that has voted that their members are immune from environmental toxins, or air pollution or coronavirus etc.? Because human beings have no power to change design laws!

So, what does it mean that the church did change the day of worship? That Christians no longer see God's law as design law, but merely as imposed rules. **This is the real breach, this is the change!**

Note the quote said, "The breach was made in the law of God ***when*** the Sabbath was changed by the Roman power." It didn't say the breach ***IS*** the change in the Sabbath!

The Sabbath change was the *evidence* of the breach, but in and of itself was not the breach: the true breach, which changes our fundamental understanding of God is when we believe God's law functions like human law. This idea corrupts everything and makes us view God like a dictator and the source of inflicted pain and death. This is paganism and this is what we are called out of.

The SDA church came into existence and reclaimed the right day of worship—but it has not yet fully repaired the breach because it has not rejected imperial/imposed law with its penal legal lie about the plan of salvation.

Notice the Isaiah quote we repair the breach when we call the Sabbath a delight—can ***delight*** in anything be legislated? No!

The only way for the Sabbath to be a delight is for a change to occur in the heart—and what makes the Sabbath a delight? The truth about its purpose and what it reveals!

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The Sabbath reveals the character of God—truth, presented in love, leaving us free! It is a gift of God to us revealing His love, kindness, mercy, truth, and methods! Is it a delight to be free, to have true liberty? This is what the Sabbath guarantees—why and how?

Because God, in the context of a war by Satan against His right to rule, after giving evidence of His Creatorship on days 1-6, gives evidence of His character on day 7. Day 1-6 we learn God is powerful—day 7, we see God step back and stop using power, establishing a day in which intelligent beings are left free to think for themselves.

If God were an imperial dictator like Satan alleges, there would be no Sabbath; the Sabbath proves Satan lied.

But when Sabbath is presented through Satan's lie of imperial law—it is a rule like human law that God imposed and we are required to obey under threat of punishment—then our freedoms are restricted, fear is induced, the Sabbath becomes a burden. This is how the Sabbath was taught and practiced by the Pharisees in Christ's day. They had the right day of the week, but ***they still had the wrong law because they had imposed law***. Thus they worshipped the wrong God, which was proven when they killed the Lord of the Sabbath and wanted Him off the cross to keep the Sabbath.

How many Christians today practice their Christianity just like this—they may have some right doctrine—method of baptism, Sabbath, but promote it through the imposed law lie, thus they promote lies about God and His government and are not repairing the breach. Their Spirit temples are not protected from all the legal lies that enter their hearts and incite fear and distrust of God. Their temples are not being cleansed.

Do you see the connection to repairing the breach in the law and the cleansing of our Spirit temples? If we don't rid ourselves of the lies about God's law, if we retain the false believe that God's law is like human law, then all kinds of lies about God enter our hearts and minds, our Spirit temples. But when we repair the breach, when we understand the truth of design law, then the legal lies are removed and our hearts and minds are cleansed and protected.

The Sabbath was created for humanity; it is a gift to us a blessing to us, but it is also an evidence to the entire universe of God's methods and character. **It is like an engagement ring; the ring is a gift to the woman, but it is also an evidence to the entire world of her engagement**. The Sabbath was made for human beings, but it is also evidence for the entire universe of God's character and methods.

The Sabbath is not a rule we are obliged to keep under threat of punishment, but an evidence of God's methods that we are invited to embrace, practice and enter into. Thus the Sabbath is space in time we are invited to enjoy as we live lives of truth, presented in love while leaving others free. It is then that we truly delight in the Sabbath.

So, how do we repair the breach—by rejecting the imposed law lie and worshipping our Creator by embracing Him and His design laws for life.

From *Prophets and Kings*:

> The spiritual restoration of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah's day was a symbol, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: "They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities." "They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah 61:4; 58:12. {PK 677.2}
>
> **The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the *principles* that are the foundation of the kingdom of God**. [what are they seeking to restore—rules? The right interpretations of prophetic symbols? No! Principles and what are principles? They are God's design laws! And notice, what restoring God's design laws into our understanding, our hearts and minds is described as doing.] **They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law--the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection**, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard. {PK 677.3}
>
> In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of this remnant people who build the wall. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and **call the Sabbath a delight,** the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and **I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth**, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:13, 14. {PK 678.1}
>
> In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. **The *breach made in the law at the time* the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired**. [She doesn't say the breach made in the law BY the change in the Sabbath, because the breach is much more than that. Remember when Satan broke the law of God in heaven the Sabbath didn't yet exist. We must of course recognize and accept the truth about the Sabbath, but accepting the day of the week while keeping the imperial law view doesn't repair the breach.] God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show t**hat the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** [why? Because it is the law of life, the principles upon which life is established and operates. One cannot have health in violations of the laws of health. So all enduring reform is merely putting people back in harmony with God's design laws for life.] and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as **a memorial of creation**, a constant reminder of the power of God. [What power? This is key—when you hear this do you hear physical might and power, the power to create? That power was demonstrated during the fist six days of creation week—but what power was revealed during the 7th day? Was a different power revealed? Paul says the the gospel is the power for salvation (Rom 1:6), Remember this quote from EGW: "God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's

> principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**." DA 759.1. What is the power of God that the Sabbath reminds us of? That God is moral—He presented truth in love and then leaves us free—God rested and did not compel. This is the power that the Sabbath is to remind us of. If we make it only about physical power we continue to obstruct the healing truth.] In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. See verse 12. {PK 678.2}

What was the breach made in the law **when** the Sabbath was changed? It was not the mere change of the day of worship—the breach was the idea that God's law is imposed law—this is the breach we are to repair.

Thus, we cannot repair the breach by teaching the right day of the week through imposed law lenses—that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test and that God will use power to punish those who don't keep it. This only perpetuates the lie, keeps the breach in the law open.

We are to repair the breach by returning to design law worship and this results in our transformation, for by beholding we are changed.

If we leave the breach in the wall—the idea that God's law is imposed, the Spirit temple remains infected with all the lies about God and thus the temple cannot be rebuilt.

But, when we repair the breach in the law and teach the truth about design law, then we cooperate with God for the healing of our hearts and minds, the rebuilding of the temple. Consider this quote:

> Your faculties are separate and distinct, yet each is dependent for its success upon the other. **So each day God works with His building, stroke upon stroke, to perfect the structure, which thus grows into a holy temple for the Lord**. One stone mislaid affects the whole building. **This figure represents human character, which is to be wrought upon, point by point. There is not to be a flaw in it, for it is the Lord's building**. Every stone must be perfectly laid, that it may endure the pressure placed upon it. God warns you and every worker to take heed how you build, **so that your building may bear the test of storm and tempest because it is riveted to the eternal Rock**. Take heed how you build. Every hour may be spent in placing the stone on the sure foundation, ready for the day of test and revelation, **when we shall be seen just as we are**…**His church upon the earth is to assume divine proportions before the world, as a temple composed of living stones, every stone emitting light.** [What is the temple? the church, built from the body of believers, who have cooperated with God for the cleansing of their individual Spirit temples] **This building is to be the light of the world, a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.** [What is the light to the world, the city set on a hill? It is the church not any human nation or government.] **It is composed of stones laid close together, stone fitting to stone, making a solid building. All the stones are not of the same**

> **form or shape. Some are large, some are small, but each has its own crevice to fill. And the value of each stone is determined by the light it reflects to the world**. **This is God's plan**, and He would have all who profess to believe His word fill their respective places in the great, grand work for this time.
> *Manuscript Releases, Volume 2 [Nos. 97-161, 1958-1964]. 1993; 2002 (339). Ellen G. White Estate.*

Read last paragraph, "As we look into Daniel…" What is the purpose of intercessory prayer, and prayer in general?

First let's define prayer – what is it? As I understand prayer, it is conversation with God as with a friend. So, prayer is open-hearted communication with God.

What is the purpose of communication with God if God already knows all our thoughts before we even think them? Are we informing God of something He doesn't already know? Then what's the point? Relationship and development!

Does a parent, sometimes, already know what a child is going to say before the child says it? Is there any benefit in the child speaking their thoughts to the parent? What is the benefit? Relationship and development! The child experiences the parent listening, caring, concerned, gains knowledge of a parent who cares, and loves them. This brings security and peace. And the child also develops the ability to think, communicate, comprehend, understand, be open, honest, overcome fear/insecurity etc.

If a child asks a parent for something the child is convinced is good for them, but the parent knows they are not ready to handle or would only injure, what does a loving parent do?

- Does the request of the child work to create love and interest in the heart of the parent for the child?
- Of course not, but the child grows closer to the parent through the experience and learns more of the parents' values and character?

What if the child has misconceptions about the parent and has developed the belief that if the parent doesn't grant the request the parent doesn't love them and that they will never speak to their parent again—what might the parent do in that case—the case of the child insisting on something that will hurt them?

- What did God do when they insisted on the fleshpots of Egypt?
- What did God do when they wanted kings?
- What did God do when they wanted to go to war rather than wait for the land to be abandoned?
- What did God do when they insisted on worshipping the Baals?
- What did the Father do when the prodigal wanted to leave home?

We are like children who know so little of reality, including so little of God and His plans. Prayer is a process of coming into connection with the divine, of opening our hearts and minds to the movement of the Holy Spirit, "listening" to what God has to tell us. In so doing we are learning of Him, coming

into contact with Him, opening ourselves to be enlightened, ennobled, and healed by Him. Is such a relationship we surrender ourselves and in that trust relationship:

- our burdens are lifted
- our guilt and shame removed
- our fears taken away
- our minds are enlightened and we see new possibilities, purposes and goals
- we know we are loved, cherished, and valued
- our love for God increases and we willingly surrender to Him and choose to follow Him in fulfilling His purposes.

What about intercessory prayer, what is its purpose? Is it to get God to care about some person He doesn't care about? Is it to bring to God's attention something God doesn't know? Is it to change God's mind about something—to get God to be merciful when God would be less merciful than what you are asking of Him?

Consider this quote—have you ever heard it and do you agree? I have found much comfort in it many times in my life.

> **The conflicts of earth, in the providence of God, furnish the very training necessary to develop characters fit for the courts of Heaven**. We are to become members of the royal family, the sons of God, and "all things work together for good to those who love God," and **submit themselves to his will**. Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. **He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls**. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to him our distress, **he is making arrangements for our deliverance.** Our sorrow is not unnoticed. He always knows much better than we do, just what is necessary for the good of his children, and **he leads us as we would choose to be led if we could discern our own hearts and see our necessities and perils, as God sees them**. But finite beings seldom know themselves. They do not understand their own weaknesses, and when reproof comes, and cautions are given, when they are rebuked, or even advised, they think that they are misjudged and unjustly treated. God knows them better than they know themselves, and he understands how to lead them. **But when he undertakes to guide them in ways which seem mysterious to them, because of their blindness and lack of faith, they rebel, and bring upon themselves unnecessary grief and trouble.** They have prayed to the Lord for light and guidance, and the Lord answered them as he did Jacob, and, like Jacob, they do not discern that it is the hand of the Lord leading them in a way contrary to their own choosing. If we will trust him, and commit our ways to him, he will direct our steps in the very path that will result in our obtaining the victory over every evil passion, and every trait of character that is unlike the character of our divine Pattern. ST May 25, 1888, par. 9

When we pray for another, especially when it appears our prayer is not answered, how do we understand that?

When I was in residency one of my colleague's mother was dying of breast cancer. My colleague prayed for her mother's healing, but her mother died. Later she told me initially this was hard for her to understand, until she realized that God was more merciful toward her mother than she was. She said God allowed her mother to pass beyond temptation, pain, and disease and her mother would never have to suffer again. She said she realized her mother's healing was an eternal healing, not a mere temporal one. Some might call this rationalization, I believe it strikes a point – God looks beyond our comprehension to realities we are unaware of and takes all of these multiplicities into consideration when answering our prayers always acting in our best interest.

But there is another aspect for the purpose of prayer, particularly here on earth now, and that has to do with the Great Controversy. God was accused of being a power monger. His character and reputation were misrepresented, and are still being misrepresented today. Only God knows our inmost thoughts, ideas and the future. Only God knows what we are going to think before we think it. Angels and humans have to wait and see what a person says or does before we can know with certainty what is in the heart.

If God were to simply act on our thoughts, before we think them, several problems. First it doesn't give us the opportunity for growth in character, in wisdom, in trust and knowledge and love of God. It is by leaving us the opportunity to wrestle with problems that we grow and when we wrestle with God at our side we grow in love for Him.

But further, by praying and communicating with God we refute Satan's allegations that God abuses His power and reveal that God is acting in accord with the requests of His children and not simply pushing His way upon others. Thus Satan's lies are exposed as false.

What intercessory prayer is not: it is not the process of persuading an unloving god to be a loving one, a disinterested god to be interested, an uncompassionate deity to be compassionate.

> If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? [33] Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Romans 8:31-34.

Why do we pray? Because we love our heavenly Father and ultimately really enjoy talking with Him!

But along these lines, jump to **WEDNESDAY's** lesson read last paragraph, "While Satan was…" Who is Gabriel? Who is the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece?

Who is Michael?

Why was Michael the only one who was available to help Gabriel? Didn't only 1/3 of the angels rebel with Satan? Doesn't that mean the good angels outnumber the bad angels 2 to 1? Then why was Michael the only one available to help Gabriel?

What kind of a war are we in? A war of truth, love and freedom against lies, selfishness and coercion—a war over God's character and methods. Satan has misrepresented them and inflames the worst fears and insecurities with deceptions to make it appear his methods are right.

What position did Gabriel take after Satan's fall? The position of covering cherub, the highest position of the angels, the position from where Lucifer fell, the position closest to the throne of God, the position in which he has the greatest knowledge, intimacy, and understanding of God's character, methods and principles.

In other words, there is no other created being that can bring more light of truth and love to bear than Gabriel. The only other being in the universe that can bring more love and truth to bear than Gabriel is God Himself, thus Michael, Jesus in His pre-incarnate form, comes with the light of God's truth and love and it is sufficient to dispel the darkness of Satan's lies!

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The most prominent character…" What is the book of Daniel about? It is about the Great Controversy, it is about human history, not just the time of Daniel, but all the way to the end of time and the cleansing of the universe from sin.

Why is Jesus the most prominent character in the book? Because this is the focus of the entire Old Testament—as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, the Messiah was promised (Genesis 3) the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. The entire story is focused on the coming Messiah and Satan's war to try and stop Jesus from coming. Daniel gives the best insights into this war of any Old Testament writer.

Jesus is the central focus because Jesus is the Remedy, the solution, the answer, the fulfillment of the law, the connecting link, the Unifier, the One through whom all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to God!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

[i] Martin, B., et al., Caloric restriction and intermittent fasting: Two potential diets for successful brain aging, *Ageing Research Reviews*, Volume 5, Issue 3, August 2006, Pages 332–353

[ii] Roth, G., et al., Biomarkers of Caloric Restriction May Predict Longevity in Humans, *Science* 02 Aug 2002: Vol. 297, Issue 5582, pp. 811

[iii] Csiszar, A., et al., Anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory vasoprotective effects of caloric restriction in aging: Role of circulating factors and SIRT1, *Mechanisms of Ageing and Development* Volume 130, Issue 8, August 2009, Pages 518–527

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 12
From North and South to the Beautiful Land

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

We received the following emails this week:

Aloha Come and Reason Ministries,

We are so grateful to have a Sabbath School Class that feels like home. Even though we have never met any of you we feel like we belong to a family of loving and inclusive believers.

We set our alarm for 5 am every Sabbath morning to listen to the class live as we live in Hawaii and are five hours earlier than TN

Listening to God's word presented though His design law of love has been and continues to be very healing and gives us the courage to go to a church where teaching God's design law is not welcomed and the challenge to continue to attend sometimes seems overwhelming but at the same time has offered an unprecedented opportunity to have God show us our hearts and how much healing we truly need so we can look at those who judge and criticize with the same eyes as our loving Heavenly Father. It is such a place of peace to know that God is recreating His mind in ours and that in that day we will rise healed and whole.

Mahalo Nui Loa for your continuous ministry

Ben and Colette Ferris

Thank you very much for allowing the lady to share her testimony as part of your broadcast of this week's lesson, Dr Jennings.

You describe and explain really well about sin and remedy; God's design law. However, this woman finally broke through to me how God's grace, His transformation, can be effective.

Thank you for your faithfulness - you and your congregation - in presenting sometimes a very different viewpoint from that provided in lesson guides.
God bless you and your loved ones, plus all those people touched by your balanced material.
For many years, I have thought we need to introduce Jesus then permit God's Holy Spirit to do His work in lives - without my coercing or whatever - just (hopefully, prayerfully) encouraging queries, softly nudging when someone asks.

We cannot legislate faith. We can (and should) enable freedom to express beliefs, however they manifest…

God bless all concerned within Come and Reason Ministry.
Sincerely,

Wilma Gibbs (Australia)

SUNDAY

Read Daniel 11:1-4:

> And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him. 2 "Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. 4 After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others. NIV84

What is being described?

Read first two paragraphs, "Gabriel tells Daniel…

MONDAY

Daniel 11:5-14 depicts the battle between the Hellenistic dynasties, read first paragraph, "Upon the death of Alexander…"

In **TUESDAY's** lesson verses 16-28 are considered and commentators believe this moves from the Hellenistic dynasties to Rome as the king of the North.

Read first paragraph, "A transition in power…" This seems to be confirmed by verse 22 which read, "Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed" (NIV 84).

The prince of the covenant would refer to the crucifixion of Jesus which occurred under the Romans.

WEDNESDAY

Daniel 11:29-39 transition us from literal Israel to spiritual Israel and Pagan Rome as the king of the north to Christian Rome as the king of the north.

Read all paragraphs, "Daniel 11…" Do we see elements that remind us of 2Thes in which the man of sin sets himself up in God's temple?

This is more than just physical conquest of Palestine, it now encompasses the Spirit temple—hearts and minds of God's people worldwide.

THURSDAY

Daniel 11:40-45 are reviewed, and there are a variety of interpretations for these texts.

November 2019, *Adventist Review* article summarized a theological conference held in Berrien Springs to discuss the different views of Daniel 11:

1. The Turkey and Egypt Position

The first view holds fairly closely to what Uriah Smith wrote in his 1884 book…

The King of the North in verses 40-45 is interpreted as being Turkey, either as the Ottoman Empire in its conflict in 1798 AD with Napoleonic France and the breakaway rulers of Egypt (verses 40-44), or as a last-days reincarnation of the Caliphate; and the King of the South in verses 40-45 represents Egypt.

2. The Papacy and Atheism Position

The second position takes the latter half of the chapter symbolically, arguing that the papacy is represented in its persecuting phase during the 1,260 years of papal supremacy.

This position agrees with the first position of a literal/historical interpretive framework for verses 1-22, down to the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary, but argues that after Calvary, the New Testament (NT) consistently applies a more spiritualized interpretation of Old Testament (OT) literal actors.

For instance, historical Babylon in Daniel becomes spiritual Babylon in Revelation; ethnic Israel through the OT era to the end of the 490-year prophecy of Daniel becomes spiritual Israel in NT times; and so on.

Thus, although this position identifies historical actors from verse 23 onward, these historical actors are no longer considered to represent the literal earthly powers to the north and south of Jerusalem, but rather they represent spiritual powers that are manifest in earthly realities, such as, for instance, the papacy as the King of the North. Verses 36-39 represent the full flowering of the blasphemous and persecuting papal power before 1798 AD.

> In verses 40-45, the papacy remains as the King of the North and atheism as the King of the South. This position parallels the identification of the atheist French Revolution in Revelation 11, and Revolutionary France being the power that overthrew the papacy in 1798 AD….

I expand this from the Papacy only, to false Christianity. All of Christianity that embraces and promotes the false law construct with an imperial dictator God and which would use the power of the state to oppose and eliminate its enemies.

I see this view as false Christianity being the king of the North fighting against atheism, humanism and progressivism as the king of the South. And the king of the North suffered defeat by atheism for a period but comes back and destroys the king of the South.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote in the book *The Great Controversy* the following:

> "The great city" in whose streets the witnesses are slain, and where their dead bodies lie, is "spiritually" Egypt. Of all nations presented in Bible history, Egypt most boldly denied the existence of the living God and resisted His commands. No monarch ever ventured upon more open and highhanded rebellion against the authority of Heaven than did the king of Egypt. When the message was brought him by Moses, in the name of the Lord, Pharaoh proudly answered: "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto His voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go." Exodus 5:2, A.R.V. This is atheism, and the nation represented by Egypt would give voice to a similar denial of the claims of the living God and would manifest a like spirit of unbelief and defiance. "The great city" is also compared, "spiritually," to Sodom. The corruption of Sodom in breaking the law of God was especially manifested in licentiousness. And this sin was also to be a pre-eminent characteristic of the nation that should fulfill the specifications of this scripture. GC 269.2

The book goes on to apply this to the French Revolution which rejected God and enthroned the goddess of reason. And is the power that overthrew entered Rome and took the Pope captive thus ending the 1260-year reign.

But could this also extend beyond the literal nation of France and the French revolution to the spiritual revolution of rejecting a belief in God and the growth of atheism throughout the world?

What I see happening through history is this:

- Christ came a presented the truth about God and procured the Remedy to sin
- The Apostolic church embraced this truth and the gospel spread and many pagans were converted to Christ over the next several hundred years
- Satan counterattacks with the infection into Christianity of the Imperial law lie when Constantine converts and Christianity becomes false and begins using the methods of Satan to coerce—the crusades, inquisition, burning people at the stake are the most obvious abuses. But, the Imperial law lie also led to arbitrary rules for members about partaking of the Eucharist, about sacred or holy ground to be buried in, about purgatory, indulgences and the denial of science.

- This led to science—which is based on God's book of nature—to conflict with arbitrary rules of the church and science combined with the abuses of an arbitrary Christianity that was based on imposed law resulted in the atheism and the rejection of God.
- Today, as science advances it, combined with the design law understanding of Scripture, which is the truth about God is overthrowing the lies of atheism and the lies of the imperial false god that has infected Christianity. This is the message of the 3 angels to present the eternal gospel and call people back to worship the Designer who made the heavens, earth, sea… Today many honest scientists who follow the evidence are returning to a belief in God because the complexities of science and the laws of nature are inconsistent with life occurring from random forces.
- So we have the remnant of God opposing both the King of the North—false Christianity and the King of the South—atheism to present the true gospel message about our Creator God.

3. The Papacy and Islam Position

… Verses 23-30 trace the rise of the religio-political church of Rome and its political-military exploits, including the Crusades and later campaigns against Islamic power, in which Catholic forces coming to the land of Israel from the north and Muslim armies coming to it from the south sought to control it (verses 25-30).

Then verses 31-39 flesh out the predictions in Daniel 7 and 8 concerning the papacy's unique and astonishing religious pretensions and vicious persecutions (verses 31-39; see also 2 Thessalonians 2). In verses 40-43, the papacy and its allies ("Babylon" in Revelation) finally triumph over Islamic power, its long-time religio-political nemesis (see also the fifth and sixth trumpets in Revelation 9), during the "time of the end" (after 1798 and 1844).

In the course of a final campaign, which apparently aims to persecute God's true people, the papacy abruptly meets its end (verses 44-45) just before a "time of trouble" and Christ's second coming (12:1-3). This interpretation accepts religious emphasis and globalization developing after Christ's first coming as Israel becomes the Christian church and Rome becomes the papacy. However, God's true Christian people are also affected by the political-military activities of Rome and Islam at particular times and locations.
https://www.adventistreview.org/what-does-daniel-chapter-11-mean

Do we agree that there is a transition away from Imperial Rome to Christian Rome in this prophecy?

If this is correct then the prophecy takes us beyond the local region of Palestine to a worldwide problem. It is no longer about genetic descendants of Abraham being harassed in Palestine, but about the people of God being harassed by two sides—the King of the North representing false Christianity and the King of the South representing either atheism or Islam, depending upon one's interpretation. Or could the King of the South represent both atheism and Islam?

What is the impact upon God's people of these conflicts?

For instance—does Satan use the two sides against each other as a trap to seduce or trick God's people into choosing one of the two sides when both sides are actually Satan's side?

- Could we get caught up in a conflict over whether we should have prayer in schools or not—Christianity promoting prayer in schools versus atheism opposing prayer in schools?
    - Could this lead to good Christian people being tricked into choosing to side with the King of the North—false Christianity—that would seek to force its religious views on others through the power of the state and deny freedom to those who would not want to pray?
    - Could this lead other good Christian people who recognize the principles of liberty as being godly being tricked into siding with the King of the South—atheism—and promoting a system that denies God and indoctrinating generations of children into a false belief system making it harder for them to come to know God?
        - What would be a godly solution to this problem? If the state decides it is its best interest to require its citizens to be educated then, the state provides the funding but leaves the parents free to choose where the child gets educated. The state requires the schools to meet basic academic requirements but doesn't police the religious beliefs taught at those schools.
- Could we get caught up in a conflict over abortion—(this is not about whether abortion is right or wrong any more than prayer is right or wrong, but is about whether the issue could be used by Satan to trick Christians into using his methods to achieve their goals)
    - Could good Christian people who value life and want to protect it get tricked into siding with the King of the North—false Christianity—and seek to pass laws to force people to practice their moral views regardless of circumstance? Could ideas be put forth that say "we believe that ever child is a gift from God" and could such rhetoric confuse people—children, adolescents, or young women—who were raped or sexually abused and became pregnant to wonder if it is true; was the rape God giving them a gift? Could good Christian people get tricked by the King of the North to promote lies about God?
    - Could it lead other good-hearted people who may not be Christian, but who do care about others to recognize the principles of liberty and to side with the King of the South—there is no God—it is just your body, make any choice you want and in so doing lead *some* women to make choices that they later regret?
- Could it lead to Christian and Islamic conflict?
    - Could those who value Christian principles be tricked by the King of the North into believing that it is godly to use physical might and power to go to war with those who are a threat and we should eradicate Islam because it is the religion of terrorists?
    - Could millions of good-hearted people be tricked by the King of the South—Islam—into believing American and Christianity are the great Satan and they should use whatever means necessary to kill the infidel?

If we allow that this prophecy goes beyond Palestine and genetic descendants of Abraham to encompass the entire world, do we recognize that neither the King of the North nor the King of the South are part of God's kingdom?

Are we as Christians able to recognize that participating with either the King of the North or South is a trap of Satan, in which he gets people to think they are fighting for right while in reality they are siding with evil?

How do we stay faithful to God while these two forces fight each other?

Could it be the that primary purpose of these two forces fighting each other is not for the King of the North and South to destroy each other, but the real purpose is Satan using both sides to destroy God's people?

How do we identify movements of Satan, whether King of the North or South?

The law and methods used—Satan always uses human imposed law and will always use coercion to force his way. No one can buy or sell save him who has the mark of the beast…(Rev 13:17)

God always uses truth, presented in love, while leaving people free. God does not coerce or force the conscience. Whenever you see movements that violate liberty you can be sure it is not the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Angel Rodriguez of the Biblical Research Institute wrote a document on Daniel 11 in 2015 https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Release_13_Angel_for_website.pdf

In this article he makes some very interesting insights. He makes the case that the prophecies are not merely local and geographic, but are dealing with the cosmic conflict between good and evil. That Michael and Gabriel are involved battling forces of evil behind the scenes.

He connects the events of Daniel with the events of Revelation and makes the case that both books are describing a conflict that goes beyond just human history.

In the Bible God's throne or place of rulership is referred to as being in the North, and Satan wanted to take God's place there. Thus, the King of the North would represent a power that wants to supplant God—a power that believes in God but claims to be God.

The King of the South is identified in the Daniel text as Egypt and Egypt is a power that rejected Yahweh, denied God's existence and set up its many own gods. Thus Egypt represents godlessness in all its forms—paganism, atheism etc.

The BRI institute article makes a compelling case that Daniel 11 is drawing from the backdrop of the greatest and most important event in Israel's history—the Exodus from Egypt:

- God's hand was against Egypt during the Exodus—now the King of the North's hand is against Egypt. God led the exodus from Egypt, whereas the King of the North leads a return to Egypt
- God used the waters of the Red Sea to destroy Pharaoh's army, the king of the north is described a flood coming over Egypt

- The references of chariots and horsemen echo the references of Pharaoh's army chasing the Hebrews
- Edom, Moab, and Ammonites are referenced in the Exodus from Egypt and were people not conquered by Israel. These are also mentioned in Daniel 11 as not being conquered by the king of the north
- Israel took silver, gold and precious things from Egypt, now the king of the north does
- Israel left Egypt to meet God on the holy mountain, Sinai; the king of the north leaves Egypt to go to the "holy mountain"
- Israel was commanded to exterminate the Canaanites and the king of the north heads to Israel to exterminate the people of God

So, the article makes a compelling case that the imagery in Daniel 11 is from the backdrop of the Exodus, but in this prophecy the king of the north supplants God and claims God's authority and seeks to undermine, overthrow or destroy God's purposes and people.

Are there lessons from this imagery that we are to understand as having a larger application than just that geographic region?

- God's people went from Canaan to Egypt and were captives in Egypt and God delivered them from captivity to return to Canaan
    - Humanity left Eden and went into captivity, becoming slaves to sin in Satan's kingdom of fear and selfishness yet Jesus sets us free, He delivers us and leads us back to Eden!
- God sent the plagues upon Egypt to reveal the impotence of their false gods in order to free the minds of the people from belief in them and turn their hearts back to Him.
    - At the end of time plagues fall on Babylon the Great, the trials and difficulties occur to wake up a world that believes in itself and its false gods and get people to evaluate the truth and turn to God
- God led the people through the Red Sea on the way to the promised land.
    - Paul refers to this as a symbol of baptism which is when we die to the old selfish ways and are reborn to a new life. It is only by this rebirth we can enter the new promised land.
    - The waters of the Red Sea destroyed forces of Egypt and the cleansing waters of God, which represent the Holy Spirit, destroy fear, selfishness and the power of Satan in our hearts and minds.
        - 2Cor 10:3-5, For though we live in the world….
        - Where is the battle fought? In our hearts and minds
        - What are the weapons of God that demolish Satan's strongholds? Truth and love—which are the weapons of God, brought by the Spirit of truth and love, and are metaphorically represented as the water of life
- God gave them manna, the bread of heaven, to eat in the wilderness
    - We are in the wilderness of this world of sin and God sent Jesus the Word made flesh for us to ingest. It is by partaking the truth of Jesus that the lies are dispelled and we come to know God and in that true knowledge of God we are won to trust
- While feeding them manna God took them to Sinai and gave them the law

  - After we partake of Jesus, taking the living Word into our hearts and are won to trust, then we open our hearts and God writes His law on our hearts and minds. This is the New Covenant (Heb 8:10). This is the law of love, the living principles of God's kingdom, it is partaking of the divine nature. Thus, we who were dead in trespass and sin, are reborn to life and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.
- Edom, Moab, and Ammonites were not killed by Israel
  - Edommites were the descendants of Esau, Moabites were the descendants of Lot and his oldest daughter, Ammonites were the descendants of Lot and his youngest daughter.
  - They were allowed to join Israel if they converted.
  - As they were all related to Abraham, they represent people from other branches of the human family that cannot be part of God's family unless they convert, but of whom we are not to war with, instead we are to seek to convert. Yet these people often war with us.
  - Ruth was a Moabitess
  - In Jeremiah 49 God predicts destruction for the Ammonites who worship Molech, but states in the end He will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites.
  - "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD, who will do these things. (Amos 9:11-12 NIV84)
  - So God seeks to save people from all branches of the human family, but only those who actually participate with God for transformation of heart become part of His redeemed.

What is the finally end of the kings of the north and south?

What brings about the end?

How do we understand the future events to unfold?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 13
From Dust to Stars

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory version, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:3 NKJV)

What does the text mean?

What does it mean that the wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament?

Jesus is called the light of the world—light is a metaphor for truth, so what wisdom would be the wisdom that shines bright? Would it be the wisdom about God—His character, methods, principles and government? Would it be the wisdom about His design laws?

What about the idea that the righteous will be like stars forever?

When Lucifer rebelled, he wanted to set himself up above the stars of God:

> For you have said in your heart:
> [m]'I will ascend into heaven,
> [n]I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
> I will also sit on the [o]mount of the congregation
> [p]On the farthest sides of the north;
> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
> [q]I will be like the Most High.' Isaiah 14:13,14

What might this indicate? Did Lucifer want only to rise higher than suns? Or higher than other intelligent beings, to rule over them?

Stars are bodies that give light in the darkness—thus they are metaphors for people of light, people who shine the truth in their lives, who live God's principles in a world promoting the darkness of imperialism.

---

[m] Ezek. 28:2; Matt. 11:23
[n] Dan. 8:10; 2 Thess. 2:4
[o] Ezek. 28:14
[p] Ps. 48:2
[q] Is. 47:8; 2 Thess. 2:4

Consider these historic quotes—what do you think?

> Among earth's inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. [what is Baal worship?] **Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people**. In heathen Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, **God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law**.—Prophets and Kings, 188, 189. [what law?]

> Christ dispatches His messengers to every part of His dominion to communicate His will to His servants. He walks in the midst of His churches. He desires to sanctify, elevate, and ennoble His followers. The influence of those who believe in Him will be in the world a savor of life unto life. **Christ holds the stars in His right hand, and it is His purpose to let His light shine forth through them to the world. Thus He desires to prepare His people for higher service in the church above**. He has given us a great work to do. Let us do it faithfully. Let us show forth in our lives what divine grace can do for humanity. CCh 98.3

In order to shine for God do we need to know the truth about God? Would this include the truth about God's design laws and methods?

SUNDAY

The focus of the lesson is on Michael—the question—who is Michael?

The Jehovah Witnesses teach that Michael is Jesus AND that Michael is a created being, not fully God.

Many Christian groups believe Michael is merely an archangel, no different than Gabriel—a created being—and reject the idea that Michael is Jesus.

There is a third option, that Michael is Jesus in His pre-incarnate form and that Jesus/Michael is fully God, pre-existent, with life original, unborrowed underived.

Let's examine what the Bible says and see which view is most consistent with the Bible texts?

God is infinite and lives in "unapproachable light." 1Timothy 6:16

- Unapproachable by whom?
- Why?
- So, if God wants the closest intimacy with His creatures, what must happen?
- A member of the Godhead must leave infinity and enter linear existence

- Who is the member of the Godhead that is the go-between, the mediator, the intercessor, Jacob's ladder, the vine, the way, the gate?

Did Jesus become the connecting link between God and His creation only after sin or did God, Jesus, interact with His created beings on their level before sin?

Exodus 3:2-6 and Acts 7:30-38:

> the **angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.** Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called to him from within the bush**, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**" At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Judges 13:16-22:

> **The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim** and said, "**I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, `I will never break my covenant with you**, [Who brought Israel out of Egypt? Who promised the land to Abraham? Who made the covenant that He will never break? Yet, the Bible describes this Being as the angel of the Lord…note who Manoah and his wife say this is at the end…] Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?"
>
> He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding." [What do you think this means? Why didn't He say "Gabriel" or "Michael" if just an angel? What does a name represent in the Bible? Character, and God is infinite, so His name would represent His infinite self and is beyond finite being's understanding—does the Bible reveal anywhere that Jesus is in fact the one with a name beyond understanding? "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. **He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself**." (Rev 19:11,12)] Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.
>
> "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "**We have seen God!**"

So, far do we have Biblical evidence that the term "angel of the Lord" can refer to Jesus? But what about Michael—is Michael actually Jesus in His pre-incarnate form or just another angel?

Jesus said,

> "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the **dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live**… Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all **who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out**…" John 5:28

According to Jesus whose voice raises the dead? His voice!

> For the **Lord** himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the **voice of the archangel** and with the trumpet call of God, and the **dead in Christ will rise first**. 1Thessalonians 4:16

> But even the **archangel Michael**, when he was disputing with the devil **about the body of Moses**, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Jude 9

In Daniel 10:21, Gabriel talking to Daniel, refers to Michael as "**your** prince" and in Daniel 12:1 He is called the great prince.

Who is the prince of heaven who becomes a human prince, the King of the Jews and ultimately the King of kings?

So, can we make a case that Michael, which means "who is like God?" is actually Jesus in His pre-incarnate form? But we must always ensure that we insist that Jesus/Michael is fully God, pre-existent, with life original, unborrowed, underived.

The lesson points out the Michael acts as a military leader to protect His people.

According to the Bible what kind of war are we in? 2Cor 10:3-5—this is a war for our hearts and minds and God's weapons demolish Satan's strongholds—what are Satan's strongholds? Lies, fear and selfishness, and coercion in the minds and hearts of people—what demolishes lies? Truth, what demolishes fear and selfishness? Love, what demolishes a willingness to control and coerce others? Freedom and love grows!

Jesus said that He is the truth, He is the bread of heaven, the Word made flesh. It is only through the truth Jesus brings that lies are dispelled and we are won to trust and then it is through receiving Jesus into our hearts that we are healed from fear and selfishness to love.

So, yes, Michael leads the forces of truth, love and freedom to war against the forces of lies, selfishness and coercion to save all who will trust Him.

Read last paragraph, "Second, the verb…" What law lens is this described through?

If we acknowledge that "stand" in this verse connotes the idea of intercession—then at this time in history Jesus stands up for and intercedes for His people—what do we understand this to mean through design law?

We are in a war—what kind of war? A war of ideas; truth waging against lies for our minds.

The lesson refers us to Daniel 7, and in Daniel 7 a little horn power is waging war and winning against the saints until God makes an intervention, until some intercession happens and the saints come to possess the kingdom. This is describing what Daniel 12 describes. Remember Daniel 11/12 are another rendition of these global prophecies already told multiple times. So, Daniel 12 describes Michael standing up to intercede and deliver His people.

According to Daniel 7 as the little horn is waging war and winning what does the Ancient of Days intercede and do that changes the course of the war, that causes God's people to break free? He gives judgment to the saints and then they come to possess the kingdom. (verses 21, 22)

According to Jesus where to we find the kingdom of God?

> The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:20-21 NIV84

This is the same process as described in 2Thes 2 when the man of sin sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God. What temple? The Spirit temple, thus when the man of sin displaces God in the minds of people and sets up a Satanic caricature of God in the minds of people, Michael the prince intercedes; He stands up, He gives judgment, discernment ability to the saints—how? By giving of Himself—the truth He revealed about God and the truth destroys the lies and wins us to trust and our sanctuaries are cleansed from fear and selfishness as we trust in Jesus. We come to possess the kingdom—the kingdom of love and truth—first in our hearts, minds, characters and then when Jesus comes physically.

Do we see this as a legal process or a healing process? What law lens do we use?

I thought it might be helpful to take some quotes often used by those who insist God's law functions like human law and therefore promote a penal legal theology, and demonstrate that such quotes don't actually mean what they say:

> **Jesus will appear as their advocate, to plead in their behalf before God**. "**If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."** 1 John 2:1. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 9:24; 7:25. Christ In His Sanctuary 176.2 [What law lens do you read this

through? Do you bring other Bible texts to bear? Do we include Jesus speaking to His Apostles when He said "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you…"(John 16:26,27 NIV84)? Do you include Romans 8:31-34: "If **God is for us**, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? **It is God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—**is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us**." NIV84. Do you hear intercession? And who is interceding for us? Jesus is *also* interceding in addition to who? God! So Jesus and God are in heaven interceding for us. So, putting the Bible together we have Jesus *along with the Father as our advocate.* Is this how you read the quote above? Why or why not? Are we so infected with the legal lie that we misread these quotes to present Satan's distorted view of God?

As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. [What law lens? For what purpose? Legal judicial decision making or diagnosis, triage and remedial action?] Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. **Names are accepted, names rejected**. [What do names represent in the Bible? Character, what causes some characters to be accepted and some to be rejected? Is it that some people have worked hard and perfected their own characters and others haven't? Or is it that some have trusted Jesus and opened their hearts/minds to Him for Him to recreate in them His character?] When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, **unrepented of** and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. [What law lens to you read this through? If we use the human law lens then this is about historical deeds, judicial findings and expunging legal rights ultimately with execution for the wicked. But if we understand design law and that the books have the characters of people recorded therein, then we realize that sins remaining in the record "unrepented of" mean that these are sins remaining in the character, sins for which the persons have refused to let go. Understand, it is not just historical acts the refused to admit to and confess these are sinful traits of character that the sinner wants, prefers, desires, embraces, values, prefers over the methods of God. This isn't about historic deeds or acts in ledger it is about the condition of heart/mind/character in reality. Why do such people get blotted out of the book of life? Because they have chosen to solidify in their characters the law of sin and death and are out of harmony with life. To them God's presence would we torture and God will do that to them—He forces no one.] The Lord declared to Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." Exodus 32:33. And says the prophet Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, ... all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned." Ezekiel 18:24. CIHS 177.1

All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; [I am pausing in mid-sentence so we can think about what is being said. The rest of this sentence will affirm our design-law understanding, but before we read it, let us see if we can figure it

out. What does it mean to truly repent—is this a legal process in books, or an actual change of heart? What does claiming the blood of Christ as out atoning sacrifice mean? Is it about red corpuscles? Or does the blood represent symbolically the sinless life of Jesus? What does atone mean? To be united as one. Did Jesus sacrifice Himself to provide a sinless life, a perfect character, to heal us and restore in us God's law/character/methods so that we can be again at one with God? Yes, this is what it means that we have been won to trust in God and have accepted Jesus as our Savior and "it is no longer I that live Christ lives in me." This is why Jesus said we must drink His blood—in other words take His life in to be our new life. And when we do we are restored to oneness—at-one with God. This same author makes it very clear in the book *The Desire of Ages* page 762 "**The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character;** [why does the law require this? For the same reason the law of respiration requires we breathe—it is how life is built to operate] and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them**. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26." Notice Christ's blood, i.e. life, becomes ours and we are built up into His perfection thus restored to oneness with God. This is not legal, it is actual. And the author said this is how God is just and the justifier—doing what is right by restoring us to real rightness or righteousness with God. Now, let's see how this author actually says it in the continuation of the sentence we are in the middle of] **as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out**, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life. [Why are they accounted worthy of eternal life? Because we have partaken of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are restored to Christlike. From where are our sins blotted out of? From history of from our characters? And where are our characters stored/recorded in heaven? IN God's books. So, our sins our blotted out of our characters recorded in the books. So we could say our sins are blotted out of the books of heaven.] The Lord declares, by the prophet Isaiah: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25. Said Jesus: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Revelation 3:5; Matthew 10:32, 33….CIHS 177.2 [Why will we be denied in heaven if we deny Christ on earth? For the same reason we would be denied as being healthy in an examination room if we refused to take the remedy that would cure us.]

While Jesus is pleading for the subjects of His grace, Satan accuses them before God as transgressors. [While Jesus is *before* the Father and angels in heaven, to whom is He pleading? Well, who is listening to Satan's accusations? Is God in heaven going, "Wow, Satan

is making a really compelling argument—"Hey Son, do you have anything to say that can compete with what Satan says, because right now I think the devil is being quite persuasive. I don't want to find them guilty but right now I am at a loss to know what to do?" Of COURSE NOT! God doesn't listen to Satan and ever since the cross neither do the angels in heaven. Only humans on earth listen to him. Satan recounts our sins to discourage us; to get us give up. Continue the quote…] **The great deceiver has sought to lead them** [the subjects of His grace] **into skepticism, to cause them to lose confidence in God, to separate themselves from His love, and to break His law.** Now he points to the record of their lives, to the defects of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer, to all the sins that he has tempted them to commit, and because of these he claims them as his subjects. CIHS 179.1

Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying:[What law lens are you hearing this through? Does this say pleading to the Father? No! This is happening in heaven and God's government is open, not secretive. Jesus wants His actions to be seen by all the universe so that all doubt in God will be removed. So that God's methods in healing and restoring will be understood, so that Satan will be fully exposed. So, of course this is happening before the Father and the holy angels. But what is happening? Jesus reveals the truth about our hearts and minds—that He has healed our characters. Notice what comes next:] **I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands**. [What does name represent? He knows us by our healed and restored characters because we have eaten His flesh and drank His blood, meaning we have partaking of His character thus we are part of Him—the body of Christ, written on the palms of His hands!] "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51:17. **And to the accuser of His people He declares:** "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Zechariah 3:2. [To whom is Jesus speaking? To the accuser, He isn't pleading to His Father to get a judicial ruling in our favor. Notice what comes next:] **Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that He may present them to His Father** "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Ephesians 5:27. Their names stand enrolled in the book of life, and concerning them it is written: "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." Revelation 3:4…. CIHS 179.2 [What is described? That Jesus fixes all the damage sin has caused in our hearts and minds and perfects us so that we are capable of living in God's presence and thus He presents us to the Father. Then, having been healed and restored by Jesus' intercessory work in our hearts and minds, we can stand in the presence of God without an intercessor!]

The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished <u>before</u> the second advent of the Lord. [Why? Because we must be healed, restored, fixed, before coming into God's presence—why? What happens in the hearts and minds of unhealed sinners when they are exposed to infinite truth and love? Thus, we must have this work done in us before that time.] **Since the dead are to be judged out of the things written in the books, it is impossible that the sins of men should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated.** [What law lens are you hearing this through? What

> is written in the books? Our characters, and this is describing the cleansing of the sanctuary, the removal of all residual defects in the hearts/minds/individualities of those who have trusted in Jesus so that when they arise in the resurrection of the righteous they arise sinless and perfected.] But the apostle Peter distinctly states that the sins of believers will be blotted out "when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ." Acts 3:19, 20. When the investigative judgment closes, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as his work shall be. CIHS 180.2

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "the time of Michael's…" The first paragraph states that at the end of time God's Spirit will be withdrawn from rebellious humanity—why?

Where is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit? The hearts and minds of people—and what happens if people harden their hearts and minds against God? The Spirit is closed out or slowly withdrawn—this is the reason, because people choose evil over God.

What is the result? The restraining power of God is no longer active in the hearts of the wicked and thus evil increases upon the earth.

The Bible mentions heavenly records—what types of records are kept in heaven—in other words are there more than one type of record?

> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. Rev 20:12

What is recorded in the book of life? Names—which are characters, thus the judgment is reviewing the characters of people—those who have accepted Jesus and had selfishness and sin purged and righteousness written in—"I will write my law on your hearts and minds"—versus those who have rejected God's healing and retained selfishness in their characters, thus Jesus said:

> "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned**." Mt 12:33-37 NIV84

But, are the records of people's characters the only records?

I think there are also records of reality—of history—the Bible itself is a partial example of a record of history. Do we believe in heaven there will be records of history? Why?

Who was charged by Satan as being untrustworthy, unfair, arbitrary, cruel? God was charged by Satan—how is God vindicated in the end? Isn't it by the evidence—the truth sets all who embrace the truth free from the lies, from doubt about God? So, won't there be an eternal record of God's actions in the Great Controversy?

And, what will we learn about all those who are lost? In reviewing the history of the lost do we learn something about God? Do we learn that God intervened over and over again in multiple ways to offer them healing, but all those lost in the end are lost because they refused every offer of salvation and there was nothing more God could have done to save them?

The best way to understand the records is to think of them as medical records—they record the reality of each person's condition and the actions of God and His treatment team bringing healing solutions to all, but record the response of the sin-sick people some accept and are healed, others reject and remain terminal—but God is revealed to be only the source of life!

TUESDAY

The Bible describes two deaths—first and second—what is the difference between these two deaths?

- First death is described as a sleep—it is cessation of living activity, the body decays to dust, but the individuality is in a state of suspended animation—i.e. frozen in time, sleeping, waiting to be restored to a body to live again, i.e. resurrection
    - Jesus referred to this in Matthew 10:28, don't be afraid of the one who can destroy the body but can't destroy the soul
    - Consider metaphor of computer
    - body—hardware
    - soul—psyche—software
    - spirit-pneuma--energy
- Second death—annihilation—the destruction of the body and the individuality—eternal non-existence

Which death is the wages of sin death?

Why do we have the first death experience if the wages of sin is the second death? Grace—it is God's grace that permitted this artificial state in which the body dies, but the individuality is retained, to permit the plan of salvation to occur so that sin could be eradicated and people saved.

This is why God barred the way to the Tree of Life after sin—to allow the first death experience to occur—to allow sin to decay nature and degrade the physiology so the body would cease, yet God

could still work to heal hearts and minds and Jesus could come as a human to fix the problem. And this is what happened, the Bible says:

> This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2Tim 1:9,10 NIV84

How did Jesus destroy death?

What is the basis of life? God is the basis or source of life. Life comes from God and extends out from God and continues in all those who maintain unity with God. Sin severs our connection with God and disconnecting ourselves from God causes injury, pain, suffering and eventual death. Jesus came to take our condition upon Himself, be tempted in every way like we are, but overcome as a human reestablishing in humanity God's perfection thus connected humanity back to God.

At the Cross Jesus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness when He was tempted in every way just like we are, but refused to act to save self and instead gave Himself in love. In so doing, Jesus in His humanity restored God's law of love back into the species human and fixed the damage that Adam did to humanity. Thus He rose again because death (the law of sin and death) had nothing in Him, no hold, because He destroyed it.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the book of Daniel which was to be sealed until the time of the end. When did the Biblical time of the end begin?

For many Biblical scholars it began when the 1260-year prophecy ended in 1798, then the message of Daniel was unsealed and knowledge increased—knowledge about these end-time events.

THURSDAY

Why has there been a delay in the Lord's return?

Did you grow up in church singing, "Lift up the trumpets and loud let them ring, Jesus is coming again"?

Did you grow up with the expectation that Jesus was actually returning soon?

As you look around the world and see the conflict, disasters, crime, exploitation, population growth, climate threats, diseases, do you wonder, "What is God waiting for? Why hasn't Christ returned?"

All the way back in the first century, Christians were wondering why Christ had not come back. The apostle Peter told them:

> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:8, 9 NIV84).

God has waited because He wants everyone who can be saved to be saved—and that requires that people know about Him and come to a repentance. This means the gospel must go to the world; as Jesus said,

> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14 NIV84)

But it's been two thousand years! Surely the whole world has heard the gospel by now—right? Or has it?

Has the gospel of the kingdom of love gone to the world? Or has Christianity been tricked into taking to the world a lie, a fraud, a false gospel, one that traps the world into a system that promotes a distorted view of God? And if this is so, then is God waiting for the truth about Him to go to the world?

The apostle Paul warned us this would happen:

> But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—**having a form of godliness but denying its power** (2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV84).

As sad as it is, the Bible is true again: Christianity, as practiced today, is no different than the world—child abuse rates, spouse abuse rates, pornography use, and addictions are no different in Christian homes than non-Christian homes. Why? Because a false gospel that has no power to transform lives has taken over Christianity and prevents people from experiencing the healing that God has for them!

Thus, Jesus waits. He waits for the true gospel to go to the world and prepare people to meet Him—only then will He come.

God told His friend Daniel thousands of years ago that this would happen. God revealed to His prophet exactly how this false gospel would take root in Christianity—a corrupting power would seek to change God's law (Daniel 7:25). Paul expanded on Daniel's prophecy, giving more insight into this evil infection:

> Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and **the man of lawlessness is revealed,** the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he **sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 NIV84).

Paul tells us here that before Christ returns, the evil one will counterattack the gospel of Jesus. He does this by setting himself up as God in God's temple. But what temple? Did Satan ride into heaven and knock Jesus off His throne? Of course not. Paul is speaking of the Spirit temple, the hearts and minds of believers. In other words, the Bible is telling us that Satan will get people to believe that a being with his attributes is God! Satan doesn't get the church to reject the idea of God or the belief in God; instead, he tricks the church into believing that God is like Satan in character and methods.

How could Satan make this happen? How could he get people to reject the truth about Jesus and enthrone the evil one into their hearts and minds as the one to be worshiped—all the while singing songs of praise to Jesus?

Daniel tells us it is by seeking to change God's law, and Paul reveals how he does it by the name he gives this power: "The man of lawlessness."

Satan displaces Jesus in our hearts and sets himself up as the one being worshiped *when we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law*. It is when we conceive of God's law to be like the laws humans make that Satan enthrones himself in our hearts and minds. Thus, we reject the law of God and promote a lawless view, even while claiming to believe in the Ten Commandments.

God is the Creator of all reality—space, time, energy, matter, and life. God's laws are the protocols He established, built into reality, that govern the operation of all things: the law of gravity, laws of physics, laws of health, and the moral laws—the law of love, law of liberty, law of worship, etc. Life is built to exist only in harmony with God's laws, for they are the protocols for life and health. Deviation from God's laws brings pain, suffering, destruction, and death. (For more on God's Design Laws, see my blog.)

As the Bible teaches:

- The wages of sin is death (Roman 6:23)
- Sin when full-grown brings forth death (James 1:15)
- Those who sow to the carnal nature *from that nature* reap destruction (Galatians 6:8)

God's laws are design laws. Life only operates in harmony with them.

Human beings cannot create reality. We cannot build space, time, energy, matter, or life. Our laws are not the laws upon which reality exists. Instead, we make up rules and then enforce those rules by threats of punishment.

Christianity has embraced the system of the world in that it teaches that God's law is imposed, imperial, a system of rules that functions like human law and requires the ruling magistrate to use its power to punish rule-breakers. This idea is "lawless"—it is a denial of reality. It dethrones God from His seat as Creator and enthrones a deity that is a rule-maker—functionally no different than any other created being—thus, it enthrones Satan in the minds and hearts of all who accept the lie that God's law is like human law.

The lie of imposed laws results in a cascade of other lies—all of which distort God's character and obstruct His plan to heal and save His people. Some of these subsequent lies are:

- We are in legal trouble with God
- We are under God's death penalty
- God must use His power to kill the disobedient
- Jesus came to be killed by God to pay our legal penalty
- Jesus pleads to God in heaven, offering the Father the blood of a human sacrifice to get God not to kill us
- We need to be protected from the anger and wrath of God
- Jesus hides us or our record from God because if God saw it, He would kill us
- Jesus hides us or our record by covering us in a robe of His righteousness—or by using His blood to erase the records of our sins from the legal accounting books in heaven
- We must do certain rituals (baptism, Eucharist, communion, confession) in order to get the legal application of Jesus' blood payment made to the court of heaven
- It is right and just for God to use power to torture and/or kill people who disobey

The lie that God's law functions like human law has displaced Christ in the minds of millions of people and enthroned a deity that functions like the evil one. And they are sharing this lie about God wherever they go.

God told His friend John that at this time in human history, a message was to be proclaimed that presents the eternal gospel:

> Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:6, 7 NIV84).

And what is the good news that has always been true—true in eternity past and true in eternity future? That God is *not* like Satan has portrayed Him to be! He is *not* a dictator who makes up laws that function like our laws. He is *not* the source of pain, suffering, and death. He is *not* the one from whom we need to be protected. And so, the end-time message calls us to make a judgment about God, just like Elijah called the people of his day to make a judgment about God:

> How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him (1 Kings 18:21 NIV84).

It is time to choose to worship "him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." It is time to reject the dictator views of God, to reject the lie that God's law functions like human law, and to embrace the eternal good news that God is our Creator, Savior, and Restorer! It is by embracing the truth about God that we are set free (John 8:32)—free from fear, free from guilt, free from shame. It is the truth about God that wins us to trust, and in trust we open the heart and experience the Spirit healing us, writing in our hearts God's living law of love.

> This is the healing plan I will renew with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord: I will recreate and cleanse them, and restore my law of love in their minds, and write my principles of benevolence on their hearts. I will be the God they love, admire and adore, and they will be a people who reveal my true character (Hebrews 8:10 *The Remedy*).

I invite you to worship our Creator—to reject the lie that God's law functions like human law—and to open your heart to the Spirit of the Lord, asking God to restore in you His perfect law of love so that you can bring glory to Him by revealing His character in your life!

Only when God's people reject the lies of Satan—instead embrace His design law and proclaim the eternal gospel about God's character and methods of love—will Jesus come again.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 1
The Uniqueness of the Bible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

INTRODUCTION
to the Study Guide

Read first three paragraphs, "As Seventh-day Adventists we are Protestants…" What do you think of this idea of *sola Scriptura?*

The argument the lesson and many Protestants take today, is that this means that Scripture is used alone, by itself, without consideration for other threads of evidence to form our doctrines. But this is actually not what the term meant to the Protestant Reformers who coined it, nor how it was used by them.

In fact, there were five *solaes,* and let's examine the other four to see if they give insight into what *sola Scriptura* meant to the Reformers who coined the term:

- *sola fide* – by faith alone
- *sola gratia* – by grace alone
- *Solus Christus or Solo Christo* – by Christ or through Christ alone
- *Soli Deo Gloria* – glory to God alone

Do these other *soloes* mean that it is only by these alone, or that they are set up against another idea that is being excluded? For instance:

- by faith alone rather than by faith plus works to earn salvation
- by grace alone rather than by grace plus human merit
- by Christ alone rather than by Christ plus church sacraments
- glory to God alone rather than glory to God plus humankind or the church?

Does by faith alone mean without grace and without Christ?

Does Christ alone mean without the Holy Spirit working in the heart?

Do you see how these *soloes* are not about the element alone, but about excluding something from inclusion that was wrongly being included?

So, what would *sola Scriptura* mean for the Reformers?

It would be that our doctrinal truths come from Scripture not from Scripture plus church traditions, church councils, or papal rulings.

Does that mean that our doctrines were not to come from Scripture plus other God-given revelation?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

When science shows that a balanced whole-food vegetarian diet is healthier than a diet that includes meat, should we reject the scientific evidence because God gave Israel laws on how to prepare meat or because the New Testament church didn't recommend vegetarianism?

The lesson points out that many people who claim to believe in Scripture alone have false beliefs, but what error in how the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is understood has contributes to this? Believing that it means that Scripture should not be harmonized with science and experience, or that Scripture should absolutely and always be used alone and by itself to determine our beliefs.

When Scripture is used alone, detached from harmonizing with the laws of God as revealed in nature and detached from our real-world experiences, then it can be twisted to say anything and this is why there are so many Christian groups arguing back and forth, last count over 40,000 different groups.

The Scripture teaches that God has given us three threads of evidence to reveal truth to us:

Scripture teaches that God reveals Himself through His **first book—nature**:

- Job, a righteous man who was perfect in all his ways according to God says, "Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you." (Job 12:7–8 NIV84).
- "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1 NIV84)
- "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20 NIV84).

And Scripture teaches that God reveals Himself through His **second book—experiences of life**:

- "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8 NIV84).
- "Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe'" (John 20:27 NIV84).

And God's **third book**—the book that came after nature, after experience, is **Scripture**.

According to one of the founders of the SDA church, Scripture is not the only book that reveals truth to us—but MUST be the foundation of all truth—which means we must harmonize our understanding of science and experience with Scripture, but it also means we must harmonize our understanding of Scripture with the design laws of God revealed in nature and how life actually works:

> **The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life**. Here are the treasures from which Christ's workers are to draw. In the search after truth they are to depend upon God, not upon human intelligences, the great men whose wisdom is foolishness with God. **Through His own appointed channels the Lord will impart a knowledge of Himself to every seeker**. –

{COL 125.2} [What are those channels? Scripture, nature, and experience—but all three must be harmonized!]

Rightly understood, both the **revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature**. {Ed 130.3}

Jesus followed the divine plan of education. The schools of His time, with their magnifying of things small and their belittling of things great, He did not seek. **His education was gained directly from the Heaven-appointed sources; from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life--God's lesson books**, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart.
{Ed 77.2}

The Scripture says, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Matthew 13:34, 35. **Natural things were the medium for the spiritual; <u>the things of nature and the life-experience of His hearers were connected with the truths of the written word</u>. Leading thus from the natural to the spiritual kingdom, Christ's parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God, and earth with heaven**. - COL 17.2

When we separate the three threads of Scripture we have problems:

- Science by itself leads to godlessness
- Experience by itself leads to mysticism
- Scripture by itself leads to confusion, over 40,000 different Christian groups arguing among themselves while claiming Scripture supports their view—why? Because they don't anchor their interpretations in reality, in the laws of nature and thus conjure up all types of irrational beliefs.

If we want to interpret Scripture correctly we must use the integrative evidenced-based approach which harmonizes all three threads.

In the fourth paragraph the lesson makes another common error in interpreting Scripture:

> In short Scripture is the foundational source of the truths that we believe and proclaim to the world. Or, as the Bible itself says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Tim 3:16). "All Scripture," of course, means *all* Scripture—even the Scripture that we might not like; that might step on our toes; and that, to use contemporary parlance, might not be "politically correct."

What is the error made in this paragraph that is a dangerous error?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

That all Scripture is God breathed—is it?

- What about the apocrypha? Books like:
  - Esdras (Vulgate 3 Esdras)
  - 2 Esdras (Vulgate 4 Esdras)
  - Tobit.
  - Judith ("Judeth" in Geneva)
  - Rest of Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4 – 16:24)
  - Wisdom.
  - Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach)
  - Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy ("Jeremiah" in Geneva) (all part of Vulgate Baruch)
- What versions of the Bible have included the apocryphal books?
  - Gutenberg Bible
  - Luther Bible
  - Clementine Vulgate
  - King James Version
- Pseudepigrapha?
  - 3 Maccabees.
  - 4 Maccabees.
  - Assumption of Moses.
  - Ethiopic Book of Enoch (1 Enoch)
  - Slavonic Second Book of Enoch.
  - Book of Jubilees.
  - 3 Baruch.
- Book of Mormon?
- Koran?

Do we believe all Scripture is inspired by God? The text should more accurately read, “All Scripture, inspired by God, is useful….” Not “All Scripture is inspired by God…”

So from *The Remedy:*

> For all Scripture, inspired by God, is beneficial for teaching, redirecting, correcting and training — to promote character transformation — so that God's ambassadors may be exceptionally competent in application of the Remedy and in every other good work. 2Tim 3:16-17

Once we have determined that the text means *all* Scripture that God inspired is useful, and not that all Scripture is inspired, then we can accept that we should use all of it that God did inspire, even if it is not politically correct.

What might the authors be referring to as Scripture that steps on our toes or is not politically correct?

- Later in the quarterly the lesson focuses on Creation—perhaps it is concerned with accepting the Biblical view of origins and rejecting the evolutionary view?
- If we accept the Biblical view of Creation does that impact other doctrines?
- Are they wanting us to think about God's design for human relationships?
- Are they wanting us to think about the Sabbath?
- Are they wanting us to think about our bodies—the Spirit Temple—and what substances we put in them—particularly with the legalization of marijuana in so many places?
- What about a belief in God itself—is believing in God considered politically correct? Perhaps—Nancy Pelosi says she prays for the president regularly, so perhaps believing in God is politically correct.
- But what about witnessing for God? Did Tim Tebow get negative feedback from the political elites for his public stance on his faith?
- Why is public witness for God considered politically incorrect by some?

SABBATH

Read memory text, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105 NKJV) What does this text mean to you?

This is how I phrased it in *The Remedy*:

> Your word is the lamp that guides my steps —
> the light that directs my way.

How does God's Word, the Scripture, guide our steps and direct our paths or ways?

Is it through studying to find the right list of rules?

Is the Bible a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned?

Or does the Bible enlighten our mind to reality—to our Creator, to His design, His methods, His protocols for life and health and therefore doesn't merely give us rules to follow, but enlightens us on how to live in harmony with God and His kingdom of love?

Life is filled with choices—how do you make choices in life? Are you an active decision-maker or passive? Do you examine the evidence, weigh out the issues, prayerfully ask for wisdom and enlightenment, considering God's revelation of truth from Scripture, science and experience and then make an informed choice? Or, do you wait for life events to make choices for you, or for the majority of your peers to decide and then follow the group? Do you let others, perhaps leaders decide what is best?

I have seen so many allowing others to do their thinking—even church leaders? I know of conference presidents who when given some of our materials did not study it out for themselves but sent it off to a

theology professor and asked the theology professor to tell them whether what we teach is okay or not. Is such an approach using God's word as a lamp to lighten the steps? No—it removes God's Word from leading one's life and allows another human being to lead.

This quote was written by one of the founders of the SDA church, consider the implications:

> We say decidedly, every minister of Jesus Christ must bind himself to the Source of all light and power and he must not follow in the shadow of any other living man, because there is Christ to whom he must become attached, and he should not bind his heart to any human being and **let man do his thinking for him.** [The Word of God is to be our light to guide us, not other human's thinking about the Word. What happens if we let others tell us what the Word of God means and don't think for ourselves?] He is not filling his position in society or in the world if he simply accepts what his father has said and what his father, or some great and good man in past generations, has done, and sinks himself, his individuality, in them**. Some who think that they preach the gospel are preaching other men's ideas. Through some means they have come to the decision that it is no part of a minister's calling or duty to think diligently and prayerfully. He accepts what other men have taught without asserting his individuality**... {1888 834.2} [Do we see any of this in organized churches? Why?]
>
> **Now Satan has his hand in all this work to narrow down the work of God**. [What does this mean? Can you see that if people, instead of studying God's word for themselves, instead study their church creeds or fundamental beliefs, restrict the light that God can bring. The Bible is the divine Word of God, and it has truths that are not fully revealed. As we study the Word we gain ever deeper insights. But if we instead study human commentaries on the Scripture we but barriers between us and the source of light and truth.] Ministers of Jesus Christ are to be constantly receiving light from the Source of all light. **They are not to be simply receivers of other men's thoughts**, they themselves not plowing deep into the mines of truth. If a minister is not a worker himself, digging for the truth as for hidden treasure to find the precious jewels of truth, he is forfeiting his God-given privileges. **He is not to put any human mind, any human intelligence, between his soul and God**. There is to come no authority from human minds that will in the least degree interpose between him and God's authority to lead, to guide, and to dictate. **The ministers of Christ should gather up every ray of light, every jot of strength and illumination from other minds whom God has blessed, but that is not enough. They must go to the Fountainhead for themselves**. **God has given men reasoning minds and He will not hold them guiltless if they trust in man or make flesh their arm.** He wants you individually to come to Him, to draw from Him, **to use the ability God gives to understand the living oracles**. If one man can see light in examining the Scriptures, so may every true Christian have the right to read, to examine, to search the Scriptures with unabated interest, and gather light therefrom. {1888 834.3}

Do you see the balance in the statement—yes we want to learn from others, hear the truths others have gleaned, but then we are to study the Scripture for ourselves and come to understanding and see the truth for ourselves and allow God to teach us from His Word.

Consider, we may have a math teacher who teaches us math—but we are to work problems on our own, and not simply memorize the answers the teacher gives.

I found the second paragraph interesting and encouraging that we can be confident we have an accurate transcript of the New Testament, "There are more than 24,600…"

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Deuteronomy 32:45-47:

> When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. 47 They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." NIV84

What does this text mean? Is Moses telling the people that if they keep the right rules they will do well, but if they break the rules they won't?

- Well there is some truth in this. If a parent tells a child to brush their teeth and the child does it only because it is a rule, they will still benefit from the brushing. But, if they never understand the purpose of the rule and come to brush because they actually want to be healthy, they remain children and in need of supervision. God wants us to grow up and do what is right because it is right, it is how life works in God's design, not because of a rule.

What does it mean to take something to heart? Can you obey a rule without taking it to heart?

How many young people obey school rules because they are being monitored but in their heart they are looking for ways to skip classes or get around the rules?

So, this goes beyond rule-keeping, it goes to heart change. This is the New Covenant: God says He will write His law on our hearts and minds—what does this mean? Is this different than Moses was counseling here? Or is it the same?

How does the law get written on our hearts? Is it different than circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit or is that the same thing?

The lesson points out that Jesus is the Word made flesh—what does this mean?

Jesus said we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood what does this mean?

The lesson points out in the last paragraph that Jesus is the focus and aim of all Scripture—this is WELL said! Absolutely true.

This gives a key to understanding Scripture—we must understand its purpose. What is the theme of Scripture? The OT Scriptures primary theme is the plan of salvation focused upon the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head.

So, let's take a minute and review—how do we accurately read and interpret Scripture, what are some guidelines?

One crucial starting point in understanding God's Word is to identify the purpose of reading it. The Bible is not an instruction book on mathematics, physics, medicine, chemistry, or many other subjects. Rather, its purpose is to teach the truth about God, the problem of sin, and the plan of salvation. It contains all the truths necessary to lead people back to the knowledge of God in order for them to exercise trust in Him and experience healing of heart and mind.

But understanding the purpose of the book—to communicate the truth to save people—isn't enough. One must study Scripture with a desire to comprehend the meaning, and not merely to know the words.

I read valuable insight many years ago from the book *Christ's Object Lessons* that really helped me grasp this:

> Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought **he must learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles (p. 59, my emphasis).

This is the key to all Bible study—not merely knowing the original words, but knowing the intended meaning. Many get confused on this and end up arguing over the right "word" yet never appreciating the right meaning.

When writing *The Remedy* paraphrase, this was one of the key principles I applied: What is the most accurate and precise meaning? I have received emails from some who take issue with certain verses because the English words I chose were not in keeping with the Greek. But it isn't the words that matters, for words can change meaning (e.g., consider how the word "gay" has changed meanings over the past century). What matters is the meaning being communicated, so I have always challenged those concerned to tell me what the verse means.

This is what we want to do all throughout the Bible. And it is even more critical to do so when dealing with symbols, metaphors, similes, images, parables, or any other representative expression.

Here are some basic guidelines that I have found to be helpful in rightly interpreting Scripture:

1. We must understand the overall context of Scripture—not just the immediate context, which is what many Bible students focus on and, thus, they lose the forest for the trees; i.e., they lose

the broader message for the local message. The overall context is a cosmic one in which God is love all the time and Satan is a being of selfishness who seeks to destroy what God has created.

2. The battle between God and Satan is not a physical battle, but a battle of ideas, concepts, and beliefs—seeking to win hearts and minds to one side or the other. God's prime weapons are truth, love, and freedom. Satan's prime weapons are lies, fear-based selfishness, and coercion.
   One of the mistakes many Bible translators do is translate in ways that put God in the role of using Satan's methods or weapons.
3. The Bible is the revelation of the truth about God, His character and methods, and plans to send Jesus to save humankind. It also exposes Satan as the source of evil, death, pain, and suffering and reveals throughout history the problems that deviating from God's design cause.
4. Throughout Old Testament times, the cosmic conflict was waged on earth, with God working to fulfill His promise to bring the "Seed" that would one day crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15), and with Satan working to oppose God by seeking to close the avenue through which the Messiah would be born.
5. The Old Testament records real people who did real things; thus, it is a book that is historically accurate. However, of the billions of people who have ever lived, only a few are recorded in Scripture. This is because the focus of Scripture is the plan of salvation. Thus, God inspired His penmen to record the stories that were not only historically accurate but also revealed cosmic truths—were metaphorical for the battle between Christ and Satan and provide insight into the plan of salvation (for examples of this, see my blog David and the Showbread vs. Uzzah and the Ark).
6. Some specific rules of interpreting Bible prophecy are:
   - If one part of a passage is symbolic or metaphor, then the rest is symbolic or metaphor unless clear reasons for taking it as literal are expressed in the text.
   - The Bible should be used to interpret itself (i.e., symbol interpretations should rely on Bible definitions before other definitions).
   - The general theme is that of the conflict between Christ and Satan.
   - God's character of love never changes; therefore, interpretations should never result in God being represented with a character other than love.
   - God's law of love never changes; therefore, interpretations should always be in harmony with God's law of love.
   - God's other design laws never change; therefore, interpretations should not violate God's design laws for life.
   - Interpretations must be internally consistent with Scripture but also harmonize with science and experience.

MONDAY

The lesson points out that the Bible was written by many different people over many years, some of whom were eye-witnesses to the events they wrote about.

But, this gives us opportunity to consider—*How* inspiration works. How is the Bible inspired and how is it different from different from the Koran or Book of Mormon?

The Book of Mormon or Koran purports to be a transcript of writings brought by angels to the persons who transcribed them.

The Bible purports to be written by people who actually witnessed events and/or were inspired to know truths to write.

Further, the Bible has many authors, not just one, and the harmony among all the books, despite the various authors, is further evidence of its divine origin.

But how does inspiration work? Do we believe in word or thought inspiration?

Word inspiration is the idea that the very words of Scripture are inspired.

Thought inspiration is the idea that the Bible writers were given inspired wisdom into concepts and ideas and they chose the words from their life experience to best communicate the idea, so the message is inspired, but not the words themselves. Thus, it is legitimate to replace Hebrew and Greek words with English words as long as the message or idea is accurately retained.

Is the power of Scripture in knowing the words or knowing the meaning, which ultimately leads to knowing God?

Can one know the words of Scripture and sometimes the right meaning and still not know God? Consider the Jewish leaders who answered Herod's question about where the Messiah was to be born—they answered Bethlehem, but were they supporters of Christ?

What is the lesson for us in this?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Bible prophecy, particularly the prophecies about Jesus, read the second paragraph, "There are at least 65…"

Because Bible prophecies are true, and particularly the prophecies about Jesus are true, does this give us confidence to trust the rest of Scripture and confidence in God?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible is unique…" Why is this important and how is it different than writings of other religious material?

Other religions have writings that are philosophical (Buddhism, Confucianism), others have writings that were said to be revealed by an angel (Islam, Mormonism). The Bible is unique in that it has philosophies, poetry, prophecy, revelation, but it most importantly is historical in that it records in history God's dealing with real people to carry out the plan of salvation. This gives the Bible a certain gravitas, authenticity, reliability that no other religious writings have.

But the Bible is not only a history book, which it is, as it records the life of real people who did real things in history, but what is so amazing about the Bible is that those historical events are also object lessons to teach us the larger reality of the Great Controversy and the plan of salvation.

Here are some examples:

- Seven Miracle Births—which I have spoken about many times so won't review here again
- Joseph—metaphor for Christ—sold into slavery, stays loyal, exalted to deliver people
- Moses—did not think becoming ruler was something to be grasped and instead became a wanderer, only to speak to God face to face as a friend, deliver the people from bondage and set up the sanctuary—thus Moses is a real person whose life experiences teach about Christ
- Nehemiah Ezra building up the walls—repair the breech 3 releases, 1844, 1888, Rev 18, final message of mercy to lighten the world God's design law with rev 14 worship creator
- Daniel lion's den—betrayed and stays faithful and protected, in the last days Satan is a roaring lion seeking to destroy those faithful to God, but those who stay united with God will be delivered from his power
- Enoch/Elijah—object of those who are translated into heaven

So the Bible records real people who did real things, but these lives also teach larger realities.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "In 621…" What happened here? God had given the Scripture years before, but it had been lost and thus error and apostacy had crept in. The rediscovery of the Scripture led to revival and reformation.

Has this happened at any other time in human history?

The Reformation—during the Dark Ages the Scriptures were locked away from the people and all kinds of superstitious teaches crept in, and what triggered the Reformation was not merely Martin Luther's 95 thesis, but translating the Bible into the language of the people. Bible truths freed the minds of the people and led to reformation and revival.

But today the Christian world has again forgotten the Bible. It has been said that Christianity is a group of people who are Biblically illiterate.

An article in Christianity Today reports:

> Around 30 percent of British parents don't know Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, or the Good Samaritan are in the Bible. To make matters worse, 27 percent think Superman is or might be a biblical story. More than 1 in 3 believes the same about Harry Potter. And more than half (54 percent) believe The Hunger Games is or might be a story from the Bible.
>
> More than half of evangelicals (59 percent) believe the Holy Spirit is a force and not a personal being—in contrast to the orthodox biblical teaching of the Trinity being three Persons in one God. As a whole, Americans, including many Christians, hold unbiblical views on hell, sin, salvation, Jesus, humanity, and the Bible itself.
> https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/july/epidemic-of-bible-illiteracy-in-our-churches.html

And as America and western countries forget the Bible has society become more decadent?

The Bible was supposed to bring revival and spiritual advancement to the infant SDA church in 1888 when Jones and Waggoner brought the message of righteousness by faith—the message that when we have faith, or trust in God, we open the heart and the Spirit comes in and we become righteous. Just as the Bible teaches:

> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2Cor 5:21 NIV84

But this Bible message was rejected by the leadership and replaced with a legal fraud that we are declared to be legally righteous in a courtroom setting in heaven, even though we are not actually righteous. This rejection of Bible truth led to, like Israel, a wandering in the wilderness since that time.

EGW, after the rejection of this message in 1888, wrote the following:

> "When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: [The following is a quote from the angel of the Lord] "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over [re-enacting] the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**. I have placed you in your proper position, **which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; [What was EGW advocating? For the healing view of the gospel promoted by Jones and Waggoner. Righteousness by faith message—which is actual, real, genuine righteousness within the heart/mind of those who trust in Jesus. The rebuilding and healing of our characters when we trust in Jesus—the fulfillment of the day of at-one-ment metaphor, the cleansing of the bride, the groom purifying His bride bringing her into unity/oneness with Him, the cleansing of the sanctuary. All the same. But church leadership rejected this healing view and chose instead to embrace the false imperial legal view of declared righteousness even though we are not. This, is, according to the angel of the Lord, like Korah saying "we can't succeed in going into the promised land." And church leaders, who prefer the imperial law view, have been telling Adventists ever since that we can't succeed in experiencing Christ's righteousness, which prepares us to stand in His presence; we

> can only be declared legally righteous, even though we are not.] but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. **It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people**. [Friends of Come and Reason around the world, realize that when you are told you are not welcome, you cannot teach your SS class, that you cannot share the wonders of God's love that has so transformed your life—that it is not you they are rejecting but Christ they are rejecting—just like Korah.] **They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness**. I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should heal them. **They have obscured their spiritual eyesight.** [What does this mean? How? By refusing the truth of God's design law, by holding to Rome's imperial law lie, they have blinded themselves to how reality actually works and live in a fantasy of confusion and contradictions mirroring this sinful world with a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death which they call justice.] They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word. Lightness, trifling, jesting and joking are daily practiced. They have not set their hearts to seek Me. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: "Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." These words from God I have not dared to disregard."–Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. (To "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie," Nov. 5, 1892.) {3MR 191.2}

What happens when we reject Bible truth—darkness of mind, hardness of heart. But when we promote the truth of the Bible the Holy Spirit is poured out to empower the truth to do its work in both transforming hearts and minds and spreading to others.

Read second paragraph, "One of the most powerful testimonies…" How is the Bible powerful—by bringing truth—it is the truth about God which destroys lies and wins to trust and leads to opening of the heart to the Holy Spirit. The Bible itself is not the source of the power, God is the source of the power, but the Bible is the sword of the Spirit, the tool used by God to cut through lies and pierce stubborn hearts and bring conviction to lead us to make new choices, primarily to reject lies and embrace the truth about God.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available on the Come And Reason Ministiries website. View FHD videos, MP3 audio tracks (and iTunes podcast), PowerPoint slides, and get the PDF course workbook/syllabus.

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 2
The Origin and Nature of the Bible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Consider some passages from Remedy Psalms to promote God's love

Read first paragraph, "The way we see and understand…" The lesson brings up a good point, our preconceived ideas, assumed premises, mindsets, beliefs we hold before we go to the Bible will impact what we are able to learn from the Bible. The lesson emphasizes the godless mindset and how if one believes there is no God that belief impacts the ability to understand Biblical truths. No doubt about it, but what are other preconceived ideas that people can have that also negatively impact a person's ability to gain truth from the Bible?

- That the Messiah will come and use might and power to overthrow the enemies of Israel and rule on an earthly throne—did this idea corrupt how the Pharisees read the Bible 2000 years ago?
    - What about today—do any religious groups believe this same idea about the second coming of Christ?
- The Bible is to be taken as it reads without reasoning things through
    - Psychotic patients have been known to gouge out eyes because of Jesus's words if you eye offends you then pluck it out
- The Bible is to be taken alone, divorced from science and nature
- God's law functions like human law and God is the source of inflicted pain and death to punish unrepentant sinners.

The lesson points out the value of faith—and contrasts it with skepticism. To be sure if a person is denying God, has concluded that the Bible is a book of myths and fairytales and goes to read it with such a skeptical mind, they are very unlikely to find any truth. But are these the only two options when approaching the Bible?

Can a person:

- Have faith in the wrong god? Remember Jesus said they would prophecy in His name but He never knew them?
    - What happens when people do believe in God, study the Bible regularly, but hold the wrong view of God?
        - Crucified Jesus
        - Salem witch trials
        - Seek to pass laws to make others comply with their relifious views

- Not have faith, but also not have skepticism, could they have an honest desire to discover the truth of the Bible, but haven't yet come to a knowledge of God? Consider the Ethiopian Phillip met on the road

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible is not like…" No doubt about it, the Bible is truthful and trustworthy, but does this mean that every text in the Bible is a true statement or should be taken as it reads?

When Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus was Satan speaking truth to Jesus? No, Satan was using Scripture to create a falsehood. Does this happen today, where Scripture is used to create falsehoods?

- How about when a disaster strikes and people say it is God doing it?
  - What about the current Corona pandemic—some people are saying this is God doing it? Are viruses part of God's creation?
  - One person posted on our Facebook page that God is the One who brought the Corona Virus quoting Isaiah 45:7
    "I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things. "

    Several points to be understood when reading this text:

    In Scripture God is often credited with doing that which He permits to occur. God did not stop King Saul from committing suicide, yet Scripture states God put Sault to death:

    > Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day. 1Sam 31:4-6.
    >
    > Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse. 1Chronicles 10:13,14.

    So, this passage can be understood as God being credited for the evil He permits to occur during this conflict with Satan.

    The Hebrew word ra' can refer to moral evil occurring within the character of a being or external trouble that occurs outside a being. In this case the text is referring to the latter. God does, at times, use His power to bring disasters upon nations and individuals for the fulfillment

of His overall healing plan of love. God brought the 10 plagues upon Egypt, but for what purpose? To expose the impotence of their pagan gods and turn their hearts toward Him. Sadly, many didn't respond. Yet we can say that God brought calamity upon them as a therapeutic intervention. Those who don't understand reality will see a god who punishes. Those who do understand reality will see a God of love who intervenes to heal and save. God's actions are always actions of love because God never changes and is true to Himself—He doesn't act based on our misunderstanding, but on what is right.

Finally, the passage was written in reference to King Cyrus who was a pagan ruler called by God to release Israel after 70 years of captivity. Pagan gods are esteemed in relation to their power. The more powerful the god, the greater he is believed to be and the more esteemed by the worshipper. Therefore, God is speaking a language designed to reach the mind of a pagan ruler, reminding Cyrus that the God of heaven has all power.

When compared with the rest of Scripture, we know that this text does not mean evil, sin, darkness, suffering, pain, or death originate, arise from, or are found within the heart of God.

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 1John 1:5

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; James 1:13

God is love 1John 4:16

- How about God's wrath being God using power to punish sin? This is a common misuse of Scripture in which people project their human, worldly understanding of wrath upon Scripture and misconstrue the meaning. What is the true meaning? God always acts in love and uses power to expose evil and give opportunity for salvation—but in the end God sets free those who refuse Him to reap what sin brings, which is death. Thus, God's wrath is exactly what the Bible teaches—letting go. Romans 1:18, 24,26,28.

Read second paragraph, "Direct verbal communication…" Can you think of some people to whom God spoke to directly?

- Adam and Eve (Gen 2:16, 3:9-13)
- Cain (Gen 4:6)
- Noah (Gen 6:13-21, 7:1-4, 8:15-17)
- Noah and his sons (Gen 9:1-17)
- Job and his friends (Job 38:1-42:6)
- Abraham (Gen 17:9 and many others)
- Isaac (Gen 26:24)
- Jacob (Gen 35:1, 9-12, in a dream 28:13-15... likely 32:26-29)
- Moses (Exodus 6:13, 34:33 and many others)

- Aaron (Exodus 6:13 and others)
- Miriam (Num 12:4)
- Joshua (Jos 6:2-5)
- Samuel (1Sa 3:4-14, 15:10, 16:7)
- David (1Sa 23:2, 23:4, 30:8; 2Sa 2:1, 5:19, 5:23-24)
- Nathan (2Sa 7:4-16, 2Sa 12:1 by implication)
- Solomon (1Ki 6:11-13, 3:5-15 in a dream)
- Jehu (1Ki 16:1-4)
- Elijah (1Ki 19:9-18)
- Isaiah (2Ki 20:4; Isa 6:8-12, 8:1-11)
- Ahaz (Isa 7:10-25)
- Manasseh and his people (2Ch 33:10)
- Jonah (Jon 1:1-2, 3:1-2, 4:4, 4:9-11)
- Ezekiel (Eze 1:3)
- Hosea (Hos 1:2-5)
- Haggai (Hag 2:10-23)
- Zechariah (Zec 1:1-17)
- People at Jesus's baptism (Mat 3:17)
- Apostles if we count Jesus in human form
- Paul (Act 9:3-6, 18:9)

And which ones wrote Scripture?

- Moses (Exodus 6:13, 34:33 and many others)
- Joshua (Jos 6:2-5)
- Samuel (1Sa 3:4-14, 15:10, 16:7)
- David (1Sa 23:2, 23:4, 30:8; 2Sa 2:1, 5:19, 5:23-24)
- Solomon (1Ki 6:11-13, 3:5-15 in a dream)
- Isaiah (2Ki 20:4; Isa 6:8-12, 8:1-11)
- Jonah (Jon 1:1-2, 3:1-2, 4:4, 4:9-11)
- Ezekiel (Eze 1:3)
- Hosea (Hos 1:2-5)
- Haggai (Hag 2:10-23)
- Zechariah (Zec 1:1-17)
- Matthew, Mark, John, James, Peter, Jude
- Paul (Act 9:3-6, 18:9)

Why doesn't God speak directly to us today? What would you do if tonight a being suddenly appears in your bedroom and begins to talk to you?
The lesson suggests that God is the ultimate author of the Bible, read the last paragraph from **MONDAY's** lesson, which is a quote from the book *The Great Controversy*:

> The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. p. v3

What does this mean? God is the author of Scripture in that He directed it, oversaw it, inspired it, but does that mean God wrote the Bible? Is the Bible a dictation from God and the Bible penmen wrote down what God told them to write down? Are the words of the Bible inspired or were the men inspired and they wrote the words they thought best to convey the concepts, thus it is the truths that are inspired?

Consider this quote from the same author as the one above, do you agree or disagree?

> The Bible is written by inspired men, **but it is not God's mode of thought and expression.** It is that of humanity. **God, as a writer, is not represented.** Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. **The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen**. Look at the different writers. 1SM 21.1
>
> **It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself,** who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. **But the words and thoughts receive the impress of the individual mind**. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.—Manuscript 24, 1886 (written in Europe in 1886). 1SM 21.2

So God is the author, in that He inspired the men with truths to be communicated, but God is not the writer. The Bible does not represent God's words, but God's truth, His methods, laws, character, but also exposes Satan, the nature and character of sin, and the plan of salvation.
Why is this important to understand? Because many people get stuck in concrete or magical thinking and believe it is essential to get the right words, or the words used have power. Almost like an incantation, have to get the words right. Such as, don't use Jesus, must use Joshua, but not Joshua, must say Yoshua. Or it isn't God its Jehovah—oh no it's not it's Yahweh, and on the arguments over words go and divert the mind away from truth.

The third paragraph points out that the Scripture is practical—what does this mean? What is required of the Scriptures for them to be practical? That they communicate reality, i.e. operate upon design law and in harmony with how life works. Notice how the New Testament church only put three directives upon the new Gentile believers and they were all practical applications of design law:

- Food polluted by idols:
  - An idol cannot change the nutritional quality of the food. Therefore, eating foods offered to idols does not pollute the body. Paul makes this clear in Romans 14.

- The issue they were addressing is the design law of worship—by beholding we become changed, this also known as modeling. What we believe has power over us: truth heals and sets free, lies damage and enslave. Don't allow your minds to become contaminated by giving any credence to idols. Thus, don't eat food polluted by the *idea* that it is a bounty given you by a false god or the false god has any power of you.

- Sexual immorality:
  - God designed relationships to operate on love and trust. When sexual intimacy occurs between husband and wife, as God designed, healthy bonding occurs. The brain actually rewires, and reward circuits are heightened for one's spouse. This is design law—how our biology is actually built to work. Deviating from this design is damaging to the mind, body, and relationships.
  - It is a violation of design law, altering brain circuitry, inflaming selfish and fear circuits, thus obstructing healing of mind and character.

- Meat from strangled animals or blood:
  - It also violates design law—the laws of health.
  - Humans were not designed to eat meat, and the blood carries waste products, stress hormones, and various inflammatory factors. Eating raw meat and drinking blood increases disease risk, and when the body is unhealthy the mind is compromised.

The lesson points out that we need the help of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives what God has revealed in His Word. Question: Are we to apply everything to our lives that God has revealed in His Word, or are some things only applicable to certain people at certain times in history?

- Should all of us follow the example of Abraham and take our first-born child to a mountain to sacrifice expecting God to intervene? No, this was a specific directive to a specific person at a specific time for a specific reason
- Should all of us observe the feasts days of the Old Testament? No, these were again specific directives, for specific people, at a specific time, for a specific purpose. Does that mean we would do wrong if we did observe them? Not necessarily—it would depend on the reason. If one chose to observe them in order to gain insight into the experiences of those who lived in OT times, to learn any lessons possible that these acted out metaphors were designed to teach, this could be beneficial. But if one were to observe the feast days out of a sense of legal obligation, without understanding they are only object lessons and have no direct benefit, then such activities could actually close down thinking and shut the mind to the Spirit of truth.
- What about foods that we eat? Should we eat only those things contained on a list in Scripture?

Read last paragraph, "Scripture also says,.." God is infinite and we are finite, and we cannot comprehend infinity thus we do need God to reveal whatever He desires to us. Further, our minds are infected with fear, selfishness and lies and thus we are unable, in our own ability, to comprehend the truth of God's universe and kingdom without God revealing it to us.

Further, what happens to us when we sin? Sin causes fear, guilt, shame—and what is the natural response to that? To deny and distort, to blame, to externalize, to justify. In other words, the natural response is to try to make those feelings go away, to justify ourselves, to find fault with the rules, the system, with others, to avoid taking responsibility for our own condition or wrong choices—thus we further darken our minds and don't want to accept the truth.

Jesus said,

> This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." John 3:19-21 NIV84)

Here is a historical quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> **For this time light is shining from the throne of God upon His people,** and He sends His messengers to give that light to the world. **All the light given in different ages to the children of men,—in promises, in prophecies, in threatenings, in testimony, and in example,—all has been handed down to this generation** by Him in whom are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." **But from this source <u>new light</u> is constantly received by the Christian**, showing yet more clearly the way to heaven. **To those who will not see the light, who refuse to walk in the path it reveals, the light becomes darkness**; but on the path of him who is willing to see, anxious to hear, and earnest in search for the truth as it is in Jesus, it shines with increasing brightness. The Lord accepts those who are not only willing to hear, but who are ready also to obey. He has said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." BEcho January 4, 1897, par. 4

What might this mean? Could it be the light of the 3 angels—to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, and sea? The truth of God's laws as design law and rejecting the lies of imperialism? What happens in the minds of those who accepted the light on the Sabbath but reject the light on design law?

I have seen this happen with people I know, who have refused to give up the imposed law view of God's law and slowly they lost appreciation for truths they once cherished and over time began to embrace more arbitrary ideas.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "All of Scripture is divinely inspired…" We went over this last week, but are all Scriptures divinely inspired?

- Koran
- Book of Mormon
- Apocrypha

What about all parts of the 66 books of the Bible?

What about when Paul wrote:

> To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 1Cor 7:12

Can prophets, those inspired by God to write the Scriptures sometimes be wrong—wrong on details and wrong on things involving the church?

> I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 1Cor 1:14-16 NIV84

What does this mean? Does it give us insight into how inspiration works? Inspiration is not about the Holy Spirit making sure every detail of reality is remembered correctly, but giving inspiration into truths that the human writer then records with their own words, experiences, and memories.

> When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. Galatians 2:11-13 NIV84

What does this tell us about how inspiration works?

Read bottom pink section, "Today there are biblical…" I would agree with the authors that we should not doubt the divine inspiration or reliability of Scripture. So, I believe in Creation, the Exodus, the Flood, the Resurrection. But, what about the last sentence, are we to pass judgment on the Word of God?

I guess it depends—

- Are we to make a judgment of whether we can trust Scripture or not?
- Are we to judge whether to take something literal or metaphorical?
- Are we to judge what applies to our lives and what was specifically for people of another time and not applicable to us today?
- Are we to judge how the various truths apply to our lives?
- Are we to judge whether we can trust God?
    - Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged." NET
    - Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come…Rev 14:7
    - Has God been lied about? Has God asked us to investigate the truth He has revealed and make a judgment?

So are we to pass judgment on the Bible?

TUESDAY

The lesson asks why God instructed that His revelation be written down?

What are the benefits to a written record?

- Accuracy through the generations
- Increased distribution
- Reference resource to return to as human memory can change
- Resistant to introduction of false narratives—but has the written Word prevented false narratives from arising? Why not?
    - because people don't study Scripture or
    - don't harmonize Scripture with science and experience or
    - have false premises about Scripture that are not in Scripture such as:
        - immortality of the soul
        - God's law works like human law

WEDNESDAY

Read John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." NIV84

The lesson makes an interesting comparison between Jesus the living Word and the written Word:

- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit yet born of a woman: Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit yet written by men
- Jesus became a man and lived at a specific time in a specific place, yet that did not nullify His divinity; the Scripture was written at specific times and places yet that does not deny its divine origins.
- Jesus is not limited to the time and place He lived on earth and Scripture is not limited to the time and place in which it was written.
- Jesus came down to the level of humanity in order to reveal God to us; the Scripture was written in the language of humanity in order to reveal God to us.

As we ingest the truths of the written Word we are taking into our minds and hearts the truth about God Himself, which become building blocks of ideas, concepts, beliefs that dispel lies and purify the heart—thus we eat the flesh of the Son of God and have our temples cleansed by His life (blood).

THURSDAY

The lesson points out the importance of faith in understanding the Bible.

What is faith based upon? Do we have faith before we hear the Scripture or is our faith established upon the Scripture? Which comes first our faith or our hearing of the truths of truth—perhaps from Scripture perhaps from one of God's representatives?

Paul writes in Romans:

> **For it is by our faith that we are put right with God**; it is by our confession that we are saved. The scripture says, "Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed." This includes everyone, because there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles; God is the same Lord of all and richly blesses all who call to him. As the scripture says, "Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved." **But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, "How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!"** Romans 10:10-15 GNT

So upon what is our faith based? Is it not on the word of God, the truth as Jesus revealed and as recorded in Scripture?

So our faith is based upon the evidence God has given us, which is established in history and recorded in Scripture of God's trustworthiness!

Read first paragraph, "All true learning…" what is true learning? Would this be learning that becomes more than an idea, but a way of living, something that is part of the character? Actual believing it to be true?

Is there a difference between learning about something and believing it? I learned about godless origins theories but I never believed them.

Can people learn about God and never know Him? It that true learning?

Knowledge and understand grow out of a loving and trusting relationship—this is true—but how does one come to love and trust their parents? Isn't it by experience, by the evidence of the parents' love and trustworthiness wrought out over time? Or do they come to love and trust their parents because they read about them in a book?

What about us? Do we need to have more knowledge of God than only reading about Him in a book? Where does that knowledge come from? From nature and life experiences—without integrating Scripture knowledge with the knowledge of God revealed in nature and in our real-life experiences then the Bible knowledge is often theoretical but not experiential.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

I love this quote:

> **Experience is said to be the best teacher**. Genuine experience is indeed superior to mere theoretical knowledge, but many have an erroneous idea as to what constitutes experience. **Real experience is gained by a variety of careful experiments, made with the mind free from prejudice, uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits.** The results are marked with careful solicitude, and **an anxious desire to learn, to improve, and to reform** on every point that is not in harmony with **physical and moral laws**. Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene 109.1
>
> **That which many term experience is not experience at all**; it has resulted from mere habit, or from a course of indulgence, thoughtlessly and often ignorantly followed. **There has not been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principles involved in the action. Experience which is opposed to natural law,—which is in conflict with the unchangeable principles of nature,—is not to be relied upon**. **Superstition arising from a diseased imagination is often arrayed in opposition to reason and to scientific principles.** To many a person, the idea that others may gainsay what he has learned by experience, seems folly, and even cruelty itself**. But there are more errors received and held through false ideas of experience than from any other cause**. There are many invalids today who will ever remain such because they cannot be convinced that their experience is not to be relied upon. CTBH 109.2

This false idea of experience is manifested today in the phrase, "That's my truth." This phrase creates a lie that allows a person to hold to something that is actually contrary to design law, contrary to how life actually works. For instance a person who says, "cigarettes help me function better, that is my truth" and they deny the evidence of all the damage it is causing.

In the second paragraph, the lesson states, "In a similar way, we do not understand the Bible correctly when we approach it with an attitude of skepticism or methodological doubt, but in a spirit of love and faith."

How about if we approach it as an expert in the law and theological expert? Did the Pharisees in Christ day approach it this way? Did they understand the Bible correctly? Could this be a problem for theology professors today?

The bottom pink sections asks, "Why is this faith not blind? That is, what are the good reasons that we have for this faith…?"

Upon what do we base our faith?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 3
Jesus and the Apostles' View of the Bible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "Unfortunately in this…" I had never thought of the Bible as God's view of humanity, hmmm…if we consider it as such, what view of humanity would you say it suggests God holds?

If you told the average person on the street the Bible is God's view of humanity what might they think?

- human beings are bad, sinners, worms and in need of punishment?
- human beings are loved, sick and dying and God died to save us?

It is a common view in some scientific circles that the Bible is merely human beings view of God. The authors take the view it is God's view of us. I take a different view:

- The Bible is God's revelation of reality to us!
    - The Bible reveals the truth about God
    - The Bible reveals the truth about sin
    - The Bible reveals the truth about sin's origin and Satan
    - The Bible reveals the truth about God's methods and the plan of salvation
    - And in that context the Bible does reveal that God is love and God loves us

Does the law lens one holds before reading Scripture have any impact on the conclusion we draw to this question?

Do some teach that God's view of humanity is that they are under legal condemnation, under "God's death penalty"?

In the design law view, however, we would see that the Bible teaches that humanity is God's special creation—now in a terminal condition, yet which God loves beyond our ability to truly understand, so much that He sent His only begotten Son to deal with the sin problem and offer us remedy so that we might be saved.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Jesus' temptations in the wilderness when Satan tempted Jesus. Read first paragraph, "When tempted by appetite…"

Several questions—was the temptation about appetite, or was appetite the physical medium through which temptation was introduced?

For instance, if Jesus ever found Himself hungry and went to a fig tree to get food to satisfy His physical hunger, would that be sin?

So, let's be clear, it is not sin to be hungry, and it is not sin to satisfy one's hunger. The temptation wasn't one of appetite—it was a temptation to doubt God and act in self-interest, i.e. selfishness.

At a later time, Satan tempted Jesus through another physical avenue—pain when He was beaten and crucified. But pain also could not induce Jesus to doubt His Father, or act against love to save self.

So in the wilderness, Jesus quoted Scripture about life not being found in physical food, but true life, eternal life, is found only in harmony with God. The point Jesus is making is "don't fear the one who can harm the body but cannot harm the soul." Jesus is saying that this mortal body is not what matters, it is the character, the mind and heart, the soul's connection with God that truly matters—that is where life is found.

Why does Jesus quote Scripture here? When Peter tempted Jesus by suggesting that Jesus not go through the cross, did Jesus quote Scripture to Peter? Why not?

This is important to understand—the lesson wants to suggest that Jesus's method here is the single and sole method to be used—quote Scripture when tempted. While quoting Scripture is one of the tools God has given us, it is not the only method to resisting temptation; Jesus used many methods such as:

- Quoting Scripture
- Talking to His Father (Gethsemane)
- Speaking truth and confronting the temptation (Peter)
- Remained silent—when being tempted by High Priest, Pilate
- Choosing to act in love (John this is your mother, Mary this is your son)
- Trusting His Father (Father into your hands I commend my spirit)
- Understanding His mission (Peter put away your sword, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (MT 26:53-43 NIV84)

But in the desert, Jesus quoted Scripture—why?

With whom was Jesus dealing—directly? Satan—and is Satan open to truth? Can Satan be reasoned with? Is Satan actually interested in learning? Or is Satan hardened in lies and selfishness and dialoging with Satan only opens oneself up to his lies which cause confusion. So, when dealing with intelligences that we deem to be beyond reason, who are closed to truth, we either remain silent or quote Scripture—we don't engage, we don't discuss.

Jesus instructed, “do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.” (MT 7:6 NIV84)

Sometimes, it isn’t even appropriate to share your Bible pearls with people, silence and walking away is the best approach.

But, in the context of Jesus being tempted by Satan, Scripture was quoted. The lesson suggests that in this way Jesus was affirming the authority of Scripture.

What makes Scripture authoritative? Is it authoritative because it is Scripture—the Bible said, it I believe it, that settles it?

Is the Scripture the source of authority—or is God the source of authority and Scripture is a tool used by God to convey His authority?

If an ambassador presents to another nation their papers, their credentials, are the papers the source of the authority or are they tools to convey the authority?

From where does Bible authority originate? From God—so another way to say this, is what has greater authority, the Bible or God? And then one could ask, what has greater authority the Bible or Jesus?

And what is the source of any official’s authority?

This takes us back to the question of what law lens one answers the question through.

Authority in the kingdoms of the world, based on imposed law, come from the office, the position—President, CEO, King, Queen, Pope, and sadly many in church view authority this way and thus allow their pastors to rule with edicts from their office. He must be right, or we should submit, because he is the pastor, conference president, priest, bishop, pope etc. But, this is the authority of Satan’s government—the authority of imperialism, the authority of power over, not the authority of God’s government.

Consider David when Saul was king. Saul was the Lord’s anointed, and David would not raise his hand against King Saul—but David also did not follow or listen to King Saul once he was in rebellion against God. David had a responsibility to follow God over the king. Likewise, with our church leaders, we have the responsibility to follow God over the church leader if that leader is no longer following God.

What, when we view things through design law, is the basis of true authority? What gives authority to someone’s words, regardless of their office? Truth! Truth is authoritative regardless of the office. And since God is the source of all truth, and who only speaks truth, God is always authoritative, but not merely because of His office, but because of His character of truthfulness.

This is important as time unfolds—if an angel of light comes from heaven with the "authority of office" but doesn't speak truth we are to reject it. This is what Jesus was facing in the wilderness, an angel purporting to be from heaven, but was not speaking truth, therefore the angel had no authority. The Bible, which is a revelation of God's truth does have authority—but only to the degree we take truth from it.

Some people can use the Bible to create lies—just as Satan tried to do in the wilderness with Jesus.

So, the Bible is authoritative because it communicates truth. Is the Bible the only source of godly truth? No—there are truths of God's kingdom from other sources, such has science and experience, but these truths are always in harmony and never contradictory to the truth as revealed in Scripture.

So, looking at the three temptations of Jesus, what were they all focused upon? Upon Jesus distrusting His Father and acting in self-interest—this is what Jesus faced.

Now, notice something else very important in this story.

James writes:

> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, *nor does he tempt anyone*; (1:13 NIV84 emphasis mine)

Jesus, showing us how to pray, said: "lead us not into temptation," (Mt 6:13 NIV84

God doesn't tempt anyone, we pray for God not to lead us into temptation, but in this instance the Bible says, "Then Jesus w*as led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil*" (Mt 4:1 NIV84 emphasis mine)

What is going on? Jesus became incarnate—human, for a purpose, to accomplish a mission, to cause a specific outcome, to achieve a goal—and that was to:

1. expose Satan as a liar, fraud, and source of death
2. as a human overcome temptation, eradicate fear and selfishness and restore God's design law in humanity thus curing the condition—or one could say procuring the remedy to sin

In order to accomplish His mission, Jesus had to face temptation so that He could exercise His human abilities and choose to apply God's methods as a human and reject the methods of Satan and thereby develop a perfect and sinless human character. Thus, it was part of God's plan that Jesus face the enemy and overcome Him.

This is different than any other human being since Adam's fall. We will never have to overcome Satan on our own. We will always have divine power at our aide to enlighten, convict of the right course, and when we choose it, empower. We will never have to face the evil forces alone. And our primary battle is with ourselves—struggling with our own feelings of fear and selfishness.

Because of Jesus's victory we can receive from Him a new heart, with new desires, motives, and experience the severing, cutting away of the ties to this world—but we must choose to trust Jesus and ask Him into our hearts and do this work in us.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 5:17-20:

> Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true. Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with—not until the end of all things. So then, whoever disobeys even the least important of the commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be least in the Kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, whoever obeys the Law and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the Kingdom of heaven. I tell you, then, that you will be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven only if you are more faithful than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires. GNT

What does this mean? With what law lens to you understand it?

Though imposed law, people hear this as God having made up rules and then keeps an exact account of rule-keeping and there will be no change in any of God's rules—at least not until the New Heaven and New Earth. Therefore if you don't teach the right rules you are in legal trouble—and this leads to all kinds of disputes amongst Christians and Jews as to what are the right rules. A very sad state of affairs that has led to great abuse of people throughout history.

Through design law it is very simple—life as God designed it would not exist if even the slightest change to God's design laws were made. The universe would stop and cease to exist. Thus Christ did not come to change the perfect laws of God that life exist upon, but to do what the law requires—to live in harmony with God's design.

In her book *Finding Truth,* Nancy Pearcey describes this reality:

> The origin of the universe has given rise to a puzzle known as the fine-tuning problem. The fundamental physical constants of the universe are exquisitely balanced, as though on a knife's edge, to sustain life. Things like the force of gravity, the strong nuclear force, the weak nuclear force, the electromagnetic force, the ratio of the mass of the proton and the electron, and many other factors have just the right value needed to make life possible. If any of these critical numbers were changed even slightly, the universe could not sustain any form of life. For

> example, if the strength of gravity were smaller or larger than its current value by only one part in 10^{60} (1 followed by 60 zeroes), the universe would be uninhabitable.[1]

Jesus is not speaking of rules, but informing people of the Creator God and the reality of how God built His universe—of Design Law.

So, Matthew 5:17-20 from *The Remedy:*

> "And don't think that I have come to destroy what the Old Testament — Torah and Prophets — taught about God and his methods; I have not come to destroy but to fulfill them. Here is the simple truth: Heaven and earth would disappear if even the slightest change were made to God's design protocol for life — what you call his Law. I am not here to destroy the Law, but to accomplish everything it requires. Anyone who violates God's design (Law) and teaches others to do so is out of harmony with heaven; but anyone who practices God's methods (Law) and teaches others to do so is in harmony with the kingdom of heaven. I tell you plainly, if your characters are not renewed with righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees and lawyers, it simply won't be possible for you to enter the heavenly kingdom of love. *The Remedy*

The last sentence of the first paragraph reads, "Jesus taught that a mere intellectual knowledge of the Bible and its teachings was insufficient for knowing the truth and, more important, for knowing the Lord, who is that truth."

This is quite right and a very important concept to understand. Professors and theologians, may have intellectual knowledge of the Bible, but such knowledge is insufficient to know the truths contained within. Where this is most profound, and from which many thus far have refused to acknowledge, is in regard to Bible translations.

To be a Bible language expert—having intellectual knowledge—is not enough to know the truth and therefore not sufficient to translate the Scriptures accurately. In my view, with the lexicons now available, the most important knowledge to have in translating Scripture is a knowledge of God's character of love, His design law and the Great Controversy which began in heaven. Without this knowledge, then one can be an expert in Bible languages and translate all kinds of errors into the translation. This is why there is so much legal and punitive language in so many of the translations.

Let's read Matthew 22:34-40:

> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

[1] Pearcey, N., *Finding Truth,* David C. Cook Publishing, Ontario, Canada, 2015, p 25.

> Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV84)

Then let's read the second paragraph, "In the statement to the lawyer…"

What is Jesus teaching here? Is He elevating a system of rules, of imperialism, or teaching that the right understanding of the Old Testament is that God's law is the design law of love and everything there if rightly understood is understood as design law, the principles of love?

As we think of the different forms and expressions of the law, which is the great original, the 10 Commandments or Jesus' description of love for God and each other? Which law came first and which was added later?

Did angels in heaven need a law to honor their father and mother, to not commit adultery, or that sins would pass down the generation of angels. In fact, did Adam and Even in Eden need a law that sins would pass down the generations when they had not sinned?

When was the Sabbath created? When this world was created, but according to Job 38, the angels in heaven sang for joy when earth was created—meaning they already existed and thus God's law already existed, but the Sabbath didn't yet exist. Thus, the 10 Commandments were not the original manifestation of God's law.

Remember, Jesus said "the Sabbath was *made* for man, not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath was made or created, it had a beginning. But the law of God existed before the Sabbath.

Thus one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> **The law of God existed before man was created**. The angels were governed by it. Satan fell because he transgressed **the principles of God's government**. [what does this mean, he broke a rule or he stepped out of harmony with the protocols upon which life was built?] ***After*** Adam and Eve were created, **God made known to them His law. It was not then written**, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah. {SR 145.1}
>
> **The Sabbath of the fourth commandment *was instituted in Eden***. [What does instituted mean? The Sabbath didn't exist before earth was created, yet God's law did—what would that mean about the 10 Commandments? Would it mean the law of God didn't exist in the form of the 10 Commandments at that time and was added later?] After God had made the world and created man upon the earth, **He made the Sabbath for man.** After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. **The *principles* of the Ten Commandments existed before the fall and were** of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. ***After*** **the fall the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state…** [what does this mean?] {SR 145.2}

> **If the law of God had not been transgressed, there never would have been death, and there would have been no need of additional precepts to *suit man's fallen condition*.** {SR 145.3} [Would this mean such things as sins passing down the generations? Don't commit murder, don't bear false witness, don't steal, don't commit adultery? Would any of these precepts need to be given to sinless beings who operate upon the law of love? Do we see the 10 Commandments were added to communicate the great principles of God's design law of love to sinful beings in their sinful condition?]
>
> The law of God existed before the creation of man or else Adam could not have sinned. After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, **but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition**… {1BC 1104.5}

So the 10 Commandments didn't exist in heaven or Eden, then what was God's law like in heaven before sin?

Consider this quote:

> But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, **the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. {MB 109.2}

What does this mean? What kind of law can be in force and people are expected to abide by it yet they don't know about it? Only design law, how reality works.

Consider Newton discovering the law of gravity and telling people about it, can't you hearing them say: "gravity is a law, huh, never thought of that, I just know that was how things worked."

If you struggle with the idea that the 10 Commandments were not in existence in the universe before Sinai, consider Newton's laws of motion:

> **First Law**: An object at rest remains at rest and an object in motion continues at a constant velocity unless acted upon by an external force.
>
> **Second Law**: The sum external force **F** on an object is equal to the mass *m* of that object multiplied by the acceleration vector **a** of the object: **F**=*m***a**.
>
> **Third Law**: When one body exerts a force on a second body, the second body simultaneously exerts a force equal in magnitude and opposite in direction on the first body.
>
> Now answer the following questions about Newton's laws:
> - Are they real?
> - Do they apply to our lives?

- Do they apply to everyone or only those who hear about them and choose to believe in them?
- Are they rules we must obey or descriptions of how reality is built to function?
- When did they go into effect?
- If Newton had not written them down, would that mean these laws would not exist and thus would not be in effect?
- If we decide in committee to change the wording of the first law to read: "An object at rest remains at rest unless it receives permission from the proper church committee to move," does anything happen in reality?
- In other words, can humans change these laws?
- Are these laws imposed laws or design laws?

The 10 Commandments are like Newton's laws they were not in existence in this written form before human beings sinned, and we have no evidence they existed before Sinai. But the *principles* of the 10 Commandments were already in existence! And what are the principles of the 10 Commandments? Truth, Love and Freedom!

This goes to the heart of the problem in Christianity—do we understand God's law as principles, design parameters, or as rules. Those who are level four and below are stuck on rules and get very upset if one suggests the 10 Commandments have not always been in existence. They focus on rules and in fact, make up more rules.

So yes, Jesus sustained, supported, and promoted God's law—but always design law, never imperialism.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "After the death of Christ…" So, what do we find? Jesus tied Scripture to real life experiences, to actual historical events that came to pass. Jesus is saying, don't believe the Scriptures because it says so, but because it IS so. This is real and has come to pass.

When Jesus was teaching the people what was His primary method? Did Jesus do Scriptural exegesis to teach them? Did Jesus primarily use Scripture when teaching the masses?

According to Matthew:

> Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. (13:34 NIV84)

This doesn't undermine the reality that Jesus held Scripture to be God's Word and used Scripture as a source of truth—particularly the truth about God, Himself and His mission. But exposes the idea that godly preaching and teaching is only done by quoting the Bible as a narrow view of reality that limits the truth God has revealed.

Consider this quote:

> The same principle appeared in his teaching; the unknown was illustrated by the known. **Jesus taught by illustrations and parables drawn from nature and from the familiar events of every-day life**. The inspired record says, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them..." Matthew 13:34. **In this way he associated natural things with spiritual, linking the things of nature and the life-experience of his hearers with the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word**. And his lessons were repeated whenever their eyes rested on the objects which had been associated with eternal truth. Special Testimonies on Education 67.2

What danger to we open ourselves to if we insist that spiritual truth is found exclusively and only Scripture divorced from nature and life experiences? –this is why there are so many denominations. Scripture alone, divorced from reality (nature and experience) causes confusion.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus taught…" Do you agree with the assertions in this paragraph?

Do you agree that when you read the Bible it is the same as God saying something to you?

Well, I think it is true that from the Bible we can absolutely receive communications from God—no question about it. The Bible is *one* of God's methods of communicating His thoughts, truths, ideas to us. So, yes, the Bible is and can be a means of receiving God's truth; so, to the degree we are receiving God's truths we can understand the Bible as God saying it to us.

But, we should not understand this as reading a Bible text and taking it literally is God giving us a direct and personal message. "If your hand offend thee—cut it off. What you are going to do, do it quickly." Taking these takes and concluding God is speaking to you directly with authority to act is psychotic.

We should not understand receiving truth from the Bible as the same experience as talking with God as with a friend: as Adam did in Eden; as Moses did when he spoke to God face to face; as Abraham did when he challenged God over Sodom etc.

The Bible is a divine instrument to communicate God's truths to us, but it is still different that talking with God.

One of the dangers with the idea of the Bible being God talking directly to us, is that it can lead to the use of the Bible inappropriately, like quoting texts as proof texts and claiming God said it etc.

What about the idea that the Bible contains ultimate authority for every aspect of life?

What does ultimate mean?

In this context it means: highest; not subsidiary, nothing superior to or having authority over.

Is this true—is the Bible the ultimate authority or is God the ultimate authority because God is the infinite source of all truth, all reality, the basis for all life and health?

In the last paragraph the lesson notes that Jesus referred to many events in the Old Testament as historical realities:

- Creation
- Adam and Eve and marriage
- David and the showbread
- Elisha and other prophets
- Sodom
- The flood

And, based on Jesus's use of these events as historical realities it gives confirmation to the validity of the Bible being a trustworthy book. I think this is reasonable conclusion, for those who value Jesus. For those who don't value Jesus this argument will not be helpful.

The last sentence of the last paragraph, referencing the flood, reads, "There is every indication that Jesus was referring to this mighty act of God's judgment as a historical event."

When you hear such words, what do you hear? What law lens do you hear it through?

If through Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, then it is heard as a judicial act—judgment is the condemnation and infliction of punishment.

But under design law, judgment is understood to be an accurate diagnosis of the condition or situation and then the judgment of what is the most therapeutic action to take. In regard to the flood it was a mighty judgment on God's part—accurately diagnosing hardness of hearts of the people and making a judgment of what is the most therapeutic action to take in order to save humankind.

First point to understand rightly understand in order to comprehend this reality is that the wages of sin is eternal death, not sleep in the grave awaiting resurrection.

Those people who died in the flood died the first death and will arise in a resurrection. So on this point alone we realize the flood cannot be the punishment for sin.

Second point, even in the penal legal model, punishment does not come until after the judgment and the judgment is yet future. So, the flood again, cannot be punishment for sin, it must be for some other purpose.

After Adam sinned, the human race has a terminal condition and will be eternally lost without Jesus coming as our Savior. In Genesis 3, God announces to the serpent that the Messiah was coming. The rest of the OT is the battle between God's agencies working to bring about the plan of salvation, centered on the coming Messiah, and Satan's agencies working to obstruct it.

Satan is working to get every human heart to harden permanently against God, so that he can shut down the avenue for Messiah. At the time of the flood there was only one righteous man left on the earth, Noah, and his family. The avenue for Messiah is almost closed. Therefore, God acts, not to punish sin, but in love and mercy to keep open the avenue for Messiah and bring salvation to humanity.

Further, God sent warnings through Noah to the people for 120 years. They ridiculed and rejected the warnings. But what would a flood occurring over a period of time (rain, fountains of water breaking through, etc.) allow for? Would it allow for some people to reflect and to reconsider? Would the evidence of what was transpiring to them confirm to them that Noah was right? Would that give the people outside the ark the opportunity to repent? Whether they accept it or not isn't the question I'm asking here; rather, I'm saying that wouldn't a God of love give every opportunity for repentance even if that opportunity was physically painful?

Did the thief on the cross have many truths presented to him throughout his life—yet persistently rejected God, pursuing a sinful life until he ended up in a state of suffering leading toward death? Did that situation give him opportunity to reflect and repent, even though he was destined to die at that point?

Thus, the flood was brought not only to keep open the avenue for Messiah, but it also allowed those who refused to get on the ark one final opportunity for repentance and eternal salvation. Just like the thief, their earthly life was going to be over, but their eternal life didn't have to be.

Further, what were the factors, besides human sinfulness, that contributed to the entire world hardening against God so quickly after Eden? What happens to sinful people when everything is given to them and they don't have to work for anything? What happens over time to people who are self-indulgent and lead hedonistic lives? What happens if such people live hundreds of years? What influence would such people have on their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and multiple generations down?

Would altering the environment by a flood to make it harder to survive be a punishment for sin or, rather, a therapeutic intervention that would help slow the corruption of human character? Have you ever heard that "idle hands are the devil's workshop?"—i.e., useful labor is protective against temptation.

The Edenic-like conditions on the earth prior to the flood permitted more indulgence of the carnal nature and, thus, accelerated the corruption of human character. The changes to the earth by the flood

made it harder to put food on the table and, thus, increased the need for useful labor, which also protected people from sinful indulgence.

Further, the changes to the earth resulted in shortening human life from about 900 years to 120 years, which also limited the pace of the spread of evil, as those who hardened their hearts against God could not corrupt as many generations with their influence. So, putting all these variables together, we see a beautiful God of love who acts in mercy, therapeutically, to keep open the avenue for Messiah and slow the progress of the disease of sin.

God never compels, never coerces, and only uses the methods of truth, love, and liberty. But love does restrain evil in order to protect, and God has done this in many places throughout human history.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that throughout the New Testament the Apostle writers consistently quoted the OT Scriptures, thus validating that the Apostles found those Scriptures to be reliable and God inspired.

It is also true that they were trying to reach their Jewish family and would necessarily be motivated to reference the truths they know in Jesus with OT writings because their audience would need that the affirmation of the OT Scripture in order to believe what they were being taught.

In other words, Jewish people who value the OT Scriptures will not accept Jesus unless His Messiahship can be demonstrated to them from their Scriptures.

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, “Men consider themselves…”

Notice what was said and not said. This author did not criticize testing Scripture against science and nature but against their own ideas of science and nature. This is quite the distinction. Rightly understood Scripture, science, nature and the experiences of life always harmonize.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 4
The Bible—the Authoritative Source of Our Theology

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (ISA 8:20 NKJV)

What does this text mean? It means that truth about God will harmonize with Scripture the Torah and the testimony of the prophets. If people teach things that contradict with Scripture then they are not teaching truth—in other words there is not light in them.

But the lesson correctly points out that every Christian group claims that their teachings are based in Scripture, yet within Christianity there are multiple contradictory teachings.

The lesson rightly points out that this is because different groups apply different standards on how they approach, value, interpret and understand Scripture.

As you know, we take the position that Scripture is only one of three threads that God reveals His truths to us through:

Scripture teaches that God reveals Himself through His **first book—nature**:

- "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1 NIV84).

- "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20 NIV84).

And Scripture teaches that God reveals Himself through His **second book—experiences of life**:

- "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8 NIV84).

- "Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe'" (John 20:27 NIV84).

And God's **third book**—the book that came after nature, after experience, is **Scripture**.

When we separate the three threads of Scripture we have problems:

- Science by itself leads to godlessness
- Experience by itself leads to mysticism
- Scripture by itself leads to confusion, over 40,000 different Christian groups arguing among themselves while claiming Scripture supports their view—why? Because they don't anchor their interpretations in reality, in the laws of nature and thus conjure up all types of irrational beliefs.

If we want to interpret Scripture correctly we must use the integrative evidenced-based approach which harmonizes all three threads.

One of the reasons the integrative evidence-based approach is so important is because when we seek to harmonize Scripture with science/nature—it leads away from imperialistic legal interpretations and back to design-law understanding of reality. In other words, it leads us to move from level 4 moral development to level 5 and 6.

Consider the ordinance of foot washing which some Christian groups do and some do not.

If one only uses Scripture, does not seek to harmonize with nature and experience, then one can approach this as a rule, a legal requirement.

After all, Jesus said to them after washing their feet:

> You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. I am telling you the truth: slaves are never greater than their master, and messengers are never greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know this truth, how happy you will be if you put it into practice! (John 13:13-17 GNT)

And some read this and hear a directive, an instruction, a task, a rule, a command and others do not and thus we have a split in Christianity as some take this as it reads, not questioning, not reasoning, not thinking, but obeying, while others don't believe this is necessary.

How does the integrative evidenced-based approach help us with this?

- In Christ's day how did He and His disciples travel? By walking
- What were the roads and pathways upon which they walked often made out of? Dirt
- And were animals traveling those roads, donkeys, horses, camels? And did the animals leave their waste? And would this be picked up by the feet?
- What footwear did they have? Sandals
- What would happen to their feet? Terribly dirty
- Was washing the feet a religious ritual, or an actual need? A real service that provided not only hygiene, but was refreshing?

- And in Middle Eastern culture what is the foot associated with? It is associated with dirt, lowliness, worthlessness, something trampled under the feet is worthless. Thus, who washes feet the king or the servant?
- So, what is Christ teaching and revealing in His actions? Servant leadership, leadership that serves, that ministers, that uses one's energies to provide blessings to others—real world blessings, interventions that are actually needed by reality.

Where does science and experience come into play?

Science:

- First—on the point of cleanliness—is there scientific evidence that cleaning off dirt and filth helps prevents disease and promotes health?
- Second—is there brain science that shows when we act altruistically, in loving service for others that we activate higher brain circuits and calm fear circuits? Yes! this results in lower inflammatory cascades, better mental and physical health! And, does acting in this way, via the law of exertion, cause growth in these mature brain circuits of altruism, and result in growth in mature character—if done from a genuine love for others? Yes!

Experience:

- First—does experience tell you that when you are clean you are healthier? Does experience tell you that when you are healthier you are happier and more capable of fulfilling the Lord's purposes?
- Second—experience tells us that people who volunteer, when compared to those who don't volunteer, have better health, less physical disability, less dementia, and stay out of nursing homes longer than those who don't volunteer.

So, how do we put all of this together in our application today, that if we did would bring harmony and not division in Christianity?

We realize that Jesus was not setting up a rule, but was demonstrating to them how to humble themselves in loving service to each other. The law of love in action. Thus, today a person who actually follows Jesus's example might:

- Volunteer at their church to clean the bathrooms
- Volunteer to clean the home of an elderly church member or neighbor
- Volunteer, in this COVID 19 environment, to do the grocery shopping for an elderly neighbor

In other words, all acts of real-world service to others are fulfilling Jesus's instructions.

Does that mean that to have a religious foot-washing service is wrong? Not at all, it only means that it is not a legal requirement for salvation. It could be a blessing, a tool the Lord provided to help us humble our hearts, but others could do the service like the Publican's prayer, out of religious pride.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> Now, having washed the disciples' feet, He said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." In these words Christ was not merely enjoining the practice of hospitality. More was meant than the washing of the feet of guests to remove the dust of travel. Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. It was to be observed by the disciples, **that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service.** DA 650.2
>
> This ordinance is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service. **While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ**. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. **Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed**. DA 650.3

What is described here? A ritual with some magical ability, or a tool, service, that Jesus intends to be a reminder to help us reject pride, variance, strife and humble our hearts before God and in love to each other? So is the service a requirement or is the humbling of the heart the requirement?

Those who don't use the integrative evidence-based approach, and who instead read the Bible through the imposed law lens, may conclude this is a rule to follow and thus set up a regular service to wash the clean feet of their fellow church members. The ritual, done out of a sense of legal obligation makes them feel good about their own piousness—that they are more holy and right with God than those other Christians who don't do this ritual, but who perhaps are volunteering at the foodbank.

So, do you see how using the integrative approach brings harmony because it focuses on the reality to which the service was designed to help one experience. As long as one experiences that reality the service is not a legal requirement, that if you don't perform you get a sin demerit on your record in heaven. The service is understood as a helpful tool to help people remember the reality—that sin infects us all and leads to pride and we all need cleansing by Jesus.

Through the design law view we see all those who with humble hearts help others are fulfilling Christ's instructions and we don't split over ritual. We have no problem supporting those who want to conduct the ritual, but don't ostracize those who are meek and loving like Jesus but haven't found benefit in the service.

I wonder, how many Western Christians, who do practice the ceremony of foot washing, would be eager to go to a culture where people went barefoot, or wore sandals and walked on dirt roads and as they came to church would meet them at the door and wash their feet?

The lesson suggests that the problem in misunderstanding Scripture is that in various groups Scriptural interpretation is impacted by: Tradition, Experience, Culture, and Reason, when it should only be the Bible impacting how we interpret the Bible. We will examine each of these in the rest of the lesson.

The Anglican church historically used the Anglican Triad to determine truth, which was the combination of Scripture, Reason and Tradition.

John Wesley developed the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, which harmonized Scripture with Tradition, Experience and Reason.

The lesson takes the position that this should not be done, that Scripture should be used in isolation divorced from all other influences or lines of evidence. Let's examine these ideas.

SUNDAY

The lesson points out the problem of allowing traditions to negate, supersede, contradict and lead us away from the truth as taught in Scripture.

It gives the example of Corban practiced by the Pharisees in Christ's day. This was when a person would dedicate their assets to be given to the Temple upon their death. This precluded them from using their assets for anything other than themselves during their life. They would not use their resources to provide for their parents, thus negating the commandment to honor their mother and father.

Jesus spoke to them on a level they could understand. They were lawyers, who viewed the world through a legal lens. They misunderstood God's law as imposed and thus Jesus met them where they were and used the commandments, the law, to expose their hypocrisy.

But, was the problem Jesus exposed really about keeping the wrong rules or the wrong traditions? No! It was about selfishness operating in the heart rather than love.

The practice of Corban was a practice that legalized selfishness and allowed a person to be selfish while believing they being pious as they had dedicated their resources to the church. This led to a greater sense of spiritual pride as they were so devout they dedicated all to the church. But, in reality they were selfish, not part of God's kingdom of love. Jesus exposes this by pointing out their failure to love by failing to care for their own parents.

Some may still misunderstand what Jesus was saying. Through the human legal lens they may read this as people replacing God's legal requirement—rule—with their own and thus the problem with what these people were doing was a legal one and they are in legal trouble with God. Design law helps us understand it is about reality, the natural results of taking a false remedy.

Mark 7:6-13 from *The Remedy:*

> Jesus didn't hesitate in his reply: "Isaiah got it right when he described charlatans like you — those who pretend to partake of the Remedy but instead promote spiritual poison. Just as he wrote, 'These people proclaim their love for me with their mouths, but their hearts are as far

away from love for me and my methods as they can get.[7]Their worship is useless, and their teachings are nothing but man-made rules.'

[8] "You have thrown away God's healing prescription and are promoting a counterfeit cocktail of dos and don'ts thought up by men."

[9]He continued, "You have perfected the art of throwing away God's healing prescription and replacing it with your own worthless traditions![10]For Moses taught God's Remedy, 'Love your father and your mother,' and 'Anyone who fails to love their father or mother will certainly die.'[11]But you come along with your own rules — which are the poison of selfishness — and throw out God's prescription of love when you say that if a person says to their father or mother: 'Whatever help I might otherwise give to you it is now Corban (that is, the resources are designated for the Temple),'[12]then you excuse their responsibility to love and provide for their parents.[13]This is just one example of how you make God's healing Remedy useless by replacing it with your worthless traditions handed down through the generations. You do many things just like that."

God's plan is about healing us and what God asks us to do has real world practical application in our lives, in our hearts and minds. The Integrative Evidence-Based approach, which harmonizes Scripture with science/nature and experience leads us to understand Scripture correctly. But divorcing Scripture from nature and experience leads to superstition, confusion, legal ritualistic religious practices that often make no sense.

One of the traditions that has crept into the SDA church that we must reject is the tradition that Scripture is to be used alone, divorced from science and experience. We must integrate Scripture with God's other evidentiary threads if we want to find God's truth.

Let's examine some Christian traditions. We will find some harmonize with the Bible, some contradict it and others do neither. And consider, which of the traditions have actual salvation significance? There are some traditions that are consistent with Scripture and some are not—but even between these, how many are salvation issues—i.e. the tradition will separate the saved from the lost?

- Using musical instruments or not in worship at church
- Baptism by immersion or sprinkling
- Attending church on Sabbath or Sunday or Wednesday evening
- Elevating the Priest or Pastor on a platform above the congregation
- Having sermons in which the audience does not participate
- Having special music
- Having a church building owned by a denomination
- Having denominations
- Ordaining pastors or priests as a separate spiritual class from church members
- Having ordination of men and not women or ordaining both
- Celibacy of the priesthood or married pastors and priests
- Children's story during the worship service

- Passing a collection plate for tithes and offerings during the worship service

How many denominational divisions do we have because of one or more of these traditions?

How many of these are actually essential to salvation? If any of these are not essential to salvation then why are we divided over them?

Because of imperial law thinking—if we think through design law lenses then if something isn't out of harmony with God's design law we don't divide over it.

For instance, in the health care field, operating upon the laws of health, if some people insist that in order to be healthy they must wear red sweaters, we don't care—let them. We present the truth that we find no evidence of benefit for red sweaters, but we find no harm so if some want to wear them, please do. This would be like Romans 14, let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind. But if they insist that health is promoted by smoking cigarettes then we oppose them with the truth—evidence and facts. We still leave them individually free, but we don't ignore the violation of God's design laws of health, and we would not allow them to promote smoking in our fellowship. The violation of God's design law would be a point of division and if some refused to harmonize a point for separation.

In Christianity, many people argue over things that don't really matter and miss what does.

MONDAY

The lesson is about experience, and I really like how the lesson focuses upon our need to personally experience God—His goodness—for ourselves. This is exactly correct.

They also point out that experience needs to be harmonized with Scripture—again this is exactly correct.

But this goes both ways, not only is Scripture to inform us and shape our understanding of the experiences of life, but our experiences of life are to shape and inform our understanding of Scripture.

There is an overlap between experience and science—for science is about testable, reproducible and observable reality—in other words how we experience reality—but not on a one-time basis, but identifying the constants in our world and universe that don't change.

Consider Galileo – who observed the movement of the stars and the earth and concluded that the earth revolves around the sun, but the theologians rejected this experience and measurements and clung to their interpretation of Scripture and imprisoned Galileo.

Doesn't our understanding of Scripture have to be informed by our experience and by science? But also our experiences have to be informed by Scripture.

So, if a person experiences a supernatural event—say their dog talks to them and claims to have a message from God. Should they just believe it because they experienced it, or should they examine that message in light of Scripture and determine whether this experience was in fact from God, or from a false spirit?

How about it is not a miracle of a talking animal but a dream or an impression that they have had and they have the idea that the dream or impression was a message from God, should that experience by filtered through Scripture?

Read the last paragraph, "Experiences can be very deceiving…" No question experiences can deceive. Would that include the experience of studying the Scripture? Can people's Bible study experience deceive them? And if so, how will studying the Bible resolve this is they are being deceived in their study of the Bible? Wouldn't it be by requiring the Bible to harmonize with how the world actually works—testable experience and nature and science, God's design laws?

Is there a difference between experiences and experience?

Do you want an, experienced surgeon, pilot, lifeguard—or do you want a professor who has studied academically and has a Ph.D. in the theory of medicine, flying or swimming—but has never actually done any of it?

What about with our church leaders—is it sufficient to have people with doctoral degrees in theology? Is acquiring academic degrees the same thing as being experienced in the things of God? What would give one such experience?

Actual application of God's truth, God's principles to their own lives and the lives of others. This is what I learned in my residency and describe in the preface to *Could It Be This Simple?* that true Biblical understanding, experience, must have real-world application and bring about real transformation and healing. Theoretical ideas are worthless in God's kingdom if they don't have actual healing application.

This is a problem in much of Christianity—the doctrines are often theoretical or conceptual but not practical and applicable.

Consider, our experience with God, Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (Johan 17:3 NIV84) What does this mean?

Is this knowing about God, or knowing God?

Can we study for years the biographies of famous people and learn all about them, become experts on the facts of their lives—is this the same as knowing them?

Sadly, this is what happens to many theologians—they study their entire lives to learn all the facts they can of the Bible and about God, but they never actually get to know Him. This is what the Pharisees

were like in Jesus's day—experts in the Scriptures—but when God stood among them they didn't recognize Him, because they never actually knew God.

Jesus says the same about many at the end of time, that they will claim to do all kinds of miracles in Jesus's name—but He never knew them.

Real experience is a real personal knowledge of God—you and I actually know Him, and this is knowing more than facts.

God gave us Scripture to reveal the truth about Himself to us in a real world that operates upon His design laws so that we could differentiate the truth of our Creator God from all the false legal impersonations of Him and thus enter into a real experience with Him.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on culture and its impact on our understanding of Scripture. It points out that the Scripture was written by people in a particular culture, to people in a particular culture.

Does this mean there are aspects of Scripture that take God's eternal truths and presents them through a cultural lens? And does that mean for us today that we can rightly remove the cultural elements as long as we retain God's eternal truths?

Can you think of any examples of how God's eternal truths were presented through the culture of the time?

What about patriarchal dominance—in other words the male domination of women? Has God's truth and design for human relationships been slanted through a culture in which men were viewed as having authority over women merely by their gender regardless of character?

Has this carried through human history so that in Christianity men are often viewed as spiritually superior to women based solely on gender without regard to character? In other words, many would accept a selfish and prideful male pastor over a Christlike female pastor?

What was God's original design for human beings? Did God create Adam and Eve with one of them subordinate to the other? Or did God create Eve from Adam's side—not from the head to rule over Adam or the foot to be ruled over by Adam—but from his side to be his companion, his equal partner—the two becoming one unit of equality bound together in love.

One of the distortions to God's creation that has happened because of sin—fear and selfishness taking root in the heart—is the loss of equality between men and women. This is moral equality, equality of value as people, equality of worth, equality under God's design laws.

But a truth often missed by people on both sides of this equality question is that God purposely did not make Adam and Eve equal in abilities. God designed and created Adam and Eve with complimentary abilities that when the two unite in godly love they become more and are capable of achieving more than either one can accomplish or be on their own.

Satan wants to corrupt God's design. Satan doesn't want equality between the sexes. Satan wants domination, subordination and exploitation. Satan also wants falsehoods, like men and women are equal in all ways, in all abilities and thus promote the lie that they can do all things equally well and don't really benefit from the union of love as God designed. Because this is inherently false, believing the lie that men and women are equal in ability continually sets up reality based conflicts that fuels the tensions between the sexes furthering the division.

God's design is a design of love—when we love each other we actually cherish, value, respect and long to promote the best in the other. There is never a desire to obstruct, denigrate, or hold down the other, but always to advance, build up, and elevate the other. We value and cherish the differences because we know as a joined couple we are elevated and ennobled as we practice God's methods of love. Thus, in God's design both men and women seek to promote the highest development of every ability in the other.

Within the church, as we come back to God's design, greater and greater equality in how we treat each other is experienced and we recognize the leading of the Holy Spirit in gifting people and thus don't put up man-made rules and traditions that obstruct the leading of the Holy Spirit, such as only men can be pastors.

Read third paragraph, "Culture, like any other facet…" When you hear judgment in this context do you hear a judicial ruling, or discernment, diagnosis, differentiating that which is actually right, reasonable and healthy from that which is not?

While we are not to judge the motives of another person's heart, we are to make judgments about what is actually healthy—absolutely, and understanding God's design and His design laws helps us do so.

Are there cultural pressures which are introducing false ideas into the world and the church which oppose God's healing and restoration to His design for life?

Let's say we had access to the fruit of the Tree of Life today—and if we gave it to a person who was blind it would cure blindness—would that be a godly thing?

What about if we gave it to a deaf person and their deafness was cured, would that be a godly thing? – You understand if we were to do this to all deaf people, curing all deafness that we would destroy a culture—that there is an entire language based on deafness. In fact, as science as pursued a cure for deafness some in the deaf community have opposed curing deafness because if will destroy the deaf community. Is deafness part of God's design? Is deafness sin? Of course not, it is a result of sin in the world, but it is not sinful to be deaf, it is just a condition that interferes with God's design for functioning.

What about if we gave people with autism the fruit of the Tree of Life and it cured the autism would that be a godly thing?

What about if we gave the fruit to people with other than heterosexual sexual identity and it restored them to heterosexual identity would that be a godly thing? If we had such a fruit today that actually did this—would it be met with joy and appreciation or hostility and rage? Why? What would it reveal if people became angry at such an opportunity?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson suggests that using reason to determine truth leads to rationalism and the rejection of Scripture.

Ten years ago, I had a series of meetings with a group of theologians who were opposed to what we teach at Come and Reason Ministries. One of their big objections was that we use reason to understand Scripture. One of their professors, in his paper outlining their objections wrote: "Human reason must bow before divine revelation, or we are left with rationalism."

They argued that we cannot use our reason to understand Scripture because Scripture is divinely inspired and we are sinful and our human reason is warped and thus we must take the Bible as it reads.

Of course, I pointed out the following:

> "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Is 1:18 NIV84)
>
> One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (Rom 14:5 NIV84)
>
> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Heb 5:14 NIV84)

I pointed out that God is the source of all truth—that Satan is the father of lies and that God has revealed truth in Scripture—but then God expects us to exercise our God-given reasoning power to reason through the Scriptures in order to develop by practice the ability to discern truth from error. In so doing, truth sets us free from lies, we are won to trust and our hearts and minds are cleansed in our trust relationship with God. But this doesn't happen if we refuse to reason.

I asked how much truth does Satan have on his side of the argument and how much truth does God have? Since Satan has no truth and God has all truth, who would **not** want us to reason, who would want us just to believe without investigation, with thinking things through?

Then, since these were SDA theologians I shared some quotes with them from one of the founders of the SDA church, here is one of them:

> God **never** asks us to believe, without giving **sufficient evidence** upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by **testimony that appeals to our *reason*;** and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

Are we to use our reason when studying Scripture? Absolutely, but here is the point where human reason is limited and for which we need divine revelation: Because of sin, human reason alone cannot discover the truth about God, God must reveal it to us. But, once God has revealed truth through Scripture, science/nature and experience, we must exercise our reasoning ability to understand and choose the truth and reject the lies.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that some people allow their experience, in what they believe are the movements of the Holy Spirit, to diminish the role of Scripture. In other words, they get a message they believe is from the Holy Spirit, but that message is not processed through the Scripture to determine if it is harmony with Scripture, or even worse, the message contradicts Scripture and they conclude the Spirit is leading them beyond Scripture.

The lesson rightly points out that the Holy Spirit inspired the Scripture and the eternal truths contained therein do not change. Thus, the Holy Spirit will not contradict the truths of Scripture. However, as we have pointed out earlier, there are many interpretations of Scripture, and the Holy Spirit will lead us to reject false interpretations of Scripture.

Can the Bible be rightly understood without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit? Can reading the Bible transform the heart without the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart? No!

This is why the metaphor of a lamp is so good.

> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Ps 119:105 NIV84)

The Scripture is the lamp, but the Holy Spirit is the oil in the lamp. A lamp without oil gives no light. Studying Scripture without the Holy Spirit does not result in truth (light) and does not result in a life that shines forth God's kingdom of love. The Scripture is useless without the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Scripture without the Holy Spirit can be a tool to cause great harm. As I have said before, there isn't much more dangerous on planet earth than someone on a mission for God who doesn't actually know Him!

The lesson, in last paragraph says, "It is not our task to sit in judgment over Scripture. The Word of God, rather, has the right and the authority to judge us and our thinking."

Are they saying we are not to reason through the Scripture and make a judgment on whether to follow it or not? That if the Scripture gives us a directive from God, then we are not to question that directive, we are to obey?

Hmmm…. I wonder, if the lesson authors were here what they would say about Deuteronomy 14:22-27 (NIV84):

> Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. [23] Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always. [24] But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the Lord your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the Lord will choose to put his Name is so far away), [25] then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. [26] Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice. [27] And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

Here we have a specific command by God to remember the Levites, God's church leaders, with our tithes—do you think they would want us to practice this? And in the very middle of this we are told also to use our tithe to buy fermented drink and celebrate with the Lord, would they want us to practice this?

Well, we are certainly not to sit in judgment of the Scripture and we are certainly not to reason, so I guess they would have us practice this. This is only one example of many that can occur when people fail to reason and to make judgments about the Scripture.

If the Scripture is to have any benefit in our lives, must we make a judgment as to whether we believe it is the Word of God or not?

If the Scripture is to have any benefit in our lives, must we make a judgment as to what the various passages mean? If we don't know what it means can it help us?

We were created in the image of God with the ability to think and to reason and God wants us to develop these abilities to the highest capacity possible. It is only through exercise that strength is acquired. Scripture is given to us by God as the revelation of truth and the spiritual gymnasium for our minds to read, study, and reason in order to develop by practice the ability to discern the right from the

wrong. So, yes, we are to reason and we are to examine Scripture and make judgments, but of course always with a humble heart inviting God's Spirit to enlighten and lead.

Human reason alone is the problem, human reason unsanctified is the problem, not human reason humbly surrendered to the Lord.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month.

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

SOUTH AFRICA NEWS: *The Journal of the Watcher* and *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World* will be available in SA after the lockdown is over, at least another two weeks.

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 5
By Scripture Alone—*Sola Scriptura*

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

One of our online class members, Ron Holman, sent in this email:

> ***The trouble with Scripture is NOT what we don't understand,***
> ***The trouble with Scripture is what we DO understand***
> ***and DO NOT apply to our life.***
>
> *Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (NKJV)*
>
> *A lamp gives us just enough light to safely take a few steps at a time. A lamp doesn't light up the whole length of the path if we stand still. If we want to have light for our journey, we must step forward into the light.*
>
> *We cannot expect God to give us more light, if we do not follow the light He has given us.*
>
> *The Captain can guide a giant ship with a small rudder, but only if the ship is moving.*

Read first paragraph, "The Protestant claim…" The lesson correctly points out that the Bible is to be our source of theological truth, not the Bible plus equal weight and value to church tradition. This is the original meaning and purpose of the phrase *Sola Scriptura. Sola Scriptura* was not intended to suggest that Scripture is the only and exclusive source of truth, but to state that Scripture is to be used without man-made traditions interpreting it or negating it—that was its point.

In fact, there were five *soloes* all of them were *not* intended to mean only the one element alone, but to divorce that element from a specific other element that had come to be merged with it which undermined the truth.

- *sola fide* – by faith alone, was to teach by faith and not by faith plus works
- *sola gratia* – by grace alone, was to teach by grace not grace plus human works
- *Solus Christus or Solo Christo* – by Christ or through Christ alone and not by Christ plus church sacraments
- *Soli Deo Gloria* – glory to God alone and not glory to God plus glory to the church

We see that faith alone does not mean without grace or without Christ, and Christ alone does not mean without the Holy Spirit working in the heart.

Do you see how these *soloes* are not about the element alone, but about excluding something from inclusion that was wrongly being included?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So too *sola Scriptura* means our doctrines come from Scripture not from Scripture plus church traditions, church councils, or papal rulings. But *sola Scriptura* does not mean we are to divorce Scripture from science/nature and experience, the other threads of evidence that Scripture itself teaches God has revealed Himself through.

The idea that Scripture is to be used all by itself without nature and experience is a <u>tradition</u> that must be rejected.

Read second paragraph, "It was the Bible that gave…"

> **The historical-grammatical method** is one that strives to discover the biblical author's original intended meaning in the text. Many conservative Protestant groups focus on this method.
>
> **The historical-critical method**, or higher criticism, is a method that investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand the world behind the text, looking for local cultural applications and understanding of the day, rather than the author's written intent. (As an example from today—if we read a statement "He is a gay fellow." The historical-grammatical method would seek to understand what the author meant—did the author mean happy or homosexual? The historical-critical method would seek to understand the typical way the word was used in society at the time it was written.)
>
> **Revealed exegesis** posits that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write things beyond their own understanding and thus the Bible contains deeper meanings or truths than its human authors intended or could have foreseen.

Each of these methods have their strengths and weaknesses. While the lesson authors prefer the historical-grammatical method in which we only draw conclusions consistent with what the authors intended, I can assure you they don't use it exclusively.

Consider these two quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church, and whether you agree, have applied this and believe the lesson authors do also:

> No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than that God by His Holy Spirit especially directs His servants on earth in the great movements for the carrying forward of the work of salvation. Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act; to each is granted a measure of light, adapted to the necessities of his time, and sufficient to enable him to perform the work which God has given him to do. **But no man, however honored of Heaven, has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption, <u>or even to a perfect appreciation of the divine purpose in the work for his own time</u>. <u>Men do not fully understand what God would accomplish by the work which He gives them to do; they do not comprehend, in all</u>**

> **its bearings, the message which they utter in His name**.... Christ in His Heavenly Sanctuary 103.2
>
> **Even the prophets who were favored with the special illumination of the Spirit did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained.**... CIHS 104.1
>
> Often as [Jesus] presented the Old Testament Scriptures, and showed their application to Himself and His work of atonement, [the disciples] had been awakened by His Spirit, and lifted into a heavenly atmosphere. **Of the spiritual truths spoken by the prophets they had a clearer understanding than had the original writers themselves**. DA 494.3

Do you agree with these ideas? Does history and evidence support them to be true? Consider the book of Daniel—did Daniel understand all that he wrote? Do we understand more today? Consider any field of study, science, medicine, mathematics, automotive technology—isn't it true that as truths are understood by one generation and taught to the next that the next generation expands and builds upon those truths and more truth unfolds? Wouldn't this be true in our study of the Bible?

If we use strictly the historical-grammatical method, then we cannot gain more from Scripture than the original authors intended when they wrote it. It would severely limit our understanding and the agency of the Holy Spirit to both inspire His prophets and to enlighten and unfold truth throughout the ages.

So, I think all the methods have their value, when used correctly, but can be misused to restrict the truth or introduce error.

But, the biggest problem with any of these methods is that they don't address the assumptions and presuppositions the student has when they come to the Scripture. In my view, it doesn't matter which of these methods one uses if one believes, prior to studying Scripture, that God's law functions like human law. If one accepts that lie then one reads into Scripture imperialism, force, coercion, legal-penal theologies that are not part of God's kingdom and thus corrupt the truth about God.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "From the beginning…" I want to affirm that for SDAs the official position and the method used to form church doctrine is the Bible and the Bible alone.

The SDA church believes that the Bible teaches the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to people and one of those gifts is the gift of prophecy and that EGW was gifted with the gift of prophecy—in which she had special revelation, visions, dreams and was visited by and spoke with angels.

This is a similar claim to Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church, who also claims to have had special revelation and been visited and spoke to angels, particularly the angel Moroni.

What is the difference between EGW's experience and approach to Scripture and Josephs Smith's and does their attitudes toward Scripture and how their writings are used give insight into whether one was more likely inspired by God than the other?

EGW herself subordinated her writings to Scripture. She called her writings the lesser light whose primary purpose was to lead people back to Scripture—the greater light. Her writings were not to be used for the formation of doctrines—the doctrines were to come from Bible study. In the founding of the SDA church the leading brethren would study a subject, often for years, and only after faithful study, pulling from Scripture the Bible basis for a conclusion, would EGW, sometimes, get an vision, dream or some other inspiration which would confirm the conclusions already formed from the Bible.

Ron Duffield, in his book, *The Return of the Latter Rain Volume I A Historical Review of Seventh-day Adventist History from 1844-1891* does a great job of providing the historical quotes, references and writings from the pioneers of the SDA church that document this process—and how the church leadership rejected the message of Jones and Waggoner, which EGW endorsed and supported, and instead chose the penal legal view to promote.

But, perhaps the most important point for SDAs is: EGW herself in regard to her writings wrote the following about her writings:

> "If the Testimonies speak not according to the word of God, reject them." (Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 5, page 691)

The Testimonies refer to EGW's writings and she herself and the SDA church make the Bible the standard, and if there is ever a contradiction between EGW and the Bible, then her position was that we should reject her writings on that topic.

This is in sharp contrast to Joseph Smith who took the position that his work was to correct and improve the Bible. That if any contradiction arose between the Bible and his writings the Bible was to be corrected by what was revealed to him.

This is why I value the writings of EGW but do not value the writings of Joseph Smith—because EGW never sought to correct Scripture, but elevated the Bible as the standard and subordinated herself and her writings to it, whereas Joseph Smith claims to supersede Scripture.

Now, I was quite heartened to note that the lesson authors wrote: *"*the *sola Scripture* principle was intended to safeguard the authority of Scripture from dependence upon the church and its interpretation…"

This is a great point—that a group of theologians working at a Bible research institute do not have the authority to interpret Scripture for the rest of us. The Bible remains its own authority. Sadly, for many in Christianity, and some in the SDA church it often doesn't work this way.

For many Christians when Bible questions arise they often seek a theologian, pastor, commentary, or research counsel to tell them the answer and these research institutes end up becoming authorities over the Bible all the while claiming they only believe in the authority of the Bible.

We should respect our church leaders, those who have dedicated their lives to the study of Scripture. We should thoughtfully, prayerfully, and honestly consider, examine, and study ideas that they may present. But we should not surrender our individuality, our minds, our thinking to them and simply believe because a person with an academic degree or in church office says so. We should only believe because we have examined the evidence for ourselves and understand and agree it is actually true.

And remember, we can disagree and still respect and love those with whom we disagree. It is okay. We can still view people who hold to different theological views with love and respect and being part of God's family. I wish we had more of that in the church. I would enjoy the opportunity to have regular discussions with someone who saw it differently as long as we both have love and respect for each other in our hearts and we both acknowledge our human limitations and are open to have our ideas changed with evidence.

I remember Graham Maxwell used to say that he had friends with whom he disagreed on various topics and they would say how they couldn't wait to get to heaven to ask Jesus who was right—but then said he had to be prepared for Jesus to say: "Well, the truth is, you are both wrong." If we don't have a heart that is willing to give up a position we hold when truth is presented then we are no longer walking by the light, the lamp of truth is no longer leading us.

This is why I promote the principle of developing a heart that loves truth and wants to grow in truth at the earliest possible moment—because God's truth is infinite and we will never stop growing in it as long as we live in harmony with God's plan.

The lesson quotes 1Corinthians 4:6, "Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another." (NIV84)

Read second paragraph, "Not to go beyond…" Not to go beyond Scripture—what does this mean? Is this different from contradicting Scripture? I think we can all agree that we should not incorporate ideas that contradict Scripture, but going beyond Scripture—what does that mean? Does it mean adding to our beliefs and practices things that are not in Scripture—is that okay as long as it doesn't contradict the Bible?

I am not convinced this means that we are restricted from adding to our experiences, practices, beliefs, and ideas things that are not in Scripture as long as they don't contradict Scripture. For instance:

- Does Scripture teach that we should form denominations and have property and buildings built for church worship which are owned by the corporate church?
- Does the Scripture teach we are to build corporate healthcare systems owned by the corporate church?

- Does Scripture teach we are to use printing presses or electronic media in transcribing and printing the Bible and distributing it to others?
- Do we find the structured church service with its opening prayer, opening song, passing an offering plate through the pews, special music, sermon, closing prayer, in which church members are led through the service from the front in the Bible?
- Do we find the practice of soliciting donations from unbelievers to support the gospel in the Bible—some have called this Ingathering?
- Do we find veganism in a post-flood world taught in the Bible?
- Do we find total abstinence from alcohol for all human beings taught in the Bible?
- Does the Scripture teach whether we should or should not use digital devises on Sabbath or in the worship service?

My point is that as long as it doesn't contradict the Bible we may continue to grow and advance in living out the Bible principles in ways the Bible never described.

This is the difference between levels 1-4 moral development and levels 5-7. The first levels are rules oriented, obey or be punished, the higher levels are love and principles oriented, do what is right because it is so and there is no rules to love and thus the specifics can change as long as the principles are practiced. But rules often interfere with the practice of the principles.

We see this same division of maturity in our country right now in dealing with Corona Virus. The point of all the interventions is to stop the spread and prevent illness and death. With this in mind, some guidelines have been put in place:

- No gatherings of more than 10 people
- Wash hands regularly
- Don't touch your face
- Wear mask—especially if at risk
- Quarantine if sick or exposed to someone who has the virus
- Don't shake hands, hug or touch

But some have approached this by making the guidelines into rules—it is no longer about avoiding contact and spreading disease, but enforcing rules. So a father who was in a park with his daughter throwing a ball, with no one around for hundreds of yards, gets handcuffed and taken away.

Those who understand the principle of avoiding contact, yet still wanted to have an Easter Service, promoted a drive-in service in which people would come into the church parking lot, everyone stay in their own cars with the windows rolled up and the service was broadcast where they could hear it. However, government officials, following rules, sent police to give citations to those who were in their cars. This means, the police, going from car to car and giving citations to enforce the rules became vectors that broke the 6-foot distancing and potentially spread the virus to those in their cars.

The point is that the problem with rules versus design laws and principles is a society wide problem and the church is to grow up into maturity, which means we must move past the penal legal view into the worship of our Creator God and embrace and live in harmony with His design laws for life.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible itself claims…" The Bible itself does not state that all Scripture is inspired of God, but that all Scripture **which is inspired of God** is useful. This is a truth, not a claim.

There are many Scriptures that are not inspired by God:

- Apocrypha
- Pseudo-apocrypha
- Book of Mormon
- Koran

This statement by the lesson authors is a good example of why we are not to submit our thinking to other humans—because they make mistakes. This is a clear mistake and if they make a mistake on something this basic, simple, and straightforward, how can we have confidence in their views on more complex ideas? So we don't surrender our thinking to the lesson authors, but respect them for their hard work, motives and consider what they have to say but…

We take the position that Paul wrote in Romans 14, that every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind. I am not here to tell any of you what to think. You have your own mind, identity, individuality, capacity to reason and think, and we at Come and Reason Ministries are not here to indoctrinate you or tell you what to think, but to stimulate you to think, to present evidences for you to examine for yourself and come to your own conclusions. This is the law of exertion—the only way to get stronger is to exercise—if you don't use it you lose it. So, we want you to think, reason, wrestle with ideas and understand for yourselves the truth and why it is the truth.

So, while I do not believe the authors know all the answers, for none but God knows all the answers, I find value in hearing how others understand things, getting their insights and then examining them for myself in light of God's Word. So I would not want to do away with the study guides or other resources for they are good tools to stimulate study and thinking.

Yes, we can assume a fundamental unity in Scripture—why then do we not have this unity in Christianity? Because if the imposed law lie that has infected how we read Scripture.

In the second paragraph the lesson states, "Without the unity of the Bible the church would have no means to distinguish truth from error and to repudiate heresy."

Consider that for a second—believing the Bible to be inspired by the Holy Spirit such that it communicates consistent, non-contradictory truths is an important concept to understand so that we can utilize Scripture to help clarify other Scripture and find harmony.

However, this does not mean that we can only differentiate truth and error from Scripture—in fact to truly differentiate error from truth, Scripture must not only be compared with Scripture, but with nature/science—God's design laws, and real-life experiences.

If we fail to do this, then using only Scripture we introduce all kinds of false ideas and this is why there are so many denominations and divisions in Christianity.

I have just made a claim, that Scripture is not the only means to differentiate truth and error—is there evidence to support this claim?

Jesus, when dealing with theologians, would sometimes use Scripture to expose their hypocrisy, but was that the only method Jesus used to reveal truth and expose error?

What about these parables:

- the landowner
- the Good Samaritan
- speck versus log in the eye
- new cloth old garments
- the sower
- wheat and tares
- mustard seed
- leaven
- hidden treasure
- pearl of great price
- lost coin
- lost son
- lost sheep
- fishing
- what goes in the mouth/food doesn't defile the character
- laborers in the vineyard
- marriage feast
- ten virgins
- faithful and wicked servant
- one, five, and ten talents
- the rich man and Lazarus
- the Publican and tax collector

Did Jesus teach truth and expose error and heresy? Did He do it by *only* quoting Scripture?

The idea that *sola Scriptura* means truth can only be promoted by and error only exposed by quoting Scripture **is the false tradition and we must reject it**. When we understand God's character, God as Creator, His laws as design laws, how life really works, the nature and character of sin, we can expose error and promote truth in many ways, all throughout life and life's experiences—**but truth from science and life experiences will never contradict the truth from Scripture.**

This is important, because those who use the Scripture to create false theologies will be foremost to condemn the integrative evidence-based approach. They take a position of moral supremacy, claiming that they are true to the Bible, honor the Bible, respect the Bible, make the Bible supreme and that by using nature and experience we devalue and dilute the Bible and thus they claim that their positions are more Biblically sound than ours. They do this because their positions are refuted by reality, by God's design laws and how life really works. Thus they deny the truth while claiming to promote the truth and we end up with over 40,000 different Christian groups arguing their views of the Bible.

Do we have other Bible examples of people exposing error and promoting truth by means other than quoting Scripture?

- How did Nathan expose to David his error with Bathsheba? With a story about a poor man and his lamb.
- How did Micaiah expose the truth to Ahab and Hezekiah that they should not go to war with Ramoth Gilead? By telling a story about lying spirits in heaven. (1Kings 22)

So, even in the Bible we have many examples of errors being exposed by means other than quoting the Bible.

In the last paragraph, the lesson points out a **very good point**—that the entire Bible must be taken together. All of the various parts of Scripture must harmonize with the other parts of Scripture. When we allow parts of Scripture to be deleted from our understanding then we open the door to misunderstanding.

The lesson asks what are we to do when one verse in the Bible seems to contradict other verses in the Bible?

Let's consider the story in 1Kings 22. The setting is Ahab meeting with Jehoshaphat trying to get Jehoshaphat to join him in attacking Ramoth Gilead. The prophet Micaiah is called and this is what the prophet told them:

> Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. [20] And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'
>
> "One suggested this, and another that. [21] Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'
>
> [22] " 'By what means?' the LORD asked.
>
> " 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said.

" 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'
[23] "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."

Yet, James tell us:

> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.. (1:13 NIV84)

Does God lie or deceive? Do we accept the 1Kings 22 passage as inspired by God? Do we take this literally, just as it reads? Or, do we understand this passage through the lens of what the rest of the Bible tells us about God, and through the lens of design law.

We should ask questions like: Does God actually lie? No, then this must mean something else—and what does it mean? That God is sending a message to Ahab, a man who worships Baal. What happens in the minds of people who worship false gods? (To answer this we must understand design law—the imposed law view merely states that they are in legal trouble for breaking a commandment. But when we understand design law, we understand worshipping changes us—so what happens in the minds of people who worship false gods?) Do they grow in God's wisdom or do their minds become darkened? So, will Ahab, a worshipper of Baal be responsive to clear heavenly light, will he understand heavenly truth, or would the wisdom of heaven be foolishness to a worshipper of Baal? What would a Baal worshipper believe to be true about the gods? That the true gods are the most powerful gods. Ahab would worship a dictator god, a being who imposes his will and make things happen.

Does our God of love want Ahab to die or Ahab to repent and be saved? So what type of message would God send Ahab—a message to lead him to his death, or a message to lead him toward salvation? If Ahab follows the message what does Ahab do? He refuses to go to war. **So, this story reveals that God, in grace, steps down and assumes the role of causing the lies** in order to inform Ahab that the other prophets had lied to him and going to war will result in his death. This was not about how things truly happen in heaven, but a message of mercy communicated in the only way the listener could comprehend that he had been lied to, all in order to save the sinner.

Now, we have harmony, God is shining light into Ahab's mind, but Ahab doesn't like it.

This is how we harmonize Scripture—but we can only do so if we understand the basic truths about God's character of love and His design laws.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The biblical testimony…" I want to affirm this—absolutely—that the Bible can be understood by anyone who has a heart's desire to understand truth and opens their hearts and minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Does this mean all Scripture is easily understood, or the basics, the key elements are clearly revealed?

I like these two historic quotes from EGW, do you agree?

> **The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and a perfect adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart**, that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while it enables the humblest and uncultured to discern the way of salvation. **And yet these simply stated truths lay hold upon subjects so elevated, so far-reaching, so infinitely beyond the power of human comprehension, that we can accept them only because God has declared them.** Thus the plan of redemption is laid open to us, so that every soul may see the steps he is to take in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be saved in God's appointed way; **yet beneath these truths, so easily understood, lie mysteries that are the hiding of His glory**—mysteries that overpower the mind in its research, yet inspire the sincere seeker for truth with reverence and faith. **The more he searches the Bible, the deeper is his conviction that it is the Word of the living God, and human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation**. A Call to Stand Apart 46.5
>
> **The mysteries of the Bible, so far from being an argument against it, are among the strongest evidences of its divine inspiration**. If it contained no account of God but that which we could comprehend; if His greatness and majesty could be grasped by finite minds, then the Bible would not, as now, bear the unmistakable evidences of divinity. The greatness of its themes should inspire faith in it as the word of God. Ed 170.2

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "The beauty of letting…" The immediate context of what was occurring is very important to correctly understand Scripture, but most importantly is the context of the Great Controversy that began in heaven and spread to this earth.

Read third paragraph, "The Bible is…" I love this quotation and it is exactly right, the grand central theme of Scripture needs to be understood. If we don't understand that central theme then we can take the Bible stories and stand them up as stand-alone stories and that often make little sense. But when we understand the grand central theme then we see how all the parts fit.

And what is that central theme?

- The truth about God—His character, methods and principles of love, truth and freedom. God's design laws—how God built reality to operate.
- The controversy over God's character and design laws when Satan lied and framed God's laws are imposed rules thus alleged God to be a dictator and source of inflicted pain, suffering and death.
- How the creation of this world was not only the crowning act of God's creation, creating beings with Godlike abilities to pro-create and have dominion to rule—but this world was also created as a revelation, a living center of God's perfection to shine throughout all God's

universe. Such a revelation would expose Satan's allegations as false, so Satan targeted Adam and Eve to corrupt them and displace God's design and methods of love and instill Satan's methods of fear and selfishness.

- God reveals Himself more fully in Jesus who is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus commits Himself to cure humanity, to remedy the sin problem and save this planet and all who trust Him
- The Old Testament is then the battle between the forces of God working to bring the Messiah and the forces of Satan working to obstruct the coming of the Messiah.

When we understand this the Bible stories fall into place and make so much sense.

Read the last paragraph, "When we compare Scripture with Scripture…" No doubt there is great value in being able to understand the original languages. However, with the various lexicons available today, knowing the original languages is not the most important knowledge to have to translate accurately for several reasons.

- The further back in antiquity the less anyone knows of the original languages. In many places in the OT the various lexicons say, "Hebrew unknown" which means the translators make their best guess.

  The older the language the less clearly it is understood. Here is an example of English from the 14th Century. Luke 8:1-2 from Wycliffe's original Bible and then the modern English translation of it:

  > And it was don aftirward, and Jhesu made iorney by citees and castelis, prechinge and euangelysinge þe rewme of God, 2 and twelue wiþ him; and summe wymmen þat weren heelid of wickide spiritis and syknessis, Marie, þat is clepid Mawdeleyn, of whom seuene deuelis wenten
  >
  > And it came to pass afterward, that Jesus went throughout every city and village (castle), preaching and showing the kingdom of 2 God, and the twelve were with him; and certain women, which had been healed of wicked spirits and sicknesses, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

- The most important thing to know is God's character of love, His design laws and the Great Controversy—if one holds the human imposed law lie then when they translate they will incorporate legal distortions into the translation.

Let's examine some differences in various translations:

Romans 3:21-26 from the NIV, GNT, Remedy:

> **NIV:** But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

GNT: But now God's way of putting people right with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. 22God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: 23everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. 24But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. 25–26God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.

Remedy: But now God has revealed a healthy state of being — a character that is right and perfect in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

Psalms 32:3,4:

The Good News Bible: When I did not confess my sins, I was worn out from crying all day long**.** Day and night you punished me, Lord; my strength was completely drained, as moisture is dried up by the summer heat.

English Standard Version: For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

King James Version: When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, Through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

The Remedy: When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God, I stressed myself and my body decayed because every day I screamed "no" denying the truth. But day and night your healing hand pressed firmly upon me; my resistance evaporated, like water in the summer heat.

Do you see how the various translations differ because there is no agreement on the various Greek and Hebrew words or the best English translation for those words. Do you see how the law lens impacts the translations?

THURSDAY

The lesson is about EGW and Scripture. Some have really struggled with this—they question: is she a prophet, is she more than a prophet, is she just a Christian with a good heart etc. Many people have argued over such questions, but these are all false arguments.

Those who want to insist she had the gift of prophecy often do so because they approach Bible truth from a child's view, they want someone else in charge to tell them the answer, so they want EGW to have the prophetic gift so they can find quotes she wrote and use them as the final word. This shifts the responsibility away from them to become fully persuaded in their own mind, from exercising by practice their own ability to reason and think and weigh out the issues and come to their own conclusions. It is so much easier just to believe the person in authority—"the teacher said so" approach. Many people do this, whether with the Bible, the pastor, priest, pope or EGW. But it really misses the entire point.

The question of inspiration, to me, is cleared up very easily with some basic questions.

- Are spiritual things spiritually discerned?
- Which means that sinful human beings can only understand God's truths by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit
- So, to the degree any human being speaks the truth about God it is only possible for them to do so by the enlightenment and working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds. Whether it is Billy Graham, Martin Luther, or EGW. And all such writings must be compared to and tested by the Scripture, just as EGW said should be done with her writings. **So to me the question of her gifting isn't relevant, the relevant question is whether what she wrote harmonizes with the Bible.**
- Thus, her writings have value to the degree they speak the truth and harmonize with Scripture NOT BECAUSE SHE WROTE THEM.

A second point that has caused some confusion regarding EGW came up a

few decades ago, when scholars discovered that within her writings are text that was copied from other sources. This led to the allegation of plagiarism. This caused a lot of confusion and some to lose confidence in what she wrote—but it really is quite simple.

Imagine you had a family member who was dying with a terminal illness. Your doctor didn't know what to do and hospice has been called in. You go online and find a medical journal in which a cure for your loved one's condition is described. In desperation, having nothing to lose, you give them the recommended remedy—and sure enough it works. They are cured and restored to health. Not only that, but over the next several decades millions of people with the same terminal condition who take the remedy described in the journal also are cured—in fact it has cured everyone who has taken it.

But then, scholars discover that the author of that journal article plagiarized it, copied it from another person. What would you do? Would you decide that the remedy was wrong? Or would you say, so what, it works.

The point is this, the only relevant question is **whether it is true or not**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

SOUTH AFRICA NEWS: *The Journal of the Watcher* and *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World* will be available in SA after the lockdown is over, at least another two weeks.

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 6
Why is Interpretation Needed

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV)

What does this text mean?

Does it mean more than believing God exists and rewards those who seek Him?

James says: “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble.” vs. 2:19 NKJV

It sounds like the demons believe God is, but they live in fear of Him. So, having faith is more than merely believing God exists, having faith means trusting in Him.

And why do you think the demons live in fear of God? Has God stopped loving them? Does God have a desire to harm them? If it were possible for God to heal the hearts and minds of the demons and restore them to righteousness would God do it? So, is God a being whom they actually need to fear?

No! Their fear is the inevitable result of sin, just like Adam and Eve, as soon as they sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid. God was for Adam and Eve, but they feared Him—why? Because of what sin does in the hearts and minds of sinners.

God presents truth to win to trust, but sinners are still free to accept or reject the truth. If one rejects the truth what is left for the mind to operate upon? Lies, and what happens in the mind when one clings to lies? They become more fearful and more selfish. Thus, the demons are deluded; they believe lies that God is

the source of pain, suffer, torment, death and this is why they fear. Many humans do the same thing, they fear God who is trying to save them rather than fearing the sin in their own hearts and minds which is destroying them.

This is classic projection—project out of one's own heart one's own evil and blame it on another.

And when we conclude someone has it in for us, someone wants to punish us, or worse wants to torture and kill us, can we trust them?

This is the root of Satan's lie about God's law. Satan's lie that God's law is like human law, imposed rules, causes us to conceive of justice as inflicting just penalties for rule breaking; then we conceive of God as the one who inflicts those penalties; which ultimately means we can't trust God because God is violating the law of liberty. We create false theologies in which payments must be made to God to get Him not to kill us, to be protected from God—which is paganism.

The only way we can find harmony in Scripture in which the wages of sin is death, that there is a real penalty for sin, yet God is completely trustworthy and never the One from whom we need to be protected, is by returning to design law and worshipping the Creator God. When we realize that God's laws are the laws reality is built upon, we understand that life, health, happiness are only possible in harmony with those laws. Deviations are damaging and ultimately result in death unless healed by the Creator. In this reality we see God as the source of only good, health, life and we know that sin as the cause of pain, suffering and death. Thus, we can trust God completely because He is trustworthy.

We realize that Jesus's death was an absolute necessity for salvation, but not for legal reasons, but to win us to trust AND fix the damage done to this creation and procure the remedy to heal us.

Understanding design law gives insight into why human beings can be saved by Jesus and fallen angels cannot. Adam and Eve were deceived and their choice damaged them, but not beyond healing. Lucifer and the angels who fell with him persisted in their rebellion in heaven until they had destroyed the faculties

responsive to truth and love—they were beyond healing. Here is one such explanation, by one of the founders of the SDA church:

> God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. **He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels.** [Why not immediately degraded? Because sin damages slowly, it isn't a legal removal by the authority in charge. There was still opportunity for Lucifer to be cured and healed. But notice, Lucifer in this context is already bearing false witness—this is transgression of the law. Consider what this author describes next.] Long was he retained in heaven. **Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission**. [Pardon on the condition of what? No blood payment, no death penalty, no payment or appeasement or propitiation of any kind—what was required? That Lucifer's heart change and be restored to truth and love—healing was required.] **Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise were made to convince him of his error**.[Truth and love were waging with lies and selfishness] The spirit of discontent had never before been known in heaven. Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. **But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at this time fully cast off his allegiance to God.** [He knew the truth, and his heart was not fully hardened against God yet. He could have chosen to repent and submit. But he didn't] Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, **yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office**. [Notice God wouldn't have even required him to be removed from office, no punishment of any kind would have been inflicted upon Lucifer—why? Because God's laws are design laws it is all about healing, no punishment is required. It is Satan's lie that sin must be punished. God's truth is that sin must be eradicated, removed, purged, healed, cured.] **But pride forbade him to submit. He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed**

himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker. [And what happens in the mind of those who reject truth and cling to lies? This is why Satan cannot be saved. Consider the following quote.] GC 495.3

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. [What was different between the two? Was this about geography? No it was about the position of enlightenment and understanding of the truth about God.] **Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love**. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, **Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him**. [Why was there no more? Was Jesus unwilling to give His life to save Lucifer? No, that was not the problem—Jesus would have, but it would have done no good as Lucifer already rejected the truth about God's character and methods of love and such truth would have no impact. Satan had changed himself, destroying within himself the very faculties that respond to love and truth. Notice how mankind was in a different position than Lucifer.] **But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God.** [Where is our hope? Being drawn back to God by beholding His character of love. This is why Jesus said the truth will set you free—free from fear of God, free to trust Him, and why Jesus said if we have seen Him we have seen the Father. The lies of Satan are refuted and in trust we open the heart and experience the victory of Christ, such that we receive new hearts and motives—becoming partaker of the divine nature as Jesus shares His perfect human character with us.] DA 761.5

So, why is it impossible to please God without trust? Because trust is what opens our hearts to His Spirit, to be healed, to be transformed. God is not pleased with good task performance while His children die of their terminal condition; God is pleased when we trust Him such that He can heal us from our terminal sin-condition.

SUNDAY

The lesson title is Presuppositions, and points out that all of us have our biases, histories, assumptions, life experiences that impact how we see the world including how we read Scripture. Learning how to examine our own biases and change them is one of the signs of the mature.

Graham Maxwell used to use the acronym FOTAP—the Fallacy Of The Assumed Premise. Assuming something to be true that is not true deceives and we draw the wrong conclusions.

During the current COVID pandemic I have pointed this out many time. If you have listened carefully to Drs. Fauci and Birx as they have given their projections of potential deaths, they have repeatedly said. “The models are only as good as the *assumptions* they are based upon.”

What this means is that the models and projections are not based on facts, but are based on assumptions drawn from facts.

Here are the facts:

- The virus, SARS-CoV-2, that causes COVID-19 exists
- SARS-CoV-2 is contagious
- COVID-19 does cause some to become gravely ill and die

But the rate of transmission, the virulence—how lethal it actually is— and what percent of people in a population will die if not treated are all assumptions. There has been no hard data to base the models upon, that is why the models at one point suggested over 2 million people in the USA may die, then 1 million, then 200,000, then 100,000 and now less than that.

Situations like the current COVID pandemic are also perfect ground for good and evil to manifest:

Good—people who willingly put themselves in harm’s way to help others such as healthcare workers, and people who willingly sacrifice to help others from being willing to socially distance, to not working, not hoarding, and sharing what

they have, even giving up life-saving treatments so others can be saved. We have seen love being manifested.

Evil—hoarding, exploiting, price-gouging, not caring for anyone but themselves and seeking to take advantage. Including using the situation to advance unrelated causes. Seeking to take away liberties—remember freedom is one of God's design laws and encroachment of liberty always incites rebellion. Using the situation to vilify or malign others. We have seen evil being manifested.

Such situations as this have no absolute right or wrong answer—decision making is a risk-benefit analysis that has consequences regardless of which course one takes:

- If the economy closes or remains closed a certain period there are consequences and some people will be harmed
- If the economy never closes or opens at a certain date there are consequences and some people will be harmed.

Because of this reality—it is the perfect ground for those who want to divide, who want to incite anger, hostility, and conflict. People who are uniters will seek to validate the difficulty in making such decisions and support those making decisions identifying their good motives, but dividers will use the situation to incite division.

This also goes back to level of maturity—the mature have grown to be able to make difficult decisions, like physicians in an ER, weighing risks and benefits. But the immature get overwhelmed with complex decision-making and want someone else to tell them what to do, but then if the outcome isn't just what they wanted they will often become angry and attack the one who made the decision.

Assumptions make a big difference in any field of study and in all our decision-making.

In science, assumptions cause faulty conclusions, particularly when it comes to origin of life science, the science of how life began on planet earth.

Here is a **partial list of assumptions** that corrupt the conclusions that lead scientists to teach the godless theory that life began on earth over billions of years all on its own:

- There is no God
- It is possible for physical matter to organize itself without intelligent input
- Carbon 14 in the atmosphere is at the same concentration today as it was thousands of years ago
- There was no worldwide flood
- There was no water layer above the earth
- Radio decay of isotopes is constant and doesn't change (we now have evidence that solar flares change the rate of radio decay, so if the Bible account of the Sun shining brighter before the flood is true it potentially could impact radio decay rates impacting how we date things)
- Advancement of species occurs through mutation of the genetic code

Every one of these assumptions are not proven facts and are not supported by the evidence, thus when people who hold them view facts, such as a fossil with a certain measurable amount of carbon 14, they interpret the meaning through a false premises and come to false conclusions.

This happens all the time in the godless origin sciences.

What about in theology, what are some of the false premises in Christianity that have corrupted the truth about God?

- #1 is God's law functions like human law, many others are a direct consequence of this assumption
- Justice requires God to punish sin
- Since sin must be punished and someone has to pay the penalty therefore Jesus came to take our punishment
- God in order to be just punished Jesus in our place, therefore God killed Jesus on the cross
- God created human beings in Eden with immortality so that no matter what happens, saved or lost they cannot die
- Jesus is not fully God
- There is no Holy Spirit

All of these premises or assumptions, when accepted, undermine our ability to trust God because they undermine the truth of God's character and trustworthiness. They also, undermine our intelligent understanding of God and what He is trying to accomplish and thus limit our ability to participate with Him.

Recently, I have again received emails from people who are being confronted by those who advance the position that there is no Trinity, that there is no Holy Spirit as a separate individuality, that the Holy Spirit is merely the Father's presence.

Understand this is an attack on the character of God. If you would like a full exploration of the Bible texts and evidences for the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit all with their own unique identity and individuality and all being fully God, then go to our website comeandreason.com and type TRINITY into the search engine. I am not going to go over the many Bible texts that evidence this truth, it is on the website.

To me the most important truth is understanding God's design law and nature. The Bible says, "God is love." 1John 4:8. Further the Bible teaches that this love is "not self-seeking." 1Corithians 13:5. Love is outward moving, other-centered.

Therefore, God, being love, could not be love in isolation because love requires an object to pour itself upon. Love is other-centered! If we make the argument that at some point in eternity past there was a time in which God existed as a singularity then at that point in time God is something other than love.

God's nature and character of love, rightly understood, is the most powerful argument for the plurality of God. We see this in the creation of humankind, "let US make man in OUR image…" He created "them male and female" and the "two shall become one" united in a triune relationship – husband, wife and God indwelling their hearts via His Spirit!

The least number we can have and still have truly other-centered love is three. With two we can have narcissistic self-reinforcement. I have seen this in couples when they both adore each other and everything is fine, until the first child comes along and the mother gives more time and attention to the child and the husband becomes jealous and begins to complain. He didn't really love, he loved what he got from her, not what he could give to her or his child.

Satan seeks to destroy the truth about the plurality of the Godhead because it undermines the truth about God's character of love and, in so doing, places an obstacle to the only healing remedy for sin: God's "perfect love [that] casts out all fear." As we see the truth about God, as revealed in Jesus, the lies about Him are removed and we are won to trust and in that trust He pours His love (Himself) into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and we are transformed to be like Him! And it is the Holy Spirit that is the agency which operates in our hearts to achieve this healing—thus to deny the Spirit obstructs the healing agency of God.

One of the founders of the SDA church, who understood design law and God's character and methods of love wrote the following:

> In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.** [Why? Because our problem is not a legal one. If it was a legal one then Jesus's perfect sacrifice was made and we could claim it to pay our debt in the courts of heaven without the Holy Spirit. But this wasn't the problem, the problem with sin is how it changes and destroys us. We must be won to trust so that we will open the heart to God and allow the Spirit in to change and heal us.] The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the **Third Person of the Godhead**, [this author identifies the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead—I agree] who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. [Why? Because what Jesus wrought out, a perfect human character is only effectual in living beings, and we cannot make our hearts renewed, it is the Spirit of God indwelling us that renews us, makes Christ's victory ours—we become partakers of the divine nature.] It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. **Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the**

> **divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. {DA 671.2}
>
> **There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit--** those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.-- Evangelism, p. 615. {7ABC 441.9}

The lesson points out that the disciples had a wrong understanding of the coming Messiah. They were looking for someone to throw off the Romans and rule from an earthly throne.

Where did the disciples get these wrong ideas about the coming Messiah? Did the wrong ideas come from Scripture?

Well this leads to another premise, which the lesson pointed out last week as false, but many still operate under:

- Spiritual enlightenment requires a theological education
- Or, we must be told by a church leader what the Bible means
- Or, the Bible can only be rightly understood on its own divorced from science and real-life experiences

I have had certain church leaders reject what we teach for the reason that they have a degree in theology and I do not, therefore their degree in theology makes them the authority.

Notice that such an argument is not based on truth, or evidence, or facts, or reason, or Scripture, but upon authority of office—such a conclusion is to be rejected. But this way of thinking has been around for a long time and it was part of the problem with the disciples. They thought that the Scribes and Pharisees were the authority on church matters and thus deferred their conclusions to what the church leaders taught and believed what they said.

How many Christians do the same thing today?

In the Old Testament, who were the ones at the forefront of leading the people away from God?

> The **priests** did not ask, 'Where is the Lord?' **Those who deal with the law did not know me**; the leaders rebelled against me. **The prophets prophesied by Baal**, following worthless idols. (Jeremiah 2:8).

Jesus as a child did not get his education at the church schools—the schools of the prophets—why not? One Bible commentator gives insight:

> In the days of Christ the Jews gave much care to the education of their children. Their schools were connected with the synagogues, or places of worship, and the teachers were called rabbis, men who were supposed to be very learned. {The Story of Jesus 30.3}
>
> Jesus did not go to these schools, **for they taught many things that were not true. Instead of God's Word, the sayings of men were studied**, and often these were contrary to that which God had taught through His prophets. {SJ 30.4}

As an adult Christ said to the theologians of His day:

> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. (Matthew 23:15).

When Christ selected His twelve Apostles, upon which He built the church, how many had formal theological training? None, they were fisherman, and a tax collector—regular people. Why didn't Christ pick at least one person with a seminary degree to be among the original twelve? Here is one Bible commentary explanation:

> The work of Jesus was to reveal the character of the Father, and to unfold the truth which He Himself had spoken through prophets and apostles; **but there was found no place for the truth in those wise and prudent men.** Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, had to pass by the self-righteous Pharisees, and take his disciples from unlearned fishers and men of humble rank. **These who had never been to the rabbis, who**

> **had never sat in the schools of the prophets, who had not been members of the Sanhedrin, whose hearts were not bound about with their own ideas,--these He took and educated for His own use**. He could make them as new bottles for the new wine of His kingdom. These were the babes to whom the Father could reveal spiritual things; **but the priests and rulers, the scribes and Pharisees, who claimed to be the depositaries of knowledge, could give no room for the principles of Christianity**, afterward taught by the apostles of Christ. The chain of truth, link after link, was given to those who realized their own ignorance, and were willing to learn of the great Teacher. {5BC 1088.9}

And through the Dark Ages it was the same; theologians opposed the advancing light of heavenly truth, and worked to keep the traditions and teachings that darkened minds and obstructed the work of God's kingdom.

Now, let's be very clear: **It is also true that God has had His great theologians** throughout history, but almost always they had to unlearn the conclusions their theological training taught them in order to move God's cause forward. Paul, the only theologian of the Apostles, had to undo his formal training with a three-year personal study program with God in the desert. Martin Luther, the great reformer, likewise had to cast off his formal theological indoctrination in order to become a beacon of God's truth. And, in every successive reformation and advancement in truth the advancement rarely if ever starts with those holding theology degrees, but with humble people who love God and honestly study His word.

Does this mean those with theological education cannot be men and women of God – absolutely not. We must remember, Paul, Luther, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and many other good, godly men and women throughout history. The point is similar to my experience during my psychiatric residency. Education changes a person; the mind can be shaped by the education one receives. Psychiatric residency is highly biased toward agnostic or godless understandings of humanity and thus many an individual who enters residency believing in God leave no longer a believer. I had to study two hours in God's word for every hour I studied psychiatric theory to remain grounded in God's truth.

Most theology programs are highly biased to imposed law views of God and many church traditions. Thus theological education can bias those who get the degree into legal views of God and His government.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, “But, as any good…” This is exactly correct, all translations paraphrase because there is no word for word exact translation. Some do it more than others, but they all do it. The real question is whether the meaning is accurate and the truth comes through.

The lesson points out that we don’t need to know the original languages to understand essential Bible truths—this is also true.

The key is understanding God’s law, once you understand God’s law as design law, these laws become lines of protection that your interpretations stay within.

As I said last week, the most important aspect to understand in Bible translation, given the lexicons available today, is the truth about God’s character of love, His design laws and the Great Controversy. Without this, just relying on the Bible text people weave in all kinds of wrong ideas based on imposed law.

Consider Psalms 137:8,9:

> O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
> happy is he who repays you
> for what you have done to us—
> he who seizes your infants
> and dashes them against the rocks. **NIV84**
>
> Babylon, you will be destroyed.
> Happy are those who pay you back
> for what you have done to us-
> who take your babies
> and smash them against a rock. **GNT**

> O people of Babylon, who cling to selfishness, you are doomed to destruction!
> Happy are those who are finished with you, just as you deserve;
> who have weaned themselves from you.
> Happy are they who take your children
> to fall upon the Rock and be broken. ***The Remedy***

The first two don't have in mind the Great Controversy over God's character of love and don't seem to understand the nature of sin, and don't have in mind design law. When those elements come into our understanding—with the belief that the Holy Spirit was inspiring the Bible writers, then we understand a deeper truth is being communicated.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that if we try to understand the Bible with today's cultural norms we will likely draw false conclusions.

Read first paragraph, "A background…" This is well said, and so true, sadly though, it is very rare for me to hear this truth put into application in sermons and Bible teachings. All too often, I hear people taking Bible stories and texts in which God is described as doing something He permitted as proof that God is the source of inflicted punishment.

This happens because of multiple false assumptions:

- God's law works like human law
- Our culture and Bible culture are the same so if the Bible describes God doing it then God is doing it

Read second paragraph, "Culture also raises…" If one has a rules-approach to the Bible then this is very difficult, but if one has a design law approach this is quite easy.

Rules approach means the Bible is a guidebook of the right rules, listing the deeds to be done and sins to be shunned. We must study to find the right rules

and the right way to keep the rules. This method of thinking and approaching the Bible is one of the reasons there are so many divisions.

Some believe it is important to keep all the directives found in the OT, including the Levitical law. Others believe those rules were replaced with new rules. Some believe that the church has the authority to determine the rules, others believe the Bible sets its rules and we can only discover those rules, we can't change them.

Those who operate upon principles—the protocols upon which God built reality to operate—understand any rules given were tools to help the immature by protecting, teaching, and leading, but the rules are not needed for the mature.

> We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1Timothy 1:8-11 NIV84)

The written law was not given as a means of salvation, but merely as a tool to expose spiritual disease, convict or diagnose us and lead us to Jesus for healing.

From *The Remedy*

> We know that the written law is a diagnostic instrument for the soul, and it is good if used properly. We also know that this diagnostic tool was not made for the spiritually healthy, but for those who are selfish in character, those who are spiritually diseased, who don't know God, who don't love others but kill their fathers and mothers, the ill at heart, murderers, sexual perverts and adulterers, human traffickers, liars, deceivers, and for everyone and everything else that is out of harmony with God's design for life or doesn't harmonize with the incredible truth about God's character of love that he has entrusted me to share.

Read the last three paragraphs, “Though God spoke to specific…” What did you hear? “The same *principle* applies…” A principle is a design law, not a rule.

They use the example of algebra—algebra is governed by mathematical laws that do not change.

So, the point the lesson is making is that we can only rightly understand Scripture when we reject the rules-oriented approach and understand it through design law!

WEDNESDAY

What is meant by our sinful and fallen nature?

Are we to blame, is it our individual fault that we have a sinful fallen nature?

Did we have a choice at any time to never have a sinful fallen nature? What are the core attributes of a sinful fallen nature? Fear and selfishness—when did these attributes enter humanity? When did you first experience these drives?

How do we come into possession of a sinful fallen nature? By birth—Ps 51:5 born in sin conceived in iniquity.

Why are we born with a sinful fallen nature rather than being born without one?

Is this a legal issue or a state of being?

Were Adam and Eve capable of having children with natures different from what they possessed? When we understand reality, we realize that Adam and Eve could only pass on what they possessed—once they corrupted themselves they could only pass on corruption. This is why Jesus became human—to fix the damage Adam did to this creation.

If God doesn’t hold us accountable for having a fallen nature, what are we held accountable for? For rejecting the remedy Jesus procured that will cure us. Oswald Chambers put it this way:

> **The Bible does not say that God punished the human race for one man's sin**, but that the nature of sin, namely, my claim to my right to myself, [selfishness] entered into the human race through one man. But it also says that another **Man took upon Himself the sin of the human race and put it away** — an infinitely more profound revelation…
>
> **Sin is something I am born with** and cannot touch— only God touches sin through redemption. It is through the Cross of Christ that God redeemed the entire human race from the possibility of damnation through the heredity of sin. **God nowhere holds a person responsible for having the heredity of sin, and does not condemn anyone because of it**. Condemnation comes when I realize that Jesus Christ came to deliver me from this heredity of sin, and **yet I refuse to let Him do so**. From that moment I begin to get the seal of damnation. **"This is the condemnation [and the critical moment], that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light . . . " (John 3:19)** Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest,* http://utmost.org

We are held accountable for refusing the remedy to our condition, not having the condition.

How does our condition impact our understanding of Scripture? By causing us to view it in ways that keep fear and selfishness alive—and nothing does that more effectively than the penal legal substitution theology.

The imposed law lie inflames fear and teaches the grossest of lies about God and our situation. It teaches that we get legal adjustment of our status in books of heaven where God will declare us to be righteous *even though we are not*. It teaches us to accept that our fallen state is corrupt and there is nothing to do except claim legal adjustment while we continue to sin. Thus, this false legal theology keeps distrust of God alive and keeps selfishness alive in the hearts of so-called believers.

The last paragraph states, "we should approach the Bible in faith and submission and not with an attitude of criticism and doubt. Pride, self-deception, and doubt lead to an attitude of distance toward God and the Bible that surely will lead to disobedience, that is, an unwillingness to follow God's revealed will."

Faith in what? Faith in God? Faith in the Bible? Faith in the church's teaching about the Bible? Faith in what the pastor tells you the Bible means? Faith in what?

What is our faith in God to be based upon? Does God want us to believe and have faith in Him because He says so?

Does Satan want us to have faith in Satan—in false gods? Upon what does Satan want us to base our faith? How is what Satan wants different than what God wants?

- Who wants us to believe based on claims and who wants us to base our faith on truth?
- Who wants us to believe without reasoning and who wants us to reason and think for ourselves?
- Who wants us to claim we have faith so we don't need evidence and wants us to look for evidence?
- Who wants us to trust in emotions and powerful feelings, and who wants us to choose truth, evidence, facts and reality despite the powerful feelings—consider Gethsemane as an example.
- Who wants us to believe or have faith based on what someone else in authority says and who wants us to have faith because we are fully persuaded in our own minds? (Romans 14:5)
- Who wants us to simply follow what we are told—the Bible said it I believe it that settles it, and who wants us to grow up to think for ourselves? (Heb 5:14)

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The most important question in the Bible…" No doubt this is a very important question, but where does it fit in regard to the questions about God Himself? Is the central issue in the war about my salvation, or is it about the knowledge of God?

Is there any concern about making the most important question to us about our salvation? Is there any danger in making salvation another way of promoting selfishness?

How much of Christianity is focused on what we must do to be sure we get what we want—eternal life and rewards? How much of Christianity teaches that we can do all kinds of sins as long as we get them properly legally dealt with, or get the church to absolve us—after all the most important question is about our salvation?

But what about Moses when God spoke about starting over with Moses's family—was Moses's primary concern with his own salvation or was Moses willing to sacrifice his eternal life for another cause? What was that cause?

Did Moses love the people more than God loved them? Was Moses wrong to be not think of his own salvation first?

What about Paul when he said he would gladly give his life that his fellow Jews might be saved, was Paul's primary concern with his own salvation? Was Paul wrong not to make his own salvation the most important question?

Shouldn't the most important question be, "Do we know God?" When we genuinely know God, not about Him, but know Him in trusting relationship—this does result in eternal life (John 17:3), but our primary concern is not about our eternal life. When we really know God, we stop worrying about our eternal life, because we trust God with our life. We know Him and know how trustworthy He is, and appreciate His character, methods, government, kingdom so much, we can say like Jesus on the cross, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." In other words, we can say, "God, while I love you and want to be in heaven, I trust you with my life and if you know that the universe will be better without me, it's okay, don't bring me, just let me be useful to your cause."

Read last paragraph, "The issue of interpretation…" this is classic level four misunderstanding of reality and the false assumption that causes so much lack of unity in the church.

Their position is that we must study the Bible to get the correct doctrines so we can all come to a unity of cognitive understanding of the right ways to interpret

Scripture, the right rules that we are required to obey and the right way to obey those rules. This is a grand falsehood from level four thinking and trying to read Scripture through the lie that God's law functions like human law.

When we come to the truth of design law then we experience unity of heart, motive, love for God and each other, thus we live to bless others, we are trustworthy, we don't exploit, don't deceive, don't harm others, we celebrate the successes of others and we have unity of heart motive and God's principles even if we are baptized in different ways, go to church on different days, and sing different songs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 7
Language, Text and Context

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs, "More than 6,000 languages are spoken…" What does this mean? This entire quarterly has been helping us understand how important the Bible is. We agree that the Bible is God's inspired Word, useful for teaching, rebuking correcting and training in righteousness. No question about it.

But the lesson has, in various places, made the point that the Bible must be used alone, by itself as our source of truth and knowledge of God, as our basis for salvation. We at Come and Reason have challenged this idea and shown that the Scripture itself teaches that God has provided three threads of evidence to reveal the truth about Himself—Scripture, Science/Nature and Experience—and it is by harmonizing these three we have the most reliable truth.

Think about the two positions—Scripture alone versus, Scripture, nature and experiences of life combined, and then consider what the first two paragraphs in the lesson today have pointed out.

There are 1.5 billion people in the world today (this doesn't count all those people throughout human history) that do not have a Bible in their language. If the Bible is the only source of truth that we can use to find God and salvation, then is the position the lesson takes would suggesting that all these people without hope? Is that right? Is God only able to reach and save people who have had the Bible translated into their language? Or, who at least have had someone speak the Bible to them in their language?

What about the people who lived on earth before Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible—are those people without hope? Obviously not, as we have the record of Enoch walking with God and being translated into heaven—but Enoch never had a Bible to read—how could this happen? Because Enoch had real life *experience* with God.

Now, we never want to undermine the Bible as God's inspired word, but when we realize how reality works, then we can reject the idea that the Bible is the sole and exclusive source of truth that God uses to reach people. Then we will return to reality—God has three threads of truth, Scripture, nature, experience. Thus, we read about this very question of God reaching people who have not had the Scriptures starting in Romans 1:20:

> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse….NIV84

First point Paul makes is that the truth about God may be understood from nature, not only from Scripture. Paul is making the point that it is not an excuse for those who have not had the benefit of Scripture. He goes on in the next few verses to describe how despite the evidence from nature about God, they reject this truth and preferred images made by their own hands.

And Paul describes the law of worship in action—a design law, how worshipping idols degrades the mind and character. This is the natural result of violating the law of worship and worshipping the created rather than the Creator.

Then, having established the truth of God in nature, having established the reality of design law, Paul makes this incredible point starting in chapter 2:12:

> All who sin apart from the law [Torah—Scripture] will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) NIV84

What is the new covenant described in Hebrews 8? Writing the law on the hearts and minds of people. And what does Paul say happens to these people who do by nature the things contained in the Torah—the law? They have had God's law written in their hearts and minds—these people are part of the new covenant, the saved of God—yet they have never heard Scripture. How is this possible? Because they have learned the truth about God's character and methods from nature and have responded to the principles of God's kingdom as evidenced in nature and have experienced the healing of the Holy Spirit renewing them with the Remedy Christ procured.

But those who say that Scripture is our only source of truth deny the very Scripture that they claim to believe, because the Scripture teaches that some to the saving truth about God via what God has revealed about Himself in nature.

One of the founders of the SDA church, who understood design law wrote:

> Those whom Christ commends in the judgment **may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles**. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. **Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness;** before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. **Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required.** [Do the things the law required? Do you think they were baptized? Do you think they paid tithe? Do you think they partook communion service? Do you think they kept

> Sabbath? Do you think they at the right diet? Yet This author says they did the things that the law required. Paul says the law is written on their heart—what kind of law—the principles of life—the law of love, truth, freedom!] **Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God**. {DA 638.2}

God is the Creator and His character is revealed in what He has made. This is exciting, it is beautiful and it makes sense. It gives us resources to understand Scripture accurately—God's testable design laws—so that we won't be deceived by myths and superstitious teachings made up by people.

But, this truth in no way undermines our confidence in Scripture. Scripture **is** inspired by God and is trustworthy to lead us into all the truth necessary for salvation. So we never want to undermine the purpose, value or trustworthiness of Scripture. We do want to undermine interpretations that teach Scripture contradicts reality and God's revelations of Himself in His other threads of evidence.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible was written as a witness…" Again—I want to validate the Bible as God's inspired Word, trustworthy and reliable to lead us into all truth necessary for salvation.

I want to validate the Bible as a historical document that does record eye-witness testimony to events of human history and God's dealing with the sin problem. So, it does stand as a witness to God's work in history. And we should value that witness, absolutely.

But, I have a question—what is more valuable evidence, the witness testimony to a work, act, or event, or the work, act, or event itself? Another way to ask it is, what gives eye witness testimony greater veracity? Wouldn't it be direct corroborating evidence?

To the degree we have direct evidence (and we don't have direct evidence for all the acts of God such as Daniel and the lion's den and many of the other valuable stories, therefore we are so blessed and thankful for the history of what God has done that is recorded in Scripture), but to the degree we do have direct evidence in nature and life experiences of God's works, acts, and the events of history, they give greater veracity to the witness of Scripture and increase our confidence in the portions of Scripture with no direct corroborating evidence.

Remember the woman at the well who spoke with Jesus and then went home and told her neighbors about Jesus, we read from John 4:39-42:

> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him [Jesus] because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "**We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."**

What is described here? Her testimony, her witness, led them to seek Jesus for themselves, and they shifted their belief from being based on her witness to their own experience with Jesus. But their own experience with Jesus did not contradict or invalidate her testimony, but it superseded it—it was more powerful, more authoritative than her testimony because it was direct evidence.

Likewise, the testimony of Scripture is powerful—but isn't the testimony of Scripture to lead us to our own personal experience with God, God's methods, God's laws, the outcomes in our own lives of applying God's laws, of trusting Him, and examining nature for ourselves and the evidences God has provided there? And when we do this, do these evidences undermine our confidence in the witness of Scripture? Absolutely NOT! Because all the truth confirms the testimony of Scripture we value it more!

However, let me be very clear, this approach will result in our rejecting the false traditions of religious systems, the made-up theories of people. It will result in cleansing our minds from the lies taught about God in many religious circles and thus the Scripture becomes clearer to us. However, those who hold theology degrees or church leadership positions and still cling to the false theories will accuse us of rejecting the Scripture or undermining the Scripture if we reject their theories. This is exactly how the church leaders treated Jesus and the Apostles and the Reformers.

What I am saying about how we value Scripture and how we present God's kingdom, is how Jesus taught God's truths, by parables and real-life examples demonstrating how God's design laws work in reality, which are the way Scripture is to be understood.

So, our challenge is to continually integrate Scripture with reality, understanding it through the lens of God's design laws, as we do, the Bible becomes more and more accurately understood and we free our minds from the human myths that have crept in over the millennia.

Read the last paragraph, "Some people not only have the Bible translated…" What do you think of this idea we are to "obey what it teaches"?

I suspect many of you would agree—but isn't there a lot of disagreement among good-hearted people as to what the Bible teaches? Is there disagreement as to what applies and what doesn't, what we are to obey and what we are not to obey?

Does it make a difference whether we read Scripture through imposed law versus design law lenses in regard to what and how we are to obey?

What Bible instructions are we to obey? Consider the following Bible instructions—are we to obey these today because they are in the Bible? And, if we are to obey them, then how are we to obey them? And if you decide that some are to be obeyed and some are not, what is the criteria? If we don't obey some of this Bible commands, then does that mean we have supplanted the Bible with human reason? In other words, are we supposed to think about what the Bible commands and reason through its

meaning and whether it applies and how it applies, or are we supposed to simple say, "The Bible said it, I must obey it?"

Here is a partial list of specific Bible commands from God:

- Do not eat or drink blood (Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:10).
- Do not eat leavened bread (bread with yeast) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15). This year that was April 8-16, 2020—how many of you at bread with yeast during those days? Are you obeying the Scripture?
- Do not eat animal fat (Leviticus 3:17). The text actually reads: 'This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood.'" NIV84—
    - Does this apply or not apply?
    - Do you apply the blood part and reject the fat part?
    - Do you read it literally as a stand-alone text and then conclude no milk, cheese, butter or any product such as cakes, cookies, breads that use anything with animal fat?
    - Or, do you read it in the context of animal sacrifice and apply it only to the internal body fat of the animal and not other animal fats such as milk fat?
- Do not eat pork (Leviticus 11:7–8).
- Do not eat aquatic creatures lacking fins or scales (Deuteronomy 14:9-10).
- Do not eat any meat not killed according to the Kosher practice (Deuteronomy 12:21).
- Buy fermented wine with tithe money and rejoice at church (Deuteronomy 14:24-26)
- If male, you must be circumcised (Genesis 17:14).
- Do not worship idols (Exodus 22:20, Leviticus 20:1-5, Deuteronomy 17:2-7).
- Do not blaspheme (Leviticus 24:14-16,23).
- Do not consult a psychic or spiritualist (Leviticus 19:31).
- Do not break the Sabbath (Exodus 31:14, Numbers 15:32-36). But what does that mean? Do we need a list? Is swimming okay? Is riding a horse? What about saddling a horse? What about driving a car, or pushing an elevator button?
- Do not perform any work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10). Do we need to tie our handkerchief to our clothing lest it be considered work to carry it on Sabbath? What about fireman, should they all refuse to work on Sabbath? What about the people who work for the utility companies, should they all refuse to work on Sabbath?
    - I remember in med school having an orthodox Jewish man on my surgical team. One Friday night we came out of a surgery into the doctor's lounge and the TV was on. This fellow asked me to change the channel so he could watch a Memphis State basketball game. He asked me to change the channel because it was Sabbath and he wasn't allowed to change the channel as that would be creating a spark which was starting a fire, which he wasn't allowed to do on the Sabbath, but he could watch the game if I changed the channel. Are we thankful for all the non-believers who work on Sabbath so that our society won't fall apart?
    - Do we take Sabbath keeping as a rule prohibiting all work, as something that applies only to the Jews, as a principle that applies to not working for ourselves, but work in service of others is okay?

- One of the positions that we at Come and Reason have taken is that the Sabbath is a sign, an evidence, of God's kingdom and methods of love—of design law government. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. We have asked, if you sin on the Sabbath have you made the Sabbath less holy? If you do righteousness on the Sabbath have you made it more holy? Do our actions in any way impact the holiness of the Sabbath? So are we keeping the Sabbath holy or ourselves holy? And can we keep ourselves holy only one day in seven? So, the Sabbath was made for man—as a sign, flag, reminder, evidence to us that all week we are thinking Remember the Sabbath day—what it reveals—Our God is real, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He is love and His kingdom is the kingdom of love and operates on design law. So, live in harmony with God's kingdom and principles all week long. We have taught this for some time.
- This week one of our online listeners—and I don't know who it was as this was forwarded to me—sent the following quote from EGW that I had never seen before: "***All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind*** *and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment.* ***We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter.*** *We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life.* ***All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God****, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them,* ***will represent the principles of His government****.* ***They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom****. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ,* ***and will exemplify the perfection of His character****. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works."* 6T 353

- You must not ignore the judgment of a judge or a priest (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). When Jesus and the Apostles didn't to follow the judgments to of the priests were they refusing to obey the Bible? Should Martin Luther have listened to the priests of his day? Are we to obey this instruction from the Bible?
- Do not strike your parents (Exodus 21:15).
- Do not curse your parents (Exodus 21:17, Leviticus 20:9).
- Do not be a stubborn, rebellious, profligate, or a drunkard child (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). But, would getting intoxicated on ecstasy or methamphetamine be okay because the Bible doesn't mention them?
- Do not plant more than one kind of seed in a field (Leviticus 19:19).
- Do not wear clothing woven of more than one kind of cloth (Leviticus 19:19).
- Do not cut your hair on the sides of your head or clip the edges of your beard (Leviticus 19:27).
- Do not dress across gender lines (Deuteronomy 22:5).
- Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoos on yourself (Leviticus 19:28).
- You must stand up in the presence of the elderly (Leviticus 19:32)
- Women must not speak in church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)

This is just a partial list of all the instructions in the Bible—and the lesson says the most important thing is that we obey the Bible. Hmmm….

Does it matter whether we approach the Bible through human imposed law lenses, level 1-4 moral development, or through design law lenses, levels 5-7?

What is true Bible obedience?

In the New Testament the Greek word for obedience, obey, to obey is: **πακοή** [*hupakoe* /hoop·ak·o·**ay**/

And it has two halves—the first half is where we get hypo, as in hypoglycemia, or hypotension, or hypodermic and means low, or under, and the last half is where we get acoustics and acoustical, and means to listen or hear. And thus the Biblical meaning of obedience is NOT about performance but is about heart attitude toward God. Specifically, Bible obedience **is a humble willingness to listen, learn, comprehend, hear and embrace, with a heart desire to follow and apply what God is teaching**. It is not about performance, but about heart attitude, trusting God, eager to grow, learn, understand and follow God.

This is why Jesus repeatedly said, things like, hearing though they do not hear, or let him who has ears, hear. So people will say things today like, "Do you hear me?" "Are you listening?"

So what does it mean to be obedient in God's kingdom? It is not primarily about performance, it is about the motivation of the heart, the desire, the eagerness to understand God and follow where God is leading.

Example: You have two sons, one 3 years old the other 14. One day, while weeding in your tomato garden, your 3 y/o comes up behind you and with a big smile pulls up a tomato plant and says, "Help daddy!" Is this child an obedient or disobedient child? Later you send your 14 y/o out to weed in the garden and the 14 y/o only pulls up weeds, no tomatoes are damaged, yet he curses you the entire time because he isn't able to play on his Gameboy.

Which child is in harmony with the parent? Which child is considered obedient? Is it about performance of the task, or the attitude of the heart? This is Bible obedience, a willingness to listen and follow with love and eagerness to do and go wherever our Heavenly Father leads.

What about all those specific instructions to the Jews? Remember the context—the Jewish people became actors in a drama—a theater, a symbolic acted out play which was to teach the plan of salvation. Many of the instructions were for the purpose of the play, the drama, and only apply to those who are acting on stage—in the play, which is over since Christ fulfilled what it taught.

But, some of the instructions were basic health and sanitation, others were giving guidance to the law of love—such as how people honor their parents.

So, one needs to understand God's design laws, then examine the instructions and determine which are part of the theater and only apply to the actors on the stage, and which are guidelines to help live in harmony with the principles, but we practice the principles, not apply the rules.

For instance, the guideline: "Whoever strikes his father or his mother must surely be put to death." Exodus 21:15 GNT

- Do we read this as a rule or understand the principle?
- Do we apply both parts of this? Do we want to apply the first part that children should not strike their parents? Do we accept the second part and teach that a child who does strike their parent should be put to death?
- Is this an absolute rule—a child should never strike their parent? What about if the parent had a heart attack and the child did a precordial thump, which is a very firm and hard strike to the chest that can restart the heart? Should a child with medical training, EMT, nurse, doctor, whose parent has a heart attack refuse to do the precordial thump because the Bible forbids them to strike their parent? Of course not, this isn't about the literal act of striking, but about the attitude of rebellion and seeking to injure and harm one's parents to rebel against their authority, which ultimately damages the character of the child.

MONDAY

The lesson is pointing out that whenever one language is translated into another language individual words can have a variety of potential other words in the new language. Further, one word can have a variety of different subtle nuanced meanings that the new language word may not contain.

Thus, the context of how it is being used informs us of the meaning in that usage.

The lesson points out the Hebrew word *chesed* and its use in various places as *kindness, mercy, love*. They cite 1Kings 3:6, let's read it from a variety of translations and notice, how the various translators translate this one word differently:

- And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great **mercy**, according as he walked before thee in truth… KJV
- Solomon answered, "You always showed great **love** for my father David, your servant, and he was good, loyal, and honest in his relations with you… GNT
- And Solomon said, "You have shown great and **steadfast love** to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness… NRSV
- Solomon replied, "You demonstrated great **loyalty** to your servant, my father David, as he served you faithfully… NET
- Solomon answered, "You were very **kind** to your servant, my father David. He obeyed you, and he was honest and lived right… NCV

None of these are wrong, they are all legitimate translations but there are subtle differences in how we understand the translations. Consider how we use the English word love, it has many nuanced meanings.

- Love can connote kindness, mercy, compassion, patience, truthfulness—*he told him the truth, that was an act of love*

- Erotic love—romance
- *Phileo* brotherly of familial love
- Agape altruistic love
- Attachment, enjoyment—love for cars or music or activities like flying or fishing etc.
- love has many different potential meanings depending on how it is used

Read last paragraph, "The Hebrew word…" This is a good insight, *shalom* does mean more than peace, it does connote wholeness, completeness, well-being—why? Does the law lens we read through impact our understanding? Does design law enlighten and expand the meaning of *shalom*?

Through design law, how reality works, understanding God's original design, understanding how sin has damaged God's design and God's intention and His plan to cure/heal us, we understand that ***shalom* connotes God's plan to restore and heal us back to harmony with His design laws for life**. Being out of harmony with God and His design laws causes pain, suffering, dissonance, discord, conflict, tension. The natural result of restoration to God's design is peace—peace with God, peace with God's design laws, peace with one's own heart and mind, peace with life as God designed it, thus the results are wholeness, completeness and well-being!

This is not an arbitrary thing—a magical word or an invocation of divine power, but a statement of reality in God's kingdom of love! Shalom—restoration to God's design brings health, wellness, wholeness—we are at peace.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that another literary device of the Bible is the use of repetition to emphasize things. We, in the English language, emphasize things with bold letters, italics, or exclamation points, but the Bible brings emphasis by repeating itself.

They give the example of Genesis 1:26,27:

> Then God said, "Let **us make** man in **our image**, in **our likeness**, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God **created man** in **his own image**, in **the image of God he created him; male and female he created them**. NIV84

What is emphasized by repetition in these two texts?

- The plurality of God as a unified being
- The creation of humankind by God
- That humanity was created as a unified plurality in God's image

The Bible also emphasizes the holiness of God, "Holy, Holy, Holy…"

What does "holy" or "the holiness of God" mean? Two general ideas are often associated with holiness—purity and separation—the separation means set apart from the unholy—and both apply if rightly understood.

God is the source of all truth, life, purity, love, goodness and in Him there is no darkness, evil, corruption. Thus, God is infinite goodness, infinite purity, infinite healthiness and all evil and sinfulness is distinctly separate from God. Thus God is holy, holy, holy, pure and perfect in an infinite way and completely separate from all defilement and sin—separate in His being and character.

This idea of God's holiness has been corrupted in some circles to teach God has a negative and intolerant attitude toward sinners and can't stand for sin to be in His presence. Ideas such as sin cannot exist in God's presence led to the idea that Mary was sinless in order for sinless Jesus to be incarnate. This is exactly the opposite of the truth. The truth is that in God's character there is no sin, He is completely holy, i.e. pure—but sin began in heaven in God's presence, but in the mind/heart of Lucifer, not IN God.

Further, Jesus "who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God." 2Cor 5:21. Jesus merged His holy divine self with our sinful humanity in order to purge humanity from sinfulness and make humanity holy—sinless and perfect again.

So, holiness is sinless purity and perfection and God is holy and perfectly pure and sinless and all darkness and sinfulness are separate from God's nature and character.

But notice how when we use the human law model we corrupt the holiness of God by incorporating death into the view of God taught; this happens when people teach that God, in order to be just, must use His power to inflict death upon sinners. They make God out as the source of death to punish sin. This is not so, God is holy—He is the source of only good, only life, only righteousness, and death is the result of no longer being in unity or at-one-ment with God.

This is why the Bible teaches: The one who sows to the carnal nature from that nature will reap destruction." Galatians 6:8 Or, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) not the punishment of God is death. Note, in this very verse Romans 6:23, the Bible teaches what actually comes from God—"the wages of sin is death, but the **gift of God is eternal life**!"

Christianity has become so infected with the imposed law lie that essentially every Christian denomination teaches that God is the source of inflicted death. How sad—it is no wonder the Lord has not yet returned. God is waiting for a people to stand up and make a right judgment about God—reject the imperial law pagan god from Rome and glorify God by returning to worship Him who made the heaven, earth and fountains of water—our Creator whose laws are design laws.

So, God is truly holy. We can NOT make ourselves holy but are instructed to be holy as God is holy. What does this mean? That we are to cooperate with God to be healed, cured, saved—restored to godliness. We are to have sinfulness cut out of our hearts and minds (metaphorically circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit). As we are healed by God we separate from fear, selfishness, sin,

corruption and become partakers of the divine nature thus we become holy—i.e. purified with new hearts and right spirits.

Places and objects used by God to assist in our healing, our purification, are also called holy—such as the ground where Moses talked to God at the bush, or the Sanctuary and its instruments, or the Sabbath day. All holy because they are used by God to assist us in healing, in becoming restored to unity with God i.e. purified from sin.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Words in Scripture…" I like this paragraph because it helps us see that there is not just one context to a passage of Scripture, but multiple contexts to Scripture.

- The immediate context within the sentence
- The context within the paragraph
- The context within the book
- The context within the entirety of Scripture
- The historical context
- The prophetic context
- The Great Controversy context

All of these must be considered to get the most accurate understanding.

The most important context, in my view, is understanding the Great Controversy over God's character and government, which means that we must understand the truth of God's design laws, and then we must understand the purpose of Scripture. What is its purpose? To give insight into the truth in this battle between Christ and Satan raging for our hearts and minds.

If we believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers, then we believe there is harmony among the Bible passages in regard to God's character, methods, principles, design laws, and the plan of salvation.

So, let's examine another text in light of these various contexts and see if we gain any insights into potential meaning. As we look at the following passage, it is okay if you ultimately come to a different conclusion than I have, but I want you to consider, is your conclusion most consistent with God's character, methods, principles, or is it based on long held assumptions?

Let's look at Psalms 139:13-16:

> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven

> together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. NIV84

Is this translation the most accurate, or has this translation introduced ideas that are not actually intended by the author and even introduce false ideas into our understanding about God and led to many bad theologies?

If we take this translation as it reads, then we conclude that God is the one who directly acts to create each individual human being inside their mother's womb. But then, it really wasn't in the womb, it was in the depths of the earth—oh but we are not to take the depths of the earth literally—but we are to take the first part just as it reads?

Well, let's consider that we are to take it as many teach that God literally knits us together in our mother's womb. If this is true, that God knits each of us together individually in our mother's womb, then God is responsible for birth defects. If a child has spinal bifida well, God must have had a bad knitting day. If this is the correct rendering, then God's divine creative power must be less powerful than a bottle of vodka since so many fetal alcohol children are born. Worse, since we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity, if this rendering is literally true that God is forming each of us directly with His divine power then God is creating sinful, defective humans—which is absolutely not true.

The Bible truth is that God was directly involved in the formation of only three human lives: Adam, Eve and the incarnation of Jesus. And all three of them, when God acted, were sinless. Jesus stayed that way, Adam and Eve did not.

But when God created Adam and Eve He gave them a godlike ability, the ability to pro-create beings in their image. After Adam and Eve sinned they changed themselves and became sinful. **But they still had the ability of pro-creation** and thus could create beings in their image—and their image was now corrupted with sin. This is why we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity—Ps 51:5

God does not control the use of the abilities He gives us. We can use them as God designed, or we can abuse those abilities. When people have children it is by the choice of those individuals to use the pro-creative abilities God has given them. When a man abuses the ability and rapes a woman and she becomes pregnant, this is not an act of God. The woman is not to think, "Well God did this to me." Such an act is a human being abusing an ability, not God acting.

So, back to our passage,

The Hebrew word translated in many Bible versions as "formed" or "made" is קנה [qanah], and according to the New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries is translated most commonly as "bought," "buy," "purchased," and also as "redeemed." So formed is more accurately translated as "redeemed."

The Hebrew word translated as "inmost being" is כליה [kilyah /kil·yaw/] means "seat of emotions or affections."

The Hebrew word translated as "knit me together" according to the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon is סוּך, סכך, שׂכך [cakak, sakak /saw·kak/] v. and translates as "cover" 15 times, "covering" twice, "defence" once, "defendest" once, "hedge in" once, "join together" once, "set" once, and "shut up" once.

Contrary to popular translations, the context of this verse is not about physical embryological development, or God using power to physically create a new human life, but is about the plan of salvation. The Psalmist in Psalms 51:5 describes that he was "born in sin, conceived in iniquity" and here acknowledges that despite his sinful origins, God was already there acting to redeem him and cleanse him from sinfulness.

So, from *The Remedy Psalms*

> For you have redeemed my heart and mind; you covered me with grace from the moment I was conceived in my mother's womb. I praise you because you are awesome; wonderful and marvelous are all your works, and I know this very well. You know my entire being —how I was built from your secret code, constructed from the elements of the earth. You saw me before I was born; my entire life was recorded in your book of foreknowledge before one day came to be.

This is how the Great Controversy context, with understanding design law, leads to accurate understanding of the Scripture.

In the later paragraphs the lesson points out that "Adam" can refer to "humanity," the first male person "Adam," or the "ground" from which God created Adam the first person. Thus, the context determines which is being referred to, the ground, the first male person, or the species human.

Another view, is that the term Adam is used in this way to help us understand that humanity is a species created from this earth and a male is incomplete, and the human being (man-Adam) was only completed when the female was created and joined the male, that was when a full human was formed. The two shall become one, as this is God's design for the two united as one are the fulfillment of His design and reflect the image of God.

THURSDAY

What is the primary purpose of Scripture?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "In His word…" The standard of character, no doubt, then what happened to the Pharisees who crucified Christ? Did they not believe in the sacredness of Scripture? Did they have a

different Scripture than what God intended? Did they not read and study the Scripture? Did they not memorize it?

Then what happened? How can it be that people can study the Scripture and still experience deformed character such that they end up crucifying Christ?

Because they accept a false premise about God's law and thus everything read is warped to support Satan's lie about God and His character and methods.

Only when we come back to design law do we understand reality correctly.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 8
Creation: Genesis as Foundation—Part I

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I like this title—Genesis as Foundation, because, as the lesson points out our understanding of reality is outlined in Genesis.

There are facts and then there are interpretations of facts. The biases, assumptions, presuppositions, beliefs we hold impact how we interpret facts.

The healthiest approach is, to the best of our ability, ensure our beliefs, biases, assumptions, are in harmony with how reality works, with the evidence and the facts and doesn't deny or ignore them.

Genesis lays out foundational basis for many beliefs that help us form a framework for understand reality. Here are some of those foundational beliefs:

- God is real and God is triune being of love
- God is the Creator
- The Earth and all life upon it were created by God
- Human beings were created by God in God's image
- God's laws are design laws—the protocols reality is built upon
- Sin is deviation from God's design which brings suffering and death and has its basis in lies which undermines trust and love
- Sin did not and does not come from God
- Death because of sin does not come from God
- The Sabbath as an aide to assist human beings in cooperating with God for holiness
- God's plan to heal and to save
- The worldwide flood
- The nature of humankind as mortal
- Marriage and family

As we undermine our belief in any of these foundational beliefs then we begin to corrupt our understanding of reality. This happens in a variety of ways:

- There is no God—we evolved from slime
- There is a god, but his law is imperial and sin is breaking his law and that god must use power to inflict death upon law breakers
- God uses death to create—the theistic evolution
- The Sabbath is a concept not a day, or the Sabbath is strictly Jewish, or the Sabbath is the 7th day but it is an arbitrary test of obedience that God will punish you for if you don't obey

- Human beings have immortality and can never die
- Marriage is an artificial construct made up by male dominated societies to control women
- Women were created to be subordinate to men or women were created equal but God decided after sin that they should be subordinated to men
- There was no worldwide flood
- Sin is a made-up concept by religions which are also made up to control people
- God's plan of salvation is to do something to God to pay for our sin so God won't torture and kill us
- Genesis is just a book of myths

These are just some examples of how the foundational ideas can be corrupted to either reject them totally, or to still believe them but in such a distorted way that people are still out of harmony with God and still don't understand reality.

We achieve ever-increasingly accurate understanding of reality when we use the integrative evidence-based approach which harmonizes Scripture, Nature and Experience.

SUNDAY

Genesis 1, In the Beginning the Creation story.

When we consider the origins of life there are really only two overall theories—intelligent design—God created, or godless origins by natural forces all on its own without any intelligent input.

If we use the scientific method we would want to do experiments that we can observe and reproduce in which we get the same results each time. However, we cannot go back and test either theory of origins. So, we are left with the premises that each theory is built upon—and these can be tested. So let's test them:

Godless Origins	**God Created Origins**
Something came from nothing	Something came from something else
Order came from chaos without intelligent input	Order came from chaos with intelligent input
Life came from non-living matter	Life came from another living organism
DNA gains information through mutation	DNA degrades through mutation

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Notice as we test these base premises upon which these two theories rest, it is not a mix some supporting one theory and some supporting the other—all of them, 100% support creation by God and refute the idea that life originated on its own.

Living organisms require three elements to exist and live: physical matter (atoms etc.), energy, and coded information stored in the DNA.

The theory of godless origins postulates and focuses exclusively upon the physical matter and energy and how they might have, in some primordial soup formed amino acids or DNA molecules. But they have no answer whatsoever for the third element required for life—the coded information stored in the DNA.

From my book *The Aging Brain: Proven Steps to Prevent Dementia and Sharpen Your Mind*

> The idea that living beings originated on their own without any intelligent input would be similar to believing that a storm arose with high winds, rain and lightning that raged for years, and during this storm the strong winds blew rocks and sand at high speeds until some were shattered and worn down to formed letters of the alphabet. This is analogous to believing that the random forces of nature in some chemical soup with lightning strikes eventually formed DNA molecules. But, even if we accept that this happened (which is a big leap of blind, evidenceless faith) scientists still ignore the most critical aspect of what is required for life—the encoded information contained within the organized DNA sequences. Having an alphabet does not mean we have usable and functional information. To believe that random forces brought life about would require we not only believe the alphabet formed on its own, but beyond this we must also believe that the winds, rains, and lightning strikes—all on its own—organized the letters into the entire encyclopedia Britannica. Yet this is exactly what millions of good-hearted, honest, thinking people do believe.
>
> But why would thinking, honest-of-heart, scientists choose to believe something that the evidence refutes? Because the historical alternative belief system is significantly more destructive! What is the historical alternative belief system—the one that reasonable people reject? The belief in an all-powerful god who functions no differently than the worst despots in human history—a god who says, "Love me or I will burn you in hell forever."
>
> This grotesque god-construct, rightly rejected by reasonable people, is pointedly described by Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion*:
>
> "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." [1]

[1] Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. 51.

So, in my view, the reason good-hearted thinking people reject God and the Genesis account is because they have been given two alternatives that are both lies—the godless view and the dictator god view and the godless view is preferable to the dictator god view.

This is why the 3 angels' messages of Revelation is so important at this time in history, because it calls people back to worship the Creator, Him who made the heavens, Earth, seas and fountains of water. It calls the godless to worship the Creator, but it also calls the imperial god worshippers to reject the false dictator-god they worship and embrace the Creator—which means reject imperial law with penal legal theologies and embrace design law with God's plan to heal and restore.

So, which worldview is more reasonable? The view of our Creator God of love who built reality to operate upon His design laws of love, truth, liberty.

The second paragraph states, "Darwinian evolution is contradictory to Scripture in every way, and attempts by some to harmonize it with the Bible makes Christians look silly."

Darwinian evolution is the concept that species evolve over millions of years by mutation of the genes which confer new and improved abilities allowing them to compete more effectively for limited resources thus selecting out the less capable and retaining the more capable to reproduce thus over the generations causing the species to evolve or develop. It also taught transmutation of the species, one species evolving into another through this process.

Couple of points—Darwinian evolution really doesn't address origins science. It is a theory based on the observations of the world already created. One couldn't have natural selection occurring before there was life. So, don't confuse evolution—things changing, adapting, evolving over time with origins of life—they are different concepts.

There has never been any scientific evidence given of one species mutating into another species. This theory is still taught, but it is taught without supporting evidence, and not just without supporting evidence, in the face of contradicting evidence. Yet, it is still believed my millions.

Evolution—the process of a species changing or evolving based on environmental pressures does occur. God created us to be able to adapt and change, so this idea of change or adaptation is not contrary to God's design for life.

Natural selection—the process of the least fit being selected out also occurs, the less capable individuals or traits are pressured by survival pressures toward elimination from the gene pool. But, selecting out the least capable, or another way to say that—the most damaged, is not the same as saying those that survive are advancing and improving. The idea of natural selection takes the observation that the least fit don't survive and draws a false conclusion—a lie in fact—that is the core to the entire evolutionary theory and that lie is, since the least fit don't survive and the more fit in a population is surviving, that means the more fit are actually advancing. This is not so—in fact all members of each generation of each species is genetically degrading, some more some less but each generation of every species is less genetically fit than the generation before.

In the human genome each generation of humans has at least 1000 new damaging mutations that the generation before didn't have. So, selecting out the most damaged that can't survive still happens, but it doesn't mean the survivors are more fit than the previous generation—they are not.

Evolutionary theory has essentially only two truths—things adapt or change over time and natural selection selects out the least fit. All the other so-called points of evolutionary theory are proven false:

- Species advance via mutation of the DNA code—false—every gene mutation thus far identified degrades the species, none have been identified that makes the species healthier or advance
- Species evolve from one to another through mutation—there has not been one example of this
- Darwin's original theory, represented by the different beaks of finches has now been proven false. He theorized that the changes occurred over millions of years, and scientists later added in the concept of DNA mutation. But this has now been tested and the various finches have the same DNA code. Their DNA does not have mutation of the sequences that caused the beaks to be different. The beak differences are caused by epigenetic changes which occurs in 1-2 generations. This is exactly consistent with what the Bible teaches, that God created us with ability to create beings in our image. We have the ability to make choices and those choices alter, not the DNA sequences, but the instructions on how those sequences are expressed and those instructions are passed down 3-4 generations, they will keep passing down if the behaviors continue in the subsequent generations reinforcing the changes. Thus, again the Bible is right and Darwinian evolution is proven false. [2]

Now, EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church and contemporary of Charles Darwin, had a different view of things. She, with her third grade education, somehow was able to have scientific knowledge well beyond that of all her contemporaries that has now been proven to be true. Specifically, she promoted the principles of epigenetics—that our actions change our DNA expression and we pass those changes along, without even knowing about DNA. Here are a couple of quotes:

> Parents ... by indulgence have strengthened their animal passions. And as these have strengthened, the moral and intellectual faculties have become weak. The spiritual has been overborne by the brutish. Children are born with the animal propensities largely developed, the parents' own stamp of character having been given to them.... The brain force is weakened, and memory becomes deficient.... The sins of the parents will be visited upon their children because the parents have given them the stamp of their own lustful propensities.—Testimonies for the Church 2:391 (1870). 1MCP 136.1

---

[2] Abzhanov, Arhat; Meredith Protas, B. Rosemary Grant, Peter R. Grant, Clifford J. Tabin (September 3, 2004), "Bmp4 and Morphological Variation of Beaks in Darwin's Finches",*Science* (USA: AAAS) **305** (5689): 1462–1465, doi:10.1126/science.1098095,ISSN 0036-8075, OCLC 1644869, PMID 15353802, retrieved 2008-03-08
Abzhanov, Arhat; Winston P. Kuo, Christine Hartmann, B. Rosemary Grant, Peter R. Grant and Clifford J. Tabin (August 3, 2006), "The calmodulin pathway and evolution of elongated beak morphology in Darwin's finches", *Nature* (UK: Nature Publishing Group) **442**(7102): 563–567, doi:10.1038/nature04843, ISSN 0028-0836, OCLC 1586310,PMID 16885984, retrieved 2008-03-08

> The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children. In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations.... 1MCP 139.1

And this is what the science actually shows—our life choices change us, alter our gene expression and we pass along not only the DNA sequences but this epigenetic modifications to our children either passing along advantages or disadvantages.

But, EG White somehow understood it was more than lifestyle choices, it was also mental processes, attitudes of the heart:

> Every woman about to become a mother, whatever may be her surroundings, should encourage constantly a happy, cheerful, contented disposition, knowing that for all her efforts in this direction she will be repaid tenfold in the physical, as well as in the moral, character of her offspring. Nor is this all. By habit she can accustom herself to cheerful thinking, and thus encourage a happy state of mind and cast a cheerful reflection of her own happiness of spirit upon her family and those with whom she associates. 1MCP 131.2

> The thoughts and feelings of the mother will have a powerful influence upon the legacy she gives her child. If she allows her mind to dwell upon her own feelings, if she indulges in selfishness, if she is peevish and exacting, the disposition of her child will testify to the fact. Thus many have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.—The Signs of the Times, September 13, 1910. (Temperance, 171.) 1MCP 132.1

Well, brain science proves this to be true:

- Study of over 4000 mothers and their children
- Followed for over 18 years
- Mothers with negative, pessimistic, depressive thinking patterns when pregnant increased the risk of their child being depressed 18 years later.
- This association remained after accounting for maternal and offspring depression.
- The thought patterns of the mother accounted for 21% of the association between maternal and child depression. (Am Journal of Psychiatry 2013; 170:434-441).

And if mother is highly stressed during pregnancy—which may not be because she has historically stressful patterns of thinking, but tragedy could occur while pregnant, husband could be killed or deployed to war etc. But if she is highly stressed during pregnancy:

- Mother's stress hormones cross the placenta
- Interferes with the stress response "braking system"
- This occurs through epigenetic modification

- Children are more stress prone, irritable, moody, and they pass this along to their children - unless new experience introduce new gene expression. (Medina, J. Psychiatric Times, April 2010, p. 16)

Again, the Biblical worldview is proven more correct and scientifically accurate than the evolutionary worldview.

The lesson points out in the third paragraph that God as Creator not only created physical matter, but also time and as such lives outside of time. This is quite important—and true. God lives on a plane of existence beyond our full experience and comprehension. Some people cannot handle this and believe that if God lives outside of time, and because of that is able to know the future, then God's foreknowledge of our choices takes away our freedom to choose. Because they are sensitive to God's character of love and realize love requires freedom, with all the best intentions they create a lie—because they have a false premise. The lie they create is that God either cannot know the future or chooses to put a blindfold on Himself and not look into the future because, in their view if He did we wouldn't be free. The false premise this is based upon is that God's foreknowledge takes away our freedom to choose.

It is really quite simple—to God, who lives outside of time, what is it that informs Him of our future choices (note future to us—not future to God as God lives in all points of time simultaneously)? God knows our future choices when *we make them*. In other words, it is our act of choosing that informs God of the choice. If we don't choose it, God doesn't know it because it didn't and doesn't happen. Because God lives outside of time, to us right now, God is aware of our choices next year, but He only know what we choose next year because next year we are the ones that choose it.

One other point, in Genesis 1:1 the language "In the beginning" is not speaking of the beginning of all things—but the Genesis 1 "in the beginning" is the beginning of this solar system, specifically the terraforming of earth and the sun, moon, stars of this solar system. Job 38:7 informs us the angels sang for joy when the earth was created. So, that means the angels already existed, thus Genesis doesn't speak to creating the entire universe, just this solar system.

MONDAY

The lesson points out that Genesis teaches that the earth was created during a 7-day week, in which each day was 24 hours long. It rejects the idea that suggests Genesis is metaphorical book and the days represent long eons of time in which life slowly evolved on earth, or that God uses evolutionary methods to create life over eons of time.

Why is it not rational to believe that Genesis is referring to long periods of time and why does the account make much more sense to believe these are 24-hour days?

- Plant life was created on day 3 and the local sun was created on day 4, if it was thousands of years or more between the creation of plant life and the sun then all life would have died before

the sun was created. So, the sequence of creation also gives evidence to the author's intended meaning that the Bible is teaching literal 24-hour days.

- The idea that God used some aspects of evolution to create life is also irrational to the Christian and is part of Satan's lie because it merges Satan's principles of death with God's principles of life. To create through evolution requires death, the killing off of those less adaptable so that through natural selection the strong survive. This is the theory of Satan's kingdom and any attempts to introduce this into Christian thought corrupts the truth about God and His kingdom of love.

This philosophy of the merging life and death is called dualism—the coexistence of both good and evil as a requirement for life to exist. This is a foundational belief in the eastern philosophies and it is part of theistic evolution. The idea of life and death both being part of God's character and kingdom is a lie. It is Satan's goal for the eternal coexistence of both good and evil, but the Bible teaches that in God there is only light and no darkness whatsoever and that sin and death are intruders which one day will be permanently and completely eliminated from God's creation.

How has dualism entered mainstream Christian doctrines? Via the imperial law lie, in which God in order to be just must punish sinners by either killing them or torturing them in hell for all eternity. In both views, God is a being who is the source of life and the source of death or suffering inflicted under the guise of justice—thus dualism—Satan's worldview.

We must reject this, come back to worship the Creator and understand His laws as design laws and then we have a holy God who is not the source of death.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about the Sabbath.

The day, months, and years are all marked by the movements of the earth and moon. But there is no astronomic reason for the seven-day week. This is quite profound evidence to those who want to claim there is no God or deny the Genesis account of creation. Ask them to explain the basis for the seven-day week, which is the week through essentially every society as far back as recorded history.

But, what is the significance of the Sabbath?

It is all about context—when it came into being and its purpose. The Sabbath was created, Jesus said, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (Mk 2:27,28 NKJV)

The Sabbath serves Jesus, Jesus doesn't serve the Sabbath—but how? What purpose did Jesus have in creating the Sabbath?

Jesus was speaking to the Jews when He said the Sabbath was made for man, meaning it wasn't made just for the Jews, but for the human race.

But for what purpose? What was happening in the universe when earth was created? War over God's right to rule. And what does the Sabbath reveal?

The first six days of creation week reveals God has power, but it is the seventh day, when God rested from using power, that reveals His character, truth, presented in love, leaving people free to think for themselves. Thus, the Sabbath is evidence that Satan lied about God. If Satan were correct, there would be no Sabbath.

Exodus tells us the Sabbath is a sign that God makes us holy, but what does this mean?

In the larger setting of the war between God and Satan, over God's character, government of love and methods of love, what does the Sabbath reveal?

It reveals God's character – that He doesn't use power to coerce, that He leaves us free. Thus, Sabbath observance is about the free exercise of our power of choice to acknowledge God and live in harmony with Him.

One of the positions that we at Come and Reason have taken is that the Sabbath is a sign, an evidence, of God's kingdom and methods of love—of design law government. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. We have asked, if you sin on the Sabbath have you made the Sabbath less holy? If you do righteousness on the Sabbath have you made it more holy? Do our actions in any way impact the holiness of the Sabbath? So are we keeping the Sabbath holy or ourselves holy? And can we keep ourselves holy only one day in seven? So, the Sabbath was made for man—as a sign, flag, pennant, reminder, evidence to us that all week we are thinking Remember the Sabbath day—what it reveals—Our God is real, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He is love and His kingdom is the kingdom of love and operates on design law. So, live in harmony with God's kingdom and principles all week long. We have taught this for some time.

I read this quote last week, but it is so powerful I wanted to read it again:

> "**All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter.** We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon **all the transactions of life**. **All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God**, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent the principles of His government**. **They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom**. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. **Every day** they will have the companionship of Christ, **and will exemplify the perfection of His character**. **Every day** their light will shine forth to others in good works." 6T 353

What is true Sabbath keeping, avoiding certain behaviors one day in seven, or being transformed in heart to live out God's principles all week long while we look forward to the day that shines as evidence of God's kingdom and methods of love.

Understand the issue of Sabbath versus Sunday is not about the days themselves, it is about what the days represent. They are signs or marks—consider them like flags of nations. The US Flag is a sign or mark of the USA, but it is not the USA, but those who love the USA (or any person who loves their nation) respects and values the flag. They wave it, they display it, they don't throw it in the dirt, burn it or mock it. Not because the flag is magical or has power, but because of what it represents.

Likewise, Sabbath became a special day by Creation—it was Created by God as a day of rest and thus it is a sign or evidence of Design law and God's kingdom of love, truth, freedom.

Sunday became a day of rest or worship day by legislation—by human counsels and governments passing in committees a law that set it aside as the day of worship. Thus, Sunday becomes a sign or flag of imperialism of a god who makes up rules and inflicts punishment, of the systems of this fallen world, of the beastly systems, of the penal legal religious dogmas.

So, what if a person observes the seventh-day Sabbath as their weekly religious day of rest, worshipping the Creator God on that day—does that mean they are right with God? What if they do so teaching that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience, a rule that God made up, and if you don't observe it God will punish you? Consider those who crucified Christ, did they worship on the wrong day? No, they had the right day, but the wrong law—i.e. imperial law and thus they worshipped the wrong imperial god and rejected the Creator God and crucified Him.

We must grow up past level four moral development, we must reject the imperial penal legal view of God and embrace the truth of God as Creator. Only then will we be true Sabbath keepers who practice His principles all week long.

What about those who teach the truth about God's character and methods of love, His design laws, but hold religious services on a day other than Sabbath? When governments begin enforcing worship upon pain of punishment, those who are like Jesus in character will not go along with such enforcement and will leave that style of worship and join with all those who honor God and His methods of truth, love and freedom

In C.S. Lewis' last book of the Narnia series Lewis describes a Calormene soldier named Emeth and his encounter with Aslan the lion. Emeth was a worshipper of Tash, and as a result was terrified when he came face to face with Aslan. This is that encounter from the book:

> *I fell at his feet and thought surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him.*
>
> *But Aslan's response?*

> *Son thou art welcome. But I said, alas Lord I am no son of thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child all the service thou hast done to Tash I account as service done to me.*
>
> *I questioned the Glorious One: Lord, is it then true that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled and said, It is false. Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath's sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted".*

Emeth questions once more:

> *Lord, I have been seeking Tash all my days.*
>
> *Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou shouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.*

Is it ultimately about the Sabbath, or the Lord of the Sabbath?

WEDNESDAY

Marriage—a relationship of love, as God designed in which two individuals become united as one—not one individual, but one in heart, love, service, other-centeredness, sharing common purpose, goals, methods, principles.

Marriage was designed to give created beings the most godlike of abilities and experiences. It was created with two beings of equal worth, value and standing under God's design law, but who were created with complementary abilities that would result in expansion of love, awareness, experience, development, and achievement as they united in the bonds of marital love as God designed. In other words, God's design would result in greater development, experience of godliness and achievement than either could experience alone.

And of course, Satan hates God's design and wants to corrupt it. After the fall, fear and selfishness replaced love and trust and instead of two co-equals operating in other-centered love, domination and control infected God's design. All kinds of mistreatment, abuse, exploitation, betrayal and heartache have occurred as the marriage relationship has been attacked by methods and principles other than love, trust, truth, and freedom.

Satan attacked God's design in other ways—physically in which God's plan of procreation, the two joining in love to create beings in their image, was damaged and infertility emerged and heartache over inability to have children has plagued humankind.

An online listener Maria Averill, sent in this question:

> Is there any way Dr. Jennings can address Genesis 3:16 Where God says to Eve,
>
> > "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
> > with pain you will give birth to children.
> > Your desire will be for your husband,
> > and he will rule over you."
>
> If they are suffering the natural consequences to their sin why would God feel the need to add sorrow to it? That seems out of character for Him.

You are so right—this is a translation and makes it sound like God is inflicting what He is pronouncing. God as the source of truth is now informing His beloved and cherished children what the consequences of their choices will be. Their sin has changed them and because of this God's design is altered with fear and selfishness—pain, heartache, domination and control will now contaminate life. So, if I were to paraphrase this it would read like this:

> "Because my design of love has now been replaced with fear and selfishness, having and raising children will be very hard—filled with sorrow. Fearful, you will seek protection from your stronger husband, but he will dominate you."

Over the last several decades in Western societies, the definition of marriage, one man and one woman, has changed to include same-sex relationships. Many Christians have been upset over this and there has been conflict in society and in churches because of it.

I thought a little history of marriage might be helpful.

In ancient times, marriage was a community or family event in which a male and female committed themselves to be husband and wife. There were no governments involved, just the public commitment of the two people along with their families' and acknowledgement of the community.

Old Testament Levitical law codified certain aspects of marriage which was designed to protect women from being arbitrarily discarded and replaced by their husbands. And it remained male and female. But during Bible times a man could have more than one female as wife.

In early Christianity, marriage remained a family and community event. One male and one female, polygamy was banned.

As the church became organized the Roman Church recognized marriage between a man and a woman as a sacred relationship. Marriages for centuries were recorded in the church records.

Wikipedia states the following:

As part of the Protestant Reformation, the role of recording marriages and setting the rules for marriage passed to the state, reflecting Martin Luther's 's view that marriage was a "worldly thing".[61] By the 17th century, many of the Protestant European countries had a state involvement in marriage.

As part of the Counter-Reformation, in 1563 the Council of Trent decreed that a Roman Catholic marriage would be recognized only if the marriage ceremony was officiated by a priest with two witnesses. The Council also authorized a Catechism, issued in 1566, which defined marriage as, "The conjugal union of man and woman, contracted between two qualified persons, which obliges them to live together throughout life."[63]
In the early modern period, John Calvin, and his Protestant colleagues reformulated Christian marriage by enacting the Marriage Ordinance of Geneva, which imposed "The dual requirements of state registration and church consecration to constitute marriage"[63] for recognition.

Prior to the Protestant Reformation the state governments had no role in marriage. It was the Protestant Reformation, which wanted a means to record marriages free of the Roman Church that led to the involvement of the state and the marriage licenses. Over the course of time various legal privileges were attached to marriage—tax benefits, inheritance benefits, next of kin rights etc.

Do we now finding that the merger of church and state is causing problems? Christians invited the state into the marriage institution, and now the state is redefining it, and many Christians are unhappy about this. Should this be another lesson in church/state relations?

Here are some other questions about marriage:

- Is there a difference between what you choose to do in your personal life, and what one should seek government to do in regard to marriage?
- Is there a difference between Biblical marriage and marriage as sanctioned by a human government, i.e. legal marriage?
- Were the Reformers correct to suggest a person isn't married in God's eyes until they get a legal marriage by the state?
- Can someone get married by the state and not be married in God's eyes?
- Should the church seek to get the state to enforce the church's view of marriage?
- Would you be happy if Muslims became a majority in your country and legalized polygamy?
- Is there a difference in spiritual union, marriage blessed by God, and legal marriage?
- Do the state and the church serve the same master?
- Do the state and the church have the same agenda?
- Do the state and the church concern themselves with the same elements of marriage?
- Church is concerned with God's blessing, unity of two individuals in a holy covenant, spiritual wholeness, honoring God with one's life, revealing the truth of God's character as he designed marriage to do, family integrity, raising children in Godly ways, etc.

- The state is concerned with legal contracts, who inherits whose property, who is the legal guardian, who makes legal health care decisions, not who is united by God.
- Should, adults, in our society be allowed to enter into legal contracts regarding the disposition of their property, guardianship, medical decision-making etc.? What if those adults are the same sex?
- Can we live in peace with those who enter into such contracts, even if they call in marriage?
- Is every "marriage" blessed by God—regardless of whether it is heterosexual or homosexual?
- Can people get legally married, but not experience the marital union as God designed?
- Are some marriages actually traps of Satan?

So, is there a difference between a church sanctioning an action, and the state sanctioning it?

What system do you prefer – the one in which such matters are decided by the church – as in the Middle Ages, the one we have in which these matters are decided by the state, or a mixed system in which one has to get both the state and church to agree?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "God declared…" What do you understand the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to be?

What do you take from the name of this tree?

To you see it is a tree of reality—it is the place where Adam and Eve would decide what they would know.

> This is life eternal that they might **know** you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent John 17:3

This knowledge of Good and Evil, wasn't theoretical knowledge, it wasn't cognitive knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, about the consequences of death. Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. That is not what the Tree was about—it was about experience, knowing by experience Good or Evil, by the choice to trust and believe God, or to believe lies and disbelieve God thereby breaking trust with Him.

God tells them, at this tree you will have knowledge—choose well, choose not to partake and you will know Good—you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness all of this will solidify in your character. But if you choose to partake the fruit, you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering and death—you will know evil.

God already knew evil—not in His character, but in His heart as His heavenly home had been fractured and He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, being lied about and the loss of His most loved angel. God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, heartache. He wanted humankind do know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God and choose the good in order for them to know it.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character**. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. {CC 13.3}

FRIDAY

Read question 3, "If the Bible…" It is when Christians are level four and below and promote an imperial God that requires them to believe without evidence, to follow rules that cause harm that they are called closed minded, because they are.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 9
Creation: Genesis as Foundation—Part 2

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "It is commonly…" How was it that people believed the earth was flat? From their limited sensory experiences, what they could perceive from a single point on earth, and misinterpreting or misunderstanding Scripture. The angels standing at the four corners of the earth taken concretely rather than figuratively.

But, while we might give understanding to those who believed the earth was flat thousands of years ago—how do we explain the flat earth society today?

Today, there are people who believe the earth is flat. It is an incredible example of the capacity of the human mind to deny evidence and distort facts in order to hold to a false belief. So let's examine the Flat Earther's belief system and identify the various mental tricks employed to deny reality and how these same methods are used by billions of people around the world to cling to other false belief systems. From the Flat Earthers—website here are some of their key beliefs and explanations:

- Their beliefs are not a joke. They want to be taken seriously.
- Their beliefs are based primarily upon what a person can experience with their own unenhanced senses—no telescopes, just stand in a place on the earth and look around. Thus, they restrict the evidence they base their belief upon to what they can experience directly.
    - This process is one of selection bias—limiting oneself to a restricted evidence-base in order to minimize or eliminate data, facts, evidence that would refute or contradict the core belief.
    - This process is also seen in:
    - The way *sola Scriptura* is used by the penal legal theologians. They restrict the evidence they are willing to accept by rejecting science, nature, real life experiences—thus they cling to a false view of God's character and government.
    - This was exactly how the flat earth idea was believed in the Middle Ages—the theologians refused to accept science, used Scripture only.
    - Evolutionists who reject the Bible and restrict their evidence-pool to only those data-points which they can currently measure or test. They also reject and refuse to incorporate scientific data-points that refute the godless origins theory. Such as the radio halos found in ever bedrock of the earth.
- While the Flat Earth Society is not tied to a religion, many adherents take a literal view of Scripture.
    - This is literalism, concrete thinking, refusing to abstract, refusing to understand symbols, metaphor, parables, figures of speech etc.
    - Many Christians do this with a variety of beliefs: "The Bible said it, I believe it." Examples, taking the parable of Lazarus and the rich man as literal. Or, reading

statements of God hardening Pharaoh's heart as literal—God making Pharaoh into a rebel even though Pharaoh really wanted to repent and love God. Or, predestination, in which God chooses who is saved and lost.

- They deny humans have been to space and claim that the various national space agencies have faked all the videos in order to create complex organizations to embezzle money.
    - Denial of reality to maintain a firmly held belief. This is a classic primitive defense mechanism, seen in addictions where the addict denies they have a problem, or claims they can handle it. It is also seen in relationships of abuse in which the victim makes excuses for the abuser, denying the problem is a lack of love in the abuser and the abuser also denies the problem is in their own heart/mind and instead blames the victim.
    - Scientists do this constantly when they deny evidence that refutes their godless theories—such as genetic evidence that refutes Darwin's theory of mutation over millions of years. Or, how no godless theory exists to explain where the coded information found in our DNA came from—which is required for all life.
    - Religious groups that deny evidence exposing sacred beliefs as false, most importantly the false belief that God's law works like human law, imposed rules requiring God to punish.
- They argue that photographic and video evidence from weather balloons, aircraft, satellites *can* be easily doctored or altered. Therefore, such evidence is not to be accepted as reliable.
    - This is taking a fact or truth and applying it falsely to create a lie or falsehood: take a truth—photographic evidence *can* be altered—and applying that fact to the photos in question without actually demonstrating that the photos or videos in question have been doctored. Thus, any evidence that refutes the position can be rejected out of hand because "photos *can* be altered."
    - Christians do this in a variety of ways. Fact: We are to live by having faith in God. False application: Having faith means we don't ask questions and don't require evidence, we just believe. Fact: We are to trust the Bible as the inspired Word of God. False application: We are not to reason but take the Bible just as it reads.
    - Scientists do this via multiple false assumptions. Fact: Carbon 14 decays at a fixed rate. False application: Accurate carbon dating can be obtained by measuring carbon 14 levels—but this is predicated upon an unprovable assumption that carbon 14 in the atmosphere was the same thousands of years ago as it is today.
- They believe the earth is a flat disc with the arctic circle at the center and the sun revolves around the earth. Around the edges of the disc is an ice wall that holds the oceans in. Government agencies have people at the ice wall to prevent anyone from climbing over and discovering the edge of the world.
- They deny gravity exists and instead believe what we call gravity is centrifugal force claiming the earth is constantly accelerating.
    - The result of employing multiple mental gymnastics—selection bias, denial, distortion, and false application of facts results in forming beliefs that are out of harmony with reality, i.e. false beliefs, lies.
    - Christianity has many of these—God is the source of pain and suffering under the guise of justice. Human beings have immortal souls. God tortures humans in hell for all

eternity. God killed Jesus on the cross in order to satisfy His wrath. God requires the blood of a human sacrifice in order to forgive us.
    - Science has many of these—there is no God. Life came from non-living matter all on its own. Complexity and organization occur spontaneously on their own without any intelligent input.
- When asked how is it that the other planets that we can see are spheres and not round discs—their answer is that the other planets are not earth, and a flat earth doesn't require the other planets to be flat.
    - Christians do this when questions or evidence doesn't fit their model and they respond with: God's ways are not our ways, we just take that on faith and don't require it to make sense.

The Bible teaches how reality works—there is truth and there are lies. Each of us is to be fully persuaded in our own minds (Rom 14:5). If we choose to reject the truth then the only thing left for the mind to rest upon is a lie and with each subsequent rejection of truth we go further and further from reality until we eventually become delusional. This is what the Bible teaches in 2 Thes 2:9-11:

> The rise of the deviant one will be accompanied by manifestation of Satan's methods and power, counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and anything else that deceives and darkens the minds of those who are dying–those who did not develop minds that love the truth, and thereby did not partake of the Remedy. Because they reject the truth, God leaves them to their delusional world built on lies. *The Remedy*

This is true regarding any subject matter. If we on a clear day look at the sky and tell you the sky is blue, and use a meter that gives the exact wavelength of light being refracted and present that evidence to a person. They still have to choose to accept and believe it or reject it. But if they reject it—what is left for the mind to rest upon? It doesn't matter whether they choose red, or pink, or brown, or green, if it isn't blue it is a lie.

This is what happens to many people, they have never trained the mind to think through evidence and they form beliefs without evidence and thus reject evidence to cling to the belief. But this process damages and enfeebles the mind.

Let's talk a little about critical reasoning.

The more complex an issue the more easily for someone to find themselves believing false theories.

The more complex the issue the more information, facts, and data-points are needed to determine an accurate view.

Consider a complex puzzle with 10,000 pieces—what happens if you are given 12 of those pieces and told to determine the image?

Would accuracy increase with more pieces included?

This is the problem with Christian theologies—many of the conclusions, teachings, doctrines, are formed on limited data, using some of the pieces but not all of them.

Martin Luther for instance only accepted 62 books of the Bible as inspired, not all 66. He didn't value Revelation, Jude, James, and Hebrews. Excluding these four books deletes a lot of information particularly about the Great Controversy and the war in heaven, and thereby alters the context to understand the rest of Scripture.

Many Christians today split the Bible in two and teach an old dispensation with an Old Testament and a new dispensation with a New Testament. The Old Testament is not included in many theologies, at least not in the same way.

The Jews of course deny the New Testament and thus limit their understanding of reality.

Many Christians refuse the integrative evidenced-based approach and don't include the puzzle pieces from science and life experiences.

Others who value Scripture don't include all 66, they pick and choose the texts that support their view, but don't include and rationally explain the texts that don't.

Another way to distort the picture is to bring in pieces that are not part of the original puzzle. Muslims and Mormons bring in additional writings that take supremacy over Scripture and thus alter the picture they see from Scripture.

We at Come and Reason want to include all the evidence God has given—all of Scripture, plus science and experience.

Then, with all the evidence form the most accurate understanding of truth, always remaining open to have our views expand and update as more truth is understood and uncovered. In other words, we don't lock into a certain view and refuse to update with new credible evidence.

We also recognize that some pieces or threads of evidence have more value than other evidence. Foundational to understanding reality is to identify God's design laws—the laws upon which reality is built to operate. These are constants, they never change and therefore become references, yardsticks, barometers, guidelines to which our explanations must conform.

Further, for accurate understanding of Scripture one needs to recognize Jesus is God. This truth becomes another standard upon which our explanations of the rest of Scripture must be conformed. If we have teachings about God that contradict the truth that Jesus revealed about God, then we know our explanations are incorrect.

But if we deny Jesus is fully God then the message of Scripture gets distorted—God is not fully revealed in Jesus. If Jesus is not fully God, we don't know what God would do in various

circumstances. We don't know whether God would forgive His persecutors, if Jesus is not fully God. Worse, we instead learn that God would sacrifice another to protect Himself rather than God sacrificing Himself for the good of others. Those who deny the Trinity, don't realize the terrible corruption of God's character the Arian or non-trinitarian views bring.

Why is it necessary for every person to be fully persuaded in their own mind? What happens if a person believes something because someone else told them, but they haven't actually been persuaded?

- Either they don't really believe it and they just conform which means they are really being dishonest and in hidden state of rebellion or,
- They are not settled, so even if they are a genuine believer, they are easily converted to another belief when a new dynamic and charismatic speaker comes along and presents what appears to be persuasive evidence.

But what is the problem in the mind of the person who believes the right thing, the actual truth, but hasn't thought it out for themselves. In other words, what is wrong with believing the truth because someone else told you the answer, your church, your parents, your pastor etc.?

It would be like knowing the right answers to the math exam because someone else told you that was the answer, even if your memorized answer is correct, you still don't know how to do math. Thus, your ability to examine facts, evidences, problem solve is impaired and you will base decisions on who you have the most confidence in, not in the truth itself.

When Satan impersonates Christ and does miracles etc. such people are almost certainly going to be deceived.

Our current culture is rife with such people, who believe headlines, believe people in authority, believe media personalities, believe news reports, but don't examine the evidence and reason it out for themselves.

MONDAY

This is a very interesting lesson, it describes one of the ancient non-Biblical creation narratives—the *Atra-Hasis* Epic.

The lesson points out critical differences, read #1 and #2, "In *Atra-Hasis* man works…"

When we understand the difference between design law and imposed law this is obviously and clearly Satanic in origin.

Notice this account has humans working so the gods can rest and the gods ultimately use power and force including death in order to bring forth life. This is exactly opposite of God's kingdom of love in

which God gives of Himself for our good so we can find rest in Him and our God is the enemy of death, He is the one who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light.

In a biblical worldview, we understand that there are two antagonistic forces at war: God and His kingdom of love, truth, freedom—which is at war with Satan and his kingdom of fear-driven selfishness, deceit, and coercion.

From the beginning of Satan's rebellion in heaven, he put his methods into play and attempted to ascend to the universe's highest position in order to rule over the other beings (Isaiah 14:13, 14). Satan's method is domination over, rule over.

But notice God's methods as revealed in Jesus. "Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death" (Philippians 2:5–8 NIV84).

Satan's method is to *rule over and dominate others*, requiring the masses to serve him; God's method is to *give of Himself to uplift His creation*.

We see this difference in the contrast between the Bible Genesis account and the *Atra-Hasis* Epic. But, many have failed to see this essential difference in Christianity and the world today.

The three major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) have all been infected with the idea that God laws are like human laws, imperial rules requiring external infliction of punishment, rather than the truth that God's laws are design laws.

This has led to the false idea that sin is a legal problem that needs punishing, rather than a terminal condition that needs curing.

Every government based upon Satan's methods is a system in which a ruling elite rules over the masses in order to exploit the masses for the benefit of the few ruling elites. This is all accomplished through the imposing of rules/laws and the infliction of punishments for rule-breakers, along with rewards to those who please the elite.

Sin and evil are not the same. Sinfulness is a condition of being—a state of disharmony with God's design. Something with which we are born and is cured only in Jesus.

Evil is not merely the sin condition: struggling with fear, selfishness, addictions, and lusts. Evil is the *intentional and purposeful choice* to embrace selfishness and exploit, abuse, injure, harm, and dominate others. It is recognizable as actions that thwart other people's paths toward growth, development, enlightenment, and ultimately entering into a saving and eternal relationship with God.

Thus, activities of Satan and those influenced by him have the impact of demoralizing, degrading, injuring, harming, and undermining others—with the effect of one person or group dominating another

person or group. In other words, satanic agencies seek to destroy the image of God in humans such that we become less capable of self-governance (the last fruit of the Spirit) and, thus, put us in need of external oversite, control, or being cared for by others.

Satanic agencies will always attempt to destroy individuality, thinking, reasoning, and autonomy in order to mold people into fear-driven, thoughtless hordes that are willing to subject themselves to the control of others they view as stronger, wiser, or in some way more capable or worthy.

Can you think of some examples in society?

Can you think of some examples in the church?

- indoctrination rather than teaching to think
- believe under coercion—threats from God or threats from the church
- The papal organizational structure is one of a ruling elite, a hierarchy with a supreme dictator operating upon imperial law. The SDA church was organized with diffusion of authority to the membership and not a central leadership. This was designed to allow truth to unfold and grow. Truth doesn't advance in society with all people waking up one day with the new understanding. It advances with individuals making discoveries and sharing their new insights, which are initially resisted, but because they are truth the are demonstrated over time to be more accurate and slowly, over time more and more people accept the truth and society advances. The SDA system was set up so that new truths could arise and false ideas would be weeded out naturally. Truth would occur in a local church, it would be shared within that group, conferences and then unions and divisions would slowly embrace the new truth and then when the majority of the world church have accepted the new light it becomes part of the official position of the church. The papal system resists such growth as it dictates the beliefs from on high and new beliefs from individuals that challenge orthodoxy is considered heresy. Sadly some in the SDA church have moved to reshape the organization into the papal model with a central hierarchy that dictates beliefs and obstructs the advancement of truth. This then obstructs the development and uplifting of people.

By contrast, God's methods always seek to uplift the and develop people restoring them back into the image of God.

When God's principles are active, people gain autonomy, ability, and capability. The principles of truth, love, and freedom lead people to think for themselves, grow in insight, wisdom, and understanding; in exercising their own ability to think and to do; in developing their God-given individuality to become thinkers, not mere reflectors of other people's thoughts.

This is why Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Because every human government in history has a few ruling elites dominating and exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites—the aristocracy.

- ancient Egypt with its Pharaohs
- China with its emperors and empresses

- Japan with its shoguns eventually leading to its emperors
- Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome with their kings, emperors, and popes leading to the nation states of Europe with their divine right of kings

When the US government was set established, its constitution was specifically written to obstruct this Satanic model—a ruling elite exploiting the masses. The US Constitution was written to diffuse power into the hands of the people and prevent a ruling aristocracy from arising. It did this by:

- Decentralization of power into three equal branches (legislative, executive, judicial)
- The limitation of congress to remove the president except for specific listed crimes (treason, bribery, high crimes and misdemeanors). The framers did not want the U.S. government to be parliamentarian, as in Britain, in which the prime minister *serves* at the behest of the parliament and can be removed for political reasons at any time with a majority vote of the parliament.
- Use of the electoral college rather than simple majority vote, which is another way to decentralize power and protect the rights of the minority.
- The separation of church and state—having seen the abuses in Europe when religious institutions controlled the power of the state, the framers specifically sought to limit the power of religions to control state agencies in order to enforce religious dogmas.
- The right of the citizenry to carry and bear arms—purposefully written into the constitution as a means for the citizens to protect themselves from threats, including those of an abusive government.
- The right to a free and independent press, intended to investigate and expose corruption in government so that the people could act via their power to vote to bring about change.
- The right to privacy, including no search and seizure without a warrant—again, giving power to the citizen and requiring the ruling authority to have legitimate justification to overrule individual liberties.
- The right to not self-incriminate. During the Inquisition, if an inquisitor asked you a question and you refused to answer, it was considered the same as an admission of guilt. The framers took power from the state and gave it to the individual.
- An educated citizenry who could read and write in order to be informed and to think for themselves and understand the processes involved to help elect qualified leaders.
- The requirement of elections every two years for the house, six years for the senate, and four years for president, thus, ultimately putting the power into the hands of the electorate and preventing an elite minority from ruling over the majority
- High hurdles to change this system written into the constitution.

If we believe the Biblical worldview, then we can anticipate that the US constitution with its protections of liberty and the diffusion of power into the hands of the masses will be attacked and eroded and that eventually a ruling elite will take over the US and use centralized governmental power to exploit the masses. Have we seen this occurring over the years since the founding of the USA?

Now, as I list some examples of how Constitutional protections have been slowly eroded, I want you to observe one of Satan's strategies or methods—doing evil and then initiating a response to destroy, removed, stop the evil—but the response ultimately erodes Constitutional protections.

- The Civil War strengthened the federal government and weakened states' rights—despite its positive effect of eliminating slavery
- Ever increasing gun regulation, making law-abiding citizens more dependent and vulnerable to the state's overreach—despite its intended positive goal to reduce gun violence in society
- Movements in certain states to do away with the electoral college—despite its stated goal of merely wanting the election to be representative of the majority of people
- The movement of media organizations toward promoting agendas rather than presenting facts—despite their goal of wanting to improve society
- The erosion to the right to privacy: FISA Courts, Patriot act, ever increasing cameras monitoring our behavior, digital listening systems, internet monitoring—despite the goal to protect us from terrorism
- Federal income tax which shifts economic power from individuals to the Federal government—despite the goal to protect the nation from foreign powers and provide social benefits
- Uncoupling the dollar from the gold standard and the creation of the Federal Reserve, which further moves economic power away from people to the ruling elites—despite the goal of a stable economy
- Huge government bureaucracies with layers of regulation and restrictions of liberty—despite the goal to protect from abuse and exploitation
- Governmental determination of what businesses are essential and what are not in the current COVID pandemic—despite the goal of protecting citizens from disease and death

Did you notice that every erosion of the protections of liberty, every move toward an ever-increasing centralized government with ruling elites is by attacking some actual other abuse or wrong? This is a classic strategy of Satan, create a wrong, an injury, an illness even, and then have the solution to that problem move further toward Satan's end-goal of a world-government of ruling elites that dominate the masses.

This is the mindset of the social progressives and all socialistic and communist governments—they present a problem—poverty, economic inequality, exploitation of a segment of society and then propose a solution in which ruling elites take away liberty and enforce by coercion the mandates of the government.

All false narratives have a controlling god who restricts liberty and takes from the masses to support the deity. Christians who hold to an imposed law view of God will do the same thing when they see a wrong to their worldview—abortion, homosexual marriage, and then seek to get the government to restrict liberty to achieve the goal that they believe is right. It is the exact same beastly method and they are falling for the exact same trick of the devil.

The truth is that God is the source of all and life, energy, goodness, love, truth all originate from Him and He is constantly dispersing His own energies for our health, welfare and the sustaining of His universe.

TUESDAY

Genesis versus Paganism—what is the root lie to all paganism? A god who functions like created beings, who makes up rules and governs by the use of coercive power, i.e. overseeing behavior and inflicting punishment for rule-breaking.

In other words, a god who is in some way restrictive of liberty.

Satan used this method in Eden, did God say you *cannot* eat from any tree in the garden—God is restricting your liberty. Rather than the truth, God gives us complete freedom—freedom to choose absolutely—but not freedom from the design laws and thus not freedom from the results or consequences of our choices.

So what is paganism—gods who make up rules, inflict punishment, and require the lesser creatures do something to the god to get the god to give to them.

At the 1897 General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists, Pastor George E. Fifield, secretary of the New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, gave a powerful sermon on this subject. Here is an excerpt:

> "In Christ Jesus we …[are] the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. … This is as near to the Lord as we can get. This is the at-one-ment. … Notwithstanding this, we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted [Isa 53:4]. That was what we thought about it. **We said**, **God is doing all this; God is killing him, punishing him, to satisfy his wrath, in order to let us off. That is the pagan conception of sacrifice**. The Christian idea of sacrifice is this. Let us note the contrast. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That is the Christian idea. Yes, sir. Indifference keeps, hatred keeps, selfishness keeps. … But love, and love only, sacrifices, gives freely, gives itself, gives without counting the cost; gives because it is love. That is sacrifice, whether it is the sacrifice of bulls and goats, or of him who is the Lamb of God. It is the sacrifice that is revealed throughout the entire Bible. **But the pagan idea of sacrifice is just the opposite. It is that some god is always offended, always angry, and his wrath must be propitiated in some way**.
>
> "If it is an ordinary case, the blood of bulls and goats will suffice; but if it is an extraordinary case, the blood of some innocent virgin or child must flow; and when the god smells the blood, his wrath is appeased. We talk of pagan immortality, pagan Sunday, pagan idolatry, etc.; **but it seems to me that the lowest thought is that men have brought this pagan idea of sacrifice**

> **right into the Bible, and applied it to the sacrifice of the cross. So the Methodist Discipline uses these words: 'Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us,' that is, to propitiate God so that we could be forgiven—paganism straight out.** Why, brethren and sisters, it is the application of the pagan conception of sacrifice to the sacrifice upon the cross, so that that wonderful manifestation of divine love, which God intended should cause all men, all beings in the universe, to wonder and adore, has been turned around and made a manifestation of wrath to be propitiated in order to save man. I am glad that we are losing sight of this manner of viewing the subject, where we do not say that Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us. **Brethren, there is sometimes such a thing as to give up the expression of a thing, and think we have thus gotten rid of it, when a good deal of it still lingers and clouds our consciousness of the love of God, and the beauty of his truth, so that we cannot present a clear gospel.**" (1897 General Conference Daily Bulletin Sermon Series number 1)

Do you see how paganism has infected Christianity? The entire penal substitution theology is a form of paganism as it teaches a false penal/legal god who requires propitiation of wrath by the blood of a human sacrifice.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses upon the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and how they give specific ages when persons had children, how long they lived, what age when they died. They make the point that these specifications give credibility to the veracity of the Biblical account. Particularly it doesn't leave room for missing generations to extend the age of the earth by millions of years.

The lesson points out that some have attempted to reinterpret these accounts to be metaphor, or to skip generations so that the timeline can be extended to conform to the currently understood scientific model of the age of the earth.

Let's talk about that.

There are two general ways scientists try to determine age of some fossil, relic or rock.

If it is organic (containing carbon) then they often use carbon dating. If it is inorganic they use radio-decay rates of various radio isotopes.

Where does C -14 Come From?

> Radiocarbon dating relies on a simple natural phenomenon. As the Earth's upper atmosphere is bombarded by cosmic radiation, atmospheric nitrogen is broken down into an unstable isotope of carbon - carbon 14 (C-14).
>
> The unstable isotope is brought to Earth by atmospheric activity, such as storms, and becomes fixed in the biosphere. Because it reacts identically as regular carbon C-12, C-14 becomes

attached to complex organic molecules through photosynthesis in plants and becomes part of their molecular makeup. Animals eating those plants in turn absorb Carbon-14 as well as the stable isotopes. This process of ingesting C-14 continues as long as the plant or animal remains alive, thus the amount of C-14 in a living organism remains constant, at the same ratio as what is in the environment.

C-14 Decay Profile

When the organism dies, the ratio of C-14 within its carcass begins to gradually decrease. The rate of decrease is 1/2 the quantity at death every 5,730 years. That is the half-life of C-14.

So when some bones are found and dated at 3 million years what do we say? Are they measuring the amount of radiocarbon correctly? No, C14 levels become too small to continue to measure beyond what would be approximately 50,000 years. So, such claims of bones being 3 million years old are not based on carbon 14, but on where they are found. In other words, it is not direct scientific evidence.

But what about items that are dated to be 40-50,000 years of age, should we accept this as an accurate date. No, we should accept the measurement of C14 in the specimen as an accurate measurement—but the date projected from that amount of C14 is based on an *assumption* that the carbon 14 in the atmosphere at the time that organism died was at the same concentration as the carbon 14 in our atmosphere today. This is not provable and thus is totally assumed. The Bible narrative gives a plausible explanation that the C14 levels in any organism living before the flood would be significantly lower as there was a water layer above the earth that would have reduced the solar radiation reaching the nitrogen and forming C14. Thus anything living before the flood would appear much older than it actually is.

What about the other radiodating techniques for rocks i.e. inorganic matter?

This is based upon another *assumption* that radioactive isotopes decay at a constant rate. But, recent research has demonstrated that solar flares altar the radio decay rates of radioactive isotopes. Further, the decay rates change on a 33 day cycle which corresponds to the rotation of the sun's core. https://phys.org/news/2010-08-radioactive-vary-sun-rotation.html

Again, the water layer above the earth as the Bible describes would impact radio decay. We don't know the impact the flood had on radioisotopes on the earth. And the Bible describes a scenario, in which the sun burns 7 times hotter and the moon burns as bright as the sun, this would have been when the water layer was over the earth. (Isa 30:26)

If any of those unprovable assumptions are true, then the radio dating is completely unreliable because we don't know the rates and starting points of when the earth was created.

So the point is, science doesn't have any reliable evidence to refute the Genesis narrative.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that Jesus and the New Testament writers took the Old Testament account of creation literally and this gives added reliability to the creation account. I don't dispute this at all.

But if one were to be specific to this line of evidence, all one could ultimately conclude is that the Bible writers believed the Bible account to be true, their belief doesn't prove it to be true.

In fact, did the Bible writer believe other things that were not true and for which they had to change their beliefs?

- Did the Apostles originally believe Jesus would rule with power over?
- Did they originally seek to have the highest positions of power in Jesus' kingdom?
- Did they originally believe they shouldn't associate with non-Jews?
- In other words, were there many beliefs the Bible writers didn't understand and had to grow into truth as Jesus and the Holy Spirit revealed it to them. So, critics could argue that just because the New Testament writers believed something only proves that they believed it.

I personally agree with them on creation and believe they were correct, but don't believe in creation merely because they did, but because it is true and the evidence is overwhelming for it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 10
The Bible and History

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson points out that the Bible is constituted history—in other words it is recording events that occurred in history in a linear fashion.

There are a variety of ways to approach the Bible. If one uses the wrong approach then one can take the same Bible texts, stories, and come to divergent conclusions.

- The Bible is a storybook written by people ignorant of reality who were trying their best to describe what was happening.
- The Bible is history with religious beliefs that were borrowed from multiple other religions in the region
- The Bible is a book of myths, not to be taken seriously but metaphorically
- The Bible stories are stand-alone stories each teaching us the power of God and the principles of right and wrong—do right God blesses, do wrong God punishes.
- The Bible is to be understood through imposed law lenses, God is supreme and made up law and we are expected to obey, but if we don't God is required to punish.
- There are two dispensations—the Old Covenant recorded in the Old Testament in which salvation was achieved through law and animal sacrifice, and the New Covenant recorded in the New Testament in which salvation is by grace through faith in the blood payment of a human sacrifice—Jesus the Son of God.
- The Bible is to be taken literally, just as it reads, without understanding figures of speech, metaphor, symbols.
- The Bible is the authoritative source of all truth—no, the Bible is the authoritative source of saving truth—the truth about God, the origins of humanity, sin, the plan of salvation—everything necessary for salvation. But it is not the authoritative source of truth on the best manufacturing techniques for ink pens, or printing presses, or metallurgy, or physical therapy techniques.

All of these approaches are flawed—the approach that helps us see the truth God has inspired to be recorded in the Bible is:

- Understanding God as Creator and thus His law as Design Law
- Using the integrative evidence-based approach wherever multiple threads of evidence are available.

- Taking all 66 books together as one dispensation—one God, one human race, one sin problem, and one solution to the problem—thus understanding the Bible is telling one story—not many stand-alone stories.
- Appropriately interpreting figures of speech, metaphor, simile, parable
- Refraining from using the Bible to teach things it is not intended to teach
- Examples of extreme literalism and using the Bible to teach or apply to things in was never intended include:
    - Not starting a fire on Sabbath means any action which has a spark, such as turning on an electrical switch—so we must have computer programming to turn on all the switches for us, or program our elevators to constantly run stopping at every floor on the Sabbath.
    - The New Testament never mentions musical instruments in worship, therefore we can only worship God with our voices and cannot use instruments.
    - The Bible is a book on the physics of motion and therefore when the Bible refers to the sun rising in the east or setting in the west, or in Joshua's battle the sun stood still, then such comments are referring to the sun moving around the earth or the sun being stopped from moving.

But with our method in mind we see that the Old Testament is the process of God working to bring Messiah and Satan and evil forces working to not only corrupt human beings into sinfulness, but also to specifically prevent the coming of the Messiah. That is the focus, goal, key. If Jesus never came as a human then the human race is eternally lost, planet earth is not freed from sin, Satan's rebellion continues, perhaps more intelligent beings in the universe are deceived and join Satan's rebellion.

But, with Jesus's victory on earth at the Cross, Satan's rebellion is overthrown. The rest of the sinless beings in the universe are solidified in loyalty, none give Satan a second to present his arguments any more, thus his work is restricted to earth. Further, the human race was redeemed in Jesus, which means eventually the planet is going to be restored—the only outstanding variable is how many individual humans will cooperate with Jesus for healing of their hearts and minds.

So, the key is Jesus. With this in mind the stories fall into place, the focus of the Bible falls into place. We understand what is transpiring right from the beginning:

- Immediately after Adam's fall, God is working to reveal the truth about Himself, the coming Messiah and the plan of salvation—seeking to heal hearts and minds. Satan is working to harden hearts and minds, distort the plan of salvation with a lie and obstruct the coming Messiah. So, Satan inspires Cain to reject humble trust in the coming Messiah and to embrace pride in his own hard work and take the fruit of his own labor and offer these to God as a means to pay or merit salvation—denying his need of a Savior. Abel, humbly accepts his sin condition and puts his faith and trust in the promised Messiah to come. Satan stirs up jealousy in Cain and inspires him to kill Abel—kill the one who embraces truth and practices God's methods and teaches God's plan of a coming Messiah.

- Satan leading the world into rebellion against God, seeking to harden hearts permanently against God so that not one human being would work with God, thereby closing the avenue for the Messiah. God waits until there is only one righteous man left on the entire earth and acts by bringing the flood in order, not to punish, but to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. The flood was also not like Sodom immediate vaporization, but was a period of time giving all on the earth who had heard the 120 years of Noah's preaching time to repent—like the thief on the cross their earthly life was over, but they could still turn to God if there was any part of them not hardened beyond healing. And, God changed the face of the earth to increase the necessity of work in order to slow the corruption of human character and to shorten the lifespan of mankind to again slow the spread of sin—all of these actions designed to keep open the avenue for Messiah, eliminate sin and save humanity.

- The same process with the tower of Babel, Satan working to unify the world into rebellion, to harden hearts and close avenue for Messiah. God works to slow the spread of evil and keep open the avenue for Messiah.

- The focus on Abraham and his family is because it is through Abraham's family that the Messiah is going to come—the Bible no longer needs to focus on the entire human race, but that branch through which Messiah will come. Additionally, Satan's prime focus is now to destroy that branch of the human family through which Messiah is going to come. And that is what we see happening throughout the Old Testament.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The monarchy of David…" First question—what this God's plan—to have a monarchy?

This so-called golden age was not God's plan, but God working with them, within the limits of the people's willingness to trust and follow God.

Consider what God told them:

> Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. 12 Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. 16 Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. 18

> When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."
>
> 19 But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. 20 Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."
>
> 21 When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. 22 The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." 1Sam 8:10-22

Multiple things come to mind—is this a stand-alone story or part of the one story—humanity fallen into sin and God working to bring Messiah to save humanity while Satan works to obstruct the coming Messiah?

- What did God describe would be the result of their request? A ruling elite, monarchy, aristocracy, in which that ruling elite exploits the people for the benefit of the aristocracy. Whose form of government is this? Satan's form of government. What happens to the masses in this form of government?
- Why did the people want this, according to the text? So they could be like the other nations. Again, what did Jesus say about the kingdoms of this world? His kingdom was not of this world. They didn't want God's kingdom and methods, they wanted to be like the world. And what did they get?
- Do we see how this again was an attack on God's plan, to bring in methods and principles of exploitation, domination, control that would damage and destroy the image of God in people and thereby harden hearts and obstruct the avenue for Messiah. And in fact that happened, they continued through their leadership to go into false worship with ever increasing selfishness which obstructed God's plan—not only to bring Messiah, but obstructed God's plan for the people—they never became the nation of priests to evangelize the world for Messiah, but instead became ever-increasingly self-centered nationalists.

So, in this so-called golden age we find the Great Controversy being played out with Satan subverting God's plan with his own imperial law methods.

God's plan was for the people to be a kingdom of priests, i.e. who would go out into the world and share the truth about God and that God would be there king.

Now, consider what we saw in the wilderness—God provided food for them, water for them, sustained their clothing so things didn't wear out, and provided good health so they didn't get sick. God was giving of himself to support them and provide for their health and welfare. He instructed them only with such instructions as were good for their character development:

- the offerings of various kinds (gold, silver, mirrors etc. to build the sanctuary) was not for God's benefit to support and sustain God, but was for the benefit of the people, to bring them in by practice to be participants in God's methods; for them to be givers in order to open the

channels of love and trust in their hearts by action. To give them opportunity to invest themselves with God in their own healing of heart and mind.
- the various regulations God set up were not for God' benefit, or to control and dominate people but for their health and protection and maturity—to lead them into ever increasing character development and unity with God

But they rejected God's plan and substituted their own and we see the patience, love, mercy and grace of God who meets them where they are and works with them to still bring about His plan of Jesus coming to save humanity.

The point of the lesson is to establish that King David and Solomon were real people who existed and ruled Israel as the Bible describes. They provide various archeological evidence that corroborates the Bible narrative that David and Solomon did in fact exist.

What would be the purpose of arguing that David never existed, he is a fictional character? It is part of the obstruction of the plan of salvation to deny the descendant of David—Jesus who is our Savior.

MONDAY

The lesson reviews the history of King Hezekiah when Isaiah was prophet and the Assyrians attacked Judah—how the Assyrians sacked several cities, but Hezekiah turned to the Lord who promised they would not breech the walls of Jerusalem—and how the angel of the Lord overthrew the 180,000 Assyrian army.

The lesson gives archeological evidence that all these individuals lived and this gives veracity to the Biblical account.

Do we see this story as a stand-alone story—just another example of how if we trust God He delivers us from our enemies, but if we don't then He doesn't deliver us? Worse, if we fight against God He destroys us?

Without understanding the larger Great Controversy narrative, it is frequently presented like this. But these are false conclusions leading to the health-wellness gospel—do the right thing, keep the right rules, pray the right prayer and God blesses you with health and wealth. But if you don't you either don't get the blessing or worse, God actively harms you.

- During this time in human history the Zhou dynasty ruled China. Did God punish the Chinese who were under the Zhou dynasty at this time? They didn't promote Yahweh; they established the idea of Mandate of Heaven which gave them the authority to take wealth from others to support their regime. During this time Confucius who founded Confucianism and Laozi the founder of Taoism lived. Did God punish these people for their failing to follow Him? Why not? Because the theory that God inflicts punishment is false.

- During this time in human history the Chavin empire ruled in portions of South America. Did God punish the ancient Chavin society which was pagan and polytheistic? No—why not? Because the theory that God punishes people for wrong worship or not obeying Him is a lie.
- Satan's lie from the beginning—I love this quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, revealing what the SDA church was supposed to teach:
    - In the opening of the great controversy, **Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed,** that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, **he declared**, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. DA 761.4

Satan's lie from the beginning is that God's law functions like human law and God must inflict punishment for disobedience. Some take the Bible stories, like Hezekiah and misapply it to teach this very lie—in fact the vast majority of Christian teaching seems to do this. Why? Because a beastly system infected Christianity with a lie that essentially every theology department of every Christian denomination teaches to their pastors and Bible teachers—that God's law functions like human law.

But what do we understand then is going on with the Assyrians and Hezekiah if God is not punishing the Assyrians and not merely rewarding Hezekiah? It is the plan of salvation—this is the story. Satan is working through the Assyrians to try and destroy the avenue for Messiah. God acts to keep open the avenue for Messiah. It is that simple. Without Jesus then every human being throughout all human history is eternally lost. So, the key to understanding the entire Scripture is the plan of salvation centering upon Jesus.

Then, with that understanding in mind we must still understand God's design law and how love actually works, the principles of liberty. We must understand God cannot heal hearts and minds without willing agreement and participation of the sentient being.

This is why God gave them kings when He didn't want them to have kings—because God cannot force hearts and minds into loyalty. God cannot heal hearts and minds from fear and selfishness by exercise of power—such actions would only turn sentient beings into mindless programmed robots. So, when we refuse to trust God, to allow Him to lead and direct, God meets us where we are and allows our choices to bring us painful consequences to awaken us to what happens when we are outside His will. Then, when we turn to Him, He heals and restores our hearts and minds.

But if we embrace the Great Controversy view and understand the Bible is focused on Jesus the Messiah, yet still hold to the human imposed law lie, then we still teach a lie and make God out to be the source of pain and suffering and still misunderstand the Bible stories.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson provides archeological evidence to support that Jesus was a real historical figure as well as other people who lived at the time of Jesus and who are mentioned in the Bible.

I really don't know of any arguments that have been put forth that take the position that Jesus didn't exist or that Jesus is a made-up figure like Santa Claus.

The attacks on Jesus have not been that He did not live, but that He was not the incarnate Son of God, but just a good Jewish teacher. That is the more typical attack.

Why can we have confidence in rejecting the idea that Jesus was just a good teacher?

- The fulfillment of all the OT prophecies in the person of Jesus—the actual historical events that all accurately are fulfilled in His life
- What the teachings of Jesus reveal—the complete and perfect revelation of God and God's design law of love.
- Jesus's own testimony about who He was. If He is not the Son of God, then He would be viewed as delusional as He claimed to come from God and was returning to God. He referred to Himself as the I Am, a reference to God.
- The witness of the Apostles—and the fact they worshipped Jesus.
- The empty tomb
- The understanding that the entire OT was teaching the Messiah was coming and what the Messiah was to accomplish and then how it was accomplished in Jesus
- Did you notice I did not reference the miracles that He performed? Not because they are unimportant, but because the other weight of evidence is so overwhelming and persuasive and because miracles are the easiest to counterfeit. In other words, we don't need to believe in Jesus based upon miracles. And on the road to Emmaus Jesus's method to lead his disciples to understand the truth of who He was and His mission, was not to reveal Himself as risen—a miracle to be sure—but to take them through the evidence of Scripture fulfilled in His life.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that the Bible records the history of people not only to give us historical events, but to demonstrate to us from history how faith changes lives and brings victory.

What is faith? It is trust, confidence, belief, devotion that leads to action.

Let's examine how faith led to action that led to victory in people's lives and worked as part of God's plan of salvation. Let's examine the list of people in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11:

- Abel—we already discussed how he trusted God and cooperated with God for his own healing and taught God's plan to bring the Messiah—and how Satan worked against the truth and inspired Cain to kill him, trying to close the avenue of truth.
- Enoch—we see God's ultimate plan, those who trust God and walk with Him are cured of sin, given immortal life and taken from the world of sin. This is the promise we receive in Jesus.
- Noah—Satan worked to harden the hearts of the human race to close avenue for Messiah. God worked through Noah to keep open avenue for Messiah.
- Abraham—trust God and left his family, moved to a new land, and had a promised child in old age. Abraham through trust experiences a new heart and becomes the father of the faithful and his family were God's chosen helpers through which the Messiah came. The focus of the Bible narrows down on this branch of the human family. Satan focused his energies on trying to destroy or corrupt this branch of the human family in order to obstruct God's saving plan.
- Sarah—trusted God and was healed of infertility and enabled to become a mother at age 90. Again, God's plan to bring forth Messiah was carried forward by people who trusted Him and were willing to cooperate with Him.
- Isaac—trust God and voluntarily surrendered himself to be sacrificed, cooperating with God to give a metaphor for the plan of salvation, to help his father Abraham overcome his own fears and be sealed in faith.
- Jacob—who struggled throughout his life with fear and selfishness, but who with God's help wrestled against his own fear and selfishness and gained the victory by trusting God. Thus his name was changed to Israel, one, who with God, overcomes. We see in Jacob's life how Satan tempted him to give up and do his own thing—again working to destroy the avenue for Messiah.
- Joseph—we see Satan working to destroy this branch of the human family by stirring up jealousy in Joseph's brothers, inspiring them to sell him as a slave. I believe Satan brought the famine trying to starve out the family—working to stop the coming Messiah. But Joseph trusted God and though the brothers intended their actions for evil, God overruled for good. God allowed (did not cause) the bothers to sell Joseph in order to place Joseph just where he was needed when the famine came in order to save the family and keep open the avenue for the Messiah.
- Moses—after God's victory over Satan's plan through Joseph and the resettling of the family in Goshen. God blessed them and they grew. But Satan inspired the new leadership in Egypt with fear and selfishness and they enslaved the Israelites. Satan working to destroy the avenue, to erase the image of God in them, to demoralize them, to harden them, to get them to give up on trusting God. So, God sends Moses. But Satan inspires Pharaoh to kill all the males of a certain age in order to try and stop God's deliverance of the people. Again, working to destroy this branch of the human family. God intervenes and places Moses in Pharaoh's family and provides Moses with the best education in the world. Satan tempts Moses to act on his own and he murders an overseer and Satan uses this to undermine Moses resolve and the trust of the Israelites in Moses. Moses flees—Satan working to get rid of God's chosen agent for that time. But God continues to develop Moses over the next 40 years and Moses returns to deliver the people from slavery and establish them as God's helpers keeping open the plan of salvation. Throughout this entire story we can see this struggle between God working to bring the Savior

and Satan working to destroy this branch of the human family: the false gods of Egypt to corrupt the minds of the Hebrews and the plagues to expose the false gods and turn the people back to Yahweh; Korah, Dathan and Abirum leading the people into rebellion and God acting to stop the rebellion in order to keep the plan of salvation moving forward; the golden calf and the destruction of the calf and drinking of it in the water; the well, on and on, you can see this battle between Satan trying to corrupt and destroy the avenue for Messiah and God working to keep open the avenue for Messiah.

- The people passing through the Red Sea and the Egyptian army drowning—Satan working to destroy the avenue for Messiah by inspiring an army to kill them and God working to keep it open.
- Rahab—who hid the spies and lied—but she lied in faith—she trusted God when it was a danger to her life. God working to establish Israel as His agents for the communication of truth to free hearts and minds from sin and ultimately the arrival of Messiah, and Satan working on the pagan groups to either war against and destroy Israel, or to infect them with further false beliefs. Either directly by pagan worship practices, or by fear and intimidation and thus doubting God. Thus God works to remove these agents from being able to destroy the avenue for Messiah. You will notice, throughout all of this history, God typically removes the minimum required to keep open the avenue for Messiah. As evidenced by Sodom, God has the ability to completely annihilate and eradicate and wipe clean. He could have done that to all the people in Canaan and thus given Israel a depopulated land. But that is not God's goal—God doesn't want to remove people, He wants to save people. So when He acts He acts like a surgeon who removes only the cancer, the minimum tissue necessary in order to heal.
- Gideon—same thing, Satan is stirring up enemies to try and destroy the avenue for Messiah. God uses Gideon to drive them back and keep open avenue for Messiah.
- Barak—same thing, Sisera was used by Satan to try and destroy God's people, closing the avenue for Messiah. Deborah instructs Barak to oppose Sisera and God gives them victory keeping open avenue for Messiah.
- Samson—God called Samson to be a champion to hold back the enemies, and Satan attacks and corrupts Sampson through lust and selfishness. Samson in the end destroys many of the enemies of Israel thus limiting their negative influence and ultimately working to keep open avenue for Messiah.
- Jephthah—Same thing, Satan inspires the Ammonites to attack Israel, seeking to destroy them thus shutting down the avenue for Messiah, but through Jephthah's faith in God he is used to lead forces against the Ammonites driving them back and keeping open the avenue for Messiah.
- David—Satan is working through the Philistines to destroy Israel thus seeking to close the avenue for Messiah. God works through David to kill Goliath and route the Philistine army. Satan corrupts Saul and seeks to have David killed, thus destroying the avenue for Messiah. But God preserves David keeping open avenue for Messiah.

Do you see the story, how the Bible makes perfect sense when we understand the issues going on?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible is the most ancient…" I agree with this statement, but does this mean the Bible is to be used alone, or combined with God's other revelations in nature and experience?

Consider these quotes from the same author:

> It was not alone upon the hills of Judea, not among the lowly shepherds only, that angels found the watchers for Messiah's coming. **In the land of the heathen** also were those that looked for Him; they were wise men, rich and noble, the philosophers of the East. **Students of nature, the Magi had seen God in His handiwork. From the Hebrew Scriptures they had learned of the Star to arise out of Jacob**, and with eager desire they awaited His coming, who should be not only the "Consolation of Israel," but a "Light to lighten the Gentiles," and "for salvation unto the ends of the earth." Luke 2:25, 32; Acts 13:47. **They were seekers for light, and light from the throne of God illumined the path for their feet**. While the priests and rabbis of Jerusalem, the appointed guardians and expounders of the truth, were shrouded in darkness, the Heaven-sent star guided these Gentile strangers to the birthplace of the newborn King. GC 315.2
>
> **As these magi studied the starry heavens, they beheld the glory of the Creator.** Seeking clearer knowledge, **they turned to the Hebrew Scriptures**. In their own land were **prophetic writings that predicted the coming of a divine teacher. Balaam's prophecies** had been handed down by tradition from century to century. But in the Old Testament the magi learned with joy that the Saviour's coming was near. The whole world was to be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord. From Heaven with Love 34.3

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 11
The Bible and Prophecy

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The Bible and Prophecy—what is the primary purpose of prophecy?

> I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. John 14:19 NIV8

The primary purpose is to increase our faith, confidence, belief, trust in God ONCE the prophecy happens. It is not primarily so that we can predict future events in detail, but when events happen we can see that God foreknew and that God's plan is being carried out and therefore we can trust God.

Have you considered the focus or endpoint of Bible prophecies? Is there an overarching theme to the Bible and Bible prophecy—various prophecies having increasing details, but do many of the Bible prophecies have the same theme?

Well, let's ask, what are the themes or end-goal of each of these prophecies:

To Satan in Eden: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Gen 3:15 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Abraham: I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed… Gen 22:17,18 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To David: The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son… Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.' " 2Sam 7:11-16 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Isaiah: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's

throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. Isaiah 9:6,7 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

Zechariah's prophecy about a measuring stick and Joshua the High Priest and Satan accusing—what is it about?

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Zechariah: Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. 13 It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.' Zech 6:12-13 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Haggai: This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty… The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty." Haggai 2:6-9 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Joel: And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; Joel 2:28-32 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Jeremiah: This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jer 29:10.11 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

Daniel 2 the multi-metal man—ends with God's kingdom

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

Daniel's vision of beasts ends with: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and

men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." Daniel 7:13-14 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Malachi: See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Mal 3:1-3 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

To Malachi: "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty. Mal 4:1-3 NIV84

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

Jesus' prophecy Matthew 24

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

Paul's prophecy 2Thes 2, concerning the second coming and the man of sin

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

The prophecies to the seven churches in Revelation—what does each one end with? A promise to the overcomers!

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

The prophecies of the seals—ends with what?

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

The prophecies of the trumpets—ends with what?

- Jesus destroying sin and Satan and saving people

What is the focus of essentially all Bible prophecy? The coming Messiah to defeat Satan, cleanse us from sin and restore this world and His universe to perfection

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The foundational method…" There three general approaches to Bible prophecy are:

- Historicism—historical linear flow that events move into the future in an unbroken chain.
- Preterism—which teaches the prophecies of the Bible are all historic, occurring in the past. Daniel's prophecies all occurred before the birth of Christ and Revelation all were fulfilled in the first century. Preterism was put forth by Jesuit Priest Luis de Alcasar during the counter reformation (the Roman church's attack against the Reformation) in the 16th Century. Its purpose was to undermine historicism and create an interpretation that made it impossible for prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to apply to the Roman church.
- Futurism—interprets Bible prophecy as having a future fulfillment around the second coming of Christ, typically literally with very little interpretation of symbols or metaphor.
- Idealism—interprets Bible prophecy as all symbolic of ideals or themes of processes, but not historic, not actually apply to specific events, but principles or processes.

The Protestant Reformers used the historicist approach to Bible prophecy, Luther and the other reformers. It wasn't until the Roman counter reformation that non-historicist methods were proposed.

The SDA church continues to use the historicist method and Sunday's lesson demonstrates this with the prophecies of Daniel, the multi-metal man and the beasts which the Bible lists as specific nations (Babylon, Mede-Persia, Greece, Rome) that arose in a linear and progressive way through history.

MONDAY

Documents the year-day principle, that in Bible prophecy a day stands for a year. We find this principle in:

- Numbers 14:34: For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.'
- Ezekiel 4:6: "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.

So, these two texts give us a principle to use in Bible time prophecy, but it still needs to be applied to determine if it is correct, which would be demonstrated by accurate fulfillment of time prophecies.

One of the best places to see this demonstrated is the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 concerning the coming Messiah:

24 "**Seventy weeks** are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,

To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.
25 "Know therefore and understand,
That **from the going forth of the command**
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks…**

26 "**And after the sixty-two weeks**
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself…

27 **Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;**
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering… NKJV

It is very interesting to read the prophecy in multiple translations because you will note significant differences in how it is translated, based on the assumptions the translators have when they translate. It is a good place to show how wide-ranging translations can be and how biases and assumptions can influence the way it is translated. This translation is a reasonable one, if you understand the "sevens" are weeks, which most of the other translations say.

So to test the year-day principle we need to calculate the total number of days/years, have a starting point and then see if in fact Messiah comes as described and experiences and accomplishes what is described on time.

If you research this prophecy you will find many various interpretations and applications, some taking the preterist view, and apply this prophecy to Antiochus and events before the time of Christ. And I have seen many arguments over the details of the text between the historicists and preterists.

But to me it is really quite simple to know the historicist view is correct: it is a general principles to understanding Scripture—and that is what is the purpose of the Bible, its central purpose? To reveal God and His plan of salvation. If there are multiple potential interpretations and only one of them focuses on Jesus and the plan of salvation and the others take our attention away from Jesus and the plan of salvation, which do you think is the true interpretation?

The focus of the entire OT is the controversy between God and Satan focused on the promised seed who will crush the serpent's head. Thus, as will be demonstrated, this prophecy is specific to the coming Messiah.

There were three different decrees given to rebuild Jerusalem. This allows for the different potential applications to different times. But only one of them also gave them autonomy to self-govern, which not only rebuilds but restores, which was the decree by Artaxerxes in 457 BC.

So we have a starting point and we have 70 weeks, weeks have 7 days so 70 times 7 equals 490 days, which would be 490 years.

The prophecy breaks the 70 weeks into segments, 7, 62 and 1. The first 7 weeks (49 days or years) plus 62 weeks (434 days or years) which together equals 69 weeks, or 483 days, which become 483 years according to year/day principle.

If we use the starting date of 457 BC:

- The first 7 weeks or 49 years are the years the Jews took to rebuild the temple after their captivity
- The next 434 years added to the 49 equals 483 years which takes us to 27 AD and that was when Jesus was baptized and began His ministry—the coming of the Messiah—just as the prophecy predicted
- In the middle of the last week 3.5 years later He brings an end to the sacrificial system—Jesus died in 31 AD—again just as the prophecy predicted
- At the end of that 70 weeks, 34 AD the gospel goes to the Gentiles, i.e. the entire world.

So, focusing on Jesus, we can see this prophecy is very accurate and is specific in its time application, thus the day year principle is validated. And we also see again that the focus of Bible prophecy is the plan of salvation.

TUESDAY/WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on identifying the little horn of Daniel, that the horn arises out of the fourth kingdom—which was Rome and wars against the saints and has many specific identifiers such as it:

- claims God's power or position—blasphemes
- uproots three horns—which the 10 horns represent the 10 groups that Rome broke up into and three of them were Arian i.e. didn't believe in the divinity of Jesus, and this power destroyed them—the Ostrogoths, Heruli and Visigoths.
- Would persecute for 1260 days or years—the Roman church received power in 538 when Roman General Belisarius defeated the last of the Arians and gave authority to the Bishop of Rome. 1260 years later, exactly at 1798 Berthier, Napoleon's general entered Rome and took the pope captive, ending the 1260 years of persecution.
- Seek to change times and laws—and the Roman church introduced imperialism, the belief that God's law functions like human law and then changed the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. These days stand as signs, symbols, banners, flags, pennants of two systems of worship—Creator Designer God whose laws are protocols upon which life is built, or dictator god who makes up rules like we do and then uses power to punish rule-breakers.

But I want to focus us on the power behind the horn and connect it with **Wednesday's** lesson, the cleansing of the sanctuary.

The prophecy of Daniel and 8 and 9, focuses on the 2300 years, 70 weeks of which was cut off for the Jewish people to complete their mission to be the avenue for the Messiah which we already discussed, after that the Remedy procured by Jesus would be taken to the entire world but the little horn would oppose it.

The 2300-year prophecy takes us to 1844 and the Millerite movement in which Baptist preacher William Miller taught the sanctuary is the earth and the cleansing was Jesus returning to the earth. This resulted in the great disappointment when Jesus didn't return and afterward a reevaluation of the interpretation.

This is a good example of the misuse of Bible prophecy—its primary purpose is to give us confidence in God once the events have happened, not to accurately predict future events in detail. We can predict general events accurately, like the second coming and ultimate victory over sin. Once the time period had past we can interpret the prophecy and see God acting through history and have increasing confidence in Him.

Further, when we look at the Bible, including Bible prophecy, do we interpret through a human imposed-law lens, or through the design-law lens?

Several questions:

1. What sanctuary needed cleansing?
2. What is the problem with the sanctuary that it needs cleansing? And then after answering these two questions we can answer
3. How is the sanctuary cleansed?

I would recommend, if you haven't read it, getting our pamphlet *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World*. You can download the pdf from our website, read it on our website, or in the US we will mail you one or more if you want to share them.

From what is the sanctuary in heaven constructed—if we use Biblical sources?

It is always built of living stones—who are the people of God.

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

From one of the founders of the SDA church—which gives us insight into how this was taught historically:

> "In the building of the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, Moses was directed to make all things according to **the pattern of things in the heavens**. God called him into the mount, and

revealed to him the **heavenly things**, and in their similitude the tabernacle, with all that pertained to it, was fashioned.

"**So to Israel, whom He desired to make His dwelling place, He revealed His glorious ideal of character**. **The pattern was shown them** in the mount when the law was given from Sinai and when God passed by before Moses and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Exodus 34:6. ..

"**Through Christ was to be fulfilled the purpose of which the tabernacle was a symbol**--that glorious building, its walls of glistening gold reflecting in rainbow hues the curtains inwrought with cherubim, the fragrance of ever-burning incense pervading all, the priests robed in spotless white, and in the deep mystery of the inner place, above the mercy seat, between the figures of the bowed, worshiping angels, the glory of the Holiest. **In all, God desired His people to read His purpose for the human soul**. It was the same purpose long afterward set forth by the apostle Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17. (Education 34-36).

"**In the cleansing of the temple**, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. **That temple**, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an **object lesson** for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was **God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple** for the indwelling of the Creator. **Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God**. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of **man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One**. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the **purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity,** and through saving grace **the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul**. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. **They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit**. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, **represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple** from the world's buyers and sellers, **Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin**,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. "The Lord, whom ye seek, **shall suddenly come to His temple**, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? **for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap**: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver**." Mal. 3:1-3. (DA 161).

So what sanctuary needs cleansing? The sanctuary of the human soul, which each one makes up a building block of the sanctuary in heaven.

What was the first thing that contaminated the human soul?

Lies—lies about God told in Eden and lies believed break the circle of love and trust resulting in fear and selfishness.

The lies about God persist and fear and selfishness persist and thus our temples need cleansing from the lies about God which win to trust and then in trust we open the heart and receive new hearts, have the law written on the heart, etc. which means we get the character of Christ reproduced within—no longer I that live but Christ lives in me. This means that fear and selfishness are replaced with love and trust.

> "Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband. They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors..." (RH, January 5, 1886 par. 8).

Now, let's examine the little horn power:

- Daniel states the little horn grew great, but "not by its own power." So where does the little horn get his power? Revelation 13:2 tells us the power comes from the dragon.
- The little horn threw the starry host down and trampled them, yet Revelation tells us the dragon's tail swept 1/3 of the stars out of heaven (Revelation 12:3).
- The little horn power sets itself up against the prince and the dragon fought against Michael the Prince (Revelation 12:7).
- The little horn power takes away the daily sacrifice, (the daily sacrifice is just a metaphorical way of saying God's entire plan to heal and restore from sin). God's plan of salvation was taken away. The dragon creates a false system—a penal legal system that supplants God's healing plan (Mark 4:15, 2Cor 11:14, 2Thes 2:9). The dragon's false plan does not result in healing and restoration but is a plan that degrades the human being.
- The little horn power brought the place of his sanctuary low. Instead of having a plan that heals and restores the mind, the false system defiles and damages the soul sanctuary and brings it low. The dragon establishes the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9, 3:9) a false sanctuary, a spirit temple filled by the satanic spirit.
- The little horn power throws truth to the ground and causes deceit and the dragon is the father of lies (John 8:44).
- The little horn power persecutes the saints and the dragon persecutes the saints (Rev 12:13-17).

Every defining feature of the little horn power is true of the dragon. And who is the dragon, the true enemy of God? That ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan (Rev 12:9). The true enemy of God is Satan and the little horn power is merely one of his agents and Satan uses many agents.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The Little Horn Power	The Power Behind the Little Horn
Grew great but not by own power	Received power from Dragon Rev. 13:2
Threw starry host down & trampled them	Dragon's tail swept 1/3 of stars from heaven Rev. 12:3
Set itself up to be like the Prince	Dragon fought against Prince Michael Rev. 12:7
Took away the daily sacrifice	Dragon created false system Mark 4:15, 2Cor 11:14, 2Thes 2:9
Brought the sanctuary low	Dragon establishes synagogue of Satan Rev 2:9, 3:9
Throws truth to ground & deceives	Dragon is father of lies John 8:44
Persecutes the saints	Dragon persecutes the saints Rev. 12:13-17

Where does the little horn get his power? From the dragon!

But what is the dragon's power?

> "Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil" Hebrews 2:14.

The devil holds the power of death and what is the power of death?

Christ gives us the insight we need in John 17:3 "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Eternal life is knowing God, then what would eternal death be? Not knowing God! Then Satan's power of death are the lies that he tells about God, that we believe, that keep us from knowing God!

So what defiles the soul temple? The lies about God that Adam and Eve believed that broke their trust and confidence and relationship with God; the continued lies that we believe that prevent us from trusting God and being reconciled to Him.

If those persistent lies about God are not removed by the truth about God that Jesus Christ has brought, then Satan's principles of selfishness continue to grow – the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits. These destructive elements strengthen within and instead of Christlike character developing we develop the character of the rebel, the Satanic character; and the soul, the individual created with

dignity, nobility of character, in God's image to represent Him to an onlooking universe, the being designed to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit instead of revealing Godlike character becomes a synagogue of Satan and the habitation of devils and reveals the Satanic character, ultimately ending in desolation and destruction.

The abomination that causes desolation is the abominations of lies about God, told by Satan and religious systems that results in the desolation of the image of God in man, the destruction of character and ultimately the desolation of the sanctuary – the sanctuary of the human soul.

What cleanses the sanctuary? And of course we all know this answer, we have been taught this since childhood – "The blood of Jesus" cleanses. But what does that mean? How does the blood of Jesus cleanse? Jesus said, ""I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink." (John 6:53-55). We know that Jesus was not promoting cannibalism, so His words must mean something else, what does it mean to drink His blood and eat His flesh?

Consider this historic view:

> "**In the study of the Bible the converted soul eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of God**, which He himself interprets as the receiving and doing of His words, that are spirit and life." (Fundamentals of Christian Education 378).
>
> "**The leaven of truth** works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By **it [the truth] the impure are cleansed, washed in the blood of the Lamb**." (Christ's Object Lessons 102).

The blood is symbolic of the truth that Jesus brought, the truth about God which wins to trust, but the blood is symbolic of more: Leviticus 17:11,14 tell us that the life is in the blood. Thus the blood is also symbolic of the perfect life of Jesus, which those who trust Him receive.

This represents the two phases of Christ's mission, the two phases in our salvation: Christ came to reveal truth to win to trust, but Christ also came to develop a perfect character which He offers as a free gift to all who trust Him. Therefore, the blood is symbolic of the truth revealed by Christ which cleanses the Spirit Temple of the lies about God and wins to trust and the blood is also symbolic of His perfect life, His perfect character which is reproduced in the Spirit Temple by the working of the Holy Spirit; **this application into our hearts of His character is symbolically taught as the cleansing of the sanctuary**. Thus to partake of His blood is to partake of the truth about God and the character of Christ, which cleanses the Spirit Temple from sin.

Here is another historic quote

> "The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi[3:1-3], are **descriptions of the same event**; and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25." (p. GC 426).

Remember in the quote above four texts are all referring to the same event. Malachi 3:1-3 which is describing the same event, which states He comes to "purify the Levites"

Well who are the Levites? "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1Pet 2:4) What is another name for a "spiritual house"? A sanctuary!

What is being cleansed? Doesn't it make sense that Jesus is cleansing His people from sin so we can live with Him again face to face? Doesn't the Bible say we shall see Him face to face for we shall be like Him?

Consider this quote:

> "**The cases of all are pending in the heavenly sanctuary**. Day by day angels of God are **watching the development of character**… All defects must be remedied. **The character must be assimilated to the character of Christ**... At an infinite cost a fountain has been prepared for **our cleansing. In the blood of the Son of God we may wash our garments of character, and make them white**." (ST, April 17, 1901).

When we study these things do we study with design law, realizing we are damaged by sin, out of harmony with God and His design for life and in need of healing and restoration. Or, do we accept the pagan view that God's law is imposed rules and we are in legal trouble and we need to get legal payments made and adjustment in legal accounts or records in heaven in order for God to legally stamp pardon by our names?

If you ask about the records in heaven being cleansed, simply inquire, what is recorded in those records?

- "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose **name** is found written in the book—will be delivered." Daniel 12:1

- "He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his **name** from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels." Revelation 3:5

What does name represent in the Bible? Character!

If you are an SDA, here is what one of the founders and the most important person in establishing this doctrine had to say:

> Remember, **your character is being daguerreo-typed** [photographed] **by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven**, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing your robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb?" (TSB 62.1, emphasis supplied)

> **"**Every passing hour of the present is shaping our future life. These moments spent in carelessness, in self-pleasing, as if of no value, are deciding our everlasting destinies. The words we utter today will go on echoing when time shall be no more. **The deeds done today are transferred to the books of heaven, just as the features are transferred by the artist onto the polished plate.** They will determine our destiny for eternity, for bliss or eternal loss and agonizing remorse. **Character cannot be changed when Christ comes, nor just as a man is about to die. Character building must be done in this life**.**"** (TM 429.3, emphasis supplied)

What is recorded in the records are the unique identities and individualities of every person who puts their trust in Jesus.

When Jesus returns and raises the righteous at the first resurrection, will those righteous arise sinful, rebellious, carnal, or will they arise perfect and sinless?

Did those who died trusting in Jesus die with all their defects perfected, overcome, completely and totally eliminated and eradicated from their being, or did they still struggle with sin, but trusted in Jesus? Will they arise with those same defects?

Will the thief on the cross who trusted Jesus arise with the heart of a thief? Will Martin Luther, the great reforming arise with an alcohol problem and as an anti-Semite?

Then something needs to happen in them before the resurrection so that when they arise in the resurrections all residual defects of character have been removed. This is another aspect of Jesus' work in the heavenly sanctuary, in the cleansing of the records.

Here is another historic quote:

> We believe without a doubt that Christ is soon coming. This is not a fable to us; it is a reality. **When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time."** (CCh 214.4, emphasis supplied)

Those who die trusting in Jesus have died with their hearts, minds, souls open to Him giving Him freedom to work, heal and cleanse. Any residuals not overcome while alive, Jesus completes while they are asleep in death.

So the big overview:

After Christ's victory at the cross, Satan's *man of sin*—the little-horn power, as Paul and Daniel describe him—wages war against God's people by attacking the truth about God. This evil power advances its assault on God's character by changing people's perception of God's law—it replaces the truth of God's design-law with the human imposed-law lie. This little-horn power—man of sin—thereby sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (see Dan 7:25; 2Cor 10:3-5; 2Thes 2:4), by getting humans to conceive of God as an authoritarian dictator—an imposer of rules, who, in order to be just, must use His power to inflict punishment and death on the unrepentant. This little-horn power is winning the war of ideas by filling hearts and minds of people with imperial, dictatorial views of God until the Ancient of Days comes and gives judgment/discernment to the saints (see Dan 7:22).

God, looking down the corridors of time, tells His friend Daniel that 490 years remain for the Jewish people to be the avenue for the Messiah. In the middle of the last week of their mission, the Messiah will come and end the ceremonial system, and He will provide the remedy for human salvation (see Dn 9:24-27). But the little-horn power will arise after Christ's victory at the cross, and it will war against the saints until a message goes forth from God, proclaiming to the world: Be in awe of God, for the time has come for people to make a right judgment about God—to worship the Designer, Creator, Him who made the heavens, earth, seas and fountains of waters (see Rev 14:7).

The Three Angels' Message is specific in its design to turn the minds of people away from the imperial dictator-god with its false, imposed Roman-law construct, back to our Creator God, whose laws are the design-protocols upon which life is built. Those who accept the truth about God and His design-law understand their need for healing and transformation, and they cooperate with Jesus in His work of cleansing the sanctuary—their souls—so that they will be prepared to meet Him face to face. Those who reject the truth about God and His design-law continue to perpetuate the lie of the little horn and teach the investigative judgment concept through legal lenses, subvert the church, and obstruct the final healing message.

THURSDAY

The lesson goes from specific prophecies to typology, meaning symbols are a type and reality is the fulfillment or anti-type. Example, the sacrificial lamb is a type, Jesus is the fulfillment or the anti-type.

Understanding the Jewish sacrificial and feast economy as acted out lessons, theater, object lessons allows us to look past the symbolism to its fulfillment in reality—the antitype.

The annual feast days are examples of a type and antitype; they teach the plan of salvation from the fall of Adam to the earth restored:

Passover – as soon as man fell into sin God passed over their sins "he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished." Rom 3:25

- Christ was the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Rev 13:8
- Those who don't have the healing life of Jesus applied to the doorpost of their hearts—symbolized by the lambs blood on the doorpost of the house—will die of unremedied sin
- Time covered by the Passover—From Adam's sin until Jesus victory at the cross

Unleavened bread – immediately God began dispensing truth unmixed with error to nurture and save, but it was internalized by those in sin, represented by the bitter herbs.

- This also represents the time from Adam's fall until Christ's victory
- Eating the unleavened bread symbolizes the internalization of Jesus

Feast of First Fruits—The first fruits of the victory over death

- The Wave Sheaf represents Jesus who is the ultimate first fruit, who was buried and rose again in sinless perfection and is the unleavened or sinless bread of whom we partake
- Those who arose with him on resurrection morning to everlasting life

Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) The pouring out of the Holy Spirit to apply what Christ achieved and bring forth a harvest of healed souls

- This occurred after Christ's death on the Cross as the benefits of His achievement were dispensed into trusting humans
- This feast symbolically spans the time from Pentecost AD 33 until the Loud Cry

Trumpets – a special message for the end time

- The Loud Cry—awake, prepare, get ready it is time to be reconciled and brought back into unity, at-one-ment with God again!
- Late 18th and early 19th Century – the Great Awakening in Christianity

Atonement – reunification with God, oneness with God

- The healing and restoration of Christlike character within; settling into the truth that one cannot be moved
- Removing the residual defects from all who trust Jesus so when they arise in the resurrection they are sinless and perfect in character
- From mid 19th Century until the second coming of Christ

Tabernacles—After we have been restored to at-one-ment in heart, mind, character Christ returns and we *Tabernacle* with Him again in the earth made new—our Eden Garden home for eternity!

We have an entire video series on the symbolism of the Sanctuary if you haven't watched it you can stream it from our website, or we can ship you a free DVD if you have a US postal address.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We will RESUME meeting publicly at Collegedale City Hall starting June 6, 2020!

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 12
Dealing with Difficult Passages

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What makes a Bible passage difficult?

- When it is written in symbolism or metaphor—in other words when it is written in code and we don't know the proper key to decode it
  - Bible prophecies
- Taking literal things that are meant to be symbolic or metaphoric
  - The parable of the rich man and Lazarus
- Taking things symbolically or metaphorically when they are intended to be literal
  - The seven days of creation week as symbolic of periods of time
- Failing to understand one of the various contexts of Scripture (the immediate historical context, the prophetic context, the textual context, the Messianic context, the cosmic conflict context) Examples:
  - Immediate—Eye for an eye rule is in context of slaves coming out of Egypt, which would be understood as moving level one thinkers to level two, and placing a limit on retaliation—the strongest are not free to plunder whatever they want. And is instead seen as God's standard and therefore people either remain immature or have a punitive picture of God.
  - Prophetic—splitting the last week of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel and putting it into the future for a future time for Israel to again sacrifice animals and be God's agents on earth
  - Textual—Putting the comma in the wrong place in Jesus' conversation with the thief, or adding the word "man" to Jesus' words about drawing all unto Himself at the cross.
  - Messianic—Misunderstanding God's actions in the OT when He acted to put some people to sleep in the grave as the war between Satan working to destroy the branch of the human family through which Messiah would come and God working to keep it open.
  - Cosmic conflict—misunderstanding the entire purpose of the Levitical law and the OT sacrifices as having any actual literal salvation benefit.
- False premises or assumptions when reading the Bible
  - Humankind was created immortal and cannot die
  - Failing to understand God's design law and accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law
  - God must use power to inflict punishment for sin
  - God's justice is like human justice only knowing all the facts and being based on God's law

- Failing to study with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit
- Using the Bible for purposes it was not given—to be authoritative on topics it was not written to enlighten upon
    - A rule book defining what is lawful or unlawful to do on the Sabbath
    - A justification for the subordination of women to men and wives to be governed by their husbands. Consider this historic quote and identify the design law being described:
        - *Few have correct views of marriage. They make light of this Heaven-appointed institution, and after it has been entered into thoughtlessly, without a true sense of its sacredness, the obligations it imposes are often shamefully disregarded. Ignoring the personal rights of women, the husband becomes unkind and authoritative. The individuality of the wife is submerged in that of the husband. She becomes the slave of his caprice and passions, as though she had naught to do but to obey his whims. He quotes texts of scripture to show that he is the head, and that he must be obeyed in all things, claiming that his wife must have no will separate from his. He acts the tyrant. But the same Bible that prescribes the duty of the wife prescribes also the duty of the husband. He is to be kind and affectionate, to love his wife as a part of himself, and to cherish her as Christ does His church.* 18MR 312.1
    - The authority on architecture, physics, electrical engineering, computer technology, aerodynamics, auto-technology, astronomy and many more fields of study. Rightly understood the Bible and science never contradict each other—but there are many fields of study the Bible is silent upon.
- Others?

What would be a good formula or general guide for studying the Bible and coming to accurate understanding?

- Start by humbling surrendering to God and asking for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the mind when studying Scripture
- Decide what one believes is the purpose of Scripture

> **"In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation.** The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. **They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience**. 'Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.'" 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, R.V. GC vii.1
>
> Is the Scripture given to be the authority on accounting practices, cartography, geography, surgical techniques, metallurgy, astronomy? Rightly understood Scripture and science never contradict, but science will give much greater truth or evidence in some fields of study than Scripture will, BECAUSE the Scripture was not given to enlighten in those fields of study.

But when it comes to salvation and character to development there is nothing that gives more light, truth, or insight that the Bible. So the primary purpose of Scripture is to reveal the truth about God, the sin problem and God's solution for it.

- Understand God's various design laws as revealed in Scripture and upon which God built reality to operate. First, that God's laws are design laws, not imperial rules. Second, how love actually functions, and then the other design laws.

> "The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--**a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will.** To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin." {Ed 99.2}
>
> **"God's healing power runs all through nature**. [From where does this healing power come? It comes from God Himself. God is constantly dispersing of Himself, giving of Himself to sustain all His creation. God is the great source of life and all life flows out from God to His creation. This is the law of love built into all reality. But sin obstructs the flow of God's healing presence. Sin severs our connection with God.] If a tree is cut, if a human being is wounded or breaks a bone, nature begins at once to repair the injury. **Even before the need exists, the healing agencies are in readiness;** and as soon as a part is wounded, every energy is bent to the work of restoration. [Before Adam and Eve sinned God was already bent toward their salvation. Jesus the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Why? Because it is God's character and the nature of His universe to promote life, to heal injury, to restore from damage.] **So it is in the spiritual realm. Before sin created the need, God had provided the remedy**. [What kind of law is this?] Every soul that **yields to temptation is wounded, bruised, by the adversary**; [What? Notice not in legal trouble and under threat from God, but wounded, injured; then what is needed? A remedy to heal!] but whenever there is sin, there is the Saviour. It is Christ's work "to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, ... to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18. Ed 113.1 [Notice the plan is for Jesus to heal, not Jesus to pay off His Father not to kill us.]
>
> In this work we are to co-operate. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ... restore such an one." Galatians 6:1. **The word here translated "restore" means to put in joint, as a dislocated bone. How suggestive the figure! He who falls into error or sin is thrown out of relation to everything about him**. [What is described here? What kind of law? Is the sinner described as being in legal trouble or actually out of harmony with reality, with God's design for life?] He may realize his error, and be filled with remorse; but he cannot recover himself. He is in confusion and perplexity, worsted and

> helpless. **He is to be reclaimed, healed, re- established**. [What is the action to be taken, get legal pardon, or get healed, restored, renewed, regenerated, re-established?] "Ye which are spiritual, restore such a one." **Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal.** Only he in whom that love flows, even as the sap in the tree or the blood in the body, **can restore the wounded soul**. Ed 113.2 [What is described? And where is the action? Is the love flowing from Christ to His Father to get the Father to act, or is the love flowing into the heart of the sinner to heal us? And what metaphor does the Bible use for this? The blood of Jesus—and where is the blood of Jesus to be applied? In our hearts to heal us. Yet, Christianity has accepted the lie that we are in legal trouble and has falsely interpreted the blood as a legal payment to God to stop God from killing us.]
>
> Love's agencies have wonderful power, for they are divine. The soft answer that "turneth away wrath," the love that "suffereth long, and is kind," the charity that "covereth a multitude of sins" (Proverbs 15:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4, R.V.; 1 Peter 4:8, R.V.) -**would we learn the lesson, with what power for healing would our lives be gifted! How life would be transformed, and the earth become a very likeness and foretaste of heaven!**" Ed 114.1

If we don't understand God's design law, His character and methods of love, how love actually functions—if we replace God's design law with imposed law—then we apply Satan's methods and make the problem worse.

Right now in the USA there are all kinds of injustices, violence, hurt, taking place. Satan's way is to divide people into factions and see others who are not in "our" faction as the enemy, as the source of evil, abuse, mistreatment; to be outraged and angry at the injustice and then seek to make the others pay, to inflict some punishment upon them, to use Satan's methods of coercion and force and inflicted punishment to retaliate against them—and the divisions grow deeper, the hostility grows stronger, the violence perpetuates and people become hardened in hatred.

- We must know the context—the immediate context, but also the overarching context—that Scripture is telling one story and it all harmonizes. There is one human race, one sin problem, one originator of sin, one original human, one Creator God, and one solution to the sin problem. If we don't understand the larger context then we get caught in the immediate context and create all kinds of contradictions—like people being saved by animal sacrifices in the OT and by the blood of Jesus in the NT etc.

- We must understand the battle is not a physical battle over power and might, but a battle over ideas, concepts, methods and principles.

- The OT is primarily the story of God fulfilling His promise in Genesis 3 to bring the Messiah to save the human race. If we don't understand this context we will misunderstand much of Scripture

- Understand the Bible records real lives of real people who did real historic things, but many of those events are foreshadowing the Messiah or teaching larger realities in the plan of salvation.

- Scripture must harmonize with itself

- Scripture decodes itself

- God's character of love and design laws never change therefore our interpretations must never conclude God violates His own design for life or has a character other than love

- Jesus is the key to understanding God's truth. Jesus is the key to understanding God's character. Jesus is the key to unlocking the mysteries of the Jewish economy. Consider this historic quote:

> The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. **The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding**. Far more than we do, it is our privilege to understand these wonderful themes. We are to comprehend the deep things of God. Angels desire to look into the truths that are revealed to the people who with contrite hearts are searching the word of God, and praying for greater lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the knowledge which He alone can give. COL 133.1

But what if we teach the gospel is the good news that Jesus came to take our place under the condemnation of God and was killed by God in our place to pay or legal debt so that God won't kill us. And that if we claim to blood of Jesus as our legal payment then we get legal pardon in the books of heaven and God declares us to be legally righteous even though we remain unrighteous. If this is the gospel we claim, what will it do to how we understand Scripture? This is why the Scripture is poorly understood because people have accepted a false gospel which is nothing but paganism.

The true gospel is the good news about God Himself, His character of love, His design law of love upon which He built life to operate and that God has always been for us and constantly uses every agency at His disposal for our healing and restoration. Thus the gospel—the good news is found in Jesus. It is sin that destroys; it is God that heals and restores. And God so loved the world that He sent His only Son… to heal and save all who trust Him.

When this is the good news and we realize that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, then we understand Scripture in a completely different way, a way that clears up many of the difficult passages of Scripture.

SUNDAY

The lesson is about Bible contradictions. I went online and here are what some people cite as Bible contradictions. How do you answer them?

- "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." — Exodus 20:8
- "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." — Romans 14:5

- "… the earth abideth for ever." — Ecclesiastes 1:4
- "… the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." — 2Peter 3:10

- "… I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." — Genesis 32:30
- "No man hath seen God at any time…"– John 1:18

- In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. John 3:3
- Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; Rev 1:7

- "… with God all things are possible." — Matthew 19:26
- "…The LORD was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." — Judges 1:19

- "…thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. " — Exodus 21:23-25
- "…ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." — Matthew 5:39

- "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised." — Genesis 17:10
- "…if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." — Galatians 5:2

- "Honor thy father and thy mother…"– Exodus 20:12
- "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. " — Luke 14:26

What did you notice these critics were doing? They were being dishonest with the text. They did not seek to understand the meaning of the text, but sought to find texts to which they could apply a false meaning, a meaning that was not intended in order to create the appearance of contradiction. So, what we have revealed is the dishonest methods of the critic, not contradictions in the Bible.

You can see these same dishonest methods used all the time by those who hold false positions—they did this against Jesus.

Are there any texts in Scripture that you have struggled with that seem to be contradictory?

MONDAY

Dealing with difficulties honestly. I really like how the lesson said that it is better to simply say "I don't know what that particular passage means" than to try and create a superficial interpretation that turns out later to be false.

Read 1Chronicles 29:17 "I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you" NIV84

What does this mean? It means God is more concerned with an **honest heart that seeks** what is right, what is true, what is holy, than actually being right on a particular point or fact.

The Jews were right when Herod asked them where the Messiah was to be born—they knew it was Bethlehem, they were right on which day is the Sabbath, they were right on what foods were on the approved list, but being right on facts didn't mean they had hearts that loved truth or loved God and loved people.

The Good Samaritan had a heart that was right—that loved others but as far as we know—did not keep Sabbath, eat kosher, pay tithe, sacrifice at temple—in other words this person would be doctrinally wrong—yet he was right with God. How is this possible? Because his heart was right.

Does this mean having a right heart means we have no responsibility for truth? No, just the opposite—those with right hearts not only love God and people—but they love truth and are eager to grow in truth as they are able to comprehend and understand it. But, we recognize that people come from different backgrounds, have different abilities, capacities, and not all of us will come to the same understanding of the facts—but the saved will all have new hearts that practice the principles of God—particularly love for others.

Will there EVER come a time in which any of us know all truth? No—we never become God all knowing, we never become infinite—we always remain finite. So, if we never know all truth does that mean there is always more to learn? And if we have more to learn, does that mean we could have some concepts, ideas, hypothesis, beliefs that are wrong even in heaven? For instance, could you decide to study advanced mathematics in heaven and get a complex equation wrong? And then rejoice when Jesus gives you the clue that allows you to understand it and get it right?

If we will never know all truth—what will all the save know and from which they will never be shaken?

> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3 NIV84)

What kind of knowing is this? This is not mere factual knowledge, this is experiential knowledge. We may know about George W. Bush or Barak Obama or Donald Trump—but how many actually know them?

The saved will know God—know His character, His trustworthiness, His methods and principles of truth, love, freedom. They will know this by experience and will identify with God and His methods such that the methods of evil, lies, coercion, fear, selfishness are repulsive—so that they would rather die than live in a universe governed by Satan's methods.

Focusing on the heart allows us to have unity with those who have Godly hearts, even if they worship on a different day or eat different foods. But we don't have unity with those in our own denomination if their hearts are not renewed, we instead have division.

Those who foster division in the church or society are those who refuse to focus on heart motive. We see this in the COVID pandemic. There has been and remains no absolutely right or wrong action to take in protecting people. The question is one of heart motive and principles—are the decision-makers seeking to help or seeking to hurt; are they understanding the principles involved; or are they seeking to advance themselves or use this as an opportunity to advance some other agenda or merely enforce rules regardless of consequence?

The mature look at the motive, realize the difficulty in the situation, understand there isn't any clear-cut right answer and actions may change and even reverse course with new data, as facts unfold. The immature criticize changes in position and cite consequences that are less than ideal when they occur.

TUESDAY

The lesson talks about being humble and willing to be corrected or grow in our understanding.

This is a very good point—the mature are those who love truth but also recognize their own finiteness and are open to change their views when new truths are in evidence.

The immature lock themselves into a system of creeds or fundamental beliefs and refuse to change or update when new truth presents itself.

This is why the founders of the SDA church intended for the SDA church never to have a creed or a list of fundamental beliefs, but took the position that the Bible and the Bible alone is to be their creed.

> **The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union;** all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. **Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible.** Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, "It is written." Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline.—The Review and Herald, December 15, 1885. 1SM 416.2

But when we create a list of fundamental beliefs any challenge to that list of beliefs is considered to be an attack on orthodoxy, on God, and is alleged to be heresy. The ability to advance and grow is undermined or obstructed when we lock into a list of specific beliefs, rather than principles.

Consider this historic quote:

> **In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it**. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began "at Moses and all the prophets" and "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27. **But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old**. **He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old.** For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form. COL 127.4

I would say this is nowhere more profoundly demonstrated than in understanding God's law—the truth of God's law being design law has not contradicted any truth of the past, but has advanced our understanding of the truth. But those who have refused to accepted the advancing light of God's law being design law, don't possess the old truths of God's law either, they instead operate upon the imperial law lie and misunderstand all law.

The bottom pink asks if truth is unfolding how can we striking the right balance between humility and certainty?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Real achievement…" What law is being described? The law of exertion—if you want to get stronger you must exercise.

Do we see how the Bible strengthens us as we study it? Do we see that we cannot develop skills of reason, discernment, problem solving if we never wrestle out problems?

Thus the mature are those who have developed by practice… Heb 5:14

Do we also see why the Bible presents many ideas that can be initially difficult to understand? Why? Because it reveals the truth of our infinite God for us to contemplate and think through and thus we grow as we study and advance in our acceptance of Bible truth.

But if the Bible was merely simple concepts with nothing complex or difficult to comprehend it would not only be limited in its ability to help us develop, but such simplicity would argue against an infinite God.

Read second paragraph, "The fact that you cannot…." This is another excellent point, and all people who take the view that difficult Bible problems cannot be solved undermine their own growth and development.

Others, however state the belief that some Bible problems are too difficult to understand as a psychological defense. They actually hold a belief which they are afraid to change, and thus really don't want to solve the apparent conundrum because the solution would require them to give up a cherished belief; OR they fear what might be thought of them for changing their view, or because they have preached or written a certain view in the past.

The mature are those who are able to say they are growing in truth and give up old ideas when better ones arise.

Read last paragraph, "When some difficulties…" this is another excellent point and reminds us of the metaphor of God's word being a lamp unto us

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph "If you do not understand…" This would be true only on matters of theology and God's principles for life—for matters upon which the Bible was given to enlighten us. It would not be true on matters for which the Bible was not given to enlighten us.

If one were to use the Bible only, can we make definitively case for a vegetarian lifestyle in this current world of sin? But, can we bring nutrition and health science to bear, harmonizing that science with Bible principles and make a strong case for a vegetarian lifestyle?

This is one example, of where science supports Bible principle to lead us to a healthy conclusion that the Bible alone does not definitively teach.

Any others?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "In the Bible…"What of the idea that faithfulness to Scripture will respect the text rather than alter the text?

I really dislike paragraphs like this because what it suggests is that we are to take the Bible as it reads and if we don't we are not faithful to Scripture—but what they really mean is to take the Bible as *they interpret* it. They really don't mean that we should take the Bible for what it says.

Ask the authors about Deut 14, take tithe to buy fermented wine and rejoice before the Lord, whether we should we be faithful to Scripture here? I am confident they would have an interpretation that would cause us to not do it. In *The Clear Word* paraphrase it is changed from fermented to unfermented wine in DT 14:26, even though the Hebrew means fermented. I wonder if this was one of the places the lesson authors were referring to?

The problem is that translation requires interpretation and can have large variation, even of innocuous things.

Consider the following texts, first Genesis 28:18:

- And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows and set it up for a pillar…KJV
- Jacob got up early next morning, took the stone that was under his head, and set it up as a memorial. GNT
- Early in the morning Jacob took the stone he had placed near his head and set it up as a sacred stone. NET
- The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar NLT
- Early in the morning Jacob took the stone that was near his head and set it up as a marker. Holman Christian Standard Version

So, was the rock used as a pillow, did Jacob rest his head upon it, or was it just placed near his head? Are we being true to the text?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 13
Living by the Word of God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

I received this email this week:

> *Dear Dr. Jennings*
>
> *I would like to share a recent experience with you with regard to your Power of Love study series. A group from our church (SDA) started the series 8 weeks ago. Once we were no longer able to meet in person, we continued with zoom. Let me first say that with the exception of myself and the couple hosting the study series, the rest of the group are mostly unfamiliar with your ministry. Last week we studied the Seven Levels of Moral Decision Making. I have wondered with each passing week what the class reaction might be as this is a very conservative group. We began to go through the seven levels and when we reached number four, one of the gentlemen from the group began to cry. He said, " That has been me for 40 years and I don't want to live like this anymore"! It was such a powerful moment Dr. Jennings. I have read all of your books, listened to podcasts and watched your Sabbath School class, but never was I so grateful to know of your beautiful message as I was in that moment, because just a few years ago, that was me as well.*
> *I will continue to pray for your ministry, especially that somehow you are able to reach our youth.*
>
> *I remember you once said that as a child you remembered a children's story about how the angels would follow you around and right down all of the bad things you did. That was my life as well. I believe that picture is one that our church continues to impress upon our youth. No wonder they leave the church. I wouldn't want that God in my life either.*

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, “The best method…” Now this is a good point—the law of exertion, if we don’t use it we lose it, but if we exercise we get stronger. So, if we want to get stronger in God’s truth, methods, principles, we not only must study the concepts but practice God’s methods and principles in how we live. This is so true—but what is the danger with this law?

Does the law of exertion only work on godly practices? No! It is a law of how reality works, thus if we embrace ungodly methods and practice, those then they get stronger and we become more like the evil one.

This would be what the Pharisees did in Christ’s day—they were students of the Bible and devoted long hours to becoming experts on Scripture, yet they accepted the wrong interpretations, primarily of

God's law—the lie it is imposed—and practiced the methods of this world and became hardened against God.

Think about Saul of Tarsus and what methods he practiced before Damascus Road and after—did his methods change? What happened that caused a change in methods for Paul? He had a change of understanding when he met Jesus.

Did Paul, instantly, or even within a week or month, after meeting Jesus have all his methods changed? Or did it take several years for Paul to rework his own mind, understanding and practices?

So the paragraph talks about obedience that is life-transforming. It is absolutely true that obedience to God's methods, principles, design laws—to God—is life transforming. When we harmonize with truth, the laws upon which God built reality to operate, we cannot avoid the blessings, the healing, the restoration that comes from God.

But, disobeying God, obeying a system of religious rules or observances that are not in harmony with God, that are based upon this world's methods is also transforming—but in a negative way. Just as one cannot avoid the positive transforming of character that come from harmonizing with God, one cannot avoid the negative when one harmonizes with the world.

So, the lesson title, Living by the Word of God, it all depends on how one understands the Word of God. If one understands it as a list of rules to be enforced by the imperial magistrate under threat of punishment then such obedience harms rather than heals.

Consider these historic quotes:

> The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience. **He does not obey**. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. **True obedience is the outworking of a principle within**. [what kind of law is this? where is the action occurring? -in a book in heaven or in the heart/mind of the believer?] **It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God**. The essence of all **righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer**. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3} [Can love and loyalty be achieved by threatening to punish people who don't love and are not loyal?]

So what happens in the heart and mind of a person who obeys out of threat of punishment? It is a violation of the law of liberty, and when you threaten people love is damaged and eventually destroyed and a desire to rebel is instilled in the heart.

Consider this quote:

> **A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel.** By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God.

> It is a mere mechanical performance. **If he dared, such a one would disobey**. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897} [This is the obedience of the penal/legal system, the threat of punishment, which destroys love and incites rebellion. Just like the person who emailed us said, the youth leave when they are taught this way. Such an approach is a violation of the law of liberty.]

The real issue is the condition of the heart and mind. Do we as individuals love truth, love liberty, love God and others? Or do we fear for ourselves and are angry that things don't go our way and believe that when we see wrong it is right and proper to use power to punish rule-breakers and to force our way?

Or, do we realize the truth that we are infected with principles of fear and selfishness and God gives us every opportunity to choose truth, love, liberty—not as a mere concept but as the principles we practice? But Satan hates these principles so he constantly stirs up injustices in order to incite outrage in people to get them to seek to destroy the injustice by the practice of Satan's coercive principles.

One of Satan's tricks is to do evil and then get people to try and snuff out the evil by his methods of force and coercion, which only perpetuates more evil. Understand the purpose of the Bible—it is not giving to set up human governments. Jesus said, His kingdom is not of this world. The Bible is given to save people, meaning to free hearts and minds from fear and selfishness and restore individuals to loyalty to God. To transform people from sinners to saints.

Satan tricks Christians by seeking social reform through government and law rather than through transforming hearts of people. Whenever you try and advance God's kingdom through government coercion will be used.

Worse is the false justification of violence, rioting, intimidation, beatings, mobs taking over property, burning buildings and injuring people and claiming it is because they love others and want to help others.

Jesus and the Apostles never used such methods in a culture of rampant human rights abuses and systemic slavery. They didn't seek to change the government, they didn't have riots—in fact if you read Acts you will see it was the Jews who opposed God's message that stirred up riots over and over again and used methods of violence. They did this with Jesus before He died; they did it with the stoning of Stephen; they did it with Peter; they did it with Paul and the violence was so bad Roman soldiers had to come in and rescue Paul.

Don't be deceived these mobs that are rioting and claiming they are doing so because they love others are frauds and do not represent God's kingdom. They are agents of the evil one whether they know it or not.

Living by the Word of God—doesn't mean living by a written rule-list, it means living by the power of the living Word of God abiding in the heart. Jesus is the Word made flesh. We must have Jesus living in our hearts by the Holy Spirit or no real change happens, no obedience happens.

Consider this historic quote, written in 1889, right after the 1888 GC when church leaders rejected the righteousness by faith message and God's design law, and chose imposed law and the penal/legal lie. Notice what EGW wrote:

> **God grants men a probation in this world, that their principles may become firmly established in the right, thus precluding the possibility of sin in the future life**, and so assuring the happiness and security of all. **Through the atonement of the Son of God alone could *power be given to man* to establish him in righteousness, and make him a fit subject for heaven.** [The atonement of Jesus would do what? Pay a legal debt? No! give power to human beings to establish in human beings righteousness, which eradicates fear and selfishness, writes God's design law upon the heart and heals us, makes us fit subjects for heaven. Why are we unfit now? Because God can't stand us? No! Because we can't stand the purity, holiness, and infinite love and truth of God and we would flee His presence. So, notice the next sentence:] **The blood of Christ is the eternal antidote for sin…**[What do antidotes do? They cure, they heal, they eradicate infection, purge disease. And the disease of sin is rooted in lies about God that breaks trust resulting in fear and selfishness in the heart. So where must the antidote be applied—in a record book in heaven? To God? To God's law? Or in the hearts of sinners? Thus the blood is a metaphor of the truth and life of Jesus, the truth destroys lies, wins to trust and in trust we invite God in and the Spirit takes the perfection of Christ and reproduces it in us, love casts out fear and thus instead of living to protect self, we trust God with our lives, our families, our futures and we love others] {ST, December 30, 1889 par. 3}
>
> The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil**; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God**. The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, **provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds**, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come. Oh, we do not

comprehend the value of the atonement! If we did, we would talk more about it. The gift of God in his beloved Son was the expression of an incomprehensible love. **It was the utmost that God could do to preserve the honor of his law, and still save the transgressor**. [what does this mean? Why? Because God's law is design law. It was the only way to restore God's methods operationally into a human being—a human being had to choose to reject fear and selfishness and live out God's law of love perfectly. Jesus did this for us and now becomes our remedy.] Why should man not study the theme of redemption? It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind. If men would contemplate the love of Christ, displayed in the cross, **their faith would be strengthened to appropriate the merits of his shed blood, and they would be cleansed and saved from sin**. [Appropriate the merits—what does this mean? Merits are what Christ accomplished or merits—which is His righteousness, His perfection, His character. We appropriate it by faith or trust, opening the heart and the Spirit comes in and "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." We are reborn, have new hearts and right spirits. This is what appropriate means—the actual real righteousness by faith, we become the righteousness of God. But when this was rejected for the penal legal lie, theologians teach that appropriate the merits of Christ is claiming His blood as a legal payment in a court in heaven so God declares us to be righteous even though we are not. Listen to the next sentence] **There are many who will be lost, because they depend on legal religion, or mere repentance for sin. But repentance for sin alone cannot work the salvation of any soul**. Man cannot be saved by his own works. **Without Christ it is impossible for him to render perfect obedience to the law of God; and heaven can never be gained by an imperfect obedience**; for this would place all heaven in jeopardy, and make possible a second rebellion… {ST, December 30, 1889 par. 4}

Those who will be saved in the kingdom of God will be those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The image of Christ will be perfected in every soul who accepts the gift of his grace, and those who are perfected through his grace, will stand before God equal in elevation, in power and purity, to the angels, and will be honored with them before the eternal throne. The angels of heaven will love those whom Christ has loved, and has bought with his own precious blood. {ST, December 30, 1889 par. 7}

The plan of salvation, the message of the Bible, the gospel message has its impact upon individual hearts and minds. It is not a message for establishing human governments—all human governments operate on Satan's methods and mixing God's methods with Satan's methods does not purify it corrupts. We must be circumcised in heart, i.e. have Satan's methods cut out, we don't mix God's methods with the methods of the world.

SUNDAY

At the end of the first paragraph it says, "in the end, there are only two sides from which to pick."

What are those two sides? God and Satan—of course—but what is the difference between those two sides?

Are these the two sides:

- The Eucharist versus communion—in which in the Eucharist Jesus goes to His Father and presents His sacrifice to the Father to pay for our sins at that time, versus the communion which is just a memorial of Jesus having already paid the Father for our sins at the time of His death and when we confess our sins Jesus doesn't present His *sacrifice* to the Father but Jesus presents His *merits* to the Father to remind the Father He already paid for our sins at the time of the cross?
- Worship on Sunday the Lord's day and keep it holy or God will punish you for your sin versus worship on the Sabbath and keep it holy or God will punish you for your sin?
- Do penance to pay for your sin or God will punish you versus claim the blood of Jesus to pay for your sin or God will punish you?
- Have Mary and the saints intercede for you with God to assuage His wrath and obtain mercy lest God punish you for your sins versus have Jesus intercede for you with God to assuage wrath and obtain mercy lest God punish you for your sins?
- The catechism is the authority we should use to interpret Scripture and know what God would have us believe and do, versus our denominational creed or list of fundamental beliefs voted in official church conference is the authority we should use to interpret Scripture and know what God would have us believe and do?
- Those who don't believe in God versus those who do believe in God?
- Those who believe in the Bible versus those who don't believe in the Bible?

Are any of these the two sides?

According to Scripture what are the two sides?

- Wheat and tares
- Fruitful vine and withered vine
- Sheep and goats
- Righteous and wicked
- Saved and lost
- Living and dead
- Christlike and Satan-like

What will separate these two groups in the end? Will it be:

- Denominational affiliation?
- Version of the Bible?
- Participation in the Jewish feast days?
- Weekly rest from labor on a particular day of the week?
- Bible reading?
- How they were baptized?
- Foods they ate?

- Claiming to believe in Jesus?

What will separate them? Notice, in all the examples of the two groups from the Bible the division is made from the *actual inherent qualities of groups themselves*.

- Wheat and tares may appear the same superficially, but they are not the same in reality
- Vines may appear the same superficially—but a fruitful and withered vine are not the same functionally—one is alive the other dead
- Sheep and goats are not the same
- So too with the righteous and the wicked, the difference is in them, in their hearts, minds, characters, in what they have chosen to love, who to trust, what methods and principles they prefer and practice and thus in who they are in heart, mind and character. This is the difference.

The plan of salvation is always about what happens inside the heart, mind, character of the sinner and never a legal process in a court off in some distant galaxy.

This is what one of the founders of the SDA church said:

> **Satan is trying to lead men and women away from right principles**. The enemy of all good, he desires to see human beings so trained that they will exert their influence on the side of error, instead of using their talents to bless their fellow men. **And multitudes who profess to belong to God's true church are falling under his deceptions.** They are being led to turn away from their allegiance to the King of heaven. {Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students 494.1}

How can this be? Because they turn away from right principles—what does this mean? What are principles?

During the COVID crisis there is the principle of love, seeking to do no harm, and understanding how the virus spreads and that led to social distancing recommendations in order to seek to protect others.

But this principle of seeking to protect, of seeking to love, of seeking to not harm, and therefore seeking to prevent the spread of disease can be implemented in many different ways.

Rule-keepers will want to create a list of obligations and restrictive rules to apply across the board to all people and enforce those rules, even when enforcing the rules violates the principles.

Consider, people who want to attend a church service go to their church, remain in their own car and have a service piped in through their radio or via loudspeaker—but a police officer goes from car to car and gives tickets because there is a rule that people are not to gather for church.

Consider all the ways this same process happens in religion—rules meant to be helpful in leading people to live by God's principles, but which actually supplant the principles and end up causing harm.

Examples—rules on Sabbath keeping which make the day a burden and a dread.

The second paragraph points out that God works in us through the Holy Spirit—what are the methods of the Holy Spirit? Truth and love—how does this work?

The Spirit of truth brings truth to our minds in ways we can comprehend but then leaves us free to choose whether to accept or reject it, to say yes and apply it or say no and not apply it.

When we say yes and choose the truth *then* the Holy Spirit gives us divine power sufficient for the task, for the victory, and enables us to grow in character with that truth. **But we don't get the power until we actually choose the truth**.

This is a cooperative effort. God cannot heal a heart and mind without the willing choice and cooperation of the person; but the person cannot heal their own mind by exercising their own abilities independent of God. It is a cooperative effort in which we humbly surrender ourselves in trust to God and the choose to follow where He leads apply the truth that He reveals.

Why? Because God cannot heal our hearts and minds against our wills and retain our individuality. The only way for us, as individuals to be saved is to be fully persuaded in our own minds and choose the truth and choose to trust God. In this way, we open our hearts and minds for God to cleanse and heal in perfect harmony with His methods. Thus our individuality is retained.

MONDAY

The lesson points us again to Jesus' use of Scripture to respond to Satan's temptations in the wilderness. The lesson points out that it is not enough to be able to quote Scripture, that the devil did this.

This is a very good point—how many sins and evils are supported through quoting Scripture?

How is it possible that Scripture can be used to support evil? Because it is misunderstood and misapplied—primarily and almost always through the imposed law lens—rules that must be enforced. Through the thinking that the Bible is a rule book we are to follow.

Examples:

- Slavery—some slave owners used the Bible to support the practice
- War
- The lie that justice is inflicting punishment on wrong doers

- All the religious rituals that obstruct people from genuine transformation of heart

What do you think the lesson means by this: "If He [Jesus] had not known the exact words of Scripture and the context in which they appear, He could easily have been deceived by the devil."

Does this have the ring of truth to it or does it sound like it is off in some way?

Was the only reason that Jesus was not be deceived by the devil because He knew the exact words of Scripture and their context? If He had the words out of order, if He didn't know them exactly then He would He have be deceived?

Where is the safety coming from in this idea? In knowing the exact words—not knowing God, not knowing truth, not knowing God's laws and methods, but knowing the exact words of Scripture. What is the underlying belief in this idea? What level of decision-making is this?

Does it remind you of this?

> "The great men who built up the Western Church were almost all trained Roman lawyers. Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the Great (whose writings form the bridge between the Latin Fathers and the Schoolmen) were all men whose early training had been that of a Roman lawyer,—a training which moulded and shaped all their thinking, whether theological or ecclesiastical. They instinctively regarded all questions as a great Roman lawyer would. They had the lawyer's craving for exact definitions. They had the lawyer's idea that the primary duty laid upon them was to enforce obedience to authority, whether that authority expressed itself in external institutions or in the precise definitions of the correct ways of thinking about spiritual truths. NO BRANCH OF WESTERN CHRISTENDOM HAS BEEN ABLE TO FREE ITSELF FROM THE SPELL CAST UPON IT BY THESE ROMAN LAWYERS OF THE EARLY CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH." Thomas Lindsay in his book *A History of the Reformation* page 168

It sounds like our safety is in the precise words, the exact definition, the correct doctrine, the right theology—which is all level four rules-oriented thinking or below. If I know the right rules, I can stay on base and not be tricked into getting tagged out.

It could even lead to magical thinking with incantations and believing there is some power in the actual words spoken.

Is the Bible a code-book, a rule-book, like Major League Baseball's rulebook?

I want to suggest that Jesus did quote Scripture not because He knew the exact words—but because He knew the true *meaning* of Scripture. He knew the truth about God's character, God's methods, God's design law, and He quoted the Scripture that supported God's methods and principles that He lived by.

Consider this story from the book of Acts:

> Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:13-16 NIV84)

But weren't they using the right words?

Read bottom pink section, "What has been your own experience in using the Scripture in your battle with temptations?" thoughts?

I can see my use of Scripture has changed as I have matured and grown in moral development. Paul wrote:

> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. (1Co 13:11 NIV84)

What was the context of this? The love chapter—how love works. He is saying, when I was a child, immature, not understanding God's character and methods of love I acted like a child—and what did Saul of Tarsus focus on then? Rules, law-keeping, do's and don'ts—this is childishness. But when he grew up he left his childishness and rule-keeping behind and instead focused on love and living in harmony with God's design for life.

So, too when I was immature I was all about the rules. I diligently searched the Bible for my proof texts to prove my doctrines legally and biblically correct so I could be morally superior to my other Christian friends because I was right and they were wrong. It didn't matter if I was selfish in heart as long as I kept the right rules. As a child, I used the Bible as a weapon to attack others who believed differently than me.

But, when I grew up, I put such things behind me and instead have focused on God's character, methods, principles, design laws for life—in loving others. I focus on teaching people about God, and how reality works, the only path to actual healing and salvation—the restoration of God's design in hearts and minds. This puts the rules in their proper place—a necessary tool for children, but not how reality actually works.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that Jesus did not come to change the law but to fulfill it. They take issue with those who claim Jesus did away with the law.

The problem with many is that when they read Jesus' statement that He didn't come to change the law but fulfill it is that they read it through the imposed law lie, thus they read it as Jesus keeping the rules and coming to pay the legal penalty the law demanded. Thus, they misunderstand the Scripture and misrepresent was Jesus actually did.

Let's examine the Matthew texts that the lesson points to and identify what Jesus actually taught about the law.

- "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Mt 5:21-22 NIV84
    - What did Jesus do? He moved it from behavior to the condition of the heart—it isn't just the act, it is the motive for the act. This elevates it from imposed law, to design law—actual healing of hearts and minds. Thus, Jesus didn't come to pay a legal penalty but to provide remedy that heals the heart.
- "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Mt 5:27-28 NIV84
    - What did Jesus do? Again moves it from behavior to the condition of the heart—regardless of whether the act was actually committed or not. God's law is design law!
- "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. Mt 5:31-32 NIV84
    - What did Jesus do? Again focuses on the condition of the heart, not legality. The writ of divorcement was about legality, but Jesus says, if there hasn't been betrayal, breech of trust in the relationship, then the heart remain loyal and to divorce a loyal spouse whose heart is faithful forces that spouse into a severed relationship, and if they marry again they are being unfaithful to their heart loyalties—i.e. adultery. So, again, Jesus elevates this from rule keeping to design law.

- "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Mt 5:38-39 NIV84

    - What did Jesus do? Again moves away from imposed rules to design law and healing of heart. Love the other person, don't seek to punish the other person—seek their redemption. But even this can be practiced as a rule and then it would become harmful. It is about the principle of seeking to reach the other person's heart for God's kingdom.

- "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt 5:43-48 NIV84

    - What did Jesus do? Again focuses on heart change not rule enforcement and then gives specific examples from nature of how God and His laws work, sunshine and rain, and that if we are to children of God, part of God's family, members of God's kingdom we must stop being rule enforcers and instead grow up to love people.

So what did Jesus do with Scripture? He took the Scripture and pulled it out of the false legal setting the Jews had put it in, and reset it in God's design law setting. That is the message we have for people today, the 3 Angels Messages, to worship Him who made the heavens…. to stop worshipping the imperial dictator.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson reminds us of the importance of spending quiet time with God. No question about it—the law of worship—by beholding we are changed; and the law of exertion—if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it. If we are to grow in godliness we must spend time with God.

The first sentence of the third paragraph reads, "If you love someone, you enjoy spending time alone with that beloved person."

Hmmm… there is an assumption in this text that needs exposing.

What if you have a child who is rebellious, hostile, hateful, drug addicted, deceitful, steals from you, would you still love your child? Would you enjoy spending time with that child as long as they remain so ugly in character?

What if you have a parent who is critical, negative, always finds fault with you when you are around—might you still love your parent and long for a close relationship—but, not enjoy spending time with them because of how they treat you?

So, what if people are taught that God is intolerant of sin, in fact gets angry, wrathful when He sees sin. That His holiness requires Him to lash out with punishment whenever He sees sin and that we need a mediator to stand between us and God to protect us from His wrath. If this is the view a person has of God, do you think they want to spend time with Him—even if they say they love Him?

This is one of the reasons Jesus came—to show us the Father is not like this at all. The Father is just like Jesus! So we do want to spend time with someone we love when we experience they genuinely love us.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Memorizing Scripture…" This is an excellent point. I know many people who believe in God, but have essentially no knowledge of Scripture so they don't have truth to fall back on to help them in times of crisis. They get overwhelmed and discouraged and have a hard time seeing God's hand in their lives.

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to us—and is filled with encouraging stories to help us in our time of need. But if we don't now it, life is often much harder.

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 2Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 1
Why Witness?

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

We are starting a new quarter on witnessing and we received this email this week:

> *Hello.*
>
> *I am just learning about God's design laws vs. imposed laws. I've been sharing these new ideas with my extended family of Adventists on the West Coast. Everyone seems to be experiencing a tremendous blessing of peace and renewed joy with this fuller understanding. I am so grateful to have found your website.*
>
> *My question: I am a nurse consultant for the state of California's intellectually disabled population. I would say most of my 500 coworkers (social workers) have placed their trust in me from day one, precisely because I am a nurse, and I feel the weight of responsibility that comes with such trust. Because I have a private office, there are several coworkers that I have built up a warm personal relationship with over the past 3 years of employment. They regularly stop by and ask me questions about God (at least until we were sent home in March for shelter in place requirements). Most are from a Catholic background. I am saddened to think that I did not have a more expanded picture of God to share with them until recently. Now on extended lockdown at home and working full time remotely, the questions from coworkers are coming in again. I have been reading everything Dr Jennings has written, thankful for the timing (more time to read while on lockdown). One thing I haven't quite been able to find the right new words for is the inevitable question of WHY ARE YOU A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST? My old answer would have been along the lines of level 4 understanding :(*
>
> *Now I want to be able and ready to share an answer in 30 seconds (one trip up the elevator basically is all the time I get), AND in a longer, more detailed response (over phone or text), that is designed to get them thinking in a positive way towards God AND the Adventist church that I love. I'm having trouble articulating both in brevity, and I don't want to overwhelm a coworker who is merely curious. Suggestions welcome. Thanks so much.*

So, how would you answer her question? And if you are not an SDA, then substitute your denomination in there and consider, how would you answer as to why you are a member of whatever denomination you belong?

My answer would be something like this: First, I don't take the view that salvation is found in organizational affiliation, but in a trust relationship with Jesus Christ. With that being said, I am an SDA because I have found the most comprehensive and accurate understanding of reality that

integrates Scripture, science and experience harmoniously together to provide substantive answers to all of life's big questions. In other words, the integrated views I have learned are the most consistent with reality and makes the most sense when compared to all other religions and denominations that I have examined.

And then I would be ready to give multiple examples for the inevitable follow up question they will ask—can you give me an example of what you mean? I would invite them to a longer discussion and likely start with design law and the example of love and liberty. Then I would go into the Great Controversy and why the Scripture takes the focus it does on the human family tree etc. What God's goals are and how they are only accomplished in hearts and minds, not in books somewhere.

Why witness?

- To benefit people—ultimately for salvation and eternal life

Who is benefited by witnessing?

- Both those who accept the truth and those who share the truth

Are any people harmed by witnessing?

- What happened to Pharaoh when Moses witnessed to him? Why did this happen to Pharaoh? Does that mean Moses should not have witnessed to him?
- What did Jesus say about the cities in His day having had His witness to them? That their guilt would be greater than Sodom's. Does that mean Jesus should not have witnessed to them?
- So they are not harmed by the witness of truth—they are harmed by the rejection of truth, the witness of truth gives them opportunity for healing and eternal life—even if they reject it.

What happens if we witness because we want to get the most baptisms in the conference? Do we risk witnessing with wrong motive and perhaps not even witnessing the truth?

- Jesus told the religious leaders in His day that their witness caused their converts to become twice the son of hell than they themselves were, why was that?

What is the primary goal of witnessing?

- Is the goal to get people to accept right doctrines—only as necessary for healing their hearts and minds? Our question could be metaphorically asked about a sick person—is our goal to get them to accept the right understanding of their disease?
- Is it to get them to join a particular denomination?
- Is it introduce people to Jesus and have them open their hearts in trust to Him so that they are turned from God's enemies to His friends?
- Will all of God's true friends agree on every point? Did Paul and Barnabas agree over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41)?
- Did Paul and Peter agree on associating with uncircumcised people, at least initially?
- Did Paul say that people *must* agree on what foods to eat or what days to treat as special?
- But what did the Apostles all agree on? Jesus is Lord and God's character and methods of love. Salvation is healing of hearts and minds through a trust relationship with Jesus.

Should we witness to every person?

- What was the purpose of telling the disciples to shake the dust off their feet?
- What did Jesus mean when He said not to cast our pearls before swine?

Are there different ways to witness and if so what are some of the different ways?

- Preaching
- Teaching
- Ministering—healthcare, helping after disaster, helping in times of need, feeding, clothing, comforting, --in other words all acts of compassion and service
- Books, blogs, articles, pamphlets
- Movies
- Lectures, videos, Bible study classes
- Preaching on the street corner
- One on one Bible study
- Witnessing at work or in the elevator
- Sharing what God has done for your personally
- Living our lives in ways that reveal God's principles
- Others?

Can we think we are witnessing for God's kingdom but actually be witnessing for Satan's kingdom? Can we proclaim the name of Jesus while promoting the principles of Satan?

- What if we were to pass laws requiring people to be baptized or else get punished?
- What about laws to worship at all or in certain ways?
- What about laws that give preference to people who believe certain things about God?
- What about laws that restrict people from sharing their beliefs about God?
- What about any merging of church and state?
- What about the crusades using violence in the name of God's kingdom—how about using violence in society today, rioting and destroying property to promote God's kingdom?
- What about using the power of the state to minister to people in need, such as taxing people to create social programs to help those in need? Why is this not part of God's kingdom?
    - Is it God's methods to take by force from people who don't want to give? Jesus said regarding taxes to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God. He didn't argue against the state taxing and neither am I. I am making the point that Jesus made—paying taxes is not giving to God, and the state doesn't do God's work or the church's work, regardless of what they do with the money.
    - Will forcing people to give what they don't want to give result in greater love in their hearts?
    - Is the primary purpose of God's kingdom to give people food for their body or clothes or housing? Or is the primary purpose to give people eternal life?
    - When Christians in love see people in need and bring relief, food, clothing, adoption, shelter, does this create opportunity for the person to learn about Jesus? Will some inquire—why are you doing this? And will the answer that God so loved the world He

gave His only Son and He has so loved us that we follow Him in loving others, impact souls for God's kingdom when it is accompanied by acts of service? But what if we take out the Christian, the church, the love of God and insert the state—the state that is vigilantly godless?

- What happens in the process of charity, of helping those in need, when we remove the compassion, the kind person, the caring people, and insert an agency, a bureaucracy, a monthly dispersement of money detached for all human contact?
- What happens if the money, clothing, food, shelter is given in a relationship with someone who cares about the person who is receiving it—a person that becomes part of their life?
- What happens when the orphan is not put in a state-run institution, in foster care in which the foster-parents are given money from the state to take care of them, but the orphan is adopted by families who love them and who sacrifice their own resources to provide for them?
- When Ruth and Naomi were without food, how did God's system provide for their food? They could get free food, but how? They had to glean for it. Is there a difference between gleaning, working in the field to gather your own food and having it given to you with no effort? What difference does it make on the heart, mind and character of the person in need?
- God's system was to connect people with people, social justice of individuals who have it in their hearts to love their neighbors, to show hospitality, to give opportunity, to rescue, to feed, to clothe. There is nothing in God's system of people paying taxes to create state agencies who become impersonal machines to take from those with no interest in the needy and give to those without. This is a corruption that instills resentment in those taxed, and no gratitude in those who receive; it instead it instills a sense of entitlement and causes division in society rather than bringing people back into unity. Think through the difference that happens when people help people directly and remove the agencies of government.
- God is always working to heal hearts and minds, restore the image of God in people. Satan is always working to destroy hearts and minds and efface the image of God in people. Human systems always corrupt—and it is most insidious when the human system purports to be helping people—but in actuality it damages.

Did I just say that the state should not have any social programs? No—I did not. I said the church (Christians) should recognize that the state cannot do the work of the church and if we promote social justice through the state we ultimately use the methods of Satan, undermine God's kingdom and promote the kingdom of the beast.

Can you be an effective witness to something you don't personally know or understand?

Read first paragraph, "God's great longing…" thoughts?

Can there be salvation without transformation? Or does God's plan of salvation actually mean healing, recreation, regeneration, restoration, transformation?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What do you think of this statement: *If we are not being transformed we are not being saved?*

From what are we being saved? We are being saved from sin—sinfulness, the condition of being out of harmony with God and His design for life. Thus, salvation heals our hearts, minds, characters such that we are being transformed in how we think, feel, and act—away from fear and selfishness and toward truth, love and freedom.

But, the penal legal lie, the theology based on human law models, that operate like human governments, is that we are being saved from the punishment that God must inflict. Thus, in this legal lie salvation and transformation are different.

But in reality, they are one and the same.

What is the difference between the sacrifices in paganism and the sacrifice of Jesus?

What is the purpose of all pagan sacrifice? To do something to the deity—to pay legal debt, to assuage wrath, to propitiate anger, to merit mercy or buy forgiveness.

Sadly, Christianity has embraced this idea of paganism, but substituted Jesus' blood for other blood. It is all a lie. The sacrifice of Jesus was not to change God or change God's law, or pay a legal payment. Jesus' sacrifice was to destroy sin, Satan, Satan's power and provide the remedy to heal human beings thus restoring all who trust God back into harmony with God and give them eternal life.

So, what happens when we go out and witness the following:

- You are a sinner and condemned to death
    - Or, have you struggled with fear, doubts, heartaches, uncertainties, loneliness? Do you long for peace, love, joy? Those are symptoms of a terminal condition we didn't choose, but for which God has provided a cure. We are all born in fear and selfishness, but God has a remedy that takes away our fear. You don't have to take it, but you will continue to suffer and ultimately die of this sin-condition.
- God is required by holiness and righteousness to punish sin
    - Or, God is love and love cannot be forced. So God will never force you to be with Him, to love Him, to accept Him. But you have a condition that without remedy results in death. God offers you eternal life, to cure you, but if you refuse, God loves you enough to give you the freedom to say no—but if you do then you will die eternally.
- The punishment for sin is execution by God to die eternally or eternal torture in hell
    - Or, God will let go all who don't want to be with Him, crying as He does, but since He is the source of life all who are permanently disconnected from Him die—no eternal torment, just non-existence. Why? Because they choose to die rather than live in God's presence—God does not inflict this on them.
- God loves you too much to just leave you to be punished so God sent His Son, who is perfect, sinless, innocent and punished His Son instead of you.

    - Or God loves us to much to let us die of this condition, so He sent His only Son to take the condition upon Himself and cure it offering us a free remedy.
- If you don't accept Jesus' legal payment or Jesus' blood to pay God for your sins then God, despite already punishing an innocent being for the sins of guilty, will still punish you for the same crime.
    - If you don't accept Jesus into your heart to transform and heal you back into harmony with how God built life to operate, then the natural result is you solidify yourself into being out of harmony with God's design for life and the only result or outcome is eternal death. God sadly gives you the freedom to choose death rather than life.
- But hey, this God who punishes the innocent and who will inflict torture and punishment upon you if you don't love Him—He really loves you. So, you want to come to church with me this weekend?
    - Do you see how much God truly loves you that He has provided everything for your eternal healing, health, happiness and eternal life—but He would never force you and if you truly don't want life, God will sadly let you go. But my God respects your individuality and would never force you to do anything. Would you like to learn more about my God and visit my church sometime?

Do you see the evil that has been foisted upon the world by teaching the Bible through the lie that God's law works like human law? This is the Roman lie.

What a difference it makes to present the truth.

SUNDAY

The first sentence of the first paragraph states, "God provides opportunities daily for people everywhere to know Him."

I couldn't agree more, the lesson references what Paul says in Romans 1:20:

> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

What does this mean?

Can you find anything in nature—without Scripture—that instructs one on:

- Baptism?
- Sabbath worship?
- Tithing?
- Communion?
- Accepting the blood payment of Jesus for the payment of sins?

What, then is being taught by Paul? Is Paul in any way teaching a legal religion or is Paul saying God's nature and qualities are those of the Creator and as such are built into reality—they are not like man-made rules—they are protocols upon which life works. And any person is able to look around and see how this reality works.

Consider Jesus' parable of the sower in Mark 4:13-20—what is revealed in that parable?

> "Don't you understand that this illustration demonstrates that God's kingdom operates upon natural law — design protocols for life? If you don't understand this, you will misunderstand all my illustrations.[14]The farmer plants the words of truth into the hearts of people.[15]Some people have hearts that are hard and callous, like a road, and they don't respond to the truth when it is presented. They hear the truth, but they don't consider it seriously: Satan distracts them with some temptation or problem, and the truth is forgotten.[16]Other people have hearts like gravel–shifting and unstable: they respond with excitement to every new idea, but nothing takes root.[17]And since the truth doesn't take root in their hearts, they only stay involved briefly. As soon as the truth requires some sacrifice or actual work on their part, they quit and move on to their next emotional fix.[18]There are other people, who have minds like soil filled with weeds and thorns. They hear the truth,[19]but the thorns of worry and fear, or the weeds of seeking healing of heart in fame, fortune, or other earthly desires choke out truth and love, and make their hearts desolate.[20]But there are those whose hearts are like fertile soil. They hear the truth, comprehend it, love it, embrace it, nurture it, choose it, and build on it; and it heals, transforms and renews them, causing them to produce fruits of righteousness even more than a hundred times what was planted in them." Mark 4:13-20 The Remedy

What is described in the parable a legal process or a process of actual healing and transformation? What laws do seeds and plants operate upon? Why did Jesus use such illustrations?

What obstructs people from learning the truth of God as revealed in nature? How about being taught from earliest childhood that God's kingdom works like human legal justice system?

The last sentence of the first paragraph, after acknowledging that God's truth is revealed in nature goes on to say, "When we share Jesus with others, we provide them with their best opportunity to be saved."

When we present Jesus in His true light I agree with this completely.

But, has Jesus had His identity stolen? Has true historic Jesus, who perfectly reveals God to us, been replaced with Satan's mischaracterization? And has that fraudulent impersonation of Jesus been the one that has been taken to the world?

Ron Cantor, in his book *Identity Theft* does a great job of telling the story of how Jesus' Jewish identity was stolen by Romanism and that the Jesus of Christianity today is nothing like Jesus revealed. He demonstrates that the first century church was not what we think of, but was the natural

advancement of Judaism taking the Messiah Jesus to the world. In his book, he does a great job of documenting how Christianity throughout history became anti-Jewish and thus today for many people, both Jews and Muslims, Christianity has no connection to the Biblical Jesus and because of this Jesus is not a being the Jews want to hear about.

If you haven't read this book, I would encourage you to give it a read, it has some good insights.

In the second paragraph the lesson states, "In Romans 6-8, he [Paul] describes how the grace that justifies each believer also is sanctifying grace."

Why is it that justifying grace is sanctifying grace? **Because it is the exact same remedy being applied to the exact same place in the exact same way by the exact same agency that achieves both.**

Justifying means to put what is wrong right, setting it back in its proper place, sanctifying means the keeping it right and the full purification or complete healing that comes after being set right.

But under the penal lie, real justification of heart is stolen from people and replaced with the lie that they are legally declared righteous even though they are not righteous. But the Bible teaches that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2Cor 5:21 NIV84)

Consider these historic quotes:

> **Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith?** Why try to work out every minute point, as if the salvation of the soul depended upon all having exactly your understanding of this matter? All cannot see in the same line of vision. You are in danger of making a world of an atom, and an atom of a world. {CTr 150.2}
>
> **As penitent sinners, contrite before God**, [heart change first] discern Christ's atonement in their behalf, and accept this atonement as their only hope in this life and the future life, **their sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith**. Every believing soul is to conform his or her will entirely to God's will, and **keep in a state of repentance and contrition,** exercising faith in the atoning merits of the Redeemer, and advancing from strength to strength, from glory to glory. **Pardon and justification are one and the same thing**. . . . {CTr 150.3}
>
> **Justification is the opposite of condemnation.** God's boundless mercy is exercised toward those who are wholly undeserving. He forgives transgressions and sins for the sake of Jesus, who has become the propitiation for our sins. Through faith in Christ the guilty transgressor is brought into favor with God and into the strong hope of life eternal. . . . {CTr 150.4} [What law lens are your reading this through? Why can God not pardon unrepented sins? What is the condition of a heart that has not repented? It's actual condition remains sinful, selfish, fear-

ridden, God will not lie, will not give a false diagnosis, thus He will not overlook or pardon the actual terminal state of a person. But when we repent, accept Christ into our hearts, fear and selfishness are replaced with love and trust. We are set right in heart with God, this is justification and we have forgiveness of past sins through the forbearance of God—i.e. we are pardoned, because we are now in harmony with God and His design for life]

But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins or neglecting known duties. *God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place;* [again heart change before justification] and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul. {FW 100.1} [Why? Because it is not a legal process, but an actual state of being. It is like saying a sick person benefits when they trust the doctor and take their medicine, but they can only retain their health as long as they continue to take their medicine, following the doctor's instructions, i.e. live in harmony with the laws of health. Break the laws of health the doctor doesn't prosecute you in court, but you return to a state of sickness not wellness.]

So what is our role in witnessing God's plan of salvation? How do you tell people this truth?

Read Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is with you,
he is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you,
he will quiet you with his love,
he will rejoice over you with singing." NIV84

What does this text mean to you? What do you discern of God's character?
Does this sound like a deity bent on punishing sin? Does this sound like an angry and wrathful god?

What is the motive that is required for this to be true? Love—God is love and God loves you and me, more than a parent loves a child. And parents, how much rejoicing would you have if your child was dying and you were able to save them?

Do we have other examples in the Bible that teach this truth about God?

- Parable of the lost coin
- "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? [9] And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' [10] In the same way, I tell you, **there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents**." (Luke 15:8-10 NIV84)
- the lost sheep and lost son

Other examples?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

Read first three paragraphs, "The Dead Sea…" What law is being described? This is the law of love, a design law built right into reality, the very foundation of life itself.

What happens when we break it?

What does God want to restore in us? His law written on our hearts and minds.

Can this be achieved by a list of rules? Then how is it achieved?

Through our experiencing God's truth and love and being won to trust in God.

When we have been won back to love and trust in God, what instructions or prescriptions has God given us to help us grow in love?

Giving to others—and what are we to give to others?

- Tithes to God and offerings to others
- Time, energy, our own love, compassion, concern, wisdom
- Food, clothing, shelter
- Respect
- Truth

And the more you give the more you will receive. This is how our ministry works, and why we focus on giving so much away.

Read fourth paragraph, "God could have…" If God could have done it without us, why didn't He?

What law is being described?

Is it an act of love for God to have us participate in His plan to reach others, or would it be more loving if God did it without us?

What about when we seek to help others—if we love them how much do we do for them?

Is it an act of love to do for people that which they are able to do for themselves? Why or why not?

What is meant by the Bible instructions: "For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2Then 3:10 NIV84)

What happens to Grandma if we put her in a wheelchair when she can still walk?

What happens to a child if we carry them and never put them down?

What happens to any of us if we don't exercise the abilities God has given us?

So another trap of Satan is to get compassionate people to seek to relieve other people's suffering by doing for others what they are able to do for themselves.

Which helps a person more—giving them a handout—or giving them opportunity to develop themselves and make their own way—become autonomous?

Does that mean there is no place to give handouts? No, there are many places where it is necessary to provide food, clothing, medicine, shelter, but the goal is to do so for the least amount of time necessary to restore people to independence. This happens best when it is done person to person, rather than removing the human contact and putting governmental agencies in between.

People can love each other—institutions cannot.

Kent Johnson, one of our online listeners, came across this quote from *The Desire of Ages* and sent it to us this week:

> "The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were **crying abuses,—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty.** Yet the Saviour **attempted no civil reforms**. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. **He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments**. **Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures.** To be efficient, the **cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart**." DA 509.3

This is exactly correct—if we want true social justice we must apply God's principles, which reach the hearts of people. As soon as we insert the state into the mix we obstruct God's healing plan!

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about faithfulness to Christ's command. What do you think this means?

The lesson focuses on how God wants all to come unto salvation. What commands of Christ are we to follow in helping people come to salvation?

Do you think the church is better off when governments take over functions of the church—like caring for the homeless, feeding the hungry, providing for the orphans?

Do you think as the governmental programs grow the churches become less community focused and more inwardly focused, more focused on their own doctrines, building programs, and building up membership?

Are there dangers in relying upon the state to minister to people in need?

THURSDAY

The lesson is about God's love motivating our witness.

What happens when we try to teach or share things we don't personally know?

When I experienced the freedom and peace that came when I finally came to know God as Creator and His laws as design laws—it was life transforming. My fear evaporated away and I became very passionate to see my fellow Christians who have lived under such burdens of fear, primarily from legal views of God, set free. So I began teaching these truths and more and more people have come to experiencing healing and peace in their own lives as God's design laws have been brought to bear in their lives.

FRIDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the purpose of the church. What would you say the purpose of the church is?

> The persecution that came upon the church in Jerusalem resulted in giving a great impetus to the work of the gospel. Success had attended the ministry of the word in that place, and there was danger that the disciples would linger there too long, unmindful of the Saviour's commission to go to all the world. **Forgetting that strength to resist evil is best gained by aggressive service, they began to think that they had no work so important as that of shielding the church in Jerusalem from the attacks of the enemy.** Instead of educating the new converts to carry the gospel to those who had not heard it, they were in danger of taking a course that would lead all to be satisfied with what had been accomplished. To scatter His representatives abroad, where they could work for others, God permitted persecution to come upon them. Driven from Jerusalem, the believers "went everywhere preaching the word." AA 105.2

How many church leaders today, rather than moving forward in truth, look inward and think it is there job to protect the members from ideas that are different than what the leader currently believes?

What is the problem with this?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 2
Winsome Witness: The Power of Personal Testimony

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I received this email yesterday:

> *I want to thank you for the work you are doing in revealing God's love through your teachings.*
>
> *I recently shared your blog (Dinah: A lesson in Satan's tactics for today) with my mother in Ghana. We have had a few discussions about how understanding God's love can transform our hearts. I am actually overseas for my studies so the only medium I can reach my family is by calling them online or sending them an article.*
>
> *My mother called me with tears in her voice. As a "good" seventh-day Adventist, she didn't know how Satan gets access to us even when we feel we are right with God. She came face to face with her inner self as someone who isn't easily forgiving and had a little knowledge of the fact that it is one of Satan's working principles to sow a seed of pain and resentment just so we will be like him.*
>
> *She told me she was having problems with a tenant and has always prayed to God to "sack" this tenant from her house. Little did she know that she started harboring some hate in her heart against this tenant. After reading the article, she now prays that the Lord should help her love this tenant the more.*
>
> *Due to the positive impact of this article, she told me that she printed it out and have shared copies with friends and family. Today whenever she calls someone on phone, she cannot keep quiet about this message.*
>
> *My heart is filled with so much joy that I can share with her the truth as it is in Christ concerning his LOVE. God bless your ministry. I know there are frictions from within and without trying to prevent the message from being preached but God is still working on minds and hearts and my family is one of them.*

After reading this, I thought it would be nice to start class by reading Psalms 32 from *The Remedy of the Lord in Song:*

Happy are they
whose wicked minds are restored to perfect purity,
whose selfishness is eradicated.
2 Happy is the person

whose infected heart the Lord transforms to perfection,
in whose mind there is no deceit.
3 When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God,
I stressed myself and my body decayed
because every day I screamed, "no!" denying the truth.
4 But day and night
your healing hand pressed firmly upon me;
my resistance evaporated
like water in the summer heat.
5 Then I admitted my sin-sickness to you
and did not hide my character-deformity.
I said, "I will confess
my selfishness to the Lord"—
and you healed me
and freed me from guilt.
6 Therefore let all the faithful ask you for this same healing
while healing is still possible;
then when the guilt, shame and regrets of life come flooding in,
the faithful will not drown in them.
7 You are my safe harbor;
you protect me from the storms of life
and turn my life into a song of deliverance.
8 The Lord says, "I will teach you my methods and how to live in harmony with my designs;
I will guide you and watch over you.
9 Don't be like the unthinking horse or mule
that do not reason or understand
and must be forced by bit and bridle
to follow the simplest instructions."
10 Many are the sufferings of those who defy your designs,
but those who trust the Lord
are healed by his never-failing love.
11 Celebrate God's goodness and be happy, you spiritually-healthy;
sing for joy, all you with hearts like God's!

I also received this email yesterday:

> *The SS lessons have been so great, [my wife] says each time, "I have to listen to this again,". And we do. I have used the lessons when I teach our SS class and we have been able to see the growth and understanding of the class members. The Blogs on the current events are courageous and "right on" so thanks for that also. These are truly difficult times and such a major change from what I lived in the 1950's. When I read of the statements in The Great Controversy, I thought, how can this be? This is the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have lost so much freedom and so fast. Tim-I am amazed over and over at all you do and*

> *how you have been inspired to teach us so clearly of God's love and Design law concepts. Thanks again*

For those who are not familiar with the reference in *The Great Controversy* the online listener was referring to, this is a one of them. But, what I want you to do is replace "church" with the church of social justice or the church of political correctness, and honor Sunday with any example of imposed law to coerce consciences you can think of going on in our country—i.e. examples of freedoms being eroded.

> The dignitaries of church and State will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." [Revelation 12:17.] GC88 592.3

Read second paragraph, "It is difficult to argue…" It is true that when you tell people how your life has been changed by Jesus that it is a powerful witness.

Does anyone want to share how Jesus and the truth that we have all come to know has changed your life?

What about the idea that "It is difficult to argue against personal experience." I think this is true, particularly if we mean trying to convince someone who has had the personal experience to believe something that contradicts their personal experience.

I don't think it is as hard for us to negate or argue against a personal experience in our own understanding when we recognize their personal experience as dangerous, fraudulent, destructive, false, erroneous, or we simply are not convinced their experience is valuable.

The challenge is in dealing with friends, family, church members, who have personal experiences that we believe are dangerous, false, destructive and trying to convince them that their experience is lying to them.

For instance:

- One I deal with in my practice quite regularly is trying to convince people that marijuana is harmful to their brain. (I am talking about marijuana with THC, not CBD oil with no THC). It is difficult to try and convince them that marijuana is not a good treatment for mental health problems, but actually worsens them. It is difficult because they have an experience in which the marijuana makes them feel better so if they feel better how could the marijuana be bad. They are basing wellness on feelings, and limiting their conclusions to only how they feel, not

the totality of the evidence—including their total life experience; they typically don't include their actual functioning or evidence of brain health. They then will search the internet for data that seems to support their view—which is propaganda or anecdotal, but not science. How do I deal with their experience? I point out they are there to see me, if it was really helping and they were doing well they wouldn't be there to see me. Then I show them evidence from brain scans of people who use marijuana. Then we examine their own life and function. Then I take them though other examples in their life when their feelings lied to them. Ultimately, they have to decide and most of the time my patients decide to give up marijuana and with proper treatment they get better. But some don't and they don't get better.

- Within Christianity there is a great divide over what some call "speaking in tongues." Those who practice it will talk about their experience and those who don't will consider their experience fraudulent, either emotional hysteria or demonic and want nothing to do with it. Yet, those who have had the experience are almost never open to have their views changed about the experience.
- What about the current craze in America of people claiming "Well that's my truth" as a way of saying their experience overrides all evidence?
    - This is a dangerous phenomenon because it relabels experience as truth, thus creating a lie and confusing minds. Experiences and truth are not the same. It might be true that a person has had a certain experience, but the experience doesn't mean what the person believes about the experience is true.
    - Example—a person may experience incredible feelings of attraction to another—they may believe they are in love and that this person is the right person to be their spouse. But, later, they come to realize that the person was not the "one."
    - Example—survivor's guilt—a person survives a trauma, whether war or a home fire or natural disaster, and someone they loved didn't. And the loss causes them to blame themselves for not saving the others, when they did nothing wrong. It is their truth that they survived and lost someone, but their belief about themselves and the loss are not true. It is often difficult to get people to change their belief about this. Their "truth" is actually not true.

Let's explore how experiences can deceive and mislead:

- Substituting someone else's experience for your own. Here is a historic quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, describing events over 100 years ago—but these human problems persist today.

> **If we mistake the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God we are led astray by the foolishness of man's wisdom**. Here is the great danger of many in -----. [This is happening to many right now with the social justice movement. Let me put it this way—there is a difference between a just cause and just actions. Satan tricks people by presenting a just cause combined with unjust or worldly methods of resolving the issue, thus following the foolishness of man's wisdom instead of following God's wisdom. In every human society and government in history some group has been treated unjustly, sometimes on race, sometimes on nationality, sometimes on religion, sometimes on politics (not joining the

party). It is a trap to use human governments to advance God's kingdom.] **They have not an experience for themselves**. They have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves, with **unprejudiced, unbiased judgment**, questions and subjects that are new and that are ever liable to arise. [How many in our society today are taking the time to prayerfully consider for themselves, with unprejudiced, unbiased judgments the questions of social justice? Or, how many are accepting the views put forth by the media, the angry and hurt, and following what others think? In my blog for this week some commented against it without even reading it, just by reading the title. Is that taking the time to prayerfully consider for themselves this issue? Our society and our church are in danger because people are being conditioned to react, to follow, but not to think reason, weigh evidences with unbiased judgment through God's design law lenses] **They wait to see what others will think. If these dissent,** that is all that is needed to convince them that the subject under consideration is of no account whatever. [How many people are doing this, waiting for the latest post, tweet, blog or statement from their party leader or movement leader?] Although this class is large, it does not change the fact that **they are inexperienced and weak-minded through long yielding to the enemy, and will always be as sickly as babes, walking by others' light, living on others' experience, feeling as others feel, and acting as others act.** [This is the mob, mob mentality, in which a person's individuality is submerged into the group.] **They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others; they are merely shadows of those whom they think [are] right.** Unless these become sensible of **their wavering character and correct it, they will all fail of everlasting life**; they will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days. **They will possess no stamina to resist the devil, for they do not know that it is he**. [How many will be duped into fighting just causes by unjust methods? Historically Adventism has taught that one day religious leaders will take the reins of government and pass Sunday laws. Why will people seek to do this? Because they think they are fighting for justice, for God's kingdom, trying to make the world a better place, a moral place, they have a just cause—but we recognize the methods are unjust. What about if we substitute Sunday legislation, with other legislation designed to pursue social justice? Could such laws be passed that cross the line of simple equal opportunity to coercion, i.e. using methods of the devil to promote a just cause? How many will possess no stamina to resist such a movement?] **Someone must be at their side to inform them whether a foe or a friend is approaching. They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned. They are not wise in those things which relate to the kingdom of God**. [I see this happening right now, so many Christians don't seem able to differentiate the kingdom of God from the kingdoms of the world. They see no problem with using the state to promote their understanding of social justice, i.e. morality. And the reason is they don't differentiate God's design law from human imposed law. Accepting imposed law it makes sense to use the state to promote social justice.] Neither young nor old are excusable in trusting to another to have an experience for them. Said the angel: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." A noble self-reliance is needed in the Christian experience and warfare. 2T 129.2

- So, substituting someone else's experience for your own, letting someone else do your thinking for you is one way experience can deceive.

- Accepting feelings as truth or reality

    - As we mentioned feelings in relationships can lie and many people get into relationship in which they have powerful feelings and have a wonderful experience, but the evidence is that this person they are with is not healthy, mature, or trustworthy, but they don't want to examine evidence because their experience tells them it is perfect, this is the one. In talking with people in such situations it is most effective to back away from the specific person they are with and ask more general questions about what are the qualifications a person must possess to be qualified to fill the role of your life partner—and lead them to list qualities such as loves you more than self, trustworthiness, honesty, reliability etc. and then compare that list with the actual person. Other truths can be brought to bear, such as the law of liberty, or healthy relationships require healthy people.

- Not checking the experience against testable laws, evidence and reality

    - I was consulted to see a patient once who had type I diabetes mellitus. He was in his twenties and was in the hospital for diabetic ketoacidosis because he stopped taking his insulin. The primary MD wanted to know if he was suicidal. He wasn't—then why did he stop his insulin? He went to a faith healer who publicly placed hands on him and "healed" him. He had a wonderful experience, felt euphoric, was overwhelmed by the spirit, spoke in tongues and was convinced by his experience that he was healed. When I asked if he continued to monitor his blood sugars he said no. When I asked why, he said, "Because it would demonstrate a lack of faith and if I don't have faith then I can't be healed." He had an experience, but he didn't want any actual evidence or truth or reason or thinking to challenge that experience.

    - A person who loves God's kingdom of truth would do just the opposite, if healed they would want to check their sugars and keep a log and document the evidence so they can show everyone that God had healed them. Do you notice the lies imbedded in the cloak of so-called "faith" that kept the young man from checking his sugars? Even his "faith" became a lie to obstruct the truth—this is what Satan does with experiences that are not consistent with reality and God's design laws.

- Another way experiences mislead is Globalization: Using a real experience from a specific situation and then applying it to all other examples or situations of similar nature. Witnessing a miscarriage of justice—say a police officer abusing their power and hurting or even killing a suspect, and then globalizing that officer's misconduct to conclude that all police are abusers and can't be trusted and police departments need to be defunded.

- Someone this week told me of conversations with their 18 y/o son who is doing this. Because of recent events and the social media he follows, he has concluded that all police or untrustworthy and police forces need to be defunded.

  How do you talk to people who think like this? Don't argue against the specific experience—the misconduct of the specific officer. Initially, don't even focus upon the police at all. Instead move away from the discussion about police and talk about something they can relate to in order to expose the fallacy of globalization. You must understand that the problem the person has is not with the police, but with their misapplication of a specific incident globally.

  So, in this case, the young man is a video gamer—I would ask: Are there any video gamers that cheat? When he answers yes, I would say, does that mean all video gamers are cheaters?

  Then I would present the following scenario: Imagine that you entered a video game contest in which the winner receives a $10,000 prize, and you win. But when you go to claim your prize, you discover someone has stolen your identity and already taken the $10,000. Would you be okay with that? When they say no, then I would ask—what would you want done? When they say they want the person caught and the $10,000 returned to them, I would say—and who do you think will do that? At that point no matter what he says it is merely labels because he will be describing law enforcement, which is the police. He might call them rule-enforcers, he might call them gaming commission, bank regulators, rightifiers, but regardless he is talking about someone with authority to enforce order in society—this is the role of police.

  Another example, when you graduate from high school you parents buy you a new car, would you be excited? Yes! What if two weeks later it is stolen, what would you want to happen? Who would do that? And whatever he describes is again police.

How do we challenge someone's personal testimony or experience that you believe is leading them astray?

By asking questions, not typically by direct confrontation. First, affirming them in some way—be careful not to state agreement or affirmation for what you believe to be false. But you could affirm them by thanking them for sharing their story or experience with you, by showing interest in them as a person. But then you can ask questions that are designed to engage thinking. Typically, when people have false experiences those experiences are sustained by denial of some reality or evidence. The goal in discussion is to get the person to think and examine their experience.

Consider this historic quote when dealing with people's experience:

> **Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture** of feeling they are converted. **But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before.**

> **Their lives show no good fruit**. They pray often and long, and are constantly **referring to the feelings** they had at such and such a time. **But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling.** They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come their house is swept away. MYP 71.3
>
> Many poor souls are groping in darkness, **looking for the feelings which others say they have had in their experience**. They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The convicted sinner has something to do. He must repent and show true faith. MYP 71.4
>
> **When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ.** To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart? **A changed life**. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride. MYP 72.1

Thoughts? Do you see how reality always has evidence associated with it? One cannot have a genuine experience with Jesus without having the life changed.

What does it mean to withdraw the affections from the world and fasten them upon Christ?

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the demoniac from whom Christ cast out the demons that went into the pigs. Then Christ instructed the healed man to go back to his town and tell what God had done for him.

The lesson asks, "Why do you think Jesus sent the man into Decapolis to witness to his family and friends rather than nurturing him in his newfound faith by keeping him with Himself?"

The lesson points out several very good reasons:

- The demoniac was well known in the region and people would recognize him and the marked change in him would stimulate interest in what he had to say.
- His healing would demonstrate the essence of the gospel which is the restoration of godliness into people
- His healing would become a point of community interest and people would tell people and help spread the interest in Christ

But what about for the healed man—any reason for the man himself that Christ sent him to do this witness rather than keep him with his disciples?

The law of exertion—we get stronger by exercise—so having the man go and tell what the Lord did for him, would reinforce his faith in Jesus and help him grow spiritually. In doing so the man's will aligns more and more with God's, his confidence in God grows and his mind becomes less vulnerable

to fear, doubt, and thus less accessible to demonic influences. Why? Because he was speaking truth and acting upon truth and this always heals.

But, what happens if a person doesn't speak truth, but instead speaks falsehoods or just constantly voices criticism or doubt, not from an honest heart asking questions to search out the truth, but from a heart that loves to cause conflict?

I read this in *The Desire of Ages* and it describes the principle of the law of exertion and how what we say reinforces itself upon us. And as all principles do, this one works regardless of whether you are doing something positive or negative:

> **The words are an indication of that which is in the heart**. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." **But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character**. **Men are influenced by their own words**. Often under a momentary impulse, **prompted by Satan**, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that **which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation**. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, **they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are.** It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. **The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief**. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." DA 323.1

This is a principle—speak critically, negatively and it changes the mind, alters brain pathways, reinforces the negative. But speak positively, share what God has done for you, speak truth, then these words react back upon the individual and helps them grow and reinforce their ability to discern truth in the future.

Do you see in this the danger of a non-Christian education? What happens when in school young people are taught ideas that are contrary to Bible truth? What happens to the mind when the student has to write papers that are critical of Christianity? What happens to the mind when they have to speak, or answer questions, or give presentations that are critical of Christian principles and values?

Is it any wonder that our society is in the mess it is in today—the public education system, including the university system, has indoctrinated the last several generations in a godless philosophy of life.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on Paul's personal testimony of his conversion to Agrippa and emphasizes again the power of personal testimony.

But it makes a very good point, "Kindness opens hearts where abrasiveness closes them."

What enables us to be kind to the unkind?

When you see injustice being done do you respond with patience, understanding, kindness?

Do we struggle with the temptation to retaliate? Is that desire to punish the wrong doer from God?

Keith Johnson is an online friend, who has worked for years in prison ministry teaching inmates developed four questions to help them understand more clearly what justice is from God's viewpoint. I have these in my book *The God Shaped Heart*

Take a moment and answer each question for yourself.

1. What if I told you that your youngest child was murdered? Would you want mercy or justice for the perpetrator?
2. What if I told you that the murderer was your oldest child? Would you want mercy or justice for the perpetrator?
3. What if I told you that you are guilty of the murder of the only begotten Son of God? Would you want mercy or justice as the perpetrator?
4. What if I told you that you had a daughter, your only daughter, the apple of your eye, who has never given you a moment's grief, but tonight, as her father, you happen to have your tux hanging in the closet, because tomorrow you are scheduled to walk your daughter down the aisle and give her away to someone whom you approve? If you're the mother, you have your new dress hanging next to her wedding gown that you have been planning and preparing for since the first time she held her in her arms. But tonight, your daughter is at a bachelorette party with her peers and they talk her into having "one-for-the-road," the first ever in her life. Two, three, four, five, six, seven (drinks) later, while on her way home, she wipes out a school bus full of little children on their way to camp. Everybody aboard the bus dies in a fiery inferno, but you daughter survives. Do you want mercy or justice for your daughter (?) and…what do those who are related to the victims who were on the bus want?

When we talk about justice—do we use human law or God's law? When we understand God's law and see injustice then are we able to show kindness, compassion, grace, forgiveness to the wrong doer?

How many people have you heard in the last few weeks interested in the redemption and salvation of the police officer that killed George Floyd? Do you think Jesus is interested in that officer's salvation? Should we be interested in that man's salvation?

What happens when a sinner experiences grace, versus when a sinner experiences condemnation? Which is more likely to lead the sinner to repent?

What is the responsibility of the Christian?

Will state agencies typically show grace and seek to lead sinners, criminals, to repent, or do they seek to condemn and inflict punishment? Do we see why we can never get God's justice through human governments?

MONDAY

The lesson is about witnessing the risen Christ, how do you do that?

Anyone want to share what they have found effective in sharing the risen Jesus with people who don't already know Him?

I think this is a great question—any ideas on effective ways to witness the risen Savior to people who do not already believe in Him?

The lesson focuses merely on the historic account as described in Scripture of the women going to the tomb, not finding the body of Christ, the angel telling them Jesus has risen and their sharing this truth.

There is nothing wrong in sharing this Scripture with people who do not yet believe in Jesus—but do you find this is likely to help people come to know Jesus who don't already believe in Jesus or the Bible?

If they believe in the Old Testament then perhaps going through the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled all of them would be helpful to bring a person to believe in Jesus. But if a person doesn't believe in the Bible at all, then how do you witness to the risen Jesus?

What evidence can you provide to demonstrate Jesus is real?

What about this idea from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. [People want some evidence and commonly cry for a sign or miracle. What is the problem with miracles? They can be counterfeited. And, we are told that before Christ comes satanic spirits will perform miracles to deceive. But people want something besides a verbal testimony or proclamation, what they hear as a claim without evidence, to base their faith upon.] **Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees**. He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan's insinuations. **He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride**. [Does this mean we may have to endure ridicule, accusation, condemnation from people who reject our belief in Christ?] But the **gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan?** Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. **When one who has been**

> **controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God's heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth**. [What is the miracle, the evidence that can be pointed to? The evidence of a life transformed to godly principles, the dishonest becomes honest, the exploiter a protector, the cruel becomes kind, the fearful becomes courageous, the liar becomes honest, the cheat becomes loyal. Transformation of character is evidence of our risen Savior.] Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezekiel 36:26. **The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls**. **A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle**. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son. DA 407.1

So, how can we reach people who don't know Christ? First, we have to personally know Him—we can't share what we don't know. And this means we have to have an experience—a transformation of our lives so that we become like Christ in heart/character.

Then, we seek to treat people like Jesus did. We get to know people, spend time with them, seek to help them. And this opens an entire other area where the battle between truth and deception rage—what does it mean to help someone?

This requires that we actually know God's law, His design law, how life is built to operate. Then, our goal is to help people know God personally and move to live in harmony with His design for life.

This means they must exercise their power of choice, to engage their abilities, to apply truth to their lives. They must live the Christian life. We cannot do it for them. Which means there are times when we must not resist and refuse to rescue people from their situation because they need to choose and act for themselves or they will never grow and develop.

It requires wisdom to know where we intervene to rescue and where we do not. If we don't intervene when we should then someone may be lost—if we do intervene when we shouldn't then someone may be lost.

I found a couple of historic quotes that I thought were quite interesting from a book *Counsels to the Church:*

> **There are two classes of poor whom we have always within our borders—those who ruin themselves by their own independent course of action and continue in their transgression, and those who for the truth's sake have been brought into straitened circumstances.** We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and then **toward both these classes we shall do the right thing under the guidance and counsel of sound wisdom**. {CCh 284.2} [Is this suggesting that perhaps we are to think about what a person needs in various circumstances?

That the help provided may vary depending on how and why a person is in need? Could we harm if we confused the two classes or lumped them all into the same class?]
There is no question in regard to the Lord's poor. They are to be helped in every case where it will be for their benefit. {CCh 284.3} [Does this imply that there are times when helping someone might not be for their benefit? Or when actions taken to benefit might actually harm? Can you think of any examples?]

God wants His people to reveal to a sinful world that He has not left them to perish. **Special pains should be taken to help those who for the truth's sake are cast out from their homes and are obliged to suffer**... **The poor among God's people must not be left without provision for their wants. Some way must be found whereby they may obtain a livelihood.** [What is the help advocated here? Is it only a handout or is it something else? What is the difference to the person in need to receive a handout versus receiving employment? What is it God wants for all humans? The restoration of godliness in them—which would mean not only a pure heart and right spirit, but integrity, intelligence, wisdom, ability to think and to act, industry, meaningful usefulness. Should we seek to help people develop these abilities, or should we infantilize capable people by merely giving handouts?] **Some will need to be taught to work. Others who work hard and are taxed to the utmost of their ability to support their families will need special assistance**. [What is special assistance? Perhaps a raise, perhaps a new job that pays more, perhaps a subsidy, perhaps a low-cost housing opportunity. The point is, assisting people in need is righteous—but we have to understand the actual need. Do you notice a single cookie cutter intervention won't work?] **We should take an interest in these cases and help them to secure employment.** There should be a fund to aid such worthy poor families who love God and keep His commandments. {CCh 284.4} [Do you know of any church that has an employment program?]

Methods of helping the needy should be carefully and prayerfully considered. We are to seek God for wisdom, for He knows better than shortsighted mortals how to care for the creatures He has made. **There are some who give indiscriminately to everyone who solicits their aid. In this they err. In trying to help the needy, we should be careful to give them the right kind of help. There are those who when helped will continue to make themselves special objects of need. They will be dependent as long as they see anything on which to depend.** By giving undue time and attention to these, we may encourage idleness, helplessness, extravagance, and intemperance. {CCh 285.1} [Could this be true regardless of the source of the aid—family, friends, church or state? And what would be the most likely initial response if such a person were cut off from the aid they were previously receiving? Protest, complaint, accusation of not being loved or valued, worsening in their condition, function, appearance. And what if they are a member of a group that has historically been mistreated or exploited, what might they do? Make accusations of discrimination?]

When we give to the poor we should consider: "**Am I encouraging prodigality** [wastefulness like prodigal son]**? Am I helping or injuring them?" No man who can earn his own livelihood has a right to depend on others.** {CCh 285.2} [Do we apply this principle well when we give without knowing to whom we are giving? So, what is required? We must get to

know people. But what is easier? Do we ever prefer to have the state involved, to pay our taxes, to have state social programs to help the poor because that way we don't have to do it and we don't have to feel guilty for not doing it? It relieves us as Christians from any responsibility.]

TUESDAY

The title: Changes Lives Make a Difference. How do changed lives make a difference?

Do lives changed to be like Jesus, as we read in the quote above, make a difference in society? How?

But what about lives changed in the other direction—to be more violent, selfish, exploitive, deceitful, do they also make a difference in society? How?

How do we resist being drawn into the methods of Satan?

If Satan cannot get good people to choose evil directly—such as cheating, stealing, committing adultery, murdering, exploiting, abusing, lying—then what other actions does the devil take to undermine good people—in other words, to change their lives for the negative?

By overwhelming them with righteous causes that they accept and thus burn out.

How about by inciting a wrong, an evil, an exploitation, an abuse, and stirring up the outrage, the heartache, the sense of injustice in the hearts of the righteous and then placing before them the option of seeking to address the wrong by implementing Satan's methods? Let's use power to inflict pain, suffering, punishment upon the wrong doer—or let's use violence to intimidate those that we perceive have failed us in order to coerce and intimidate them into doing what we think is necessary to fix the wrong.

This is not God's method and will always cause further corruption, division, and problems. Only God's methods heal, worldly methods always divide.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about telling what Christ has done for us personally—does anyone want to share?

With the current events going on in the world many people are become afraid. In fact, some parties use fear of the future in order to manipulate people.

I have found this quote very helpful to me throughout the years:

> "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." Christian Experience and Teaching 204.1

This is one of the reasons to recount our personal experiences. Our experiences of how God has led us in the past, how He has delivered us in the past, helped us, been with us, builds our faith and reminds us that we can face an uncertain future without fear because God is by our side.

FRIDAY

Read both paragraphs, "The essence…" Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 3
Seeing People through Jesus' Eyes

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The title of this week's lesson: Seeing People through Jesus' Eyes—what do you think?

Does it depend on who we understand Jesus to be?

Do we believe seeing people through Jesus' eyes is different than seeing people through the Father's eyes?

When you consider yourself standing before God and being examined—what to you conclude? What to you experience? Do you experience peace, joy, confidence, or fear and anxiety, guilt and shame?

When you consider standing before God and being examined, do you experience confidence because you believe Jesus stands between you and the Father and protects you by preventing the Father from actually seeing you?

This week on Christian radio I heard a pastor telling his audience that we can have confidence because when we sin we have Jesus as our advocate standing next to the Father in heaven to pay the Father for our sin.

Do you think the Father would have an angry response if He saw a sinner without Jesus beside Him to remind Him of the blood He shed to pay for the sinner's sin?

Or, do you think "God so loved the world that He sent His Son…" That "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us…" That "God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself…" that if you've seen Jesus you've seen the Father… that "if God is for us who can be against us…"

What do you think when you think if how God sees us?

When we look at people through Jesus' eyes are we certain we are using the right law lens? Does Jesus look through human law at people, or does Jesus look through God's law? And what kind of law is God's law?

When Adam sinned and ran and hid because he was afraid, how did God approach him? What did it mean that God said, "Adam who told you that you were naked?"

How did God see Adam? He saw him sick, injured in soul, damaged and in need of healing. God did not see him as a criminal in need of punishing.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

I am going to read to you the opening story from my book *The God-Shaped Heart* it is a retelling of the story of the woman caught in adultery and dragged before Jesus. Do we see sinners like Jesus saw this woman or do we see sinners like the religious leaders saw this woman? And do we see ourselves like this woman saw herself, or do we see ourselves like Jesus sees us?

> *She was terrified. Dust caked her mouth, and the tears that made trails through the dirt on her face couldn't flow fast enough to keep the painful grit out of her eyes. Her knees bled from being dragged through the rough streets as she desperately clung to the torn sheet barely covering her body. She frantically looked for escape, but in every direction there was only the impenetrable wall of hate. She could feel their malice building, their hunger for her blood, the dam holding back their pent-up savagery about to break upon her.*
>
> *She knew she deserved to die. She was taught from childhood that what she had just been caught doing was punishable by death, and she loathed who she had become. She remembered how her uncle had taken her innocence when she was only a child and then had told her how wicked and filthy she was. He called her vile names, and those insults replayed in her mind in a nonstop cacophony of self-loathing. Some part of her longed for escape; perhaps death would finally free her from the years of guilt, shame, insecurity, fear of rejection, and chronic loneliness—yes, loneliness. Though she had been with more men than anyone she knew, she always felt alone, unloved, worthless. Life was hard; perhaps it was better this way. Perhaps this was God's will for someone like her, someone who wasn't pure. Perhaps death was all she deserved. Let it come. Why fight it? She sank down in the dirt waiting for the stones to find her.*
>
> *But the stones never came. One moment the vulgar taunts of the murderous mob were all she could hear, and the next—silence. Daring to open her eyes, she saw a pair of sandaled feet. Fearfully looking up, she thought she must be dreaming as she saw the kindest face she had ever seen, and he smiled at her.*
>
> *How could he smile? But he was smiling, and in his smile she saw peace, compassion, and real concern for her. And then she noticed his eyes. They were intense, and she knew instantly that he saw her—not the nearly naked body the mob looked upon nor the frightened girl groveling in guilt and shame. No! He saw her! He saw the little girl, the bruised, battered, betrayed, exploited, misunderstood, and vilified little girl hiding behind years of bad choices, broken promises, and self-hatred. He saw the little girl inside longing to be loved, desperate to be whole—he saw her!*
>
> *She held her breath as he asked her where her accusers were. With a voice barely above a whisper, not wanting to shatter this fragile moment, she told him they had gone. And then, the unbelievable happened, her world shook, her distorted self-image shattered, her understanding of reality changed. His voice was so compassionate, so tender, like the gentlest music, and she heard him say, "Neither do I condemn you." How? How could he not? He knew what she was, and what she had done. She knew what the law said, what the teachers said, what the priests said. Everyone agreed she deserved to be condemned. But not this man! He said no, I don't*

condemn you! I love you and want you to be whole—go now and live a better life, live in harmony with God's design for life and relationships!

The years of pent-up shame burst, and tears began to spill down her cheeks—not the terrified tears of guilt and fear she had shed just moments before, but tears of joy and relief, tears of love and thanksgiving. She was loved despite any previous actions, loved not for what she had done but loved for who she was—a child of God!

There is power in love—power to change people, power to heal broken hearts, power to transform lives. God is love, and it is his plan to pour his love into our hearts to heal, transform, and rebuild each of us back into his original design for humankind (Rom. 5:5). But sadly, something obstructs that love. Something has prevented far too many good Christian people from experiencing that transforming power. (pages 13-15)

Do we see past the sins of people, through their bad choices, through the pain and suffering to see them? Do we see what people can be if they would let Jesus heal them?

Do we see ourselves though the eyes of Jesus or do we let past wounds, past mistakes, past sins fill our hearts with guilt and shame and destroy our peace and obstruct or view of Jesus?

What about if it is more than just a sin like the adultery of the woman in this story, what if it is actual crime, harming another? How does Jesus see us then?

Do you think the two thieves on the crosses were innocent men? Did Jesus love them anyway? Was Jesus concerned for their salvation? How did Jesus see them? Did He still see them as His children injured and wounded by sin, but healable, that if they trusted Him He could fix the brokenness in their hearts—take away the fear and selfishness so that they would be people with godly hearts?

What is the Christian approach to those who have actually committed crimes in our society? Are we to seek vengeance, seek to inflict punishment, or seek to redeem them, to love them, to lead them to Christ for the healing of their hearts?

So, we might restrain them from committing more crime in order to prevent injury to innocents and also from further damaging their own characters, but do we seek to lead them to Jesus to turn them from enemies of God into friends of God? Should we?

What about the officer that has been arrested and charged with the murder of George Floyd—what is the Christian response to him? Should we seek vengeance upon Him? Should we seek vengeance upon other police officers not involved? Should we seek to punish other citizens or organizations or corporations? Or should we see this officer's salvation? How do you think Jesus looks at that officer? Should we see the officer like Jesus does?

Imagine you have a son, in the 5th grade, who has a teacher that has been molesting him. Your son has tried to tell people but no one believes him, or if they do they tell him there is nothing they can do so

he keeps getting sent back to that teacher's classroom. Eventually, feeling helpless and full of anger, your son gets a baseball bat and goes into a rage at the school, breaking windows in cars, breaking computers in the school, hitting other children and teachers breaking bones. Some friends join him, some of whom were also abused, some who just empathize with him, and they protest the injustice done to him and others by march through the community breaking into houses of other teachers, destroying property of anyone along the route, involved or not involved with the abuse, and they call for the city to defund the teachers and fire them all.

Would you love your son? What action would you take if this was your son? What is the primary goal or outcome you want in this situation? What do you want for your son? What do you think is happening inside the heart and mind of your son?

What do you think Jesus wants for your son?

Will your son get a good outcome for his soul, his character, his heart, if the community gives him what he wants, disbands schools, fires teachers, and even buys him a new car, gives him a house, puts money in his account? What is he likely to do the next time he feels he is wronged?

Love wants to heal the heart of your son, to protect him, but your son needs protection from more than the abusive teacher—your son needs protection from himself—from acting on the hurt and pain in ways that damage his soul. So, in love, as a parent would you take the bat out of his hands, would you stop him from attacking and injuring others, would you sit and hold him while he cries, and would you seek to heal the wounds he has suffered—what about helping to heal any wounds he inflicted upon others in his rage?

And if we are really mature in Christ, we would seek transformation of heart/salvation for the abusing teacher—just like God did for king David. But, how many believe the most just thing to do is to use force to inflict suffering, pain, punishment upon the abuser—and not just the abuser but anyone who looks like the abuser?

When we see problems through the lens of human law, crimes to be punished, we will fail to fulfill our Christian mandate of taking the gospel to the world. Our actions will not unite and heal hearts and minds but cause further division.

What about changing the identify of Christ?

Some today are calling for the destruction of images of Jesus in churches and cathedrals that portray him as white. I am not sure what they mean by this—I wish someone would ask them—are they saying he was black? A preacher a year or so ago in this community said that Jesus was black and put up a picture of black Jesus on the screen.

What is the problem when we focus on Jesus' skin color? We are NOT focusing on His character and His true identity as the Son of God. Should His skin color matter to us or should we stay focused on

the only two elements that actually matter for our salvation—that was He the Son of God and He developed a perfect sinless human character?

What impact does it have on people to shift away from Jesus' character to His skin tone? Do such discussions bring greater unity or cause some sense of division, hostility?

Is there a difference in saying "imagine Jesus was black" and saying "Jesus was black"? There can be a benefit to black people to imaging Jesus was black to allow a closer connection in their personal experience. It would be like saying to a woman who is being abused, "Jesus was abuse, imagine he was a woman being abused how would she have handled it?" Nothing wrong with such an imaginary application to Jesus' character and methods.

But would it be helpful to go around and tell people Jesus was a woman and let's destroy images of Jesus as a man and replace them with Jesus as a woman? Likewise while skin color is not important to salvation, character is, those who focus on skin color are not only introducing division but introduce falsehoods—and lies never heal, they only damage.

The truth is that Jesus' humanity was descended through David, going back through Abraham, Noah, to Adam—thus Jesus' humanity was not from the caucuses—meaning he wasn't Caucasian but His humanity wasn't from Africa so he wasn't Negro either. He was Semitic.

Ellen White had visions in which she saw Jesus and she said that one particular picture she saw was the closest to how Jesus appeared to her in vision. This is that picture:

Do the protesters want to shift our focus to Jesus' skin color, trying to promote the idea He was black, because it fits the narrative they are pushing that black people get abused by white people and Jesus was crucified by Romans. Such a view distorts the purpose of Jesus' mission to earth and takes away the real reason why Jesus was crucified. A non-black Jesus doesn't fit their narrative and leads us to realize the true reasons Jesus was crucified was not because of His skin color, but because of His pure and holy character.

So, how do we address the call for the destruction of white Jesus's? By recognizing those calling for these changes are not Christian—they are the ones who Jesus said will come to Him claiming to have done all these good works in Jesus' name, but He will tell then to go away they worked iniquity and never actually knew Him. They are not people who are interested in promoting truth in love—the character of Christ. They are not presenting a message of unity, but of division; they are not interested in healing society's wounds but of causing greater pain and hostility.

We are to see it for what it is and rest confident in the truth of our Savior. People can say all manner of evil against Him and us falsely, but we know the truth and we stand at peace upon the truth. We recognize that those who reject truth are rejecting salvation because salvation is found only via the path of truth. We recognize that they are searing their own consciences and hardening their hearts and we grieve for them, we love them, but we do NOT join them in demonstrations of solidarity that is based upon lies, falsehoods and ungodly methods of conduct.

One of the most deceitful and destructive elements of this current social justice movement is the false dichotomy they have set up. They identify an event or events that expose legitimate wrong that any righteous person is outraged by and desires to see rectified—but then they present two false options—1) their destructive method of violence, coercion, lies about history and demand everyone surrender to their new narrative, story, understanding and actions like removing pictures of Jesus if you want to show you are racially sensitive and here is the other lie they project with intensity—2) if you don't accept their view then you are a racist, bigot, or part of the abusive system.

Thus, they trap many good-hearted people into going along with their destructive methods to keep from being labeled a racist—this is wrong. The lover of Jesus loves all people, doesn't care about skin color, but cares about the quality of character, a person's heart. A follower of Jesus wants to see all people come to salvation and will love those protesting, but realize they are damaging themselves any time they accept lies and use ungodly methods to advance their agenda, and we will NOT be tricked by their false allegations into participating with their destructive methods.

The end-time deceptions are so subtle that if it were possible the very elect will be deceived—this current movement is a very powerful lie because it identifies wrongs that need rectifying but weaves in lies and worldly methods that corrupt.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Jesus healing the blind man and references Mark 8:22, but I want to focus on the blind man in John chapter 9, this is from the NIV:

> As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
>
> 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Thoughts about this? Does it seem strange the way it happened? I was talking to Messianic Jewish Rabbi Eric Walker who told me this was done specifically to demonstrate Jesus was God and the Messiah.

In Jewish culture the Messiah will do the following to prove He is Messiah, which was articulated in the answer to John the Baptist's disciples when they asked are you the one:

- The blind receive their sight—creation power (will unpack this below)
- lepers are cleansed—which was the forgiveness of sin
- the deaf hear—bringing truth to enlighten
- the dead are raised— Lazarus after four days because the Jews believed the soul didn't leave the body until then
- gospel preached to the poor

So, what is the significance of healing the man born blind?

1. "In the beginning God "CREATED"
2. John 9 – Jesus encounters a blind man at the Pool of Siloam – Verse 1 - As Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from birth
3. The term blind from birth begs the investigation into how one could determine 2000 years ago a newborn's visual acuity. The only conclusion that is 100% certain that the man was blind from the moment of birth is that he was born without eyes. This is supported by the fact that he is referred to as having his eyes closed. If he had eyes and was blind that would not be able to be determined at the time of birth. The" born blind" reference in made multiple times depending on the translation.
4. Jesus does what the Creator did on the 6th Day as recorded in Genesis:

> 2:4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, 5 no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 But a mist arose

from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

5. Note that the mist made the earth damp – Jesus took dirt – spit into it to make it damp and created (BARA) eyes for the man born blind.
6. Eye witness testimony is given to support the claim the man was born blind. His Testimony and both his parents.
7. This was an act of "creation" which only God can "BARA" create and in the same manner as God created (BARA) out of wet ground (as in the earth was covered in water, the mist watered the ground, we are a new creation breaking through water, we are baptized breaking through water, etc.) Jesus also "created – BARA) an act of God in the flesh.

The lesson focuses on healing, why is healing such a central part of the gospel message?

I read the following from the book *Testimonies to the Church Vol 6.* What do you think, what lessons are being taught and why?

> **Again and again I have been instructed that the medical missionary work is to bear the same relation to the work of the third angel's message that the arm and hand bear to the body**. [What is the message of the three angels? When you hear it do you hear a message that immediately connects to medical work? What kind of law does medical practice work upon? Design law—laws of health. Who are we called back to worship in the 3 angels messages? The designer/creator, which means design law. What is the plan of salvation except the plan of healing, so we cannot effectively take the 3 angels message to the world divorced from the medical work because to do so perpetuates the imposed law lie] Under the direction of the divine Head they are to work unitedly in preparing the way for the coming of Christ. The right arm of the body of truth is to be constantly active, constantly at work, and God will strengthen it. **But it is not to be made the body**. [What does this mean? It simply means the message of salvation is not primarily a message about healing our mortal bodies from physical illness. While the healing arts operate on design law, and vividly portrays the plan of salvation that is to heal us, the plan of salvation is about healing our characters. So if we make it merely about physical health we miss the entire point.] **At the same time the body is not to say to the arm: "I have no need of thee." The body has need of the arm in order to do active, aggressive work.** [But when we divorce the gospel message from the medical work we make the spreading of the gospel ineffectual because it becomes legal rather than healing] Both have their appointed work, and each will suffer great loss if worked independently of the other… {6T 288.1}
>
> The medical missionary work should be a part of the work of every church in our land. **Disconnected from the church it would soon become a strange medley of disorganized atoms. It would consume, but not produce.** [healthcare, disconnected from the gospel consumes rather than produces—wow—do we see that today? Is the wealth of America being consumed by the healthcare industry? Why? Because it is disconnected from the gospel. The gospel leads people to God which leads people to live responsibly, in harmony with design law, which heals body and soul, and reduces sickness, produces people that are able to contribute to

society, the disabled ill decrease. But, treating illness disconnected from the gospel leads to lifestyles of indulgence that results in more and more sickness and its treatments and more and more disability and the consuming of resources] **Instead of acting as God's helping hand to forward His truth, it would sap the life and force from the church and weaken the message**. Conducted independently, it would not only consume talent and means needed in other lines, but in the very work of helping the helpless apart from the ministry of the word, **it would place men where they would scoff at Bible truth**. [have we seen this happening in our world as healthcare has become and end unto itself and the costs have skyrocketed and many in the healthcare field scoff at the Bible?] {6T 289.1}

The gospel ministry is needed to give permanence and stability to the medical missionary work; and the ministry needs the medical missionary work to demonstrate the practical working of the gospel. [The gospel—good news about God give permanence because it brings people into a saving relationship with God so they will experience everlasting life—eternal healing. Without the gospel than life is temporary. And the ministry needs the medical work to make it practical, in other words to show the plan of salvation transforms and heals, it is not theoretical] Neither part of the work is complete without the other. {6T 289.2}

MONDAY

The lesson points us to the story of the woman at the well and recommends we read it, this is from John 4 in *The Remedy:*

While Jesus was resting at the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus asked her, "Would you be kind enough to give me a drink?"[8](Jesus was alone, because his disciples had gone to town to buy food).

[9]The Samaritan woman was momentarily stunned by Jesus' request because Jews were notorious for discriminating against Samaritans (women in particular) and wouldn't even talk to them. Once she recovered from her shock, she said to Jesus, "What's going on that you, a Jew, would ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" [Imagine in the 1930's being in a Southern state and being a white doctor or professor and asking a black woman if she would use her cup to bring him a drink.]

[10]Jesus, with courtesy and respect, said, "If you knew the gift that God has provided for all humanity, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would ask me and I would give you the water of eternal life."

[11]"Sir," the woman replied, "the well is deep, and you have nothing with which to draw the water, so where do you propose to get this water of eternal life?[12]Are you greater than our father Jacob who dug this well and drank from it himself, as did all of his family and their flocks and herds?"

[13]Jesus patiently answered, "Everyone who drinks of the water from this well, in just a short time becomes thirsty again,[14]but whoever drinks the water of life I give them will never thirst again. In fact, the water of life I give will actually become a new fountain inside them, that will overflow to eternal life."

[15]Upon hearing what Jesus said, the woman eagerly requested, "Sir, please give me this water so that I won't ever get thirsty again and have to keep coming here to draw water."

[16]Jesus told her, "Go and get your husband and come back."

[17]She replied, "I don't have a husband." Jesus gently said to her, "You are right when you say that you have no husband.[18]In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you now live with is not your husband. So when you said that you don't have a husband, that was quite true." [How did Jesus handle this? Did He say it in a way to embarrass or humiliate, or in a way to validate her honesty while letting her know that He already knew about her many husbands and current living situation and He was still speaking with her? What is the message that Jesus knew all about her and still spoke to her kindly and saw her as someone of value or worth?]

[19]Shocked and somewhat uncomfortable with such a personal revelation, the woman said, "Sir, to know such things you must certainly be a prophet.[20]So please help me with a problem: Our people have always worshiped God here on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place we must worship God is in Jerusalem; so which is it?"

[21]Jesus declared, "Believe me, dear woman, the place where one worships God is not important; it is the condition of the heart of the worshiper that matters. Very soon, you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.[22]You Samaritans worship a confusing tradition of rituals that does not enlighten the mind and have no ability to heal the worshiper; we worship the Creator God, and our minds are enlightened and healed by him because all he asks of us is sensible and reasonable. The plan to heal humanity from the infection of selfishness and sin is provided through the Jews.[23]The time has now come that all true worshipers will worship the Father with an intelligent and reasonable understanding of who he is, respecting, admiring and loving the truth about his nature, character, and methods. These understanding worshipers are the kind the Father seeks.[24]God is intelligent and reasonable, and his worshipers must worship him intelligently and reasonably, appreciating and valuing the truth of God's methods and principles."

[25]The woman said thoughtfully, "I know that the Savior of the world, called Christ, is coming. When he comes, he will make plain the truth about God and untwist all the confusing ideas about the Father. He will destroy the lies of Satan that prevent us from knowing God. He will explain the real problem regarding the infection of selfishness and sin within mankind, and he will reveal God's plan to heal and restore mankind to God's original ideal."

[26]Then Jesus proclaimed, "I, who stand before you and am speaking with you, am he."

> [27]Just as Jesus said this, his disciples returned and were shocked to find him talking with a woman — and not just any woman, but a Samaritan. They were too insecure to ask, "Why are you talking with her?" or "What do you want with her?"
>
> [28]After hearing what Jesus had just told her, the woman forgot all about her water jar, rushed back to town, and said to the people,[29]"Come, see a man who knew everything about me. Could this be the Savior we have been waiting for–the Christ?"[30]The townspeople were so intrigued by the woman's testimony that they made their way toward Jesus.
>
> [31]While the woman was witnessing to the townspeople, the disciples urged Jesus, "Teacher, eat something."
>
> [32]But he said to them, "I have food that nourishes me that you don't yet understand."
> [33]The disciples were puzzled and said to each other, "Did someone else bring him food?"
> [34]Jesus said to his disciples: "The food that nourishes me and gives me strength is to do the will of the Father who sent me, and to finish the work he has given me to do: to reveal the truth about him, expose the lies of Satan, and cure human sinfulness.

How did Jesus approach this woman? How did He see her? Did her nationality, race, skin color, gender make a difference to Jesus? Why not?

Did it make a difference to the disciples? Why? What did Jesus want to teach them?

In God's view of earth how many races are there? One human race, all descended from Adam and all of us suffering with the same sin condition and all in need of the same remedy. (We have a sin condition—not a skin condition)

Who wants to fragment us into groups fighting with each other?

The Bible teaches that as we come to Jesus we come closer and closer to each other until eventually all who unite with Jesus are united as one—unified in love and truth.

Consider this historic quote—do you agree?

> **When Christ is not abiding in the heart by faith, there are discord and strife and but little effort made to get near to each other where we can be one in Christ Jesus**. As we approach the **great center**, Christ Jesus will be our Unity, which is as a wheel within a wheel. **The nearer we come to Christ, the nearer we come to each other**. Those who live in Christ realize the greatest harmony, heart with heart. **Discord and strife are not found in that company who are sanctified through the truth**. We need faith and love. Let us seek for it. 12LtMs, Lt 202, 1897, par. 9

I have found this to be true, when Christie and I travel around the world and meet people for the first time who love our Creator God and understand His design law of love, we have such a unity, a

oneness, a connection with them. And they are not all from the same denomination—but they all love God and His design of love.

But when we meet Christians who cling to the imposed law view, there is discord as they often must argue over this verse or that ritual or that observance, rather than the unity of love that comes from Christ living in the heart. Even when in the same denomination.

Read bottom green section, "Who are the people whom, due to the influence of your own culture and society, you tend to view disdainfully, or with a lack of respect? Why must you change your attitude, and how can that change come?"

My blog a week ago *Christian Beware the Trap of the Social Justice Movement* generated a huge response. But interestingly, while my blog mentioned no politicians, there were people who responded with hateful messages toward one politician or another. Some said ugly things about Trump, others said ugly things about Biden etc.

Do you think Jesus loves Trump and Biden and wants to heal both of their hearts? Should we love them any less?

What does it say about us if we harbor (not be tempted with—remember temptation is not sin) but harbor disdain or hate for people in our hearts?

If we see them as suffering from the same sin-sickness as ourselves and in need of the same remedy, does that change our attitude toward them?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Jesus' message…" This is an excellent insight, we all have opportunities to witness God's kingdom. Everyone of us have, and will have, opportunities to witness God's kingdom that will never be available to other people. Do we have minds and hearts open to share God's kingdom to others?

What ways have you found to be effective in doing this?

Read bottom green section, "Why can…" Do we ever mistake leading people to Christ with joining a church organization?

Do we ever mistake leading people to Christ with obeying a certain set of creeds or beliefs?

Do we ever become sin police, monitoring our friends or family members and acting as voices of condemnation to condemn sin in their lives?

Is it hard to lead people to Jesus while holding stones in our hands?

Do we ever struggle with being more intolerant of our own family who are engaging in activities we deem as sinful than non-family members doing so?

Do we ever struggle with being more indulgent of our own family than non-family?

What is the healthy approach to family and friends who are not growing with Jesus?

WEDNESDAY

Dealing with difficult people—have you ever had difficult people to deal with?

How do we deal with difficult people?

- Seek to understand before seeking to be understood;
    - assess with whom you are dealing, their hearts, attitudes, beliefs, biases, wounds, hurts, objections. It requires getting to know someone before you can share with them.
    - In the medical model, we must diagnose before we treat. So, too, before you know what truth of God needs to be ministered into a person's life, you need to accurately diagnose what their struggle or problem is. Too often Christians are taught a false legal view and have a cookie cutter approach that says we are all condemned to death by God and we all need to accept the legal payment of Jesus and we try to fear bash people into praying the sinner's prayer.
- Love people as people, seek to show you care about them rather than are seeking to get something from them
- Live a life that reveals a healthier and happier way
- There are some people that are actually incapable of grasping or understanding certain concepts. How do we deal with them?
- When truth is spoken, speak in love but leave free—no retaliation if they don't embrace or validate the truth you share. Consider the example of sharing the dangers of smoking with someone who either doesn't believe it or doesn't want to change even though they believe it. What should your attitude be and how should you treat them? What if it isn't smoking but is diet, or day of worship or accepting Jesus or marrying someone you think is wrong for them?
- When do we shake the dust off our feet and move on? When is it love to set boundaries, where do we draw that line?
- If a person who smokes comes to your house is it judgmental to inform them of no smoking in your house or car? And if they light up anyway do you ask them to leave if they can't comply with your boundary? How does this apply to other activities? What about critical comments, negativity, cursing, rudeness?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

God's providences—anyone want to share a story in which God opened a door for you to witness for him?

FRIDAY

Read first question and discuss—what is our job in bringing people to Jesus and what is the Holy Spirit's job?

We are to spread truth, the seed, but the HS sinks it into the heart and brings forth fruit—that is not our job.

What if we believe we must see a harvest from our sowing—i.e. we count baptisms etc. Might our approach to sharing truth change if we expect, desire, look for a measurable outcome?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

July 1, we launched our SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available. In July it is *Could It Be This Simple?*

October 3, 2020: 2020 Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 4
Prayer Power: Interceding for Others

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

I received this email this week:

> *Greetings, I am a high school teacher and also an elder in our church. Your teachings have greatly enriched my Christian experience. I try to give tidbits of the teachings to my students and also include them in the weekly sabbath sch lesson slides I prepare every week. Fellow leaders are so unwilling to read but the church members read and instantly accept the teachings and desire more. Thank you so much and may God promote this ministry especially for such a time as now. I will carry it forward in my small corner of the world.*
>
> *Tom Ondiek*
> *Nairobi-Kenya.*

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." NKJV

Why does the Bible tell us to confess our sins one to another?

What happens inside the heart and mind of a person when they commit sin?

They experience guilt and shame, which leads to what internal response? Self-condemnation, fear of rejection, fear of not being good enough, fear that no one will accept them or love them if they knew their sin—which leads to what?

Either—living a lie, wearing a "mask," keeping people at a distance, but always in fear, which leads to religiosity and much legal-behavioral religious works to deal with one's unresolved guilt and shame; OR—it leads to rejection of God, hardening the heart, justifying the sin and continuing in the sin.

So, what is the solution to resolving the guilt and shame of sin? God's grace—experiencing grace, truth, and love. And such grace that heals is given and experienced without earning it, without works, without ritual—in other words the grace that heals is to be experienced before a person joins a denomination, quits their Sabbath job, changes their diet, gets baptized etc.

If you haven't read Curt Thompson's book *Soul of Shame,* I recommend it. Curt is a Christian psychiatrist and a friend. He and I have taught a course together several times for the AACC. He has

some very good Biblical insights into the destructiveness of shame, how Satan uses shame to trap people and God's truths to heal and free from shame.

When Adam sinned how did God approach him? It was grace, "Adam who told you that you were naked? It wasn't me Adam. I am not condemning you, that is your own conscience, that is what sin does."

When we confess to another godly person, our fear of rejection, our fear of condemnation, of being shunned, abandoned, of not being loved is shattered when we experience that we are loved and valued and accepted despite our sin and that there is a God who has provided a healing remedy to transform us and heal the brokenness within us.

This is why we confess one to another—but this only happens when people love each other and understand the truth about sin and salvation; that sin is a condition of being out of harmony with God's design rooted in fear and selfishness, that it is about character, hearts, minds, not behaviors; that the behaviors are the symptoms of the sin-sickness into which we were all born. And the solution is not penal legal focusing on behavior, but healing the heart from fear and selfishness.

If we have a penal/legal approach it perpetuates the mask wearing and living lies because if we confess we are likely to experience punishment from the group, denomination, that we are members in, removal from office, gossip through the church etc.

I have seen this happen, a person confesses his sin and the legal church authority tells them that because they have repented and confessed, that they can still be a member of the church, but that they are now disqualified to preach, lead the music team, be head elder, or host their TV program.

This is why 12-step programs are historically much better at helping addicts overcome than regular church attendance.

I wonder what the legal church authorities would have done with a leader who confessed to:

- Murder—remember Moses
- Seducing a subordinate's wife and then murdering the subordinate--David
- A conman, liar, thief and polygamist—Jacob
- Building shrines to pagan gods and sacrificed his own son—Solomon

How is it that God can use people who do such things?

Because man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. God knows that all these behaviors that these people had were symptoms of hearts infected with fear and selfishness, which is a condition of being that God can cure, if the person trusts Him. Thus, God knows the deeds are merely the symptoms of the condition that needs curing and not legal matters that need punishing. So, when these individuals kept their hearts open to God, God knew the case was not lost and He could not only heal them, but use them in His cause.

Read second and third paragraphs, "There is a direct relationship…" First, I want to emphasize that when we pray for others God works in our hearts to draw us closer to Him. This is part of the law of worship, the law of exertion—we become like the One we worship, admire, focus upon, think about—thus we fix our eyes on Christ. When we spend time in prayer we are positively changed by that experience.

Now effective prayer is humble submissive prayer, praying to God as our Supreme Creator—not as a candy dispenser. If we pray to God mechanistically, reciting memorized prayers it doesn't have the positive transforming effects upon us. If we claim Bible promises like they somehow bind God to fulfill our will, then we are not transformed, we actually treat God like occultists treat demonic spirits, citing incantations to bind the spirits to their will.

- Spontaneous prayer results in activation of same brain regions as when talking to another person (theory of mind), regions associated with anticipation, consideration of another's response, attitudes, feelings, reaction (right & left cortex)
- When reciting memorized prayers or repetitive mantras the same brain regions activate as when reciting nursery rhymes – regions of recall, rote learning and repetition – but not higher cortical function – no prefrontal cortex
- When making a list for Santa the Prefrontal cortex does not activate as in spontaneous prayer—thus our belief about the experience impacts the brain response. This is important because many atheists like to make fun by making comparisons to praying to God to praying in fairies or pixies. Brain science shows that in fact, it is not the same.
- The brain doesn't activate in the same way when interacting with computer or inanimate objects—the brain doesn't expect reciprocity or think about the wants/desires/need of the computer, no empathy, connection, relational interaction. Praying to God then, regularly, would cause one to be more open to self-reflection, how one is living, what principles one is practicing, and thus be more open to grow and mature.

But it does depend upon to which God one prays and for what one prays:

- In the aftermath of 9/11/2001 terrorist attack, University of Michigan scientists evaluated the impact of prayer in coping with trauma and discovered that students who prayed in the aftermath of the trauma had better psychological adjustment 1 year later than those who did not pray.
- But they also evaluated Muslim refugees of Kosovo and Bosnia and found that many of them also prayed to cope with the stress, 60% of whom had PTSD. Interestingly, they found that 77% of them had "negative" forms of prayer, such as praying their enemies "would pay for what they have done." In other words, prayers of vengeance.
- They found that positive prayers and practices were related to high levels of optimism, hope and healthy adjustment, but justice-seeking and anger-related religious practices that sought vengeance were related to reduced levels of optimism, hope and healthy adjustment. (*Journal of Personality* Volume 73, Issue 3, p 763-792, June 2005)

We are changed by prayer, but it does matter to whom we are praying and for what we are praying.

Our brains are amazing quantum computers. They are composed of 100 billion neurons and more than one trillion supporting cells. Each neuron can have up to 10,000 connections to other neurons. That's over 40 quadrillion interconnections!

These 40 quadrillion interconnections in our brains are comprised primarily of dendrites. Within each neuron, there are 10 million microtubules, and each microtubule is made up of billions of tubulin molecules, which in turn are composed of 445 amino acids, which are made of various atoms, many of which share electrons.

Within these quadrillions of dendrites, with their millions of microtubules made of billions of tubulin molecules, the atoms form shared electron clouds. These clouds exist in positions of uncertainty until you think about something and form a conclusion, a belief, or accept a truth — or a lie. Your act of choosing to believe something will cause the electron clouds, in various places within the dendrites, to collapse. This causes conformation change within the microtubule structure, which solidifies the memory or belief into the brain.

This is the process of choosing, when we choose to believe something it changes us, whether it is true or false, the choice to believe it changes the conformation of our dendritic electron clouds. This is why we can have a change of heart, or change of insight, or conviction of certainty very quickly when a belief changes—but the brain hasn't had time to build a new neural pathway or connection. The pathways and connections the brain builds hardwires in learned information and behaviors that can become rote or habitual, but this is different than forming conclusions and beliefs and memories.

Your beliefs and memories are stored within the brain tubulin structure until something happens that causes you to reexamine or reevaluate the belief or memory and come to a different conclusion. This is how beliefs are stored and mindsets are established. This is why the Bible tells us to rejoice in trials because they build character. Difficulties in life will cause us to re-examine our beliefs and the electron clouds reenter a position of uncertainty and we can change our beliefs and when we choose a new belief they collapse in new patterns corresponding to the new belief.

This gives insight into the law of worship, which says that by beholding, we become changed. In psychiatry, this is known as "modeling." We neurobiologically and characterologically change to become like what we admire, worship, think about, choose, and act on. Our beliefs initially collapse the electron clouds storing those beliefs, and then as we act on those beliefs, think through and reaffirm those beliefs, recite them and live them the brain creates pathways wiring in the beliefs to habits of thinking, reacting and processing. Thus, we are changed and transformed by what we think, value, worship, watch, believe and engage in.

If we spend time watching vulgar, exploitive, debasing, cruel, selfish, deceitful, or otherwise ungodly material, we will be changed by it. Our quantum matrix will realign, our neural networks will rewire to come more and more into harmony with what is selfish and evil—that is, what is demonic.

This gives greater importance to the biblical exhortation to fix our eyes on Christ (Hebrews 12:2) and to focus upon "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is

lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8 NIV84). It gives insight into how the Holy Spirit can indwell a person's mind to bring healing and restoration.

Truth sets free; truth heals, because truth changes conformation and the configuration of our brains. Truth realigns us with the Source of truth, such that we become more sensitive to the Spirit of truth—and as we choose the truth, focusing upon, meditating, and worshiping the God of truth, we experience the alignment of our minds with the mind of God. We become "indwelled" by the Holy Spirit.

Consider this like your computer being "indwelled" by antivirus software. That software doesn't overrule your decisions or actions, but rather, in the background, it's constantly monitoring for malicious code, alerting you to what is harmful, and working with you to remove it. But you remain free to ignore or override the antivirus software. However, if you do, the malicious code may eventually defeat the antivirus software on your device and take control of your computer.

Likewise, when we choose the ways of the world—the vile, vulgar, crude, debasing, selfish, exploitive, and manipulative—we change ourselves. What we choose to watch, esteem, promote, and value changes our brain resonance patterns. When we make coercion, force, and intimidation the principles that we value, we become more aligned with the demonic.

The Holy Spirit alerts us to the wrongfulness, the danger, but we remained free and if our emotions are inflamed we may choose to ignore the Spirit and pursue the course contrary to God's ways. In that path we move ourselves out of harmony with God, we sear our consciences, warp our characters, harden our hearts. The Spirit continues to alert us, but if we don't repent and realign with God, over time we become incapable of hearing the Spirit any longer.

The sinful world operates upon imperialism: rules (laws) requiring the infliction of punishment by a ruling authority. When Christians teach others that our Creator God operates like sinful humans do, making up rules that He then enforces by punishing rule-breakers, we reject the truth and choose lies, aligning ourselves with the father of lies.

Satan traps people into becoming like him by getting them to pursue a righteous cause with unrighteous methods, to use the methods of force and coercion to impose their moral standards. Not, mere restraint of people seeking to do evil, but to impose upon people.

Human governments are ordained by God **to restrain evil—they are not capable nor authorized by God to instill or bring about righteousness.**

The imposed law lie, accepted by Christianity—that God's law works like human law—has resulted in the false penal substitution theology and obstructs the work of the Holy Spirit by establishing lies in the minds of people, preventing the truth from transforming the individual. Further, it sets Christians up to believe that using the state to pass laws to enforce morality, rather than restrain evil, is godly.

But, instead of experiencing greater love and trust, the legal methods cause individuals to experience greater fear of punishment for sin and to create theologies designed to protect them from their punishing god (such as Jesus "pleading His blood" so the Father won't kill them); such believers in society often seek to take control of governments to enforce their beliefs.

Another trap is the false idea that if one rejects God altogether then one cannot be part of the process of forming the image of the beast in Revelation. Not so, the beastly system of Revelation is the system of coercion, of legal enforcement of moral imperatives. Those who don't believe in God will always use the methods of the beast because that is the only option left to them. They will seek power to coerce others, because ultimately they are driven by fear and selfishness and not love.

God wants to set us free—free from fear, free from selfishness, free from the methods of this world. He wants to restore in us His character and methods of love. But this is only possible as we are fully persuaded in our own minds (Romans 14:5). We must choose the God of truth and choose His methods, we must reject the lies about Him; in so doing, our quantum matrix is changed and we are transformed into harmony with the God of love and truth.

There is another aspect to the quantum understanding of our being. We not only have the ability to use our physical bodies to impact others, such as a surgeon suturing a wound, or setting a broken bone, or a therapist stretching a limb, or giving a massage etc., but the evidence reveals that we can impact people on the quantum level.

We can directly use our physical ability to impact another person and bring healing. We can do this with or without inviting God into the process. A surgeon who doesn't believe in God can still reduce a dislocated joint, or sew up a laceration and the wound will heal because the laws of God are in operation whether the surgeon believes in God or not.

This is describing the physics of big things—Newtonian physics.

Isaac Newton's ideas of the universe, which focus on laws of motion, an object exerts a direct force on another object and so forth.

Newtonian thinking focuses on the physical aspects of reality brain receptors, electrical signals, neurotransmitters, but this is only one part of our amazing universe

Newtonian understandings fail to explain:
- Consciousness
- Freedom of choice
- Flocks of birds and schools of fish turning in unison
- Human intuition
- The sudden awareness of a loved one in danger
- Miraculous healings

But, God is also the God of the infinitely small things, the quantum world and He built us with quantum abilities as well as physical abilities.

In Quantum physics matter is both a particle—being at a specific point in space-time, and also a wave—extending throughout the entire region of space and time

Quantum Understanding has led to ideas such as:
– Entanglement—everything is in the universe is connected
– Observer effect and String theory

Observer effect is the effect our observations have on the world around us.
- Matter is both mass and a wave, but also has spin and vibration
- But the matter remains in a state of uncertainty until impacted by the observer, the act of measuring, observing, encountering the object determines the outcome—whether it presents as wave or matter. This is also the process of changing our electron cloud conformation—the process of choosing.
- This provides scientific basis for freedom of choice our choices cause real change in the world around us altering how things turn out

We are not merely programmed or fated to have certain outcomes, our choices really do make a difference.

String theory states that everything in the universe is connected by infinitesimally small strings

This idea teaches that particles separated by physical space are connected by these strings—entangled and can impact each other

Now interestingly, years before physicists discovered Quantum Mechanics and string theory, a 19th Century Sage, named Ellen White, one of the founders of the SDA Church wrote:

> It is God's plan that every part of His government shall depend on every other part, the whole as a wheel within a wheel, working with entire harmony. He moves upon human forces, causing **His Spirit to touch invisible chords, and the vibration rings to the extremity of the universe**. (Manuscript 22, 1897. Ev 93.1)

Modern Quantum Mechanics provides a scientific basis for not only freewill choices, but belief in a higher power, who is connected to the entire universe.

This raises serious questions for us today—
- Is the conscious intent of a being able to alter physical matter & impact outcomes?
- Can conscious intention alter gene expression—in oneself and/or in others?
- Can such conscious intent be involved in prayer and healing?

Researchers placed placental DNA in test tubes and instructed participants to generate the emotion of love and goodwill and then focus their intention on causing the DNA to wind tighter or looser

This can be measured by the absorption of UV light, and what did they find?

Focused intention with love and goodwill caused a 25% conformation change in DNA

When the tubes of DNA were in the room with the participate and they generated emotions of love and goodwill but with no focused intention—No DNA change

When focused intention but no emotion of love and goodwill—no DNA change

To get the change it required both the emotion of love and good will and focused intention.

Then to test whether this was a general electromagnetic effect or not, they placed three test tubes side by side and had the participants focus their intent on changing DNA in only two of the tubes but not the third, and that is exactly what happened.

Finally, in five separate experiments, in which the DNA samples were a half mile away from the participants, the same DNA conformation changes occurred when the participants focused their intent with love and good will.

This study would indicate that we can only impact other people or things around us with our prayers **if we have love and good will** along with focused intent. If we have negative emotions, hate, hostility and pray for injury, cast spells, call for harm to a person, this study would indicate that it would have no effect on others—it would change the one praying for the injury through the laws of worship and exertion, but it would not impact the person they are against.

This makes sense if we understand God is love and the quantum linkages are created by and sustained by Him, thus they work upon love, not upon selfishness and hate.

- Elizabeth Targ, MD, PhD conducted a study to measure the impact of remote (long distance, never having met the patient) prayer on terminally ill AIDS patients
- Pts matched regarding CD4 count and severity of illness and randomized into 10 weeks remote healing prayer group or control group
- Faith healers (from multiple traditions) were presented with a patient's photo, name and T-helper cell count
- All patients were blinded to who was being prayed for and who was not
- 6 months later blinded medical review found those who received remote prayer showed:
- Improved mood (p=0.02)
- Significantly less doctor visits (p=0.01)
- Fewer hospitalizations (p=0.04)
- Fewer days in the hospital (p=0.04)
- Fewer AIDS defining illnesses (p=0.04)

- Lower illness severity (p=0.03)
    - *(Western Journal of Medicine* 1998, 169(6), 356)

Our prayers not only invite God and His heavenly agencies to intervene directly into the lives of those we pray for, but if we pray with love, good will and focused intention for their good, our prayers also have a direct effect upon them.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses upon the cosmic struggle—where is the battle fought between good and evil?

2Cor 10:3-5—for though we live in the world…

The battle is a battle for our hearts and minds—it is not over these mortal bodies.

Our bodies are avenues to impact our minds and hearts—disease, pain, assault, starvation, deprivation, all negative things that impact our bodies impact our brains and minds and are avenues to lead us away from God and incite fear, selfishness, and lies.

God's directions in Scripture, which always lead us to harmonize with His design laws, result in greater physical health, relational health, mental health and all of this has a positive impact on our minds and gives us greater ability to grow in God's truth—but it is not primarily about this mortal body, it is about the mind/heart/individuality/soul/psyche, which God plans to transfer to an immortal body.

This is why Jesus said not to fear the one who can destroy the body but cannot destroy the soul—the individuality.

Read first two paragraphs, "The Bible lifts…" This is well said, God respects our freedom and never uses coercion—why is this true? The law of liberty—what happens to love when a person is coerced.

What does God seek to achieve, what is His goal for us? He wants our love, our trust, our loyalty, our friendship, because He is the source of life and only in harmony with Him can we experience eternal life and true happiness. Can God get this from us by taking away our liberty and threatening to kill us if we don't give it to Him?

Do you see how evil the religions of the world are that teach that God is saying "love me or I will kill you?"

Do you see why human governments, which always use coercion, cannot bring about righteousness?

Do you see the trap that Satan is setting up to get people to seek social justice through the imposition of the state? It will only result in more rebellion, violence and division in society. Imposed law cannot bring about love, trust, unity, it can only restrain evil from acting out.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Jesus as a human praying to His Father—why did Jesus have to pray to His Father if Jesus is God?

Because Jesus lived as a human and only used the abilities of a human while He lived here as a human. Thus, He prayed because that is the only way for us humans to have a living connection with God.

What about in heaven today—do we believe Jesus is in heaven today praying to His Father to get His Father to act in our behalf? Or do we see Jesus and the Father working in perfect unity and harmony to achieve the salvation of every human being who is willing to respond—even those who ultimately reject what Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit are doing?

Consider this quote from a book entitled *Prophets and Kings:*

> In his own strength, man cannot meet the **charges of the enemy**. In sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus, our **Advocate, presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him**. He **pleads** their cause, and by the mighty arguments of Calvary, **vanquishes their accuser**. His perfect obedience to God's law has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims from His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. **To the accuser of His people He declares: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan**. These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." And to those who rely on Him in faith, He gives the assurance, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Zechariah 3:4. PK 586.2

What do you hear? What law lens do you hear it through? To whom is Jesus pleading?

Is God confused by the arguments of Satan? Does God need Jesus to educate Him and present evidence to God to get God to understand reality and make the right decision?

Who are the beings that have been confused by Satan? When Satan points out our sins who is impacted by that history? Who gets discouraged, guilt ridden, ashamed and fearful?

Who then needs to be pled with to not give in to the accusations?

When you hear of Jesus pleading in heaven do you understand that He is the Father's agent to plead to you to trust Him to heal you and save you and get you to stop listening to the guilt, shame and lies of the devil?

The same author wrote the following:

> Through the plan of salvation, **Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. [What is Satan's power? Heb 2:14 Jesus destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil. Life eternal is knowing God, what is eternal death? Not knowing God, then what is Satan's power? The lies he tells about God that we believe that keep us from knowing God. Jesus is breaking Satan's hold and rescuing us from his power—how?] All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation. {LHU 234.2}
>
> **He leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love**; [Again, who is being impacted by Satan's lies, and accusations?] he tempts **them** to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it; **therefore he presents their sins *before them to discourage them***. [to whom is Satan' presenting their sins?] He is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt. **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their condemnation.** [by whom? Whom does Satan seek to get us condemned? Is it not in our own minds, that we conclude we are beyond salvation, too sinful to be loved?] Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary**. [To whom is Jesus pleading? Who needs to have the allegations of Satan refuted? Who needs to believe that God loves them and Jesus' righteousness is sufficient for them? Does God need to be persuaded that Jesus righteousness is sufficient to save a sinner? Who doubts? It is you and me that need to hear Jesus' plea!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. [notice now to whom Jesus speaks] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.' These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." Those who rely upon Him in faith receive the comforting assurance: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."** [to whom is Jesus pleading? He rebukes the accuser and pleads for us not to listen to his lies and to trust in Him!] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. . . . **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own** (Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 470-472). [To whom does Christ's plea need to effect? you and me!]

Jesus pleads before the Father, carrying out the Father's purpose to save sinners, the Holy Spirit listens

to Christ and works in you and me communicating the love, grace and pleas of Christ to you and me to win us back to trust, so we will open the door to our hearts and let Him save us from fear and selfishness!

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read about Paul's prayer to the Ephesians in Ephesians 1:15-21, from *The Remedy:*

> Because of this, ever since I heard about your trust in Jesus and your love for all our fellow believers,16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, or remembering you in my prayers.17 I keep asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ — the glorious Father — to pour out his Spirit of wisdom and revelation upon you so that you may know him and all he is trying to accomplish.18 I also pray that your reasoning abilities and conscience may be healed so that you can discern and understand God's purpose for all humanity — the incredible, rich inheritance in store for his children — 19 and God's incomparable power to heal and restore all who trust him. That life-giving power was seen as the outworking of his true strength,20 which he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heaven,21 above all power, rulers and authority, above all other kingdoms, empires or governments, and above every title that can be given–now and forever.

For what is Paul praying? What impact would such prayers have upon the Ephesians? What impact would it have upon Paul?

The lesson also asks us to read Paul's prayer for the Philippians in 1:15-21, from *The Remedy:*

> I am so thankful for you, that every time I speak to God I tell him how thankful I am.4 In all my conversations with God about you, I always talk with joy,5 because you have been effective partners in promoting the good news about God — from the first day you heard it until now.6 I am completely confident of this: God, who began his good work of healing and restoring you to his original ideal, will continue healing you right up to the day Jesus Christ returns to take us home.
>
> 7 It is only natural that I am filled with joy, because you are so dear to me; for no matter what I have been doing, whether in prison or freely proclaiming the good news about God, you have been partakers with me of God's gracious Remedy.8 God can testify how I share with Christ Jesus the deep desire to be with you.
>
> 9And when I talk with God, it is my desire for you that your love may grow — with ever-increasing knowledge and understanding of God's character, methods and principles, with ever-increasing depth of insight — 10 so that you may be able to distinguish with cutting efficiency the difference between the healthy and unhealthy, the true and false, the right and wrong–right up to the day when Jesus comes and takes us home.11 I want you to become true

> friends of God, who have recovered the ability to think clearly, choose wisely, live completely in harmony with God's methods and principles, and who reveal Christlike love in everything you do.

For what was Paul praying?

WEDNESDAY

Read Daniel 10:10-14, 20,21:

> A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.
> 12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. 14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come…" 20 So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; 21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. (NIV84)

Read fourth paragraph, "This is a fascinating…" Who is Gabriel? Who is the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece?

Who is Michael?

Why was Michael the only one who was available to help Gabriel? Didn't only 1/3 of the angels rebel with Satan? Doesn't that mean the good angels outnumber the bad angels 2 to 1? Then why was Michael the only one available to help Gabriel?

What kind of a war are we in? A war of truth, love and freedom against lies, selfishness and coercion—a war over God's character and methods. Satan has misrepresented them and inflames the worst fears and insecurities with deceptions to make it appear his methods are right.

What position did Gabriel take after Satan's fall? The position of covering cherub, the highest position of the angels, the position from where Lucifer fell, the position closest to the throne of God, the position in which he has the greatest knowledge, intimacy, and understanding of God's character, methods and principles.

In other words, there is no other created being that can bring more light of truth and love to bear than Gabriel. The only other being in the universe that can bring more love and truth to bear than Gabriel is

God Himself, thus Michael, Jesus in His pre-incarnate form, comes with the light of God's truth and love and it is sufficient to dispel the darkness of Satan's lies!

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

July 1, we launched our SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available. In July it is *Could It Be This Simple?*

Saturday, October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 5
Spirit-Empowered Witnessing

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

We received this email this week:

> *I'm so excited about the free resource opportunity:):):) I'm sure it is a lot of work on your end but I have been telling anyone I think will be interested:):) Thank you and Praise God for your continued commitment to share and spread this beautiful truth :):)*
>
> *When I was at the conference in TX, I shared with Tim how God had led me to share "The God Shaped Heart" with the pastor of a Sunday church I attend. The Pastor was hungry for answers, for TRUTH. He got the book, studied it, and the Spirit brought the truth home, the pastor received it and he now shares these beautiful God-concepts with his congregation. Sunday, his wife shared with me that until they read that book they were lost in legalism and struggling with confusion about God's character. Their upbringing, though not SDA, had brought the same incongruent concepts. "If He is love than how can this be true"!!!!!!!! (You can fill in the "this" with whatever lie the devil spins!!!!!!) She said that book saved their lives spiritually and their own personal relationship. They have both accepted this beautiful truth and are sharing it with over a 1000 people each Sunday through FaceBook. They are both so excited. She said they have never felt so free in God, Jesus and the Spirit:):):) Truly, PRAISE HIM from WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW !!!!!!!!!! This story brought shivers and tears at the wonder of our AMAZING GOD!!!!*

SABBATH

Mark 16:15 “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’ NKJV

Acts 1:8 “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” NKJV

What is the gospel? Good news? About what? How would you describe it?

- Salvation in Jesus? This is certainly good news—yet Revelation states that the gospel is eternal—meaning there is a good news that has always been good news and will always be good news and is directly related to salvation in Jesus—what is that?
- The truth about God—how is the truth about God eternal good news and how is that truth connected to salvation in Jesus?

What was the basis of sin? What is the core root that caused rebellion against God, disaffection—which means heart loyalty to God was broken and the heart has other attachments, desires and motives than love for God—what caused this?

Lies about God told by Satan—what then would be needed then to save sinners? Would it not be the truth about God that restores trust?

But is the truth about God that wins us to trust enough for fallen human beings to be saved, or is something more needed? What more is needed?

What about a new nature, a new heart and right spirit, a new sinless character? And where do we sinners obtain such a new heart, a new character?

Who not only revealed the truth about God to destroy Satan's lies (Heb 2:14), and said "if you've seen me you've seen the Father," but also, as a human, using only human abilities, lived a sinless life, was tempted in every way just like we are yet without sin. He never gave in to fear and selfishness but loved perfectly. And in so doing, eradicated the infection of sin, fear and selfishness, and arose in a perfected humanity—the new head of the species, the second Adam (Heb 5:8,9)

So, is there a link between the eternal gospel and Jesus?

What happens if we delete and change both of these and replace the true gospel of God's character with something penal legal payment instead?

Jesus died to save us no longer means He died to reveal truth about God to destroys lies and win to trust, and provide us a sinless human character—but instead it means He died to pay His Father a blood payment so His Father won't kill us. If this is what people present, what happens in hearts and minds?

Do you see how this false gospel removes both elements necessary for our salvation—we no longer have the truth about God, instead we have a lie that God is the source of death, **and we don't seek to have a new heart and right spirit**, instead we seek to be hidden from God because we are told we can't be righteous, we can only be declared righteous.

Further, the Spirit is the Spirit of both truth and love, truth to destroy lies and love, which is the character of God and thus what Christ perfectly developed.

So, the Holy Spirit becomes the agency of Jesus to advance the truth, destroy lies, win to trust and then administer into our hearts and minds the new motives and desires, i.e. the character of Christ.

But if we reject the truth about God then we don't seek the Spirit to heal, we instead rest secure in a legal penal solution.

So, the gospel is the good news about God: What is the power? How does the Holy Spirit work?

Here is a quote from the book, *Acts of the Apostles* about power, what do you think?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "Whereunto," asked Christ, "shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?" Mark 4:30. He could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude. In society He found nothing with which to compare it. **Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished.** This kingdom is to uplift and ennoble humanity. God's church is the court of holy life, filled with varied gifts and endowed with the Holy Spirit. The members are to find their happiness in the happiness of those whom they help and bless. AA 12.2

What is the power that we are to use?

> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16 NIV84

What kind of power is in the gospel, which is the good news about God?

Here is a quote from the book *The Desire of Ages* what do you think?

> God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love;** and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** DA 759.1

What is the power of God that we are to use? The power of truth combined with love—and from where do we get such power?

From the indwelling Spirit, that is why the Bible teaches, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

Why doesn't God use compelling power?

What impact does force, threat, coercion have upon a person?

- Increases fear
- Decreases trust
- Increases resentment
- Decreases love
- Leads to either loss of individuality or rebellion

What impact does the power of truth and love have upon a person?

- Decreases fear
- Increases trust

- Forgiveness of wrongs and eradication of resentment
- Increases love
- Leads to restoration of individuality, development of self-governance, confidence and growing up into the full stature of Christ

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2Cor 10:3-5 NIV84

What weapons do we wield? Truth and love, how do we wield them?

Can people think they are promoting the gospel and actually be promoting a false gospel?

> Gal 1:8 "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" NIV84

What happens if we accept a different version of the gospel? The law of worship and exertion, we are changed by our worship and practices. If we persist in promoting a false gospel we become hardened in alienation to God and the truth. If we are lovers of the truth, we may have ideas or beliefs that are not true, because we are finite and growing, but we are sensitive to truth and grow in truth as we are able to comprehend it. So it isn't about knowing all things correctly, it is about loving and growing in truth, rather than holding to views that are not true when truth presents.

Consider the implication of this historic quote from *Acts of the Apostles*:

> **Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death**. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plenitude. AA 50.1
>
> Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, **why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it?** The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. **For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God**. Companies of Christian workers should gather to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely. Especially should they pray that God will baptize His chosen ambassadors in mission fields with a rich measure of His Spirit. **The presence of the Spirit with God's workers will give the proclamation of truth a power that not all the honor or glory of the world could give**. AA 50.2

Do we ask for the Holy Spirit with real desire to receive Him into our lives?

What would cause us to value the Holy Spirit so little?

- Perhaps being frightened by the fear of false spirits? The Bible tells us to test the spirits, perhaps movements that smack of fanaticism, emotionalism, that claim to be the movements of the Spirit of God frighten us into not seeking the true Spirit of God?
- Perhaps accepting a legal theology in which one falsely believes salvation is in claiming a legal blood payment to have one's heavenly record books adjusted—thus no real need for the Spirit, the payment is being made in heaven.
- Perhaps anti-trinitarian teachings that propose that there is no Holy Spirit, that there is only God the Father and the Father is omnipresent, and we can ask for the Father's presence into our lives, but we don't seek the presence of the Holy Spirit because we don't believe He exists?

What happens if we reject or don't accept the Holy Spirit, what is the problem with valuing little the Holy Spirit?

Here is one view of the importance of the Holy Spirit, from *The Desire of Ages,* do you agree?

> In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.** The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. **It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature.** Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome **all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.** DA 671.2

Do you agree? What is the danger of rejecting the Holy Spirit?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "With the promise…" Why was it good for the disciples and for us that Jesus leave and send the Holy Spirit?

What is it that Jesus, the Father and the Spirit actually want for us?

They want our healing, our restoration to righteousness, and what does that require for each of us? That we are each, fully persuaded in our own minds. We each must be convinced of the truth, must

come to trust God for ourselves, must surrender our own hearts to God for ourselves, which means we each must strive in life with temptations, hurts, heartaches, trials, and wrestle out for ourselves these issues in a relationship with God. Thus, sending the Spirit allows each of us individuals access to God in a way that Jesus's physical presence would not. It enhances our engagement in thinking, weighing, and choosing instead of just seeking the expert with the answer to tell us what to do.

God doesn't want us to have the obedience of a well-trained dog, that sits and waits until the master says jump. God wants understanding friends that intelligently agree with Him and freely choose to live in harmony with Him and His methods. This requires that we do more than say, "God you tell me what to do and I will do it." God wants us to understand for ourselves what is right and wrong and to choose the right.

What kind of help does the Holy Spirit give? How does the Holy Spirit work?

- Reveals truth to people in ways they can comprehend
- Brings convictions—of sin, of duty, of longing for something more, of not being satisfied with the disease of sin
- Brings hope, brings comfort, brings love
- Leaves completely free to decide for oneself and when we choose truth the Spirit provides power to follow through with the choose.
- The Spirit also brings gifts and abilities to enable us to succeed in fulfilling any calling God has placed upon us

MONDAY

An Empowered Church—what does that mean to you?

What does empowered mean? What kind of power?

What is the church? Is it denomination? Is it church invisible?

Does the Holy Spirit restrict His activity to specific denominations?

The Holy Spirits seeks to work on every human heart—the work of convicting of sin and bringing people to salvation—this is not the same as being empowered by the Spirit.

Are there any *requirements* to receive the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit?

- Repentance—will we receive the Holy Spirit if we remain unrepentant?
- Repentance leads to humility, i.e. the overthrowing of selfishness and pride—a willingness to be taught, led and changed
- Develop a heart that loves truth
- Loves God and others
- What about some level of truth about God?

Will God send His Spirit to us if we are not lovers of truth, if we cling to false views of God? In other words, will God empower us with His Spirit to take a message to the world that misrepresents Him?

I received this email this week from an online lister, C.K. Lester sharing two quotes from EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church:

I saw these quotes in a video I watched this week.

> "There is to be in the [Seventh-day Adventist] churches a wonderful manifestation of the power of God, **but it will not move upon those who have not humbled themselves before the Lord, and opened the door of the heart by confession and repentance**. In the manifestation of that power which lightens the earth with the glory of God, **they will see only something which in their blindness they think dangerous, something which will arouse their fears, and they will brace themselves to resist it. Because the Lord does not work according to their ideas and expectations they will oppose the work**. "Why," they say, "should we not know the Spirit of God, when we have been in the work so many years?"—The Review and Herald Extra, December 23, 1890.

Of note: "Because the Lord does not work according to their ideas and expectations..." Ha! God's laws are not like man's laws!

> "**The third angel's message will not be comprehended**, the light which will lighten the earth with its glory will be called a false light, by those who refuse to walk in its advancing glory."—The Review and Herald, May 27, 1890.

Do you see how many who cling to imposed law, and teach God is the source of inflicted death for law breaking, and Jesus must pay the penalty to the Father are actually rejecting the Three Angels Message and the power that comes from the Spirit of God?

What about this, could a person or group fail to advance in the truth by clinging to actual truth from a previous generation, truth that was truth for its time, but is no longer truth for today?

For instance:

- Accepting the Old Testament Scriptures and following what they teach but rejecting Jesus as Messiah, so teaching people to be converted to Judaism of the Old Testament variety without Jesus—would that be truth for today?

  Consider this quote from *Acts of the Apostles* p. 61:

  The enemies of the disciples could not but be convinced that Christ had risen from the dead. **The evidence** was too clear to be doubted. Nevertheless, they hardened their hearts, refusing to repent of the terrible deed they had committed in putting Jesus to death. **Abundant evidence that the apostles were speaking and acting under divine inspiration had been given the**

Jewish rulers, but they firmly resisted the message of truth. Christ had not come in the **manner that they expected**, and though at times they had been convinced that He was the Son of God, yet they had stifled conviction, and crucified Him. In mercy God gave them still **further evidence**, [this is the third time in this paragraph that the word "evidence" is used. Notice, not declaration, command, claim, proclamation, order, directive, but evidence, and evidence requires something that proclamations do not—our contemplation, reasoning, understanding and then agreement! And rejecting evidence has a damaging impact that rejecting claims or proclamations do not. When we reject evidence, we turn off the brain regions of thinking, reasoning, contemplation and we cling to non-evidenced based beliefs. This damages the mind and makes it harder to think and discern in the future. But rejecting claims doesn't do that because they are just claims, meaning opinions, not facts, not truths and rejecting them doesn't damage the mind especially if one is waiting for evidence.] and now another opportunity was granted them to turn to Him. He sent the disciples to tell them that they had killed the Prince of life, and in this terrible charge He gave them another call to repentance. But **feeling secure in their own righteousness**, the Jewish teachers refused to admit that the men charging them with crucifying Christ were speaking by the direction of the Holy Spirit. {AA 61.1}

What evidence was presented? Why didn't those church leaders accept the inspiration of the Apostles? What did they use to reject the inspiration of the Apostles? Did they use the OT Scriptures that supported their preconceived ideas and expectations? Do we see this happening today, religious leaders, study for years teaching certain viewpoints and having certain expectations, and resisting any advancing truth that doesn't meet with their expectations?

- What about teaching the truths Martin Luther presented and clinging to his understanding? While Luther moved forward in truth, he was coming out of deep darkness and did recover all Bible truth and to only advance as far as Luther means we are still 500 years behind where truth has advanced. The Spirit isn't going to empower us to go backward.

  Consider this quote from *Christ Triumphant* p. 331:

  We are not to set our stakes and then interpret everything to reach this set point. [which means we are not to go to Scripture to prove what we already believe and have been taught is true] Here is where some of **our** great Reformers have failed, and this is the reason that many who today might be mighty champions for God and the truth **are warring against the truth**… [Many within our denomination are warring against the truth—why? Because they have their preconceived ideas and use the Bible to prove those ideas true, rather than learning from the Bible.] **God designs we should be learners**, first from the living oracles, and second from our associates. This is God's order. {CTr 331.2}

  The Word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine. We must study it reverentially. **We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing it with the Scriptures**.

> [this is something I actively encourage everyone to do with what we teach!] Here is divine authority, which is supreme in matters of faith. {CTr 331.3}

If we want to be empowered the Holy Spirit, do we need to repent, have humble hearts, love the truth, love God and others, but also be willing to grow in the truth?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Throughout the book of Acts…." What about receiving the strength to face trials and challenges in a hostile culture?

Do we see this in the world today?

Do we see hostility to the truths of God's kingdom?

Is there fear in our society of speaking the truth as one understands it?

Which of the following is in harmony with God and which is in harmony with Satan?

- When we hear ideas that we believe are wrong we speak the truth in love but leave people free to disagree
- When we hear ideas that we believe are wrong we use intimidation, coercion, threats of various kinds—canceling speakers, firing people from their jobs, shouting them down—to ensure such opinions are silenced?

From Acts 17:23-34:

> About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. 25 He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."
>
> 28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. 30 Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. 31 Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

> 32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. 33 The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (NIV84)

Why didn't these workers want to listen, to reason, to consider?

You will notice this—when truth is on one's side then we want to engage people, to reason, to examine, to present evidence, to persuade. But, when we don't have truth we want to silence, to intimidate, to shut down voices or views that don't agree with ours.

Truth *always* wins over lies in the minds of those open to the truth.

But those who don't have the truth and don't want the truth will not be persuaded by it, and don't want any presenting it. The truth itself is offensive to them, because it exposes their lies, wrongs, falsehoods.

Jesus said,

> "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (Jn 3:19-20 NIV84)

What kind of methods are being used today by the cancel culture? Would we say that one of the methods is economic coercion—if people speak out against what they like they seek to get them fired, canceled or their products or companies boycotted?

Hmmm….does anyone have concerns that Bible prophecy may be being fulfilled right before our eyes?

> He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, **so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark**, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. Rev 13:15-17

What is being described, what methods? Coercion, force, intimidation and economic pressures and sanctions. Hmmm….are these the methods of God? Do we see the enemy at work when we see such methods being employed?

Do we have the courage and strength to speak the truth in love—to warn people against embracing the methods of the world, to not get a mark in their hand by going along with and practicing the methods of the world, and to not get marked in their forehead by believing those methods are righteous.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about witnessing—what is the central theme of Scripture?

- There is a God in heaven who created the universe
- This Creator God is love and created all things in sinless perfection—without disease or defect
- Real love requires real freedom, so God did not create His intelligent beings as robots or puppets, but gave real freedom.
- This freedom was abused and lies were told about God, and lies believed break the circle of love and trust resulting in fear and selfishness.
- God's design for life was broken, love and trust was displaced by fear and selfishness stemming from believing lies. This is a terminal condition that damages God's design for life.
- God's laws are the design laws He built life to operate upon and deviation damages and destroys.
- God so loved us that when humankind became infected with fear and selfishness He did not abandon us but sent His own Son to reveal the truth to destroy the lies and win us to trust, and to cure the condition by procuring the remedy that heals all who do trust.
- This remedy is freely available to everyone and will heal all who trust God.
- What is the Remedy – the perfection of Jesus Christ, the truth revealed about God first that wins to trust and then in trust a new human character we receive by the indwelling Spirit such that our hearts actually change and we have new desires and new motives.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "A careful study…" Where do you see the gospel struggling today to overcome cultural bias?

Or, how is cultural bias obstructing the gospel?

What about the culture that there is no God, that we all just evolved from lower life? Why is this idea appealing? What was the historic alternative? What kind of God did the Dark Ages church present? What about today is Christianity presenting a God worthy of our worship or is much of Christianity infected with a false god that functions no different than a tyrant?

What other cultural biases obstruct the gospel?

Does racism have any place in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What does it mean that in Christ there is neither Jew or Greek?

If we have ideas promoted today that divide people on the basis of race, is that from God?

Does the Bible divide people? What are the camps the Bible divides people into?

The metaphors are:

- Wheat and tares
- Sheep and goats
- fruitful and withered vines
- pure woman and harlot

But these are metaphors of what reality? God's people are the righteous versus Satan's people who are the wicked, which divides people by what? Character! Do we have the character of Christ or the character of the enemy?

When we focus on nationality or race or gender what are we not focusing upon? Character and thus we divide on issues that incite more conflict, hate, fear, selfishness and obstruct God's plan to bring all people under one head Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 6
Unlimited Possibilities

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs, "God calls us to witness…" To what are we to witness about? God—to be sure—but does the message about God ever take on any specific focus relevant to the situation of the people at a specific place or time in history?

- Did Noah witness for God but have a specific message to give?
- Did Moses witness for God when he appeared before Pharaoh and demanded the Hebrews be set free to worship Yahweh?
- Was Samuel witnessing for God when he called king Saul to account for taking booty from one of the cities they conquered?
- Was Jeremiah witnessing for God when he told Israel, including the leadership, to submit to Babylonian rule?
- Was Jesus witnessing for God when He answered the question about taxes and told them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's?
- Was Paul witnessing for God when he told the Christians how to live in relationship with Roman authorities in Romans chapter 13?
- Was Ellen White witnessing for God when she wrote the book *The Great Controversy* in which she describes the long history of church-state abuse and governmental policies that violate God's principles and warned about forming of the image to the beast?

Now, were any of these witnesses for God being political, or were they witnessing for God in the context of real-life situations in which the people found themselves?

Were any of these people running for governmental office? Were any of these people seeking to change the governments of the world? Were any of them seeking to get certain judges, senators, governors elected or laws passed?

Does witnessing for God mean that we never speak about issues that intersect with the state?

If we do speak about issues that intersect with the state does that mean we are being political? Certainly, we could be—but can we speak about God's methods and principles and how to apply them to our current circumstances without being political, yet addressing current events?

I have received a few emails recently from people saying they feel that over the last six months or so, that our class has become political. I would counter, that we have not become political, but eschatological, that I continue to advance God's kingdom of truth, love, and liberty, founded upon God's design laws, that are an expression of His character—and like the great spokespersons for God

throughout history, at times, we make local and contemporary application of God's principles to our real-life situation.

I am not advocating for a political party, or a specific law, or a politician—I am advocating for the truth, for people to be freed from manipulation, for the application of God's principles and method, and for the recovery of the image of God in people. I am sounding an end-time warning to alert people to the dangers of joining forces with movements that are practicing principles contrary to God's kingdom, despite their stated goal.

At this time in human history, to what are we to witness? What is our message to the world today? What are we to share that meets the needs of society today?

Now I love this quote and have shared it before, it is found in the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, what do you think?

> **It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character**. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. **At this time a message** from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth…**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love**. The children of God **are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them**. COL 415.5

Does this have anything to do with the law of God? How is the law of God and God's glory and our revealing God's glory in our lives related?

Can we live out the law of God without confronting intersecting with people and practices in our society that violate the law of God?

I found this quote by the same person who wrote *Christ's Object Lessons* and she attributes these words to an angel of God—what do you think?

> Said my Guide, "**There is much light yet to shine forth from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness**. [What do you think is being referred to? More rules, or the light of God's design law, how God built life to operate—the law of love and liberty an expression of the character of God? Are we giving more light to the law of God by presenting it as design law and rejecting the imposed rules view?] **This message, understood in its true character, and proclaimed in the Spirit, will lighten the earth with its glory**.[What message? The truth about God, who is love, who created the universe to operate upon the law of love and that God is completely trustworthy.] **The great decisive question is to be brought before all nations, tongues, and peoples**. [What is the great question? If God is like Baal—an imperial dictator who imposes rules, inflicts punishment, and requires legal solutions—then worship him by becoming like him, by practicing his methods, by embracing imperial rule. Mark yourselves in

> your hands by your actions of going along with forcing people by coercion and threat to do what you want, or mark yourselves in your forehead by believing it is actually right to do so. Or, worship Yahweh, the Creator, whose laws are design laws, and present the truth, in love while leaving people free and be sealed in your foreheads with the seal of God by being settled in character into His methods and principles.] The closing work of the third angel's message will be attended with a power that will send the rays of the Sun of Righteousness into all the highways and byways of life, and decisions will be made for God."—Manuscript 15, 1888, 5. (To "Dear Brethren Assembled at General Conference," November 1, 1888.) 2MR 58.1

How is the law of God related to the third angel's message?

Here is a description from the book *Christ Triumphant*:

> The first and second messages [Revelation 14:6-8] were given in 1843 and 1844, and we are now under the proclamation of the third; but all three of the messages are still to be proclaimed. It is just as essential now as ever before that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel's message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. . .
>
> "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.[What is the eternal gospel—the good news that has been true for eternity past and will be true for eternity future and which Jesus revealed in His life here on earth? That God is not as Satan alleges, God is truly good, trustworthy, and a being of love. But notice, specifically what comes next] He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.[What law lens are you hearing this through? The hour in which a tribunal is set up, or the hour in history when enough truth has been presented that people can make a right judgment about God? Notice, immediately after saying the hour of *his* judgment has come, we are told what to do in response to finally judging God correctly] Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.'" [What kind of law is creation built upon? Design law, stop judging God to be a dictator and the source of inflicted pain and death, and judge Him correctly, as Creator whose laws are design laws] This message, if heeded, **will call the attention of every nation and kindred and tongue and people to a close examination of the Word, and to the true light in regard to *the power* that has changed the seventh-day Sabbath to a spurious sabbath**. . . The Sabbath memorial, declaring who the living God is, the **Creator** of the heavens and the earth, has been torn down, and a spurious sabbath has been given to the world in its place. **Thus a breach has been made in the law** of God. . . {CTr 338.5}

What are we to call people's attention to? Not the Sabbath or Sunday as *THE* issue, but to the *power* that changed the Sabbath to Sunday. In other words, the Sabbath-Sunday issue is the evidence of the breach in the law, and what was that breach? The lie that God's law is imposed law—changing in the minds of people that God's law functions like human law. This is the breach, the Sabbath was created

as a day of rest and is evidence of design law, Sunday was legislated as a day of rest and is evidence of imperial law or human law. Thus, we are to call people out of a system of imperialism, religions that teach God's law functions like human law and back to worship our Creator whose laws are design laws. This is the repairing of the breach!

So what is the final message of mercy? The truth about God—His character and methods of love, design law, how reality works.

SUNDAY

Differing Gifts—what does it mean that we have differing gifts?

From where do our gifts come?

If we have differing gifts does that mean we have different value or worth? No!

If we have differing gifts, even though we the same value and worth, do we have different abilities?

If we have different abilities, despite having equal worth, what would that mean for where we find ourselves working in God's cause? Do we all end up doing the same activity?

What about in society as a whole—do these principles hold true? Are we all of equal worth as children of God? But do we have different abilities, gifts and talents? Does that mean some individuals are better suited than others for various positions or jobs?

Do we also have different individualities, and do we develop different characters?

Do we apply ourselves uniquely and thus, can two people with similar gifts get different outcomes because of different applications of their gifts?

What is God's role in the development of a person's gifts, abilities and talents?

What is the person's role?

What is society's or government's role in the development of an individual's gifts?

Are there laws involved—what kind of laws? What are the design laws that are involved? The law of exertion, the law of worship, the law of love, the law of liberty—all of these are involved in a person developing their abilities to the maximum.

Can governments legislate and enact laws designed to help people develop their abilities—like laws that all children will attend school? Or laws that provide meals for kids at school. Will such laws cause all children to get equal outcomes from school? Why not?

- Are all teachers equal?
- Are all schools equal?
- Are all children equal?
- Are all homes and parents equal?
- Do all have equal friends?
- Do all have equal ability?
- Do all have equal health?
- Do all have equal sleep, nutrition, safety, or support?
- Do all apply themselves equally to the task of learning?

Do all have equal value and worth? So does equality in value and worth mean we all get equal outcomes?

What is the Christian's responsibility?

What principles must be applied in order for people to maximize their development?

To maximize development, individuals must be stressed, challenged, pressured to struggle against difficulties. In other words, strength come from exertion, so in order to grow people have to be presented with problems or obstacles that are beyond their current level of functioning or understanding, yet within their ability to master.

Most of the time this means they will not initially perform well or won't initially understand. It means that frequently they will get the problem wrong—but as they apply themselves their skill, understanding, and abilities get strengthened, honed, developed and improved. A good teacher or coach will push, but also encourage.

It is damaging to people to never be stressed, challenged, or pressured, to be given advancement without having applied oneself and developed one's abilities. In other words, passing children to the next grade when they haven't mastered their current grade-level, because we don't want to hurt their feelings, or stigmatize them is damaging.

The first paragraph of our lesson talks about unity despite differing gifts, do you hear anything we have been talking about this morning that if applied is unifying? Have we been elucidating ideas and principles that are universal truths, that are true for all people, of all cultures, throughout all human history?

Have these principles of individuality, hard work, reaping and sowing come under attack in our society recently? Why?

Consider the impact in history when position was awarded based on identity rather than ability:

- Divine right of kings—rulers become rulers because of inheritance not because of ability, not based on character, talents or gifts. What happened in human history when this occurred?
    - Do you notice God overthrew this human tradition in several places:
    - Abel and Seth inherited the blessing, not Cain;
    - Isaac inherited the blessings, not Ishmael;
    - Jacob inherited the blessings not Esau;
    - Joseph inherited the double portion of the first born, not Reuben;
    - Judah became ruler of the family not Reuben, Simeon, or Levi;
    - Ephraim inherited the blessing of the firstborn not Manasseh.
    - Solomon inherited the kingship not David's older children.
- What about in society today, what happens if we place people in position based on some identity issue, rather than ability?
    - Pastors are based on gender not upon gifting by the Spirit?
    - We require school admissions or business admit or hire based upon gender or race rather than qualifications?
    - What impact does that have upon people if we reward based no some identity issue rather than on abilities? Would it undermine individual application, why strive, why develop, why achieve, it won't matter, what I need to do is be identified with the groups that get advancement, that is what matters. Character isn't important, group identity is what is important.
    - This same problem can be applied to religion, when people believe belonging to the right denomination is what matter not character. 2000 years ago, "We are Jews and we have Moses and the Law, and we are God's chosen." What about today, "We are Seventh-day Adventists and we are secure because we have the Sabbath and we are God's chosen."
    - Is it about identity with various groups whether race, nationality, or religion, or is it about having character like Jesus?

Is it ungodly to *discriminate*—meaning to differentiate in our decision-making—in who we hire, what position we place people in, who we marry, who we let babysit our children, who we associate with *based upon character, abilities, gifts*? Or are we supposed to make such discriminating decisions?

One of the falsehoods that has become commonplace in society today is that being equal in worth, in value, means we have equal abilities—it does not. This falsehood leads to the idea, that it is wrong to discriminate based upon ability, character, gifting, or talents—it is not.

It is actually good for all involved to be truthful, to say to those ill-suited for certain tasks or roles, that they don't have the requisite qualifications or skillset for that position.

When does this become a problem? What happens if a person gets their feelings hurt when they are rejected in a relationship or for a position?

Have you ever been rejected for a position—whether being left out in a pick-up game on the playground, or rejected when dating, or rejected by an employer, or rejected by a church group?

How did you respond when rejected?

How did Jesus respond when He was rejected?

What is a healthy response to rejection?

- Be truthful—evaluate, to the best of your ability, why you were rejected, was it because:
    - you were ill suited for the position?
    - the other person was ignorant of your abilities?
    - the other person had a bias against you?
    - the other person didn't have a bias against you, but did have a bias toward the other person that was selected (nepotism for instance)?
    - God was protecting you from some future bad outcome?
- Apply the truth
    - If you realize that you are ill suited, then address that concern.
        - If you weren't picked for a basketball team and you are 5'8" tall, accept the truth about yourself, you will never be a professional basketball player, no matter how much you practice.
        - If you don't have the education, license, experience, then if you want the position go to school or get the license
        - If you have character shortcomings—an addiction you have not addressed and thus were rejected in a relationship—then get into recovery etc.
    - But if you realize that you are well suited but still were not chosen, then apply the truth that your rejection in that circumstance was not about you, but about something outside of you, and that if you have put your life in God's hands, then you can have assurance that God is protecting you, or the other person has their reasons that have nothing to do with you and move on.

In the last two paragraphs the lesson uses the Bible metaphor of the body, and that the body has many different parts that have different functions, but all are important to the overall health of the body. They give the example of the eyelashes, and how small they are, but what an important role they play.

Likewise, in the body of Christ, the church, we all have different abilities, gifts, talents—and have developed them differently. And therefore, will have different roles to play, but as long as we are surrendered to God, following where God leads, we will be useful to the body of Christ and in God's cause.

What is the basis of true unity? Do we have true unity when we all take an oath to believe the same creed or list of fundamental beliefs?

Or, is true unity found when we have had our hearts renewed to love like Jesus loves—including having hearts that love the truth and love to grow in the truth?

If we have a group of people with hearts that are pure, that love like Jesus, that are honest, kind, patient, peaceful, true, meek—does that mean they all believe the same on every point?

Why not? Because we are all finite, we are all coming from different backgrounds, we all have different experiences, different education, and are at different places in our maturity—thus it is predictable and inevitable that we WILL understand various points of doctrine differently. We are not unified by having the same list of beliefs—we are unified in loving the same God, surrendering to the same Savior, and have the same design law (love, truth, freedom) written upon our hearts, so we practice the same methods.

I have unity with my grandchildren—we are united in love, affection, devotion, trust, loyalty—but we certainly do NOT understand everything the same way—and our difference in understanding is not a source of division between us, why not? Because of love, because of trust, we both have hearts to understand the other. I love to hear how my grandchildren understand things, and they love to spend time with me and learn from me.

Why is it not like this in the church, with some being more mature than others, but all having love for each other?

In my experience, traveling around the world, whenever people accept the truth about God's character of love, and His law as design law, there is this unity of heart. We may still see certain points differently, but we have real friendship, affection, and love for each other.

But when unity is based on legality, agreeing to a certain list of rules, then arguments are frequent when differences of belief, doctrine, definitions, rituals, practices, come up. Why? Because security is not found in heart transformation, but in rule-keeping. In that situations, whenever someone doesn't believe things like us, it makes us insecure and incites argument and conflict, rather than loving acceptance.

When is it appropriate and even necessary to amputate a body part? When that part becomes gangrenous—which occurs when it is cut off from the blood flow despite being attached to the body.

Is there a lesson in this for when we need to cut people off from our fellowship?

What does the blood represent? The life and love of Jesus. And what happens in our hearts and minds if we shut ourselves off from God's presence in our lives? We become more selfish, more fearful, and will manifest the fruits of the selfish spirit—gossiping, judgmentalism, perversities of various kinds, unkindness, untruthfulness, accepting and teaching lies, hardness of heart.

But, when do we sever the connection with such people—when do we amputate a person from our fellowship? Jesus said the wheat and tares grow up together until the harvest, that we are not to seek to uproot the tares from the church—yet, are there times it is still necessary? When?

When a limb of the body does need to be amputated, who do we want to do it? How do we want it done? Are there a lessons in this analogy in how we should handle the painful circumstance of severing a connection with a church member who has hardened themselves in such a way they are leading others away from God?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "According to 1Corinthians 12…" Do you believe this? Do you see this as an issue of trust in God?

What happens when people trust God with their lives, accept their abilities and gifts, humbly seek to apply them where God leads? What happens when people do not do this?

Satan tempted Eve to be dissatisfied with the gifts and abilities and position God had given her, and he suggested she could be more if she would merely take the fruit God had said not to partake of.

How many people today, partake of some "forbidden fruit" because they are not content with their lives, their selves, and are seeking for more ability, fame, power, position, or wealth than God has called for them to have?

What happens when we are not content with God's plan for our lives?

What do you think of this historic quote from *Review and Herald August 4, 1910:*

> God did not create evil. He only made the good, which was like himself. **But Satan would not be content to know the will of God and do it.** His curiosity was on the stretch to know that which God had not designed he should know. **Evil, sin, and death were not created by God; they are the result of disobedience, which originated in Satan**. [A result of disobedience, not an inflicted punishment by God for rule-breaking, but the unavoidable result of being out of harmony with the design laws that God built life to operate upon.] But the knowledge of evil now in the world was brought in through the cunning of Satan. These are very hard and expensive lessons; but men will learn them, and **many will never be convinced that it is bliss to be ignorant of a certain kind of knowledge, which arises from unsatisfied desires and unholy aims**. The sons and daughters of Adam are fully as inquisitive and **presumptuous as was Eve in seeking forbidden knowledge**. **They gain an experience, a knowledge, which God never designed they should have**; and the result will be, as it was to our first parents, the loss of their Eden home. When will human beings learn that which is demonstrated so thoroughly before them? RH August 4, 1910, par. 4

Can you think of types of knowledge that God never designed for us to have? The knowledge, by experience, i.e. knowing, anything that is out of harmony with His design law for life.

He doesn't want us to have:

- The knowledge of what taking cocaine or other illegal drugs feels like
- The knowledge of adultery
- The knowledge of worshipping false gods
- The knowledge of sorcery or witchcraft or communing with demons
- The knowledge of cruelty to other people or to animals
- The knowledge of murder
- The knowledge of bearing false witness
- The knowledge of envy
- The knowledge of laziness
- The knowledge of gluttony
- The knowledge of pornography
- The knowledge of war
- The knowledge of human politics (remember God warned them against kings)
- The knowledge of sin in all its deviations from God's design

If God did not want humans to have the knowledge of evil, why did God put the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden?

Notice it was the Tree of the *Knowledge* of ***Good AND*** *Evil*, meaning what?

It was the Tree, that would impart knowledge, but what kind of knowledge?

- Was it a tree where they would go to pick up books to read about good and evil?
- Would they get a TED talk on good and evil at the tree?
- Would they hear sermons or have Bible studies at the tree?
- What kind of knowledge were they to get there?
- When Jesus said, "This is life eternal that they might *know* you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) what kind of knowledge what Jesus speaking of?
- So, what kind of knowledge were they to obtain at the tree?
    - The knowledge of experience. They were to consider, reason, think, reflect, examine the evidence, and then decide and choose to internalize into their hearts and minds either good (trust in God, choose thee truth and embrace His methods and thus know good) or internalize evil (distrust in God, choose the lie and embrace Satan's methods and thus know evil).

God put the Tree there for their development, for them to exercise the abilities God had given them so they could solidify themselves in perfect loyalty to God—so they could *know* good.

It was never God's design or intent for them to come to *know* evil by experience. It was God's design, for them to know the evil of sin by description, by education, just as God and the loyal angels had warned them—"in the day you eat thereof you will surely die." But God never wanted them to know evil by experience.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "God promises that His…" Are gifts of the Spirit restricted by gender? Are certain gifts given only to men or to women?

Do we obstruct the health of the church if we take the position that only certain gifts can be experienced by men?

Are there objective differences in general between men and women?

Is it ungodly, discriminatory, to recognize these differences?

Why do you think, through all human cultures, throughout all recorded human history, societies have been organized in families with men being predominantly in leadership?

Is it only because of selfishness and men abusing their physical strength, or are their objective reasons that contribute to this arrangement, including in homes where godly love rules?

Consider human history, and consider a husband and wife who both love and trust God and want to live according to God's design. They enter into a genuine partnership to live other-centered lives; they both seek to bless and uplift the other and never seek to dominate, abuse or control the other. Would the couple want to divide responsibilities between the two of them so that their family would be most successful in their society?

Then, who would likely be the hunter, the woodsman, the plowman, the laborer and who would be the child bearer and homemaker? Would this be because of abuse, or because both husband and wife want to maximize their inherent strengths for the good of their family?

If a more successful arrangement could have been found in history, don't you think it would have emerged? Has a more successful arrangement ever emerged?

Now, does that mean there cannot be crossover? Are there examples in history of strong women succeeding in leadership?

But what happens when we ignore inherent differences in ability, and move forward with practices that ignore those realities? Are there any dangers?

Are families under assault today? From what forces? Are women being tempted in societies today to be dissatisfied being a mother and homemaker, to not be content in following their gifts? I know of women who love being mothers and homemakers, and yet still experience criticism for not working outside their home.

TUESDAY

What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Read first paragraph, "Spiritual gifts…" The gifts are for the healing of people and the elimination of sin, for the advancement of God's kingdom.

The lesson asks what is the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents?

Read third paragraph, "The special gifts of the Spirit…"

THURSDAY

What is necessary to grow our gifts? Are any of God's laws involved? What happens if we don't apply ourselves?

Should we expect our gifts to just be given and develop without application?

What about ideas in society that it is wrong to expect hard work?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, "To everyone…"

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 7
Sharing the Word

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "When we witness…" This is an great point, that our witnessing is about Jesus, not about a denomination, or a rule, or a creed, or a ritual, but about Jesus.

And who is Jesus—what would you tell someone about Jesus?

And as we witness about Jesus what is important that we witness about?

> Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the **testimony of Jesus**. (Rev 12:17 NIV84)

What did Jesus say He was here to witness about?

- Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9 NIV84)
- I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you… (John 17:4-6 NIV84)

What was Jesus' testimony to reveal? The truth about God, is this related to the eternal gospel mentioned in the 3 angel's messages and the final message of mercy to the world? How?

- The eternal good news is the good news about God—which Satan lied about in heaven and lied about in Eden and has continued to lie about and misrepresent through all human history
- The final message of mercy to the world is the truth about God's character of love, which is manifested in Jesus Christ, who lived out perfectly God's living law of love.

So, when we witness about the Word are we making it clear Jesus is the living Word of God who became human in order to reveal God to us while simultaneously exposing Satan and sin and procuring the remedy to heal humanity from sin?

When we witness about Jesus, whose testimony was about His Father, do we have to use the name Jesus?

Is it sometimes wise when witnessing about Jesus not to actually use the name Jesus? When?

How did Jesus speak to the people? He used parables, why?

What did many of His parables reveal?

Design law, the methods of God, exposing the lie of imperialism and arbitrary rules.

Parables of Jesus

The Lamp - Matthew 5:14-16

- If one lights a lamp and let it do what it does naturally and don't interfere by artificial means, it shines. What kind of law is revealed in the parable? God's truth and love will always shine out of our lives to brighten the world around us. And if one tries to hide the light they are working against how reality operates.

The Speck and The Log - Matthew 7:1-5

- What is the natural result of a larger object in one's eye? One cannot see clearly with obstructions in the eye. This parable teaches the reality that lies obstruct our ability to discern. The more lies one believes the greater the blindness. So if we want to be effective in helping others we must first remove the distortions from our own minds. What kind of law is described here? Again, design law, how reality works.

New Cloth on Old Garment - Matthew 9:16-17

- What happens, if new cloth is sewn onto old cloth? The new cloth tears the old garment, why? Does a ruling authority inspect the garment and issue a decree that law enforcement must enforce by tearing the garment or is it design law, how reality works? This is the same lesson as in the new wine in old skins that one of our class members wrote an excellent blog about, which you can find on our website.

The Divided Kingdom - Matthew 12:24-30

- A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, why? What is the reason? It is the natural result of warring against oneself. The system collapses. Do we see forces at work in America today to divide the country—not just typical politics in which all parties are for the same goal of a stronger nation and merely debate different ways to get there, but are the divisions growing in such a way they threaten the actual health of the nation? What kind of law causes the collapse when a kingdom wars against itself?

The Sower - Matthew 13:1-23

- What is the lesson? Why do the seeds grow differently? Is it because of God uses His power to make the seeds grow differently? Or are the seeds equally healthy when planted, the sunshine and rain are the same for all, but the soil where the seeds are planted is different? Which represents what? The hearts of people into which the seeds of truth are planted—what kind of law is involved?

The Weeds Among the Wheat - Matthew 13:24-30

- What is revealed in this parable? Why do weeds grow in a field? Do they come up naturally or are they planted? What happens if you pull weeds growing next to wheat? Does some of the wheat get pulled up? Why? So what is the lesson—what kind of law is involved?

The Mustard Seed - Matthew 13:31-32

- What do mustard seeds do when planted in a garden? How do they do it? What does the mustard plant become—a place of shade for others—why? What is taught? What kind of law is involved?

The Leaven - Matthew 13:33-34

- What is the lesson of leaven? How does leaven work? Is it that God inspects the flour and if there is leaven then God uses power to perform a miracle for those who use leaven but won't perform the miracle for those who don't? No, it is a natural result of design law at work.

Hidden Treasure - Matthew 13:44 and Pearl of Great Price - Matthew 13:45-46

- What is taught in these two parables? What is the natural result when our hearts value something? And when we value it more than anything else in the world what do we do? What law is being described?

The Net - Matthew 13:47-50

- What determines which fish are kept and which are discarded? It is the condition of the fish themselves—there is no jury, no prosecutor, no defense lawyer, no judge. It is all based on the actual condition of the fish. So too in the end of time people are separated by their condition of heart—having accepted Jesus and been renewed in love, or rejected Jesus and been hardened in selfishness. This is design law, no penal/legal issue at all!

What Comes Out of the Mouth - Matthew 15:10-20

- Why is it that what goes into a person's mouth does not determine his cleanliness but what comes out does? What kind of law is involved? Is the person unclean because someone hears what they say, reports it to authorities, has a judicial review and a legal ruling that declares them unclean? What was Jesus teaching?

The Lost Sheep - Matthew 18:10-14

- What is revealed? The heart of God, who loved the world so much He gave His only begotten Son—does it teach that God was paid such a high price, the blood of His Son, that He was induced to go look for the sheep? No, He already valued the lost sheep so much that He went to find it. Did the sheep have to do anything to get the shepherd to come looking? What is the natural action to take when we love someone who is lost? Again, the reality is God's character of love, nothing legal.

The Unforgiving Servant - Matthew 18:23-35

- What causes the servant with the great debt to ultimately be lost? What lesson is taught? Is it a legal issue, or an issue of character? Was the man with the great debt given grace—did the grace change his heart? What law is revealed?

Laborers in the Vineyard - Matthew 20:1-16

- This is a great parable because it really exposes the fallacy of imposed law. The workers who worked one hour got the same pay as those who worked all day. What did those who worked all day think? What do you initially think when you hear this story? What if we added to the story that those who worked all day were people of color and those who worked one hour were white? Is it fair that they all got the same pay? It is totally unfair *if we have an imposed law view*, but if we have design law view and understand that the payment, the reward, is eternal life with Jesus and the field is the field of this earth where we work to save souls, then it is totally fair. Those who worked all day had salvation early in their life and the privilege of working with God and therefore coming to know Him better. They applied His methods early in their lives and became more skilled in laboring for Him, and applying His principles, which means they became more mature than those who only worked an hour. But, if one holds the human law model it appears unfair. It is a great parable.

The Two Sons - Matthew 21:28-32

- One says he will work in his father's field but then doesn't, the other son says he will not work in his father's field but then does, what is the lesson? What law is involved? How many today are being duped because they go merely on the words people say and don't look at their actions? Lies are mere words, truth is how reality works. Thus, the parable is again application of design law revealing the truth in spite of the words.

The Tenant Farmers - Matthew 21:33-45

- This parable reveals the actual condition of the hearts of people and the actions they take when selfishness rules in the heart. They are lost in the end because of hardening their own hearts despite all the pleas from the landowner (God) to repent. No legal issue, but reality of their heart condition.

Marriage Feast or Great Banquet - Matthew 22:1-14

- Who was invited, who came, who decided who attended, what is the lesson? So who decides who is at the banquet and who is not? Is this a legal process of bad deeds done and then getting records expunged by the application of some payment, or is it a process of accepting the invitation and partaking of the resources provided—i.e. the clothing given, which represent the remedy of Christ's righteousness which heals us.

The Ten Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13

- What makes the difference in the wise or foolish, what is the lesson? Why don't lamps shine without oil, is it a miracle God performs for those who have oil but refuse to perform for those who don't? Or is it how reality works? Who can have the light of God's character without the oil of the Holy Spirit in their hearts? So, who decides which are the wise and foolish, who have the oil and who doesn't? What law is involved?

Ten Talents or Gold Coins - Matthew 25:14-30

- What is the lesson? What law is described? The law of exertion! What happens if you don't use the talents you have—if you don't use it, you lose it. But if you apply yourself you gain more abilities.

The Good Samaritan - Luke 10:29-37

- What determined who was right with God? What is exposed as fraudulent? How many Sabbaths did the Samaritan keep? How many sacrifices at the temple did he make? How much tithe did he pay to the temple? How many kosher meals did he eat? Do you see what mattered was not a list of rules, but having God's love in the heart—what law is this?

The Rich Fool - Luke 12:13-21

- What is revealed? What determines his eternal end? What law is involved?

The Lost Coin - Luke 15:8-10

- What is taught about God's kingdom and God? Is God's character to search for His lost children revealed? What is different between the lost coin, sheep, and son?
- The lost coin didn't know it was lost and the owner searched for it and found it.
- The lost sheep knew it was lost but didn't know how to get home and the owner searched for it and found it.
- The lost son knew he was lost and knew the way home and the father waited for the son to make the choice to come home.
- In all three what does the father/owner reveal about himself? What kind of law is involved?

The Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-32

- What is taught? Why did the father leave the son in dire straits? Why did the father accept him back? Why did the older son get upset? What did the older son value? What law is involved? Did the prodigal have to pay a legal penalty? Why not?

The Rich Man and Lazarus - Luke 16:19-31

- What is the lesson, what is taught? What law is involved? If people won't accept truth when presented, miracles won't change them.

In all of these parables what is Jesus revealing the kingdom of God and what kind of kingdom is it? What law does it operate upon? Over and over again Jesus taught reality, design law, how things actually operate. No where do we find Jesus teaching penal substitution theology, no where do we find

Jesus teaching imposed law with imposed punishments. Jesus constantly overthrew their system of rules and creeds.

So, are we giving the testimony of Jesus to the world or have we accepted the wine of Babylon, that God's law is like human law and misrepresent the teachings of Jesus through the lie that God must use His power to punish sinners?

What is God waiting for? What is the final message? So, what do you tell people about Jesus?

SUND AY

The lesson points to various symbols of God's Word and asks what we can learn from each symbol.

- **Lamp**
  Gives light to see but one has to move forward in the light to see beyond your immediate circumstance. Likewise we don't get more light of truth until we apply and move forward in the light we have. Then the light is advancing.

- **Fire**
  What does fire do? It cleanses, the truth of God's Word will burn out lies, distortions, falsehoods, will convict of sinful habits or practices, and lead us to God to have them burned out of our hearts.

  Fire also warms, heats, gives energy and spreads—when we are on fire for God's Word we bring warmth to our environment, we are energized for action, and the fire spreads to others.

- **Seeds**
  Sometimes lie dormant until the right circumstances then sprout and bear fruit—sometimes the truth is planted in a heart but doesn't sprout until later. But when it does sprout in good soil, the truth bears fruit of righteousness and will be shared with others and the truth spreads.

- **Bread**
  Nurtures, gives strength, and as bread is taken into the body and broken down into molecules that become building blocks to our body tissues. So too truths taken into our hearts become building blocks to our ideas, beliefs, constructs, philosophies for life and worldview shaping our mindsets and characters leading us out of darkness, lies, and distrust of God back to trust in God.

- **Sword**
  Can be used to block attacks, it can be use to attack, it can be used to cut and kill. So the Word of God can defend, like Jesus did with Satan's temptations in the wilderness. It can be use to pierce through defenses based on lies and selfishness, it can cut deep into the heart and mind

> and separate emotions from facts bringing conviction, breaking through denial and distortion. It can kill—what did the truth do to Judas? What happens to those hardened in lies and selfishness when they are exposed to infinite truth and love—the fires of God's life-giving glory?

When we share the seeds of truth, the word of God is it a requirement to quote a Bible verse? Can we share the truth of God's kingdom, the Word, without quoting the Bible? Is it wrong to do so? Can we value the Bible as God's Word, yet sometimes choose to share the truth without quoting it?

MONDAY

Read first two paragraph, "The Word of God is the Living Word…" What do we understand this to mean?

Is it the vocalizations of God that are meant or does this refer to a person, a member of the Godhead?

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it… The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:1-5, 14 NIV84)

If God didn't speak the words of Creation, does that mean He couldn't have created—if we could put a gag in God's mouth, would that render Him powerless?

It isn't about vocalizations—it is about a person, Jesus the living Word. And it is about the truth, the truth that emanates from God and resonates throughout God's universe.

From the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. **He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible**. In His prayer for His disciples He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name,"--"merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"--"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. **Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love**, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their **science and their song**.[science meaning reality, understanding, reason, facts, design law, song our joy, our love, our heart's appreciation, our emotional expression—and both our understanding of reality and our emotional experience will be in perfect harmony] It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus **is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life**

> **for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God**; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. DA 19, 20

What kind of law is described here? It isn't about proclamations or edicts or declarations or vocalizations like human rulers give, it is about God's character of love and the reality He created which operates upon His design of love!

What do you think of the quote from the book *Education* in the second to last paragraph,

> The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, **it brings with it the life of the Infinite One**. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God. Ed 126.4

Is this creative energy that called worlds into existence referring to vocalizations, or a Person, a member of the Godhead?

When we partake of the divine nature, of what are we partaking?

Is there more than concepts and facts involved? In other words, when we partake of the truth, experience a trust relationship with God, apply His methods to our lives do we not only get a change of heart attitude, a change of mind, a change of character, do we also get physically changed? Yes, our brains change. And do all of these changes bring us into actual closer intimacy with God? Can we become ever closer in some resonance frequency, some harmonic, some quantum connection? Is there some actual connection between God and God's creation that God designed and built into the universe that goes beyond just agreeing upon ideas, values, beliefs?

What happened to Moses on the mountain? What happened to his face? What were Adam and Eve covered in before the fall? Where did that light come from?

As we partake of the Word, the truth and connect with our Creator is there some aspect of God's reality, that we don't fully comprehend, that connects us with God and we become conduits of greater life energy from God?

When Jesus asks us to let our light shine could it mean more than just truth—could it mean that as we come into unity with God His life-giving energy and presence dwells in us and we eventually will shine—actually shine?

What did Moses and Elijah look like at the mount of transfiguration?

TUESDAY

Benefits of Scripture, what benefits have you found in studying God's Word?

Read first paragraph, "There are multiple benefits…" I love this—they are referencing the law of worship—exactly right, this is a design law.

Then, if by reading the Scriptures we ingest truth which leads us to trust God and ultimately we partake of the divine nature and via the law of worship are changed to be more and more like God, what did Jesus mean when He said:

> You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84)

What is happening here? How is it possible to read and study Scripture, yet not become a partaker of the divine nature, nor become more like Jesus?

Did they have the wrong Scriptures?

Did they have the wrong premises when they approached Scripture? Such as?

- God's law is imposed law, therefore Scripture is a law book, or code book
- Salvation is found in the right law keeping
- Salvation is found in the right rituals
- Salvation is found in the right sacrifices
- Salvation is found in belonging to the right group

What is the right understanding of Scripture—a revelation of God to humankind of what?

- God's nature, character, government, law, methods
- Satan and sin
- The Great Controversy
- The plan of salvation

Consider this quote from the book *Education* p. 190:

> The student should learn to view **the word as a whole**, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its **grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption**. He should understand the nature of the **two principles** that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into **every phase of human experience**; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the **two**

> **antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, **he is even now deciding** upon which side of the controversy he will be found. Ed 190.2

Do we have a view that integrates the entire inspired record? Can we see the grand theme? Can we understand the purpose of the world, the rise of the great controversy, the two antagonistic motives—what are they? How does the plan of salvation work? Who decides your salvation?

Read the bottom green section, "Think about a time…" For me personally, when I have faced difficulties, the way the Word of God benefited me was not in some prose, or sentiment, or promise, or cliché, but in helping me experience God. My strength was not from the book, but from the author of the book, my comfort was not from the Scripture, but from connecting with the God of the Scripture. And this is how the Bible helped me—it helped me connect with God in truth, in reality, in meaningful and real ways.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Someone has counted…" I really like how they emphasized that God's promises to give us everything necessary to be victorious over sin in our lives—for eternal life. The promises of God are not given for us to attain all this world has to offer.

What does it mean that the Bible is filled with promises?

- That God is a God who is reaching out to us, who loves us, who has our good at heart, who is filled with infinite blessings for us…but why does God make promises?
- When are promises necessary? Or, another way to ask it, what is the purpose of giving a promise? Isn't it to instill confidence in the one to whom the promise is given?
- Why is the Bible filled with so many promises? Because humanity is filled with so many lies about God, so much fear, selfishness, and sin and thus doubts God's goodness. Therefore God is constantly giving of Himself what we need to overcome our distrust of Him. thoughts?

So, I am thankful the Bible is filled with promises from God, because it reveals a God who will do everything that is in harmony with His nature of love and truth to save us.

But what about the idea that the Bible promises are made to each one of us?

In the sense that they reveal our trustworthy God and we can all gain confidence in God as we read the record of His promises, then this is true. But, does it mean every individual promise is made to each individual on earth?

- Is the promise that the Savior would be your descendant made to you?
- Did God make you a promise that you will have a descendant who will reign on your throne forever?

Are some promises of God conditional?

Consider the promise of salvation—it is an interesting promise because it is unconditional and conditional.

It is unconditional in that God promised in Eden that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head, that the Messiah would come and would redeem Adam's sin and save the species human. This promise is not conditional—God would fulfill this in His own person. And in so doing God would also provide the way for any individual human to partake of the victory achieved by Jesus for their individual salvation—but that is conditional.

It depends upon them accepting what Jesus has done, of being persuaded in their own mind, of choosing to surrender their hearts, let go of fear and selfishness and trust God with their lives, of preferring God's design law methods over the imperial systems of this world. Why is salvation conditional upon our individual agreement and choice? Because it is the only way to retain our individuality—we must agree and choose and accept in order to be transformed while still being us.

Some people get confused on the unconditional the unconditional elements of God's actions in His Son overthrowing Satan and redeeming the species, and apply this to every individual human teaching that every individual will be saved regardless of their free choice. Reality simply doesn't work that way.

The lesson points out that God promises to provide for our physical needs—hmmm… Why did many Jews stop believing in God after the holocaust? Because many prayed, claimed the Bible promises and were not delivered. Many of survivors who lost so many family gave up on God because of this.

What about Christians in the Dark Ages—were any martyred? What happened to God's promises to provide for their physical needs?

Read the last paragraph, "There are so many…" I am not a fan of this paragraph, there is a truth here, but it isn't presented in the best light.

It is true that if we have no faith in God, don't want Him in our life, rebel against Him, persist in sinful living then our lack of faith obstructs God's power in our life and we should not expect miracles from God in such a state.

However, this paragraph could lead to the false conclusion that if one doesn't experience a miracle then it is because of a lack of faith—this is a lie. Consider the book of Job—did Job have a lack of faith? Yet, what did he experience?

In fact, in my book *The God-Shaped Brain* I describe the danger in believing such things and point out that in Scripture most of the time miracles are performed for the weak in faith, not the strong in faith.

- When Gideon was called by God to defeat the Midianites did he ask for the miracles of the fleece because his faith was strong or because his faith was weak and he needed encouraging?

- At Mount Carmel when the fire fell from God consuming the sacrifice offered by Elijah, was the miracle given for Elijah to strengthen his faith or was the miracle given for the people who were weak in faith?

- When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace God miraculously intervened to save their lives, but for what purpose? Was it primarily to extend the lives of the men thrown into the furnace or was it a means of exposing the impotence of the golden idol, the truth about God and of reaching Nebuchadnezzar, a man weak in faith? By contrast notice the genuine mature faith of the three worthies who when threatened with a burning death put their lives into God's hands and trusted Him with the outcome knowing God could save, but allowing God not to intervene. They said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:17,18.

- Consider the lives of the Apostles, God miraculously intervened in many places (opening prison doors), but always as a means of spreading the gospel. Were the miracles of healing done through the Apostles done in order to strengthen the Apostles faith, or to strengthen the faith of those to whom the Apostles were preaching the gospel? When the Apostles eventually lost their lives, God did not miraculously intervene to save them (with the exception of John). Did God refuse to perform miracles to save His Apostles because they didn't have enough faith or was their faith so strong that they trusted God with their very lives? Was their faith so intense that God didn't have to perform a miracle to help them maintain their confidence in Him?

Many people believe that miracles are a good barometer of who we should believe or in whom we should place our faith. But in Eden the miracle of a talking serpent didn't make the serpent trustworthy. Satan often confuses the mind and obstructs the way to God by the use of miraculous signs and wonders. In fact, the Bible prophecies that before Christ returns Satanic agencies will perform miracles as a way of deceiving many (Mark 13:22, Rev 13:13, 16:14). Jesus said that in the end there will be those who claim to be Christian who have performed miracles in His name but who were never on God's side (Matthew 7:21-23).

God wins people to faith in Him by the revelation of His trustworthiness as revealed ultimately in life and death of Jesus Christ. Miracles can be counterfeited, the truth as revealed by Jesus cannot. The question is never about God's ability to perform miracles, the question is, **do we know God well enough that our confidence will not be shaken when He doesn't miraculously intervene.**

Genuine faith is not having confidence that God can perform miracles, but is trusting Him even when He doesn't.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

What methods have you found effective in sharing the Word of God?

- Putting it into the language of the people
- Letting people read it for themselves
- Sharing how God's truth have impacted your life for the better
- Identifying with people and sharing your experience and how God's word helped you with a similar problem to them
- Sharing God's design laws and how life actually works best in harmony with His methods

FRIDAY

Read and discuss question 1

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available. **August 1 resource is *God Is Love,* Children's Book.**

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 8
Ministering Like Jesus

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I received this email this week:

> *To Dr Jennings and the entire class and all of the online people, without this class me and my spouse would truly be lost and stuck in an impossible place with God constructs that were ruining our lives.*
>
> *You happily sent us a case of the Remedy about 3 years ago and we gave them out to others who we knew are stuck believing in penal substitution god. It's not an exaggeration to say that your Bible class has been a life saver..*
>
> *For all the reasons that you teach, so many in our lives are immovable from their positions, (parents, other friends and family). It's hard, even depressing, to see everyone reaching out for comfort from all the wrong sources.*
>
> *The last few months it's been especially hard for us as we struggle to make God our first priority, you've mentioned several things that we are still dealing with and sadly I know we've come up short.*
>
> *But God has blessed us with a child and we have never been so happy (most of the time), we hope to be the best parents one could have. We also wanted others in the class to know that they are very much appreciated, Russel, Wendel, Linda and all the rest, you are in the prayers from online participants and thank you for being great!!*

Read memory verse: "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36 NKJV).

Why were they like sheep without a shepherd? Didn't they have the Bible at the synagogues? Didn't they have the ceremonial system? Didn't they have the Sabbath? Didn't they have the priesthood? Why were they like sheep without a shepherd?

Because they didn't have the truth about God and His design law for life. Why didn't they have this truth, isn't it in Scripture? Isn't it revealed in the little drama of the ceremonial system? Doesn't the Sabbath declare God's as Creator and doesn't creation operate upon design law—so why were the like sheep without a shepherd?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Because Satan is a liar and Satan has been lying about God's character and God's law since the beginning and the enemy's lies have been so effective that all of these tools to reveal truth about God have been misunderstood and misapplied. The people needed God Himself to come and reveal the truth.

Here is a short section from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> **Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give**. [What do you think of when you think of God's glory—fire, lightning, or love?] "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe**. [What does the law of life mean? And what is it? The law of love, design law that originates in God's character and emanates from Him, and is perfectly lived out in Jesus] All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: **through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all**; [this isn't just beautiful prose this is reality, the life-energy from God flows out to all living things from God] through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus **through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.**
>
> **In heaven itself this law was broken. Sin originated in self-seeking**.[What is sin? Is it rule breaking, or breaking the very protocol of love that life is built upon? If sin is breaking the protocol for life, what is the result of sin? Death, and if one is out of harmony with life, what is needed to save a person in sin? The restoration of the law of life within them. Do you see how the penal legal lie obstructs God's healing plan?] Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. **He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself**. [Gain control of heavenly beings—wow, how? Lies believed break the circle of love and trust, incite fear and selfishness. Do we see this in society today—lies gaining control of people? Notice the very next words.] **Therefore he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation**. **With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men**. [Satan lied about God in heaven; he lied about God in Eden and he continues to lie about God through his agencies on earth including the false doctrines in Christianity rooted in the lie that God's law functions like human law and thus God is the source of inflicted pain and suffering] **He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness**.[Do you believe a being to be good if you simultaneously believe that being will torture and kill you if he is not paid the proper price not to? Do you see the evil of penal substitution theology?] **Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, Satan caused them to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving**. [What is justice? Doing what is right and just, as defined by what? The law, so if we can get beings to accept the lie that God's law is like human law, imposed rules, then what does justice look like? It giving proper punishments to rule-breakers. And from who metes out the punishment? So, Satan gets beings to see God as severe and unforgiving by lying about God's law. But when we worship God as Creator and understand

> His laws are design laws, then we realize justice is doing what is right, which is seeking to heal and save by restoring sinners to harmony with His design for life; but it is also right and just to leave people free not to cooperate with God for healing and sadly reap what their persistent choice causes—eternal death] Thus he drew men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world.
>
> **The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken.** [What caused the darkness in this world? Lies about God, then what is needed to lift the darkness? The truth about God. How can this be achieved? Can the lies and distrust of God be removed by threatening to kill all who don't accept heaven's view of things? Never, notice what comes next in the quote] **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened**. [Again do you see how corrupt Christianity has become by accepting the lie that God's law works like human law and justice is to inflict punishments upon rule breakers. In other words, to believe sin can be overcome by force, which leads Christians to believe it is righteous to use force either through government or through riots or wars to achieve their goals.] To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do.** Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. **Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings."** Malachi 4:2. DA 22.1

Who is the Sun of Righteousness? Jesus, and what does it mean that he must rise with healing in his wings? This is a quote from Malachi 4:2, let's read that prophecy together Malachi 4:1-6 NIV84:

> Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty. "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers;

The Hebrew translated wings doesn't mean just wings of a bird that cause flight, but also wings like the wings of a building, the portions that extend out from the center—and what extends out from the Sun? Beams of light—so the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in the beams of light extending out from Him.

This is talking about the second coming of Christ. It is telling us that all the sinners who refuse healing will be annihilated, die and be no more, be turned back to dust. But those of us who trust Jesus don't

have to worry because we will be saved. His transforming and healing truth and love will rise on us like the sun, rising with healing in its rays.

Think about this—what is being taught?

What caused the loyal angels and Adam and Eve to become disloyal to God? Lies about God. What is the truth metaphorically likened to? Light, truth is light, lies believed cause darkness.

What has Satan's lies done to the world? Covered it in darkness—darkness covers the people a gross darkness the people.

But before Jesus returns, He, the Sun of Righteousness, rises with healing in His rays.

Imagine you are in a dark cave for days and days with no light and you are brought out immediately into the bright sunlight, what is that like? But what happens if you are brought out before dawn and watch the sun rise?

The Sun of Righteousness, Jesus, at this time in human history is rising with truth, ever increasing amounts of truth, the truth about God's character, the truth about God's law as design law, the truth about God's methods, and those who love Him embrace the truth and are transformed by the application of the truth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus, when Jesus appears in His full unveiled glory, they are ready to be in His presence. Notice, they are being healed by this process.

This is the same as saying they are being cleansed, which is the exact same truth taught in the cleansing of the sanctuary message, that God cleanses His people of sin so they are ready to meet Him. For the Scripture says that when He returns we shall see Him as He is for we shall be like Him (1John 3:2).

But for those who don't love the truth, who cling to lies, rather than being healed, they are hardened in lies and selfishness and when they are exposed to the full unveiled glory of God their unhealed condition causes them torment of mind, heart, soul until they are consumed with guilt, shame, fear and choose not to live in such a kingdom of infinite truth and love; they voluntarily surrender their lives back to God, and are turned back to dust.

But before this happens the prophet Elijah must come. Why? Because, just as Elijah called the people to choose between the true God and the false god, so too a message like that is to go to the world. And people today must choose between the true Creator God or the false Baal god. And who was Baal?

Baal was the son of El (i.e., El-ohim or El-Shaddai). He was the god of weather and was often called "Almighty" and "Lord of the Earth." Baal was the god who brought rain, thunder, lightning, who fertilized the earth, controlled the sun, and brought the harvest. Baal fought the great serpent leviathan,

as well as battled against Mot, the god of death. And most amazing of all, it was taught that Baal died in his battle with Mot and was resurrected to bring life to earth.[1]

So what was the problem with worshiping a god who was the son of El, who controlled the weather, who brought rain, sunshine, and fertility, who blessed with a full harvest, who warred against the great serpent and death, who died and was resurrected to bring life to the earth? What was wrong with this god? What was Elijah opposing? What made Baal worship false?

Here is what one Christian writer identifies as the central distortion in Baal worship:

> "Determined to keep the people in deception, the priests of Baal continue to offer sacrifices to their gods and to call upon them night and day to refresh the earth. **With costly offerings the priests attempt to <u>appease the anger of their gods</u>** ... " (Prophets and Kings 124)

The Bible confirms this:

> "So the prophets prayed louder and cut themselves with knives and daggers, **<u>according to their custom</u>**, until blood flowed" (1 Kings 18:28).

So putting all of this together and what does Malachi's prophecy tell us? That Jesus is going to rise at the end of time with ever-increasing truth about God to lighten those who have eyes to see, and that truth will be the Elijah message, the truth about God as Creator and His law as design law that exposes Baal worship as false, particularly the lie that God's law functions like human law and God requires some legal payment to appease or assuage His wrath. This is the same as the three angels' messages.

To give this message is what it means to give the message of Jesus, to give the testimony of Jesus—to bring people back under the care of their heavenly Shepherd.

Read first paragraph, "Jesus genuinely…" There is no doubt Jesus loved people and always sought to pour God's love into their lives.

Who decided what Jesus gave to people? Did Jesus always give what people wanted? Why not? Does love give what people want or what is actually best for them?

Did Jesus ever leave people with needs that He did not meet? When and why?

---

[1] Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary (3rd ed.)* (108).
Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press. Carthage, a history, Serge Lancel, p194
Miller, Patrick (2000), *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays,* Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 32. ISBN 184127142X
Moscati, Sabatino (2001). *The Phoenicians,* Tauris, p. 132. ISBN 1850435332
Walbank, Frank William (1979). *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Volume 2, Clarendon Press, p. 47
Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary (1976) ISBN 0-310-23560-X.

- Nazareth they didn't believe in Him
- The curiosity of Herod who wanted to see miracles
- The people when they wanted to have more food
- What about when Jesus was tired and need to rest or spend time with His Father? Was Jesus being selfish to retire from the needy for rest and personal time with His Father? Is there a lesson in this for us?

What limits what God does in people's lives? Isn't it the condition of the people and the circumstances they are in?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus always looked for the good in others…" No doubt again that Jesus loves us all and seeks to save sinners. But absolutist statements trigger my mind to think, is this true? Is it true that Jesus "always" looked for the good in people? If so, how, what does it mean?

What about Matthew 23 was Jesus looking at the good?

> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to….You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" (vv 14, 33 NIV84)

Was Jesus looking at the good in them? No, He wasn't looking at the good ***in*** them, but **He was looking out for the good *of* them** and others.

Understanding design law, Jesus was **diagnosing** their condition and revealing that diagnosis to them with evidence. This is the presentation of the truth, as a final attempt to bring conviction for their salvation. Jesus wasn't seeking to condemn them but to save them, thus Jesus was seeking their good, by exposing to them their terminal state, their false religion based on imposed law, giving them the opportunity to reject the lies and embrace the truth and be saved. I believe His voice was filled with heartache, compassion and concern for them—not hostility.

Jesus saw the good—the health of character—that they could experience if they would allow Him to heal them. Like a doctor can see past the disease to how well a person can be if they take the treatment. But in this case Jesus was sad because they were sick and clung to a false remedy of their own devising and rejected the actual cure and they didn't even know it.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

From *The Remedy* Matthew 23:14-39*:*

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! Your false teachings obstruct people from being healed and entering God's kingdom of love. You certainly are not healed and do not enter into salvation, but worse still, you actively work to prevent others, who want to be saved, from being healed.

14 Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You con widows from their homes, yet you make public displays of praying long prayers. Unhealed you choose to remain! Your suffering will be most severe.

15 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You go around the world trying to convert one person, and when you do, you indoctrinate them so deeply into your false penal system that they become twice as much the child of lies and selfishness as you are.

16 "Misery is yours, you irrational and unthinking teachers! Unbelievably, you say: 'If anyone swears by the temple, it doesn't count; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, then they are bound by the oath.'17 You make no sense at all! Think about it: Which is truly most important–the gold, or the temple that makes the gold holy?18 Another of your sayings is: 'If anyone swears by the altar, it doesn't count; but if anyone swears by the gift on the altar then they are bound by the oath.'19 You don't understand the simplest truths! Think about it: Which is truly most important–the gift, or the altar that makes the gift holy?20 Don't you get it? The one who swears by the altar swears by it and everything on it.21 And whoever swears by the temple, swears by it and by the One whose dwelling place it is.22And oaths sworn before heaven are promises made before God's throne; and the One who sits on it knows the true intent of the heart.

23 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You keep rules, such as proudly paying a pre-tax tithe and even giving a tenth of the herbs in your garden, but you fail to do what actually matters–to live in harmony with God's Law, which is his design for life. You fail to 'do what is right because it is right.' You are not merciful but judgmental and critical, and you cannot be trusted to protect those struggling with sin. You should have lived lives of love for others, without neglecting the simple instructions of God.24 You are truly irrational and unthinking teachers! You are so focused on keeping the rules — such as dietary laws — that you fail to understand that their purpose is to promote health. You're so confused that you actually think it would be a virtue to die of starvation rather than eat something not on the 'approved' list.

25 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You work so hard to make yourselves look good on the outside, but the inside–the heart–is full of selfishness, arrogance, and greed.26 You truly don't understand anything about God's kingdom! The mind, the character, the heart — they all must be cleansed first, and then the outside will also be clean.

[27] "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You are like highly polished burial vaults: they look beautiful on the outside, but inside are nothing but the bones of the dead, and everything that defiles.[28] You are just like that. On the outside you appear to people as good and righteous, but on the inside you are full of lies, selfishness, and evil. You are great counterfeits!

[29] "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You go to great lengths to give praise and honor to God's spokespersons and church leaders of the past.[30] You say, 'If we would have lived back then, we would never have rejected God's spokespersons or joined those who killed them.'[31] By such claims you condemn yourselves, because you acknowledge such actions are wrong, yet by your actions today you reveal you are the true descendants of those who murdered God's spokespersons. You're just like them[32] and your sins pile on top of the sins of your forefathers!

[33] "You slippery serpents! You brood of venomous vipers! You think you can cure yourselves with your own snake oil?[34] It's because of your false remedy — your penal legal trickery — that I am sending my spokespersons, instructors and Bible scholars, some of whom you will attack, kill, and crucify; others you will beat–some physically, some verbally–right in church, running them out of town with beatings and the most vicious gossip.[35] The pure and holy lives that have been sacrificed through history — from Abel, all the way through to Zechariah the son of Berekiah, who was murdered right in church, at the altar — testify the truth to you.[36] But the sad truth is that this generation will reject all this evidence.

[37] "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you sick and hard-hearted people who have rejected the Remedy, killed God's spokespersons, and stoned those sent to you with the cure! How my heart has longed to pull you to safety, like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me.[38] Look around: I leave your house to you abandoned without Remedy, and infected without cure.[39] For I tell you plainly, when you see me next, you will say: 'He is the One sent by God to reveal God's true character and provide the Remedy.'"

Read second paragraph, "The scribes'…" How many do this today, live in fear of something in the environment contaminating them. Perhaps being afraid of someone at church starting up a conversation that is not a Sabbath topic, talking about a ball game or the latest news and afraid that to discuss such things would breaking the Sabbath. So they come in to church late and leave early to ensure they don't interact with anyone that would contaminate them with sin.

The lesson points out that Jesus used the metaphor of salt for His followers, what lessons do we learn from this?

Matthew 5:13 from *The Remedy:* "You are like salt to humanity: preserving the knowledge of God, providing the flavor of heaven, and increasing the thirst for God."

Are we like this—do we preserve the knowledge of God, give people a taste of heavenly truth and love and inspire them to thirst for God?

The lesson points out that we are to be light to the world and that the light doesn't avoid darkness it shines into the darkness.

How do we shine the light of God's truth and love into the darkness of this world? And how can Satan trick people to exchange light for darkness?

- Light is always truth, love and freedom, i.e. the methods of God.
- Darkness is always lies, selfishness and coercions, i.e. the methods of Satan.

Satan gets good people to exchange the light for darkness by exchanging any of the elements of God for the elements of Satan.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote:

> Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that (as quoted in Strength to Love, 1963).

Can we see movements afoot in the world today that are seeking to trap good people into using Satan's methods to achieve their goals?

The following is from an interview entitled with Ellen G. White on November 20, 1895 entitled "Words of Caution Regarding Sunday Labor, the Colored People, and the Way to Oppose Error," she said:

> This is God's world, and wicked men are simply permitted to be in it. This earth was deeded to Abraham and his children, and **we** will come into possession of it before long. [Who are Abraham's children? All those who have the faith like Abraham, who have been circumcised in heart are considered children of Abraham. Remember he is the father of many nations. This is not about genetics, but about who has partaken of Jesus by faith and been renewed in heart like Abraham.] **We must not feel that we will receive any help from those around us, but we must be where we can help them**. 5MR 67.1 [We don't look for humans who are not on God's team to help us, i.e. human governments or political movements, we look to where we can help those who don't know Jesus to come to know God and God's methods]
>
> **When you begin to work with parliaments, that sets the devil to work,** and if he cannot make the work hard for us, who can? [If we seek human governments to work with us in the advancement of God's kingdom we set the devil to work. We corrupt the gospel and the church by ultimately bringing in the methods of the world—imperialism and coercion into the work. This corrupts the minds and hearts of people and obstructs the kingdom of God.] Do not let your work be known any more than necessary. **Let the truth work**. [How does the truth work? We present evidence and truth and leave people free and the truth exposes lies and transform hearts and minds.] **Our best course is not to get up an exemption**. [Meaning, not to seek governmental to give us legal exemption for our ministry or activity. Just go about living out

God's kingdom, ministering and loving others. Don't seek to get governments to give permits or laws supporting your work.] God has given light that the least said about these things the better. **The devil and all his hosts are working to destroy God's law, and when you begin to work on those lines he will stir up men to believe that we do not regard their laws, nor obey their decrees**. [When we seek to promote God's law by seeking governmental involvement we will stir up the devil and ungodly men to oppose us by passing their laws.]

We are not to reveal all our purposes and plans to men. **Satan is working in an underhanded way,** and he will continue so to work. **He will not work openly and above board. His power is to work upon human minds to make a start, to set a powerful movement on foot before the people's minds are prepared for it**. [Do we see this happening today? Underhanded methods, dishonest methods that are not above board, claiming one thing but doing another, designed to work upon human minds to set powerful movements into motion?]

Question: Can we not get the truth before the minds of the members of parliament in a quiet way, and by furnishing them reading?

From the light that has been given me, we should fear that these men and rulers will take their position against the work and then they will act like the devil; [We should not expect the political leaders on either side to act like Jesus, they will act like the devil. Why? Because the devil's methods are imposed law with coercion and that is the only way human governments work. So no matter how righteous the goal, when the church seeks to get the government to advance it, the methods will be those of the devil. The only righteous (God ordained) purpose of human governments is to restrain evil, there is no God ordained place for human governments to advance righteousness because righteousness is a matter of the heart and human governments have no role there.] but every advantage should be taken to get acquainted with these men; not in a way to produce anything like prejudice. **We must appear to them as trying to help others, working on the line of the Christian help work**. [Notice, we should show the politicians that we have no interest in politics, we have interest in them as people, we have interest to help people through ministering to them, not through changing the government.] As they see the good work we do on these lines, their prejudice will be removed in a large measure, and their hearts will be open for more. [And when their hearts are open for more what should we present, what should we share?] **Then we should <u>not</u> present the Sabbath, but let us present Christ.** [Not the false Christ presented in the penal legal lie, but the true Christ who reveals the character of God and His kingdom of love.] What if they should begin to oppose you and say, **Oh, that's a Seventh-day Adventist?—Lift Christ up higher and still higher**. It means a great deal to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. 5MR 67.5 [And how did Jesus work? Did Jesus work politically to change government, or did Jesus work to help people?]

The world is not to be condemned until after they have the light. **We must tell them the simple story of conversion**. [The light of what? The light of God's kingdom of love, His design law, the testimony of Jesus, calling people to the eternal gospel and the worship of Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water. We are calling people out of

Babylon, the confusing system of imposed law to worship our Creator whose laws is design law. Can we convert people through legislation, through elections, through governmental action? How are people converted, what is that simple story of conversion?] The people are to be pitied, and we want to soften them so that the Spirit of the Lord can mold them. **They have been receiving false ideas. If we come close to them, and show them the love of Christ, we can do much more for them.**... [The core falsehood is that God's law works like human law, which leads to the lie that we can achieve a righteous society with the right politicians, laws, judges and policies]

Question: Would it not be as well for us to present principles rather than dwell upon what the governments will do?

We have nothing to do with the government's actions. [Wait, didn't she live in a democracy, a representative government? Aren't we supposed to use our political voice to advance the agenda of God? NO! It always corrupts because all human governments are beastly and use the methods of coercion. We are not to do this. We are to stand up for truth, to oppose evil, to speak out against abuses—but with the focus on changing the hearts of people, to bring them to conversion, not to pass laws that force people to act like we want with hearts that are unconverted.] It is our duty to obey God, and when they arrest you, take no thought what you shall do. **What you are to do is to follow Christ step by step**. We need not commence weeks beforehand to examine the question and plan out what we will do when they do so and so, neither what we are to say. **Study the truth**, and the Spirit of the Lord will bring to your remembrance what you shall say…

If we should let loose of Jesus and take up our own spirit, it may take months, or perhaps years to counteract that one wrong move. [What does the spirit of self do? What does Jesus lead us to do?] **Unless many of us are converted and become as little children, we shall never see the kingdom of God…** [Was she speaking to people who were not members of the church? No, she was speaking to people who were members of the church, yet refers to them as unconverted, why? Because it is about heart change from the methods of the world, from fear, selfishness, imperialism, coercion, to the methods of God, truth, love, freedom, design law—trust in God so that we don't try and force our own way. She was acknowledging that the wheat and tares grow together in the church and many of the church members need true conversion.]

In cases where we are brought before the courts, *we are to give up our rights* unless it brings us in collision with God. It is not our rights we are pleading for, but God's right to our service. [Wow, what did you hear? Is the devil trapping millions of Christians with movements right now focused on claiming their legal rights and then seeking to gain political power to force their way?]

Instead of resisting the penalties imposed unjustly upon us, it would be better to take heed to the Saviour's words:- "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."—Manuscript 22a, 1895, pp. 4-6. ("Words of Caution Regarding Sunday

Labor, the Colored People, and the Way to Oppose Error," Interview, November 20, 1895.) 5MR 67-69

Do you realize there are powerful movements at work in Christianity that would call this perspective evil. These theological movements teach Jesus' life was necessary to reveal the goodness and love of God to win us to trust in God, but Jesus' suffering and death was not necessary for our salvation. In fact, these theologies teach that the crucifixion of Christ was merely the result of evil people rejecting God's love and His death has no benefit for our salvation. Further, this false theology teaches that to promote the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as a virtue, as having salvation value, is a means to exploit the poor and colored people of the world by teaching them to suffer, to sacrifice. This false theology teaches that we should not look to the Cross of Christ and trust God in our suffering, but should rise up to throw off the oppressor. Thus, this theology teaches the death of Christ was not necessary for salvation and that such ideas are taught by the powerholders as a way to exploit the masses.

What do you say about such views?

That they have a fundamental misunderstanding of reality. They are reacting to the lie that God's law works like human law. They misunderstand the nature of sin, the law of God, the methods of God and the purpose of Jesus' mission on earth. They don't realize that it wasn't possible for Jesus to procure the remedy to save humanity without the cross—that it was at the cross that God's law of love destroyed the law of sin and death, and in the person of Jesus cured the sin condition in humanity. That is where Jesus became our Remedy, our source of salvation (Heb 5:8,9). Thus, this theology, which appeals to modern political movements, is another subtle trap of Satan to try and remove the sacrifice of Christ as central to our salvation.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "Jesus' statement…" How many Sabbaths had the centurion kept? Did he eat a kosher diet? Sacrifice at Temple? Pay a regular tithe?

Then how could he be close to God's kingdom? Did the religious leaders like this perspective that Jesus was revealing? Why not? What about today?

What if we told people who trusted Jesus, lived lives of loving service to others, but didn't go to church on Sabbath, didn't pay tithe, didn't eat a vegetarian diet, had wine twice a week with dinner, that they had more faith than our pastor or conference president?

What is the difference between a compliment and flattery?

Consider this historic quote from the book *Eternity Past* writing about the war between God and Satan:

> God could employ only such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. **Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit.** It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven and all the world that God's government is just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works. EP 14.2

What is the difference between a compliment and flattery?

- A compliment is sincere praise or commendation based on fact and reality intended to affirm and validate
- Flattery is insincere praise based not based on fact and intended to mislead, entice or deceive

Why must time be given for Satan to manifest his character and methods? Why couldn't God just tell everyone that Satan was wrong?

Can lies be effectively removed from people's minds with declarations alone, or does evidence have to be revealed?

Since God's laws are design laws, deviations from His designs laws will always reveal, over time, destruction, pain, suffering and death. Only in harmony with God and His laws is their health, happiness and life.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that Jesus spent much of His ministry healing people, why? What is revealed by healing? Why kind of law does health operate upon?

Is there a judicial process in healing people?

Can people live in health while violating the laws of health? Miracles of God can certainly give immediate physical healing to any physical ailment, but will health be retained if a person persists in violating the laws of health?

Do you see why Jesus after healing often instructed to live better lives or to sin no more?

What lesson does this teach about salvation?

Is our salvation exclusively and only God's responsibility? What is our responsibility and what is God's?

What about in healing our relationships? Does God have a role? Do we have a role? If we do everything perfectly in harmony with God's laws, designs, methods, instructions, will that guarantee that we have healthy relationships? Why not? Because healthy relationship require healthy people—

and we can only choose health for ourselves, if the other person is unhealthy then the relationship will be unhealthy.

The lesson points out that in some healings Jesus linked healing from sickness with forgiveness for sin—why?

What did the people in Christ's day believe about the cause of sickness? They believed a lie that all sickness was a result of sin, that is why the disciples asked who sinned the man or his parents that he was born blind.

So, when Jesus met people with serious sickness, and they also had terrible guilt from believing that their sickness was punishment by God for their sin. Or, in the case of the paralytic, perhaps his sickness was a result of sin, Jesus wanted to do more than free their bodies of illness, He wanted to free their minds from guilt and shame and reconcile them to God. So, He linked the healing with forgiveness when necessary.

And how did the religious leaders respond to Jesus healing the sick, whether He actually stated their sins were forgiven or not? They were not happy, why? Because in their mind the people were being punished by God for sin, and Jesus was overruling what they believed were God's just punishments for sin.

Isn't it interesting, rather than examining their own beliefs about reality, considering whether they were misunderstanding the nature of sin, God's character and methods, instead they judged Jesus to be in error and condemned Him as working for Satan in performing miracles?

Do we see any such distortions in the way people deal with truth today?

WEDNESDAY

Read bottom green section, "Is it possible to live the abundant life…" Fanny Crosby the song writer who wrote many famous hymns such as:

- "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"--1875,
- "Blessed Assurance"--1873,
- "He Hideth My Soul"--1890,
- "More Like Jesus"
- "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home (Jesus is Calling)"--1883,
- "Near the Cross"--1869,
- "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus, Our Blessed Redeemer!"--1869,
- "Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!"--1882,
- "Rescue the Perishing"--1869,
- "Safe in the Arms of Jesus"--1868,
- "Take the World, But Give Me Jesus"--1879,

- "Tell Me the Story of Jesus"--1880,
- "To God Be the Glory"--1875,

She was blind from infancy and later in life, wrote:

> It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me.
>
> If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour.

Can we have the abundant life with sickness, poverty, infirmity?

What is it that Jesus promises us today?

What happened to all the people Jesus healed of physical illness 2000 years ago?

Is God's primary concern that we live an extra 50 years here on earth? What is God's primary concern? That we receive eternal life, that we are reconciled to Him.

THURSDAY

Read the third paragraph, "The Old Testament…" I love, this, so well said, yes, salvation is healing. What other Bible references reveal this reality?

- circumcision of the heart
- remove heart of stone
- rebirth
- mind of Christ
- renewal
- cleansing
- adoption—but by what means? Legal declaration? No, by reaching us with His love so that we *adopt* His truth and love and are transformed into unity with Him. This is how we become part of God's family.
- Ransom—what does a ransom do? It frees from bondage, and what holds us in bondage? The lies of Satan we believe and our own carnal natures. Then what is the price to free us? The truth that destroys the lies and wins us to trust and a new nature—which is applied where? In us, so again the reality is our healing and transformation and restoration back to unity with God and His design for life.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

August 1 resource is *God Is Love,* Children's Book.

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 9
Developing a Winning Attitude

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "The more we study…" No question about it God's love is infinite and it is absolutely true that His forgiveness is infinitely deeper than any sin—but was the problem with sin ever a problem with God's forgiveness? If Jesus didn't die would God be unforgiving toward sinners? If Jesus didn't die would God refuse to forgive, or be prohibited by some law from forgiving?

No—what is the issue—it is not one of God forgiving, it is one of our hearts, minds, attitudes distrusting God, living in fear, preferring selfishness, doubting His goodness. In other words, we simply won't believe that God forgives outright, and we insist that our sin requires some legal payment made to God in order to get God to forgive. This is a lie.

Our sin problem is a problem in us, a problem of character, a problem of being out of harmony with God and His design for life; it was **never** a problem with God. God didn't need something done to Him to get Him to forgive—we needed something done to us to get us to trust God, open our hearts to Him for healing and to repent!

The lesson says, "No one was beyond His love." It is true God loves everyone and never stops loving anyone—but does that mean everyone responds positively to His love? Does the fact that God loves everyone and there is nothing we can do to get God to love us more or get Him to love us less mean that His love wins everyone to salvation? Again, the problem isn't God's love, His love is infinite and freely given to all people, but not all believe it, want it, or value it.

What does sin do to the sinner? It sears the conscience, hardens the heart, warps the mind and destroys the faculties that respond to love and truth—thus though God's love is infinite and never ceases, some people change themselves so much they become immovable in sin and no amount of truth or love will win them. King Herod would be an example of a person who destroyed their faculties that respond to truth and love; and this is why Jesus didn't respond to him during His trial. Nothing Jesus did or said would have had any positive impact—yet Jesus still loved Him.

Regarding Developing a Winning Attitude, which is the title for the lesson this week, let's examine Ephesians 4:17-32 in detail, from the NIV84:

> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. What makes their thinking futile? What is the basic premise of the world? Me-first, power over, the ends justify the means, fear-driven survival of the fittest, might makes right, imposed law and enforced obedience. The methods of the world are futile why? Because no amount of externally imposed might and power can heal hearts and minds, in

fact it makes it worse. The way that seems right to the world only leads to death. So, this type of thinking leads to religious views and practices that are legal in order to bring a sense of security, diminish the fear—but it is a false security, a delusion or illusion depending on how deeply one believes it. The appeal of the penal legal views with its various list of rules gives the self a sense of control—

- As long as I can figure out the right doctrines and make a pledge to accept them
- As long as I can identify the right rituals and perform them in the right way
- As long as I can know the right rules and keep them—or accept that Jesus kept the rules for me and thus claim that I have perfect legal rule keeping in my record in heaven
- If I do all of this, then whenever fear and guilt assail me I can feel safe because I believe the truth, have performed the right rituals, obey the right rules and have the legal payment applied to my account.
- A false security because all of that can be done without any change of heart, without any renewal of character. Not only does the penal legal lie which infects Christianity lead to this false security, it actually prevents real transformation because it simultaneously teaches that God is the source of legally inflicted punishment and death and He is the one from whom we need an intercessor to protect us. Thus, this theology obstructs our trust and reconciliation with God.
- It is only by rejecting imposed law, returning to design law that we can understand the truth of our condition and God's amazing sacrifice to provide us remedy, and thus trust Him for our healing and thereby experience a new heart via the indwelling Spirit.

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. What separates them from God? Darkness of understanding, which is caused by what? Lies—about God, about sin, about salvation—which are rooted in what? The lies about God's law—mispresenting it as imposed law with imposed punishments. So, even if they are religious, which essentially all were, their religiosity was legal, seeking to appease their gods, to do works, to get payments, to do penance, to propitiate wrath, to turn away the anger of their gods. In other words, none of them knew God because they operated upon a false paradigm that warped their understanding of reality itself. This is the same process that infected Christianity and led to the Dark Ages—darkness covering the people, yet the people remained religious. And such darkness about God, even though people remain religious leads to the hardening of hearts—why? Because it is self-centered, it is feared-based, it is not based upon truth and love.

19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Not being reconciled to God, having accepted a false paradigm of legality, a punishing god, leads to increased guilt, shame, searing of the conscience and this leads to self-indulgence, get for self, advance self, gratify self. Either through direct pleasure seeking or through self-medicating, i.e. intoxicating self to numb a guilty conscience that the false religiosity can't resolve. Pornography rates and substance abuse rates are no different whether one identifies as Christian or not. Barna research found that 57% of pastors and 64% of youth pastors admit to struggling with porn.

(https://www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon/) Why? Because penal legal theology cannot heal hearts from fear and selfishness, only increases guilt and reduces a sense of wellbeing.

Happiness is a by-product of healthiness in all domains. Healthiness is only possible in harmony with the laws of health—in all domains—physical, mental, spiritual, relational. This is only possible in harmony with the laws God built His universe to operate upon. To the degree we are in violation of the God's design laws, we are unhealthy, and this undermines our happiness. Many people when unhappy, say struggling with guilt or shame, rather than seeking to identify the cause, the place where they are out of harmony with God's design and seek God to change their lives to live in harmony with His design, which would bring happiness, instead, in their unhappiness substitute pleasure seeking and thus live indulgent lives that worsen their health and cause more unhappiness leading to more sensual living.

20 You, however, did not come to **know** Christ [Messiah—Savior—Rescuer—Remedy—Healer] that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its **deceitful desires**; 23 to **be made new in the attitude of your minds**; 24 and to put on the new self, **created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness**. What is being described? What does it mean to "know Christ"? Does it mean to know about—to know the right facts, the right doctrines? Does that mean facts or doctrines are irrelevant? No, it means we must know the truth about Jesus, but we must also know Jesus, which goes beyond the truth of facts. For instance, a person may know the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and not actually know Jesus. Jesus said in the last days many will come to Him professing to be His followers, but He never knew them. Conversely, a person may be a follower of Jesus and actually know Him and love Him and be like Him in character, but not know all the facts like where He was born.

Knowing Christ leads to what? Is this a legal process being described? Let's read the passage again: Is the Apostle describing that we must remember all the bad deeds, confess them, claim the legal payment of Jesus' blood to our account in heaven, and then believe we are declared to be righteous even though we are not righteous? No! That is the lie that keeps good people trapped in miserable and destructive cycles of sin.

When we know Jesus, we are won to trust and we open our hearts in trust and invite Him in. We ask for His renewing agency, the Holy Spirit to remove the destructive desires that deceive us (our feelings *can* lie to us) and to have new desires, motives, attitudes that come from Jesus and are imbued into us by the Holy Spirit. We become new creatures in Christ and we become like God i.e. godlike in fact. This is actual righteousness, holiness, transformation of character, not some legal fictional declaration of righteousness while we remain unrighteous.

True righteousness by faith is this transformation of the heart motives and attitudes that comes through trust in Jesus. There is nothing legal going on, it is all actual, genuine, healing, transformational. Thus, our life histories of sin, the deeds we have committed in the past, they never change, what changes is our hearts and minds. We become NEW people.

King David, through all eternity future, will still be the father of Solomon, why? Because he had an affair with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah, those historical facts never change. Those historical facts do not get erased from history. When we get to heaven every intelligent being there will know David's history. But his history of bad deeds doesn't matter—why? Because David repented and had a change of heart—thus He is healed in character, actual, real righteousness, holiness, at-one-ment with God in reality. This is the true message of salvation!

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and **speak truthfully to** his neighbor, for we are **all members of one body**. What does this mean—members of one body? Would it mean the same as there is neither Jew or Greek but we are one in Jesus? Would it mean there is neither black or white or Asian or Hispanic but in Jesus we are one human race? Would it mean that we are to speak truth that in God's kingdom all lives matter and reject the racially divisive messages that suggest some lives matter more than other lives? The world doesn't know Jesus. The world wants to divide, Jesus wants to unite!

26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. What does this mean? Do we find a lot of anger being manifested in our society today? Is a lot of it being manifested after the sun goes down, every night riots in certain cities with violence? Is this how Jesus would act? Do you realize this is not the way of the genuine Christian who is being renewed in his mind to have the attitude of Christ?

Does that mean we are not to have anger? It all depends of the type of anger and the focus of the anger. There is a difference between righteous anger and sinful anger:

- **Righteous anger** is always motivated by love for people and focuses on destroying the disease of sin in order to heal and save people
- **Sinful anger** is motivated by selfishness and focuses on punishing, hurting, or destroying people, while perpetuating sin and selfishness

Here is a simple example: Doctors have righteous anger toward pathogens (measles, polio, Ebola, Corona) and diseases (cancer, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, etc.). They seek to destroy all disease and pathology in order to heal and save people. But doctors do not have anger toward sick and dying patients.

Of course, doctors do get angry at activities that spread disease, especially when it is purposeful—HIV-infected individuals who spread the disease with dirty needles or unprotected sex. But doctors still love the addict or prostitute who is spreading the disease. It's just that, while seeking to cure those currently infected, doctors also want to prevent the spread of the disease to protect all who are not yet infected.

Doctors also offer remedies for HIV and methods to stop its spread, but when a person refuses to take the remedy and to use methods that prevent infecting others, doctors get angry not only at the disease, but they also get angry at the refusal of the person who rejects the treatment.

And how much greater the anger when the person who refuses lifesaving treatment is the doctor's own son or daughter?

Why are the doctors angry in such situations? Because they love the dying person and know they can save them, if the terminal individual would only let them.

This is righteous anger—never seeking to harm the person, but always motivated by love to heal and save, even when a person refuses healing and chooses paths that destroy themselves and others. This is the anger that God expresses:

> As the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds as you did in the rebellion in the desert, during the opportunity to partake of God's cure, where your fathers broke my heart by trying their own remedies and rejecting the truth which I brought and for forty years patiently tried to heal them. That is why I was so angry with what happened to that generation, and said, 'Their minds continually reject the healing truth, and they refuse to practice my ways of health and live.' So I granted them their persistent choice and said, 'Since they refuse the truth–the Remedy I freely offer–they will never be able to enter my rest and get well'" (Hebrews 3:7–11 *The Remedy*).

Selfish anger, however, is not motivated by love for others, nor is it angry at the suffering that sin is causing others. Rather, selfish anger is an anger about the wrongs we experience—done to us or to what we value—not for love for others. Examples of this include:

- Anger at not getting our way
- Anger at having our ideas challenged or refuted
- Anger at having our projects and pursuits interfered with
- Anger at having our self-promotion thwarted or name maligned
- Anger at being assaulted, injured, robbed
- Anger at having been embarrassed
- Anger of envy—someone else getting what we have wanted
- Anger of perceived unfairness, someone else has more than we do, or gets privileges we believe we deserve, or perhaps we do deserve
- Anger when someone questions our authority, disobeys, or disrespects us
- Anger at having not lived up to the family standard

And this type of anger can be projected out of the self onto proxies—we can see others in our environment who approximate our plight and we unconsciously project our own selfishness out onto them and then get angry at their plight, mistreatment, injury and vent our anger on the perceived exploiters—deceiving ourselves that because we are angry about another person's mistreatment we are not selfish—we are loving and it is okay then to seek to punish the wrongdoer.

28 **He who has been stealing must steal no longer**, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. If people were

applying the attitude of Christ, would they steal, riot, destroy property? Or would they get busy working in their communities to build up, not tear down? Does God want Christians to support movements that use the methods of the world to achieve their ends—even if the goal is a righteous goal? Why or why not?

29 **Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths**, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Is lying wholesome talk? What about gossiping or rumor spreading if the rumor is true? What about slander, speaking unkind? What about if it is for the purpose of ensuring your candidate wins the next election—is it godly and righteous to speak unkind things of the opposing candidate if it helps you win the election? What if it is true but not relevant to the ability to carry out the office, is okay then to bear tales? When I speak of politics getting one's candidate elected through such methods were you thinking of human governments? But, could all of this apply to the church as well? Have you ever seen a major political race (whether for government office or church office) in which both sides only spoke wholesome things that built up the opposing candidates?

Is there a difference between speaking clearly about the differences in policy, methods, vision, goals, plans, beliefs, doctrines, and attacking a person?

Did Jesus speak clearly the truth about God's kingdom, law, methods, goals, plans and expose the distortions that others were teaching? Did Jesus ever slander others and expose their personal sins? Or did Jesus actually protect the reputations of His enemies—remember the people who brought the woman caught in adultery?

Do you recognize these differences in methods and are you able to apply the information to your decision making and practices?

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. What grieves the Holy Spirit? Rejecting His agency, i.e. holding to lies, resisting truth, and clinging to selfishness and resisting love. Thus, note what the Apostle says next:

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:17-32 NIV84 Can you see why the genuine Christians in our society do not align themselves with movements that fail to love every human being as an equal? Why genuine Christians won't align with movements that use methods of violence, deceit, slander, that incite fear, hostility, that coerce and intimidate and force their way?

Do you see how the devil is manipulating society right now by inciting wrong, abuse, misconduct and inspiring people to be outraged by it and then tricking them into pursuing the righteous goal of eliminating evil by the practice of his methods of force, violence, coercion. But this only spreads more evil, incites more violence, and hardens more hearts.

We are not to participate in such activities. We are to come out and be separate. We are to understand that the only God-ordained use for human governments is to restrain evil, to hold in check people that overtly seek to exploit and harm others. There is no role for human governments to promote righteousness because righteousness is a heart issue and human governments have no power to heal hearts—human governments can only injure, harm, and damage hearts.

So what is a winning attitude? Having an attitude like Christ!

SUNDAY

The lesson states, "The last place the disciples expected to find hearts receptive to the gospel was in Samaria." Why?

What was the basis of the disciple's belief about who was reachable for God's kingdom? Did they have biases that nationality, genetics, gender or race increased or decreased one's viability for the kingdom of God?

Where did they get such ideas? Why didn't they know better? Were the disciples used to studying Scripture for themselves and coming to their own conclusions—or had they been conditioned by their culture to believe what the leaders of their society told them?

What about today? In our society, are we teaching people how to think for themselves, how to examine the evidence, understand the design laws of God, how reality works, to discern truth and come to their own conclusions? Or are we teaching people to surrender their thinking to those in authority—whether teachers at university, church leaders, governmental leaders, or media personalities?

Who is God trying to reach with the gospel? What role does genetics, race, nationality, gender play in God's plan, who is savable by God? These elements are meaningless to whether someone is part of God's kingdom or not—what actually matters? Heart attitude—is one like Jesus, what law is written in the heart and mind, truth, love and freedom, versus lies, fear & selfishness, and coercion.

Are we able to accurately judge who is reachable for God's kingdom?

What is our responsibility for others? Present the truth in love, treating every person with value, but leaving them free—so if they reject the truth we move on, we don't demand they accept it. This is one of the problems in society today—there are movements afoot that no longer want to leave others free to believe differently than they do. There are movements afoot that want to punish those who believe differently or practice differently. This is a violation of the law of liberty and will always result in love being damaged and destroyed, more rebellion, and if freedom isn't restored the loss of individuality.

This is Satan's goal—to destroy love, to incite conflict and rebellion, and to destroy individuality. He wants people to be helpless, passive, incapable of thinking for themselves.

Some of the movements going on right now are so emotionally, economically, relationally abusive—i.e. unwilling to leave others free—that many people are being intimidated and are slowly losing the ability to discern, to think for themselves. They are starting to become shadows of others, thinking through the lens of the mob.

I have patients who are in relationships with abusive spouses, some physical abuse, but most are emotionally abused—if they don't do what their spouse wants or think the way their spouse wants, then the abusive spouse will: yell, criticize, name-call, get angry, slam doors, mock, reject, ignore, embarrass, withhold money, withhold affection, cancel dinner or other activities. And the abused spouse rather than speaking truth in love and leaving their spouse free to pout and act out, instead begins to think "Oh I can't say that my spouse won't like it and will get angry and may cancel dinner." And over time they actual start thinking like their spouse, not because they believe it is right, but because they have surrendered their individuality and go along to avoid hostility and emotional assault.

The dominated spouse eventually stops speaking the truth and accepts the lies being told by the abusing spouse.

This is EVIL and is Satan's method to destroy individuality and occurs because the truth is not on the side of the abuser.

This is exactly what is happening in society today with the cancel culture. They cannot achieve their goals with reasoned presentation of the truth to persuade to a better way, so instead they use rage, name-calling, hostility, abusive language, verbal and physical assaults, cancel events etc. to create fear to get people to surrender individuality and stop speaking the truth in order to avoid the temper tantrums of those who don't like the truth and all parties are injured by this process.

We must never surrender our individualities to others. We must never accept and go along with lies merely to avoid upsetting someone's feelings. It is true we don't need to seek out those we know have no interest in the truth and throw the truth in their face—Jesus didn't do this and instructed if people don't want to hear the truth go to others who do. But, we must never stop presenting the truth just because some will scream and accuse of being insensitive etc.

MONDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "Our attitudes often determine…" There is much truth in these two paragraphs, and I constantly pray that God will continue to heal my heart and help me have an ever increasingly winsome attitude and method in my presentations.

Our attitudes, how we present the truth is important. Imagine you are hungry and someone brings you your favorite meal—perfectly cooked—on a beautiful silver platter, would it be appealing? How about they bring the same exact meal, cooked the same way to you on a garbage pail lid? Is it as appealing?

So presentation, attitude, does make a difference, no doubt, but is this the ultimate truth? My question is, is a person's demeanor, attitude, style of presenting more important than their character, heart, motives and the message itself? As we mature, can we see past the presentation to the actual heart, character and message?

I have patients, who I have gotten to know very well, and they have good hearts; they really care about people, but because of their background, some of them have ways of interacting that are blunt, direct, abrasive—they seem outwardly to be harsh. Some of them are from a different cultures, but others have Asperger's Syndrome in which they merely don't have the neurological hardware to recognize social cues and thus seem abrasive, but in their heart they are not mean-spirited. Sadly, many of these good-hearted people get misjudged because they are often abrupt and come across as rude.

If any of you remember the TV show Bones, the lead character Dr. Temperance Brennan was like this—good-hearted but many people were offended by her directness.

Conversely, the best con artists are the most socially enjoyable and friendly. In fact, the community pedophiles, the ones who exploit other people's children, are often the persons everyone in the community likes.

This is also true in public figures. We don't know the hearts of actors, athletes, politicians, we only know their public persona, their public demeanor—but we don't actually know them. Yet, so many people seem to get caught up into judging these public figures character based on communication style and public demeanor, i.e. public persona and end up supporting and identifying with those who have good social skills, but being hostile to those with poor social skills.

Consider Bill Cosby—what was his public reputation before the actual evidence presented in a court of law?

Our challenge is to be mature people who have developed, by practice, the ability to discern right from wrong (Heb 5:14) and not jump to conclusions, especially about someone's heart or character without actually corroborating evidence—and allegations are not evidence.

Read the third paragraph, "The woman in Matthew 15…" thoughts? What do you understand is happening here?

How do we get stronger at something? We must exercise, whether muscles or abilities—what about faith? If our faith is to grow stronger do we need exercise it?

When a coach gives their athletes exercises to do, even if those exercises stress them, cause them pain, make them sweat, are hard to do, is the coach for or against the athlete?

What if a coach told a group of athletes that because they came from poor homes, or homes with only one parent, or they had a history of abuse that any such athlete was given a pass and didn't have to do laps, lift weights, run drills, or study the playbook. They could just show up for the games.

If the coach said, "you have had such a hard life at home that I don't want to stress any more by demanding that you do the same drills, learn the same playbook, lift the same weights as the other athletes, that would not be fair to you; it might discourage you, so you can go home while the other students are required to stay and do the hard work" What would you say about such a coach?

What about it if isn't a coach but it is a teacher or social worker telling students the same thing regarding academics?

Jesus didn't play these games with the Canaanite woman. He loved her and wanted her to grow and to strengthen her faith, so He stressed her faith so she could exercise it so that her faith would grow stronger. What an amazing loving God we serve!

Do you see how design law—how reality works, brings such clarity to stories like this?

TUESDAY

The lesson makes the point that being friends alone with those who don't know Christ will not win people to Christ, but unfriendliness can turn people away from Christ.

Is there a difference between friendship and friendliness? What is the difference?

Do friends risk losing the friendship to protect their friend? The old adage, friends don't let friends drive drunk. But, someone being friendly may not take this stand because they don't want to deal with the potential conflict. Does this dynamic have application in society today?

Is there any caution to forming friends with people who don't know Christ? What is the caution?

Read second paragraph, "The apostle Paul…" thoughts?

What is the difference between a compliment and flattery?

Consider this historic quote from the book *Eternity Past* writing about the war between God and Satan:

> God could employ only such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. **Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit.** It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven and all the world that God's government is just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of

> the universe. The true character of the usurper must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works. EP 14.2

What is the difference between a compliment and flattery?

- A compliment is sincere praise or commendation based on fact and reality intended to affirm and validate
- Flattery is insincere praise not based on fact and intended to mislead, entice or deceive

Why must time be given for Satan to manifest his character and methods? Why couldn't God just tell everyone that Satan was wrong?

Can lies be effectively removed from people's minds with declarations alone, or does evidence have to be revealed?

Since God's laws are design laws, deviations from His design laws will always reveal, over time, destruction, pain, suffering and death. Only in harmony with God and His laws is their health, happiness and life.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "In these two passages…" The two passages are Romans 15:7 and Ephesians 4:32, we have already read Ephesians 4:32, so let's read Romans 15:7:

> "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (NIV84)

So, we are to accept others just as Christ accepts us. Is the acceptance we have with Jesus unconditional acceptance, or are their conditions? What are the conditions?

Here is one historic view:

> **The condition of our acceptance with God is a practical separation from the world.** The Lord calls upon us as a people, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," "and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The world may despise you because you do not meet their standard, engage in their dissipating amusements, and follow their pernicious ways; but the God of heaven promises to receive you, and to be a Father unto you. "Ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18. Counsels on Health 51.1

Will Jesus accept us into fellowship with Him if we refuse to be separated from sin, selfishness, lies, and the methods of the world? Why not—doesn't Jesus love us enough to accept us?

He loves us enough to refuse to accept us in a state that will ensure our destruction. He cannot heal and save us if we refuse to let go of fear, selfishness, lies, and sin. We don't have to rid *ourselves* of the sin—for we cannot do so, but we have to be willing for Jesus to separate us from the sin. We must surrender ourselves to Him for healing, cleansing, renewal. If we go to Jesus and say, that we want to be accepted but we do not want to be freed from sin, there is nothing He can do for us until we choose Him over sin.

So the lesson gets it right in the last paragraph, "Jesus' attitude was not, 'Do whatever you please. It's all right. I still accept you,' His attitude was, rather, 'No matter what you have done, I am willing to forgive you and provide you with power to change.'"

This is the reality—healing and transformation, not mere legal accounting.

So, what should our acceptance of others be—unconditional or conditional?

I see this all the time, in families with someone who insists on living destructive lifestyle—it could be an addiction that they refuse to get into recovery for, or it could be merely a constantly negative critical and fault-finding attitude toward others. But regardless, these destructive individuals will often present to their families demanding acceptance without condition and if boundaries are set the destructive one accuses the one setting the boundary of not loving them, of not being kind, or Christlike or forgiving—and will manipulate the kind-hearted person into a position where they are exploited over and over again.

Consider you had a relative who worked for the city sewer system and was in and out of the sewers all day long. At the end of their shift they are covered in foul-smelling waste and, without cleaning themselves up they come over to your house and demand to sit down with your family and eat dinner. What would you do? Would you let them? What, if when you said, "Hey we would love to have you eat with us, but you need to go home and clean up first," they respond with the allegation that you are being judgmental, critical, unaccepting, unkind, and don't love them?

Some people come into our lives with foul attitudes that create foul atmospheres; we are not required to accept people without condition, in fact to do so is often unloving and harmful. To give feedback that you love them, but they need to clean themselves up before you let them around your family is not unChristlike it is godly.

Read third paragraph, "And yet…" What does it mean to be accepted by faith?

It isn't about history, it is about current reality. Example of having gastroenteritis as a child….

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus did not neglect…" this is so well said, Well done quarterly!

The Christian experience that heals is the one that leads to our Creator, the Builder of reality whose laws are design laws which are the basis of life. It is in a trust relationship with Him that we are transformed to live in harmony with Him and His design for life.

Bottom green section, read, "If someone were to ask you, 'Why are you a Christian?' how would you respond, and why?"

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 10
An Exciting Way to Get Involved

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

We received a call this week from someone giving her testimony about watching the class online during the pandemic. She said that typically she and her husband watch the class live on Saturday mornings but since inviting her son and his family over to their home for church they've had to switch to watching the replay in order to accommodate her 15-year-old grandson's questions and comments. They need to pause the bible study and attempt to answering his questions— (sometimes they wish Dr. Jennings was actually there to help answer his deep and thoughtful questions!!) This was an unexpected result since her grandson seemed to be disinterested in church when he was attending regular services before the shutdown of in-person gatherings began.

Read Memory Text: "Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38, NKJV)

What does this verse mean to you?

When is the harvest? In Israel they had two, and they had two rains, the early rain and the latter rain, and the early harvest and latter harvest—what is this an object lesson for?

The early rain was for the early harvest, which was Pentecost and the initial reaping of souls that starting the Christian church at the time of the Apostles.

But the latter rain falls to prepare and cause the latter harvest, the harvest of souls that prepare for the second coming.

And the metaphor of the harvest has two applications—reaping souls from the world into the church, but also the final reaping when Jesus comes and ultimately separates the wheat from the tares.

Our job is to harvest, bring people into the church a saving relationship with Jesus—it is Jesus job, at the time of the second coming, to separate the wheat from the tares.

Here is an historic quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> **But near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man**. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that **Christians are to**

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest** "in the time of the latter rain." **In response**, "the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain." "He will cause to come down ... the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain," Zechariah 10:1; Joel 2:23. AA 55.1
>
> **But unless the members of God's church today have a living connection with the Source of all spiritual growth, they will not be ready for the time of reaping**. Unless they keep their lamps trimmed and burning, they will fail of receiving added grace in times of special need. AA 55.2
>
> **Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power. Instead of looking forward to some future time when,** through a **special endowment** of spiritual power, they will receive a **miraculous** fitting up for soul winning, **they are yielding themselves daily to God,** that He may make them vessels meet for His use. **Daily they are improving** the opportunities for service that lie within their reach. **Daily they are witnessing** for the Master wherever they may be, whether in some humble sphere of labor in the home, or in a public field of usefulness. AA 55.3

What is being described? Why is it that the ones ready to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are the ones who did not wait and look to some future time, but were active each day developing themselves, applying themselves in God's cause, spending time with Him, connecting with Him, sharing what He has given them with others? Why are these the ones to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and not those who wait by doing nothing?

Is there any law of God involved in this?

The law of exertion—what happens if you don't exercise? If you don't use it you lose it—but if you do exercise, you get stronger and develop more ability.

What would happen if you had a person who never exercised, never studied the playbook, never lifted weights, but dreamed about being the starting quarterback in the Superbowl. And because of their dream they bought all of their team's paraphernalia—hats, shirts, even jerseys and helmets. This person would walk around town in the team uniform and would look ready to play. But what would happen if that person were to actually start as quarterback in the Superbowl? What would they do when the plays were called, when the responsibility was on their shoulders, when the pressure was on?

What will happen to people who have not developed themselves in godliness if the Holy Spirit were to come upon them in power?

We at Come and Reason Ministries have been praying for years that the Lord will send more workers to the field—more people who will join us in sharing this message and over the years this ministry has slowly grown. This month, August, we are celebrating our 10-year anniversary of incorporation into a not-for profit ministry. We started are weekly Bible Study class years before, but it was in 2010 that

we incorporated. And since then God has blessed and more and more people accept this end-time healing message and join us in sharing it with others.

Yet, we still see so much more to do. Does that mean we should double our workload and do more if we are already doing what God has called us to do?

Consider this historic quote:

> Though Jesus could work miracles, and had empowered His disciples to work miracles, **He directed His worn servants to go apart into the country and rest.** When He said that **the harvest was great, and the laborers were few, He did not urge upon His disciples the necessity of ceaseless toil, but said**, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." Matthew 9:38. **God has appointed to every man his work, according to his ability** (Ephesians 4:11-13), and **He would not have a few weighted with responsibilities while others have no burden, no travail of soul**. DA 361.4
>
> **Christ's words of compassion are spoken to His workers today** just as surely as they were spoken to His disciples. "**Come ye yourselves apart, ... and rest awhile," He says to those who are worn and weary. It is not wise to be always under the strain of work and excitement,** even in ministering to men's spiritual needs; for in this way personal piety is neglected, and **the powers of mind and soul and body are overtaxed**. Self-denial is required of the disciples of Christ, and sacrifices must be made; **but care must also be exercised lest through their overzeal Satan take advantage of the weakness of humanity, and the work of God be marred.** DA 362.1

What do you hear? Is there a law involved in this? What law and what kind of law?

The corollary law of exertion—which is the law of restoration.

As finite beings, once we expend a resource we must rest and recover in order to have more to expend. If we do not rest, we burn out.

- Baseball pitchers must rest between games or they ruin their arms
- Olympic marathon runners will not run again the next day—they must rest

One of Satan's strategies if he cannot get good people to choose evil is to overtax them with too many good works to the point they burn out.

We must have the wisdom to maintain the health of our Spirit temples, our bodies, so that we can stay on the field as long as God would have us work for His cause.

While I was preparing for today's class on small groups, about connecting with others, I was thinking about the unity we are to have in Christ. About how God created us to be one with Him and each other and how sin separates and divides us. I was reflecting on movements in the world today and how so

much happening right now is causing division rather than unity. As I was studying and researching, I came across another historic quote. What do you think of this quote?

> What an argument of **power** is the prayer, "**That they all may be one; as You, Father, art in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us**:[What is another word for all of us becoming one? At-one-ment, Bible atonement is not legal it is healing, restorative, the removing of the infection of fear and selfishness so that we are united in the bonds of love, truth, and freedom that originates in God's character, bring us back to oneness with Him.] that the world may believe that You have sent me. **And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one:** [What is God's glory? It is His character of love and it is that love which brings unity, healing and oneness. And it is at this time in Earth's history that we are to give glory to God because the hour of His judgment has come, the hour in which people are to judge whether God is like Baal, an imperial dictator who imposes law and inflicts punishments and needs a blood payment not to do so. Or whether God is like Jesus revealed, a being of self-sacrificing love who gives in order to save and heal. The true message about God, that gives Him glory, wins people to trust Him and restores us into oneness with Him. But the false imposed law Baal view causes division.] I in them, and You in Me, **that they may be made perfect in one:** [What is the perfection here described? The perfection of love for each other—that we are perfect in one and how do we get this perfection? By being reunited with God through the victory of Jesus and the application of His victory in us by the indwelling Spirit. Then fear and selfishness is removed and we have love for God and others.] and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me." (SpTB07 44.3 Testimonies to the Church Containing Messages of Warnings and Instruction to the Seventh-day Adventists)
>
> I have repeated this wonderful statement; for **it contains the very evidence that we are to present to the world,—the perfection of unity in the followers of Christ. The members of the church of God must reach this perfection.** [Again, what perfection? The perfection of loving unity for and with each other! It is not task perfection, it is love for others perfection and this love for each other is evidence—of what? It is evidence of a power contrary to the powers of this earth. Look around and see what earthly powers do, what political powers do, what governments do, what imposed law applications do. They divide, the incite injustice, the imposed law method is always unfair. In every human government some cheat, some commit crimes and don't get punished, others are innocent and do get punished, others are discriminated against, others are discriminated for. All human governments are unfair, and the more governmental policies and laws, the more division. We, those who know God, who have Jesus living in our hearts are able to rise above the world and love when it isn't fair, to forgive those who have wronged us, to pray for those who have spitefully used us. This love is the evidence of a power the world cannot overthrow.] I can not do more than urge upon them **that this perfection is found in unity in Christ.** The Saviour has presented before us how much will be gained in **working out the unity that will join one believer to another in the perfection of Christian love**.... SpTB07 44.4 [When you hear about Bible perfection is this what immediately comes to your mind, that we are to be united with Jesus to love others as

Christ loves us? Or, do you hear "perfection" through the human law lens and think about task performance?]

This message I am given to bear, as the Lord's messenger. [Can you make the same claim—to be the Lord's messenger? Why not? Didn't Jesus say that as the Father had sent Him, He is sending us? Are we not all to be messengers for the Lord?] **The unity for which Christ prayed is a sacred pledge of discipleship. Those who enter heaven must be one with Christ. Unless they should bear the same perfection of character that He bore while on this earth, they would spoil heaven.** The trial and test is to come here in this world. **Here we are to be stamped with the image and superscription of God**. **The virtue of the grace of Christ will perfect the character of every believer who truly accepts Him**. [Does this frighten you? Do you hear this as some work you must attain? Some performance you must achieve? Or do you hear this as a cancer patient hears the description of having 100% of their cancer eliminated, put into remission to be perfectly healed by the remedy provided by their doctor? Without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no remission of sin—without the victory of Christ, His perfect character, sinfulness in the hearts and minds of humans would not remit. But, because of Jesus, all who trust Him, can have the Holy Spirit fill their hearts and minds and self can be crucified and sinfulness can remit and be replaced with love for God and others. Thus, the Bible describes those who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes as those who do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death—fear and selfishness is replaced with love and trust. In other words, they are perfect in love for God and others. As the quotation said, "**The virtue of the grace of Christ will perfect the character** of every believer who truly accepts Him."] All true disciples are made members of the royal family. **All have the new heart**, and all blend in perfect harmony. **They speak the same thing, though in this world their language may differ. Their manner of expression may not be the same**, but their one desire is for the highest end in this life,—the sanctification of the same Spirit. **They love as brethren**. SpTB07 45.1[We may be from different countries, different races, different cultures, different tribes, but all who have new hearts with God's law written in, will love each other as the family of God—we are one as God is one! This terrifies Satan. The enemy doesn't want us to love—he wants us to hate, to fear, to distrust and thus we can see the devil's work in the world today.]

Christ's disciples must obey the laws of heaven on this earth, else they will never obey them in the higher world. [What laws? Is this describing that we must get the right list of rules and keep them in some legal way, or that we must be restored to live in harmony with the laws God built reality to operate upon? What kind of law did the angels in heaven have? Why didn't they know about law when Lucifer rebelled, why was it something unthought of to them? What is the only kind of law that can be in operation and enforced that people are not informed about? Design law, it is merely how reality works. Thus, if we do not love here we will hate love their. If do not embrace honesty here, truthfulness, then we will hate truth there. If we do not practice liberty here we will not value liberty there. It is about the character, what the heart becomes by the methods, principles and design laws accepted, valued, internalized and applied here and now. By faith/trust in Jesus we can overcome our inherent fear and selfishness and experience God's methods restored within and carry out those methods in how

we treat others.] **I call upon every physician, upon every gospel minister, to obey the laws of God in everything**. [What kind of laws do physicians work with and treat patients through? The laws of health and these are design laws. Are the laws that the gospel operates upon of a different type, are they mere rules like humans make up and that we must keep under fear of inflicted punishment, or are they also design protocols?] This world is the school in which we are to prepare for graduation into the higher school. [What are we to learn in this school of this world? The truth about God and His methods. We are to learn to discern, to differentiate the truth from the lies of Satan. We are to learn the methods of God and the love of God and to grow in that love and in the practice of His methods. We are to learn to trust God with our entire being. And then we graduate to eternity, in which there is no more sin, disease, pain, suffering death—but we are still in school, for God is infinite and we are finite and we will spend all eternity learning and being overwhelmed with awe at the incredible love of God.] We know not who are the chosen of God only as they reveal the education they have received from the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit. Christ is their Mediator, their Righteousness, and their unity centers in God. [Mediator—where is Christ mediating? In the heavenly sanctuary—which is built out of what? What is the building material of this dwelling place for God? Where is it the Bible tells us God wants to dwell? In our hearts and minds. Thus the sanctuary is a metaphor for the true Temple of God, which is the hearts and minds of people. Jesus is mediating, via the Holy Spirit, in our hearts and minds working to cut out fear, selfishness, distrust, lust and unholy passions and write in truth, godly love, and the fruits of the Spirit. Each day in the Old Testament Temple the High Priest, and only the High Priest, would trim the wicks on the candlestick. Remember the central spirt was solid gold, representing Jesus, the sick other bowls with lamps represent humanity, man was created on the sixth day. Six, plus one equals 7 the number of perfection. Thus, when we are joined to Jesus and He trims our hearts we become perfect—perfect in love and shine the light of God's glory out to others.] **Those who are so stubborn that they will not comply with the prayer of Christ will be lawless, loveless, impolite. They could not be admitted into the family of heaven**. [Christ prays for us to be one as He and the Father are one. But those too stubborn to comply will be lawless, loveless and impolite—why? But what if they keep the weekly Bible Sabbath, and eat only the approved foods, and pay a faithful tithe, and get baptized in the right way, and believe in the Bible, and claim Jesus' blood as the payment for their sins? Can a person do all of this religious stuff and still not be united with God in heart? And why do those who refuse to be united with God, to be one in heart, mind, method, motive, one in love with God become lawless, loveless and impolite? What law is being referred to when she says lawless? Why are they not admitted to the family of heaven?] The truth cherished in the heart will work out a blessed unity among Christ's disciples in the lower school of earth. **The Lord is dishonored by the contention and strife caused by the unsanctified dispositions of professing Christians**. SpTB07 45.2 [What truth cherished in the heart? Is it not the eternal gospel, the eternal good news about God, which Satan has lied about? Is it not the truth that Jesus has revealed about God and God's kingdom of love, the reality that God's laws are design laws and are perfect and life and health and only possible in harmony with God and His design for life? What dishonors the Lord? strife, conflict, division—would this include joining with movements that claim to promote equality, to oppose injustice but use the methods of

violence, coercion, intimidation, riot, and any other method that divides and instills fear and hostility?]

I have written out fully the instruction that I was commissioned to give. [Who do you believe commissioned her to write this?] We are now to take our individual selves in hand, **and conquer the wicked feelings that rise in our hearts. In allowing the venom of these feelings to flow forth in words, we help Satan in his work**. [How many in the Christian world today are being duped into allowing feelings of anger, rage, resentment, bitterness, hurt over real injustice to motivate them to act in ways that are contrary to love? But we are to be one with God as Jesus is one with God. When did Jesus make that prayer of unity? Right before His crucifixion. Was Jesus treated justly by human governments? How did Jesus respond to the injustice? When Peter pulled out a sword to fight, what did Jesus do? What is to be our response to those who do injustice? What does the world want us to do? Consider seeing someone assaulting another, what is your instinct? What would you want to do? What if the person being assaulted is your child, wife, husband, mother, sister? When you see news images of people being dragged out of their cars and beaten in the streets do you have some part of you that is outraged? Do you get tempted to want to strike back? Do you have feelings that tempt you to consider wishing you could have been there with a gun and you would have shot the assailant to protect the innocent. You, like Peter would pull out your sword and strike a blow for justice. But, what if the person attacking your child, your wife, your sister, is your oldest son—what would you do then? What would you want to do for your son—kill him, beat him, or restrain him for the purpose of saving him?] Our church-members need a reconversion, a renewal of the Holy Spirit's power to make them children of God, members of His family. Let every one in our churches now humble his own heart, confess his own sins, and remember that God has a controversy with those who have kept the work from advancing, by their crooked characters, which need to be made all over again. SpTB07 46.1

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit…” What is described? Do you see love functioning in this relationship?

I have often talked about how love only functions in relationship. That it doesn’t function in isolation or as a singularity. And that the minimum number for genuine other-centered-love is three, which is a strong evidenced-based reason to believe in the Trinity.

I received this email this week:

> *I was wondering where I can find sources that support the statement that you need at least 3 individuals to have love truly demonstrated.*
>
> *Thanks for your materials. They have answered all the questions I had in my Christian experience. Filled the gaps in the SDA theology.*

I am doing the power of love course with some fellow church members. We all love it. May God keep blessing your efforts.

I need the sources I asked for to refer some other SDA colleagues who asked for "proof".

How would you answer this inquiry?

My response:

What do they consider "proof?" Which is more "proof" a textbook that cites that gravity exists or dropping an apple?

Which is more proof, a statement made by a person with credentials or the reality of how love actually functions?

Ask the persons who are requesting proof what they consider more authoritative—statements, declarations, descriptions, or the reality of how things actually function? Which holds more weight with them the description of things by people or the reality to which the various experts are referring when they describe it? Is the description by Isaac Newton of the various laws of motion more authoritative that the actual functioning of objects in motion?

So ask them can love function in isolation, as a singularity—and if so have them demonstrate other-centered love with no other.

If they suggest that two individuals can love each other, acknowledge this is possible, but ask how can that love be differentiated from narcissistic reinforcement? In other words, if no sacrifice is ever required, how can we tell if there is love or if the two parties merely love the love and adoration they receive from the other? One of Satan's allegations in heaven against God is that God required sacrifices from His creation but wouldn't sacrifice Himself. Satan's allegations is that God is self-centered or narcissistic.

> "In the light of the Saviour's life, the hearts of all, even from the Creator to the prince of darkness, are revealed. **Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory, and making no sacrifice for their good**. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Jeremiah 29:11. It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death. DA 57

Two beings can be in relationship that appears to be loving, but in reality is merely self-serving. This type of narcissistic reinforcement is exposed in relationships where husband and wife seem to be totally in love and then the first child comes a long and the husband begins to get angry at the wife for no longer giving him all her attention.

Three is the minimum number necessary for genuine other-centered love. But, if after a discussion of evidence, take them to Scripture and read how the Trinity functions, no member of the Godhead seeks glory for Themselves, but all are seen to uplift and glorify the other. If they want other sources then here are a couple:

> "But turning from all lesser representations, we behold **God in Jesus**. Looking unto Jesus we see that **it is the glory of our God to give**. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "**I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me.** John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give**. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: **through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns**, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, **to the great Source of all**. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life." DA 21

In the quote above, there are three, the Father, Son and the created beings, who are infused and empowered to love by the Holy Spirit.

> "In describing to His disciples the office work of the **Holy Spirit, Jesus** sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. **The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father** for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a **regenerating agent**, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the m**ighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.** It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. **Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature.** Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.
>
> **Of the Spirit Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me." The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world.** The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people. DA 671

Note the Father sends the Spirit, the Spirit glorifies the Son, and the Son glorifies the Father—the principle of love functioning in the Godhead for the purpose of healing sinners steeped in selfishness back to God's design of other centered love.

God's methods and plans always bring the unity of love—Satan's methods and plans always brings fear, division, distrust, selfishness, hostility.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible provides numerous examples…" Have you found where God has called you to work in His field?

What do you say to those who complain that we are only pawns on a chessboard in a game between God and Satan and God uses us to achieve what God wants and they don't want to be pawns to God or Satan?

Does God use us like pawns? No—what is the key to understanding this? What law lens are you looking through.

Chess is an arbitrary game with arbitrary rules and arbitrary consequences for movements upon an arbitrary board. It reinforces the idea that God's law is like human law and God plays games like humans do.

When we reject the imposed law view and understand design law—then we want to be used by God; we want to become active and engaged in applying ourselves usefully in God's cause. Why? Because we get to help our team (family, friends, neighbors, church family), and there is joy in helping those we love. And in exercising our abilities, including our love, those abilities, including our love grow stronger. We genuinely develop more skills, become more proficient, and so it is for **our good** to be used by God—not for God's need—it is the only way that we can grow in knowledge, in insight, in wisdom, in patience, in faith, in godliness and in love.

The lesson focuses our attention on Jethro's organizational recommendations to Moses.

Read second paragraph, "Every individual…" thoughts? Did this remind you of anything today? The military, the US Army is organized by:

- Squads (typically 5-10 soldiers)
- Platoons (4-5 squads, 40-50 soldiers)
- Companies (4-5 platoons, 200-250 soldiers)
- Battalions (3-5 companies 500-1000 soldiers)
- Brigades (3 or more battalions 3000-5000 soldiers)
- Division (3 brigades 15,000-20,000 soldiers)
- Corps (2-5 divisions 30,000- 100,000 soldiers)
- Armies (2-5 corps 60,000-500,000 solders)

And in the army there are leaders at each level, Squad leaders, Platoon leaders, Company, Battalion, Brigade, Division, Corps and Army commanders. At each level of this organization the individuals have responsibilities for the health, welfare, safety, education, development, proficiency, readiness, and equipping (both training and providing equipment) of their people.

It is part of the training that leaders lead from the field. They go through what their soldiers go through. They live in the field when their soldiers are in the field. The commander ensures his people are fed before he eats, his people rest before he rests.

Why is this the way leadership is taught? What impact does it have on subordinates to see their commander working with them, ensuring they eat before he eats etc.?

In the church, do we experience this type of leadership—servant leadership? Would we benefit from small groups in which members care for each other, look out for each other? How do we do that when people are free to come and go when times get tough?

For instance, how well would a military unit hold together if each member could pick up and leave at any time they wanted? What would happen during training, when things get tough? What would happen during deployment, during actual combat?

What is it that keeps soldiers together in combat? Do units who operate on fear of punishment from their superiors function best in combat?

What about those who function on love—the bonds of brotherhood? What forges or builds those bonds of love? Common cause, struggling through difficulties together, having each other's back, knowing each other and experiencing their reliability and trustworthiness in real world application.

Is there a lesson for us in our work for God's kingdom?

Are there other ways to get this type of experience besides in the military? Ball teams or any team activity can help build this type of bond of brotherhood. But, the point is that we must work together, struggle together, sacrifice together, achieve together, overcome together.

Is one of the reasons for church groups for us to come together for common purpose? This reality is a powerful argument against those who say they can worship God on their own from home and they don't need to belong to a group.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "A study of anatomy…" this is so true. We have been given different skills, abilities, gifts that when blended with others who have different gifts, but applied together for God's cause can achieve so much more.

This ministry would not achieve nearly as much or reach nearly as many people if I were working by myself. Dean Scott is gifted in ways I can only dream about. His skill with computers and graphics and design and video production and website programming is all beyond me. And because of Dean all of you who follow us online are able to access our material and it is always of the highest quality.

I am so thankful for Dean—let's be sure to keep Dean in our prayers, like Moses, he needs to stay energetic and healthy.

We are hopeful and prayerful that each of you will reach out to others and share this message where the Lord opens doors. We are actively working to prepare and make available more resources for you to use to share this message.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points out that the New Testament believers regularly met in homes—why? Because the New Testament church didn't own property, it was all about the people.

Is there benefit to owning properties? Of course, schools, publishing houses, hospitals, in addition to places of worship. So much of the work would be restricted if Christian organizations didn't own any properties.

But, we must never lose sight of the fact that the properties are not the church, the properties are merely resources or tools for the body of believers to utilize in fulfilling God's work.

Properties, organizations, institutions are not saved, people are. When people lose sight of this and begin to think that their responsibility for God is primarily to protect property they can be tricked into betraying their trust for God. When governments make actions that threat to take church property unless the organization goes along with policies that are contrary to God's methods and laws, it is important to let the properties be seized rather than compromise principles.

THURSDAY

What small groups have you been a part of and how have they been a blessing to you?

There are all types of small groups that can be formed and helpful to people such as:

- 12 step groups
- grief recovery groups
- divorce recovery groups
- abuse recovery groups
- Bible study groups
- cooking groups
- book groups

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SURPRISE! The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website's The Remedy NT online reader and will be added to the mobile app soon.

The Remedy App, which is free, has been redesigned and **Updated**, and now includes the Psalms! Please go to your app store and update The Remedy.

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 Q3 Making Friends for God: Lesson 11
Sharing the Story of Jesus

by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

When you think about witnessing…telling people about Christ…how does it make you feel? Excited? Nervous? Grateful? Afraid? Obligated? Reluctant? Why?

One of the founders of the Adventist church advises us:

> "The Lord has said, "Ye are My witnesses." Isaiah 43:10. But all who are called to be witnesses for Christ must learn of Him, that they may be efficient witnesses. As children of the heavenly King, they should educate themselves to bear testimony in a clear, distinct voice and in such a manner that no one may receive the impression that they are reluctant to tell of the mercies of the Lord. – CT 243.1

From Saturday's lesson, "Witnessing is sharing what we know ***about*** Jesus." I'm glad this is more fully explained in the next sentence, because we have learned here that there is a significant difference between knowing ABOUT swimming – the physics, the techniques, the strokes – and actually getting down in the water and actually swimming. We may know a lot ABOUT some public figure – a politician, a celebrity, an athlete – but how many of us really truly KNOW them.

The next sentence says, "It is letting others know what He means to us and what He has done for us."

Are some bells ringing or electrons firing…doesn't this sound like a description of one of the three prongs in our integrative evidenced based approach – experience! Witnessing is sharing what we know OF Jesus…what we have experienced in a trust relationship with him. It is not trying to prove what we believe is right or showing that others' beliefs are wrong…that does not make for a winsome witness.

> "Our sharing about Jesus must come from a heart that has been healed by His mercy and grace, and transformed by His love and truth. Then other people will see how the truth we believe has impacted and changed our lives. This is the best reason why we must live what we believe. Truth presented in the context of a changed life makes all the difference."

That same author agrees…see what you think about this:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "Successful Ways of Witnessing for Christ—Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can be home missionaries in their families and neighborhoods. There are many ways in which church members may give the message to those around them. One of the most successful is by living helpful, unselfish Christian lives. Those who are fighting the battle of life at great odds may be refreshed and strengthened by little attentions which cost nothing. Kindly words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation and doubt that gather over the soul. The true heart expression of Christlike sympathy, given in simplicity, has power to open the door of hearts that need the simple, delicate touch of the spirit of Christ. -- AH 485.1

What about the this question addressed in last week's class…are we the Lord's messengers…and are you comfortable with that label…and of course Tina's ability to voice what most of us are thinking but afraid to say.

For those who did not hear that exchange last week, Dr. Jennings read a quote from Mrs. White that said,

> "This message I am given to bear, as the Lord's messenger…and asked us if we could make that same claim – of being the Lord's messenger…if not, why not? Jesus said that as the Father has sent me, so He is sending us. I found this quote that helps to explain why and how we can be effective messengers for Him…spoiler alert, it's not because of us. "Have not your energies been quickened by the blessing that God has bestowed upon you? Has not the truth been more deeply impressed upon your soul? Can you not see more clearly its relative importance to those who are perishing out of Christ? Since the manifest revealing of God's blessing, are you witnessing for Christ more distinctly and decidedly than ever before?
>
> The Holy Spirit has brought decidedly to your minds the important, vital truths for this time. Is this knowledge to be bound up in a napkin and hidden in the earth? No, no. It is to be put out to the exchangers. **As man uses his talents, however small, with faithfulness, the Holy Spirit takes the things of God, and presents them anew to the mind**. Through His Spirit God makes His word a vivifying power. It is quick and powerful, exerting a strong influence upon minds, **not because of the learning or intelligence of the human agent, but because divine power is working with the human power. And it is to the divine power that all praise is to be given.** – 8T 55

SUNDAY

Jesus: The Basis of Our Testimony

Sunday's lesson talks about our extreme makeovers – not a home remodel…or some new makeup or a hairdo – but in the ways we are different before we encounter Christ and after we have been changed by His Spirit. What are some of those differences…can we list some?

Dead in our trespasses and sin – terminal versus healed, renewed, and transformed to be like Christ in heart, mind and character.

Hard hearts of stone versus soft hearts of flesh…hearts that were at enmity and distrust toward God are now trusting, open, seeking truth, and in agreement with Him.

Slaves to our sinful condition and carnal natures versus free with a new spiritual nature.
Attached and striving for the things of this world versus having the things of this world cut away through circumcision of the heart – which can manifest itself sometimes in dramatic changes in behaviors, habits, likes/dislikes…and sometimes in more subtle shifts in motives, methods, and attitudes.

Our fearfulness and selfishness are replaced with love, other-centeredness, and fearlessness – evidenced by a change in the methods we use – we move from methods of control, coercion, manipulation, and punishment…to kindness, honesty, liberation, we speak the truth in love and leave people free.

> Ephesians 2:1-10, *The Remedy*: "As for you, you were terminal and dying in the distrust, fear and selfishness[2] in which you used to live when you followed the survival-of-the-fittest principle of the world instituted by the ruler of the kingdom of the air–the intelligent being whose principles are now at work in all those who reject truth, love, and freedom.[3] All of us also were born infected with this destructive survival-of-the-fittest principle and at one time gratified its selfish and unhealthy desires and thoughts. Like the rest of humanity, we were born infected with this principle which — if not removed — would result in our self-destruction.[4] But because God is love, because he is merciful, gracious, forgiving, patient and kind, and because he truly loves us,[5] he removes the infection of distrust and selfishness and heals us through Christ. It is because God is gracious, loving and kind that you have been healed and set right with him.[6] God raised the human race from its degraded and detestable state through Jesus Christ's victorious life, and humanity again occupies its seat in God's heavenly counsel–in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord–[7] in order that the amazing truth of God's gracious character may be showcased for all eternity through the love expressed to us in Jesus Christ.[8] It is only because of God's grace that

you have been healed through trust–and you did not create this trust yourself, but it was established through the evidence of God's character revealed in the gift of Jesus Christ.[9] This is not by some human work–No way!–so there is no room for anyone to boast.[10] We are God's special creation brought to existence by Christ Jesus to showcase his character–his living law of love–which was always God's design for us.

One of the founders of the Adventist church puts it this way in this familiar quote from a book called *Christ's Object Lessons*:

> "This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us…When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged with His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. [This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.] – COL 311.4

If you have seen any of the "extreme makeover" shows, you know there is not an overnight transformation…there is *work* involved, a lot of work, effort…but whose work? Is this before and after transformation God's work? My work? Our work?

God's work: His work is to procure the remedy – from the foundation of the world to the promise of the redeemer, to ensuring a way was kept open for the Messiah to come, to having fear and selfishness war it out in his humanity, giving Himself in love, and ultimately overcoming the infection, developing a perfect human character, and offering that to us as a free gift.

Our work: trust Him, open the heart to him, and when His spirit pours His love into our hearts to receive it, to assimilate, it to agree and cooperate with Him.

> "Herein is revealed the outworking of the **divine principle of cooperation, without which no true success can be attained**. **Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part.** His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort." --LHU 193.4

> "There are two grand forces at work in the salvation of the human soul. It requires the cooperation of man with the divine agencies-- divine influences, and a strong, living, working faith. It is in this way only that the human agent can become a laborer together with God. The Lord does not sanction in any one of us a blind, stupid credulity. He does not dishonor the human understanding,

> but, far from this, He calls for the human will to be brought into connection with the divine will. He calls for the ingenuity of the human mind, the tact, the skill, to be strenuously exercised (!!) in searching out the truth as it is in Jesus… Ye are labourers together with God." -- OHC 310.5

So how can salvation be wholly of Christ and no work of ours, and yet require *our* work of cooperation? Think design law and it all becomes clear. We are born in a terminal condition, out of harmony with and divergent from God's design. Christ, and Christ alone, took this condition upon Himself, and by the exercise of His human will, cured the condition procuring a remedy for all humanity. He lived a life in perfect harmony with God and thus developed a perfect human character.

This is our Remedy. We cannot do this; we can only choose to partake of what He has developed in our behalf. But the partaking is not the developing.

> Christ came to the earth as man, he lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. -- DA 762.2 adapted

Note how the justification happens, according to this passage? It is by becoming a partaker of the divine nature, by partaking of Jesus in a trust relationship, and receiving a new heart and right spirit through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are set right in heart and mind, justified.

MONDAY

The Transformative Power of Personal Testimony

Monday's lesson presents 2 real life examples who experienced extreme makeovers – James and John, the brothers who were originally known as the "Sons of Thunder," but were transformed and changed because of their close relationship with Jesus.

The quarterly says a couple of things so well here, I have to point them out. Jesus' way is the way of love, not combative force. In the presence of Jesus' love, John's impetuosity and anger were transformed to loving-kindness and a gentle, compassionate spirit. In John's first epistle, the word love appears nearly 40 times; in its various forms, it appears 50 times.

> "There is an eternal principle of the universe (what would another term for 'an eternal principle of the universe' be?). Ellen G. White states this principle well in these words: 'The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love;

and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened."—{DA 22}.

TUESDAY

Telling the Story of Jesus

This lesson points out some of the inexperience and lack of qualifications of Christ's first missionaries/evangelists. These were not His disciples or long-time followers, but rather two gentlemen, aka "madmen", who experienced healing and liberation from demon possession. These were men who had likely never heard Jesus preach even one sermon, had never sacrificed at or even been to temple services, they certainly had not attended seminary or memorized the Torah or Old Testament scrolls.

So what in the world would they have to share with people, what deep spiritual insights could they possibly have to impart? They shared the Jesus they knew because they had experienced Him for themselves.

> "Their changed lives were living proof that Jesus was the Savior. These men told what they knew, what they had seen, heard, and felt of Jesus' power. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been changed by God's loving-favor."— DOA, 340

So how can this be? How effective and what difference can my witness actually make? Do you feel Unfit? Incapable? Ill-equipped? How can I improve my skills in this area?

> "Well, in this work, as in every other, **skill is gained in the work itself**. It is by training in the common duties of life and in ministry to the needy and suffering that efficiency is assured. **Without this the best-meant efforts are often useless and even harmful. It is in the water, not on the land, that men learn to swim.**" – AH 490.2

What law is being described here?

Listen to this one:

> "It is God's purpose to manifest through His people **the principles of His kingdom**. [What is another word for "principles"?] That in life and character they may **reveal these principles**, He desires to separate them from the customs, habits, and practices of the world.... – AH 519.3
>
> Wonderful scenes are opening before us; and at this time **a living testimony is to be borne in**

> **the lives of God's professed people** so that the world may see that in this age, when evil reigns on every side, there is yet a people who are laying aside their will and are seeking to do God's will—**a people in whose hearts and lives God's law is written**. – AH 519.4 [These are individuals, not a denomination!]

And if we have any young folks watching or listening out there, lest you think that being God's messenger and witness doesn't include you, think again! Listen to what this author says about it:

> "When heavenly intelligences see that men are no longer permitted to present the truth, **the Spirit of God will come upon the children**, and they will do a work in the proclamation of the truth which the older workers cannot do because their way will be hedged up.
>
> In the closing scenes of this earth's history many of these children and youth will **astonish people by their witness to the truth**, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power. They have been taught the fear of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible. In the near future many children will be endued with the Spirit of God and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church.
>
> Our church schools are ordained by God to prepare the children for this great work. Here children are to be instructed in the special truths for this time and in practical missionary work... **By them God's message will be made known and His saving health to all nations.** – AH 489

THURSDAY

Something Worth Testifying About

What's the "something" that's worth testifying about…and what makes it worth it?

Is what most of Christianity believes worth testifying about?

Is some heavenly legal proceeding where you are declared righteous even though you're not worth testifying about?

Is having your medical records altered to say you're well…while you're still dying of a terminal disease…worth testifying about?

Is getting to spend eternity with a God who will torture you if you don't love Him worth testifying about?

I gotta tell you and I have said before that the traditional legal, penal view of God and Christianity that I was raise in, taught, steeped in…was NOT worth testifying about…not to me, at least…and I didn't…I never told a soul. And now look at me…I'm up in front of a class…I'm on YouTube, permanently ensconced on the internet in perpetuity. What changed?

Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying…as we read earlier, this is **not because of the learning or intelligence of the human agent, but because divine power is working with the human power. And it is to the divine power that all praise is to be given.** I'm talking about what changed in my thinking, in my paradigm(s), in my knowledge about God, and my experience OF God. I thought I would try to just delineate out a few of the most significant shifts that are now worth testifying about…and I know everyone here has some too, so I want to see if you have some on your list that aren't on mine.

The medical healing or healing substitution atonement model – and even the meaning and pronunciation of the word at-one-ment. In contrast to the traditional penal substitution model, which focuses on an angry or "just" God who must be appeased or propitiated, the healing model shifts the focus to the sinner's condition – this carnal nature, this corrupt character that is motivated by fear and selfishness and the drive to survive – this is a terminal condition that is in need of **healing**. Christ cured this disease of fear and selfishness in His humanity, an procured a remedy which He offers as a free gift to all who accept it.

God is the creator and designer – his laws are the laws upon which reality and life are built and designed to operate. Once you embrace this concept and change your "law lens" from imposed rules to design laws, you end up basically having a secret decoder ring or a crystal ball that helps you predict the future…or more often diagnose the past.

Understanding the importance of methods, principles, and character instead of focusing on following specific rules, behaviors, and performance.

The Sabbath – is a sign/flag/banner representing God's government and His methods of truth, love, and freedom versus the flag/banner of imposed/enacted/arbitrary rules requiring force/coercion/punishment.

Entirely new view and appreciation for the investigative judgment and cleansing of the sanctuary doctrines – the investigative judgment is all about God and not us…He has not already gotten through

the "A" names as he works alphabetically through the Lamb's Book of Life. No, our destiny is determined by OUR judgment of God – do we trust Him? Is He trustworthy? Plus I have a vastly different/expanded understanding of all the sanctuary symbols and the entire service – what/where it is, what it's made of, what needs to be cleansed, and how it gets cleansed.

Why Christ had to die and what his life, death, and resurrection accomplished. I obviously don't have time for a complete study of this topic, but search the words "why Christ had to die" on comeandreason.com, and you will get lots more detailed explanations. Very briefly, Christ came to reveal the truth about the Father, which destroys the lies and distortions, and refutes Satan's accusations about who He is and how He governs. He also came to reveal the truth about Satan's character, who was shown to be a liar and a murder from the start. By giving Himself in love all the way to death on a cross, Christ purged the infection of fear and selfishness from His perfected human character, and procured a remedy that he offers as a free gift to us to cure our terminal sin sick condition. Finally, Christ destroyed death by perfectly restoring the law of love – the basis for life – life is the default setting in God's universe – He restored humanity back into harmony with God's perfect design…and life was the inevitable result.

The amazing great controversy perspective and the ongoing point-counterpoint battle between good and evil, between God and His accuser, playing out in this theater and spectacle to angels and men – from the Garden of Eden, through the Old Testament, the life/death/resurrection of Christ, right up to today the war is still being waged.

Love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom and God. Is. Love. The good news isn't good news at all if God is like Satan has alleged Him to be.

So what changed? God hasn't changed…the truth about who He is and His character of love have not changed – they have always been good and have always been true and have always been worth testifying about. What changed is me…He changed me…the truth about who He is continues to change me. This last message of mercy to go to the world – the truth about His character of love is life changing. And this healing atonement model is for real, it is not metaphor, it is not symbolic, it is actual tangible genuine healing, restoration, regeneration, renewal in the heart, mind and character of the believer. He doesn't want to grant you legal pardon, He wants to heal you and save you…He doesn't want to declare you to be righteous, He wants to make you righteous – set you right, back in harmony with his perfect design. Our salvation is not legal or transactional, it's transformational.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 12
A Message Worth Sharing

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

A Message Worth Sharing—what is a message for this time that is worth sharing?

Read Memory Text:

> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Revelation 14:6,7 NKJV

Read the first paragraph, "Christ's atoning death…" Let's affirm that Jesus is the key—that Jesus is God's solution to the sin problem, that Jesus is our Savior, that only through what Jesus has achieved for us is salvation possible. Let's affirm our thankfulness to God and Jesus for Jesus and what He has done for us.

But having affirmed all of that does this paragraph sum up the gospel and the final message we are to take to the world? Is what is described in this paragraph different from any other Evangelical or Protestant Christian group?

I don't disagree with anything in this paragraph, I just find it both inadequate and incomplete. It leaves out the central most important issue that Jesus came to expose and resolve, and the way its worded lends itself to be too easily construed through the lies of Babylon, the very thing that we are to come out of.

What is the key to the final message that this paragraph neglects that Revelation 14 points us toward?

What is the key lie that is the foundation to Satan's rebellion?

God's law, that God is Creator and His laws are design laws—this is the key. As long as we continue to present any idea through the lens of imposed law we still promote Satan's lies.

Here are a several of historic quotes to show what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching:

> **The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God's unchanging love**. PP 33.4 [What is the issue? God's character of love, God's methods of love, God's law of love. What is the final message of mercy? The truth

about God's character of love! And love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. Satan's system, government, methods, laws always erode liberty because it is based on imposed law that requires external enforcement and in the end such actions always destroys love. This is the great lie in Christianity that God imposes law and imposes penalties, thus to teach such things teaches God is something other than love! Let's keep reading…]

The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in **His work of beneficence.** [What is another word for beneficence? Altruism, giving, other-centeredness, love—and why was He not alone? Because love cannot exist in a singularity. The arguments against the Trinity are another attack on God's character of love. Listen to what comes next…] **He had an associate—a co-worker** who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. [Who is able to know the mind of God? Who can enter into infinity? Who can share in the purpose of God? Only God…continuing on with the quote…] "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." John 1:1, 2. **Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God**. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, **The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2… [Satan has been attacking the position of Christ from the beginning and the theories that Jesus is not fully God is part of Satan's attack]. PP 34.1

The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. "By Him were all things created, ... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." Colossians 1:16… [Jesus is the Creator—fully God and Satan hates it] PP 34.2

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. [Why? For the same reason our health require we breathe—it is the law life is built upon] God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. **He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience;** [Why? Because it destroys love, incites rebellion, destroys creativity, destroys individuality, causes pain, suffering, misery, unhappiness—how could God take pleasure in such a thing. But this is what billions of Christians believe and teach, that God will use His power to inflict pain and suffering and death on those who don't love Him.] and **to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service**. [Because only in freedom is there love and only in this environment is there development of our individuality and abilities.] PP 34.3

Satan has been persevering and untiring in his efforts **to prosecute the work he began in heaven,** [what work did he begin in heaven? the war against God of course, which was what kind of war? a war of ideas against the character of God, and what was at the root of Satan's strategy in this war? What has Satan been constantly working to get intelligent beings to

believe that results in rebellion against God and damage to them?] **to change the law of God**.[Satan achieves his goal when he gets intelligent beings to accept in their minds that God's law is imposed rather than design law. He can't change reality, but he can lie and can get intelligent beings to change their view or belief about God's law and this changes their belief about God, and changes them from loyal to sinful.] **He has succeeded in making the world believe the theory he presented in heaven before his fall, that the law of God was faulty, and needed revising**. [What kind of law can be revised? This is what Satan has succeeded at, at getting people to believe God's law is like human law, imposed rules, legislation, revisable. It is not!] **A large part of the professed Christian church, by their attitude, if not by their words, show that they have accepted the same error**. [Yes, including many in the SDA church. All penal legal substitution theology promotes this lie of Satan!] **But if in one jot or tittle the law of God has been changed,** [Because as Jesus said doing so would result in heaven and earth passing away.] Satan has gained on earth that which he could not gain in heaven. He has prepared his **delusive** snare, hoping to take captive the church and the world. But not all will be taken in the snare. [Who won't be snared by this lie? Those who reject it and embrace the truth about God's design law and thus about God's character and methods. It is the message of the 3 Angels to worship the Creator and reject the dictator views of God.] A line of distinction is being drawn between the children of obedience and the children of disobedience, the loyal and true and the disloyal and untrue. **Two great parties are developed, the worshipers of the beast and his image, and the worshipers of the true and living God**. [And the beastly system is the system of imposed law, coercion, force, inflicted punishment regardless of day of worship. God's system is that of the Creator, it is the system of life, of love, of truth, of freedom of design law. And God sent Christ to restore us back to life!] 2SM 107.2

Now consider these quotes—again in the setting of where we are in earth's history and what is the message we have worth sharing:

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning **the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering**,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (GC 582.2)

What kind of laws to men pass? What kind of laws does the Creator build reality to operate upon?

> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be** holy, just, and good, complete in itself. **It cannot be repealed or changed**. [Why? Because it is not legislated, it is not imposed, it is not a rule, it is not the kind of law humans make. God's laws are design protocols for life. To change them would be to destroy the universe and life as God built it. Thus it cannot be repealed or changed.] To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (PK 625.1)

> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the *last great conflict* of the controversy between truth and error. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle**

not between rival churches contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. (PK 625.2)

Again, what is the final conflict over? What difference does it make in how we view God's law?

Let's do a quick summary and then come back to the first angel's message:

Sin is transgression of the law—but what is the difference if we understand the law differently?

Imposed law	**Design law**
Sin is being in legal trouble	Sin is having a terminal condition
God is required by law to punish sin	God is required by His law & character of love to save sinners
Jesus died to pay legal penalty	Jesus died to be our Remedy
God killed Jesus in our place	God so loved that He gave Jesus to be our Savior
Salvation is claiming a legal solution of Jesus blood to appease God	Salvation is accepting the truth Jesus revealed about God opening the heart and receiving the mind of Christ via the HS—being reborn
Atonement is legal payment	Atonement is at-one-ment
The gospel is Jesus died to propitiate God and atone for our sin	The gospel is the eternal good news about God
The final message is perverted to be legal issues of right days or right rituals or right claims of legal salvation	The final message is the truth about God's character of love –here is what one of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

"**It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world**. Men are losing their **knowledge of His character**. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. **At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed**, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…**The last rays of**

> **merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love.**" Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

Connect the previous quotes about the final struggle between the law of God and the law of men and God's character and you will see that the rebellion of Satan is rooted in the lie that God's law is merely imposed rules, like humans make, that requires God to use power to inflict punishment.

The first angel's message is a call to reject this lie about God, to return to worship our Creator Him, who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water and thereby give Him glory in how we live, by living in harmony with His design laws, because the hour of God's judgment has come.

This is the hour in human history in which people are to decide if God is like Baal, an imperial dictator who requires a blood sacrifice to appease him, or if God is like Jesus the Creator whose laws are design protocols and whose character is love and who gave Himself to cure or terminal sin condition.

So, Revelation 14:6,7 from *The Remedy:*

> Then I saw another messenger flying in midair, and he had the eternal good news about God's character of love to proclaim to everyone living on earth–to every nation, tribe, language, and people–which represents a movement of people who arise to proclaim the truth about God's character of love throughout the world. He said in a clear, resounding voice, "Be in awe of God, and glorify him by living his methods of love, because the hour has come for everyone to make a judgment about God, and worship the Designer, Creator and Builder who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and springs of water– all of which operate upon his law of love."

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Throughout salvation history…" What do you think of the use of the word judgment here? It is a correct use of the word, but it lends itself to being too easily misunderstood if one has a human law mindset.

In a human law mindset what does this sound like? A judicial process, God has some line of total number of bad deeds by a person, or nation, or group, and when that threshold is met, then God judges it is time for Him to act to punish all the badness. But, before He does, He sends warning that He is going to punish.

Is this how it sounds?

But, is this the truth of how it really is? No!

It is true, God is never caught off guard, and it is true God sends warnings to His people, no doubt about that. But, what the authors don't seem to incorporate into their explanation are two key pieces of

reality that illuminate events quite clearly and those two pieces of reality are: God's design law and the Great Controversy in which after Adam's sin the Messiah was promised.

With these truths in mind, the Old Testament is the record of God working to bring the Messiah and Satan working to stop God's plan.

With those two critical pieces of information we then see that God's judgments are not judicial but therapeutic. God is judging what actions are necessary to fulfill the plan of salvation, to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. God sends warnings to humanity of the dangers of deviating from His design laws, what will happen to them, like a doctor warning His patients of the results of smoking.

Then God takes actions, when necessary to excise necrosis in order to keep open the avenue for Messiah or no human would be saved.
What confuses people is they confuse first death, which is sleep, with second death which is annihilation and what God calls death. God has acted to put people to sleep in times past–for what purpose? To save humanity, to keep open the avenue for the Messiah, like at the flood, but God does not kill people. Every human in history is alive, some walking on the earth right now, but others asleep awaiting resurrection.

So, God sends these messages to warn people, in order to save people, but if people refuse the message what does God do? Does God ever become the source of death or is sin the source of death?

So, let's read a few passages from Genesis in *The Remedy:*

> Gen 6:5 The Lord saw how human beings, by choosing to indulge selfishness, had completely corrupted themselves, destroying in themselves his design of love, and how their every desire was totally selfish and their hearts sought evil all the time. 6 The Lord grieved at their suffering, and his heart ached over humanity's terminal condition. He also grieved at the action his love must take in order to slow the spread of sin and to keep open the avenue for the Messiah to come and save the human species. 7 So the Lord pronounced his therapeutic plan: "I will remove the malignantly selfish humans from the face of the earth that I have made; I will remove humans and animals, both large and small, and the birds of the air. Having to do this grieves me, for I have created them." 8 But the Lord was pleased that he had a friend in Noah…
>
> Gen 6:11 The earth, created by God to operate upon the principle of love (the circle of giving), was being destroyed by the grossest violence and exploitation. 12 God saw how fear and selfishness had spread throughout the earth, corrupting all living creatures, for all living things were violent and sought to dominate and destroy each other. 13 So God pronounced his healing plan to Noah: "It has come before me that if I don't act, then all life on earth will end, because the earth is being destroyed by constant violence and exploitation. I am going to stop this cycle of violence and put an end to the living creatures and change the earth to slow down future corruption… 17 Understand that I must act to save humanity—to keep open the avenue for the Messiah and slow the spread of sin—I am going to bring waters to flood the earth, and all the

> creatures living upon it are going to die; and the face of the earth will be changed. [18] But I will fulfill my pledge to save humanity through you…"

So, what is God's judgment? It is the accurate diagnosis of each person and the situation as a whole and what is necessary for Him to do in order to remedy the sin problem and save the species and as many people as possible. There is never anything penal legal in God's judgments, they are always manifestations of love in order to heal and save.

Read second paragraph, "The message of eternal significance…" What is the message of "present truth" for us today?

Here are two historic quotes about present truth:

> **God intends that even in this life the truths of His Word shall be ever unfolding to His people**. [Why unfolding? Because this is how reality works. We are not only in darkness and misunderstanding about God and His kingdom, but we are finite, so even in the Earth made new we will always be advancing and growing in truth. We will never be God and never have infinite knowledge. This is quite exciting always new discoveries. But does Satan want us to advance in truth? It is a godly approach to establish our doctrines and refuse to advance in our understanding?] There is only **one way in which this knowledge can be obtained.** We can attain to an understanding of God's Word **only through the illumination of that Spirit** by which the Word was given.... And the Saviour's promise to His followers was, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.... For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13, 14. CSA 46.7

> **God desires man to exercise his reasoning powers**; [If we are able to obtain this knowledge only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, then why do we have to exercise or reasoning powers? Because we are not robots. The Holy Spirit illuminates our minds to comprehend truth, but we must exercise our God-given reasoning abilities to think it through, to comprehend, to choose and agree, to, as Paul says, be fully persuaded in our own minds. This is the only way for us to be transformed while retaining our individuality. If God were to simply write the truth into our being we would not be us anymore but robots or computers. And it isn't truth cognitively comprehended, but truth embraced and accepted into the character as principles we build our identity upon that matters. Many people will be lost who know the truth cognitively, but don't accept into their hearts and characters—Satan knows the truth about God, but rejected God's methods, principles and character and thus formed a character of selfishness instead.] and the study of the Bible will strengthen and elevate the mind as no other study can.... A sense of the power and wisdom of God, and of our inability to comprehend His greatness, should inspire us with humility, and we should open His Word, as we would enter His presence, with holy awe.... CSA 47.1

> **In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation.** [What is the message to this generation? Is it not the 3 Angels Messages—which

> is the truth about God as Creator, which brings us back to His law being design law!?] The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. **It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new**. [This is a fantastic point—we in our class are not denying any of the old truths, but advancing them by putting them in their right setting of God's design law. For instance, Christ died as our Savior, and without the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we could not be saved. But we reject the penal/legal theory built on Satan's lie that God's law is like human law and continues to distort God's character and undermine our trust in God. We put the death of Christ in its right setting as God's solution or remedy to the sin problem. Jesus died to reveal truth and destroy lies in order to win us to trust AND to eradicate sinfulness from the species by being tempted as a human just like us but instead, as a human, living out God's law of love perfectly thereby restoring into the species human God's law of love. Christ developed a perfect, sinless human character and thus becomes our Remedy—nothing penal legal at all, it is simply what life and reality in God's universe requires.] When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began "at Moses and all the prophets" and "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27. **But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old**. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form. COL 127.4

What is the truth for our generation? What is the new light that illuminates the old? It is the truth of God's design laws, worshipping Him as Creator and understanding the entire conflict as a question over God's law, what type of law. Thus the entire Bible is embraced and understood in the fuller light of present truth.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "From the first to the last…" As we described in a previous class, the overarching theme of Bible prophecy is the coming Messiah to destroy sin and restore humans and the Earth back into heavenly perfection. Praise God!

And is there a message for God's people today?

Let's read the message to the Laodicean church in Revelation chapter 3, from *The Remedy:*

> [14]"To the messenger to my children in the church in Laodicea, write:
> This message is from Jesus–the consistent, reliable, faithful and true Witness–who is the origin of God's creation:[15]I know your choices. I know that you are neither on fire with love, nor do you appear cold with selfishness. I wish you were either on fire for my kingdom, or clearly opposed to it![16]But because you are a lukewarm mix of cold hearts practicing selfish methods while appearing to be on fire for my kingdom, you misrepresent me and make me sick to my stomach. I am about to vomit you out.[17]You claim to be spiritually rich and full of heavenly treasure, thinking you have the truth and are in need of nothing, but you are so self-deceived that

> you don't realize you are devoid of my character of love. You are decrepit, pathetic, bereft of true godliness, with minds so closed that you can't even comprehend truth. You stand naked and exposed.[18]My prescription for you is to exchange your corrupt motives for the gold of godly love purified through fiery trials, so that you can be rich in what heaven values. Exchange your filthy, selfish characters for the perfect character of Christ — pure and white — so that you can cover the shame of your imperfection. And apply the salve of the Holy Spirit to your minds, so that you can see and understand the reality of your own condition, and that of God's kingdom of love.
> [19]"It is those whom I love that I diagnose and provide these therapeutic interventions, so take ownership of yourselves: turn away from destruction, and apply the Remedy.[20]I am here now! I am standing at the door to your hearts, knocking with truth and love. If any hear my voice and open their hearts, I will come in and commune with them, and they with me.
> [21]"Everyone who prevails by completing the treatment, and lives in harmony with my methods of love until the end, will sit enthroned with me–just as I overcame, and sit enthroned with my Father.[22]Those whose minds are open to truth will understand what the Spirit reveals to the churches."

Is this a message for Christians today? What is the reason many Christians struggle with true godliness of character? What is the connection with this message and the message of the 3 angels?

How does the lie about God's law fit into this?

What happens to the person who believes they are in legal trouble with a god who will torture and kill them unless they get a substitute to plead to this god and pay this god a blood payment of his own blood not too kill them? What happens if they believe that salvation is a legal adjustment of their record by claiming the legal payment of their substitute and that once they make this claim by "faith" they are saved?

Do you see how the lie that God's law is like human law has corrupted the gospel and trapped millions into a fraud that prevents actual righteousness and results in exactly what Revelation describes as Laodicea?

I am sadly seeing this on our Ministry Facebook feed this week. I posted a blog about the principles of liberty written into the US Constitution being under attack and how this is part of Satan's end-time strategy to bring about his beastly system. I did not mention any political party or politician but wrote about the principles of God versus the principles of Satan unfolding in the world around us, hoping to enlighten people to the two antagonistic methods and principles.

But sadly, the vast majority of the comments are political advancing one party or candidate or railing against another. Some are even threating violence or war. It is quite sad to see how many don't realize they are joining with Satan regardless of whether they are left or right if they embrace imposed law methods and want to use coercion to force their methods upon others.

For those with eyes to see you realize that Revelation is coming true right before our eyes.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that the epicenter of Revelation is chapter 14, it is the end time message to prepare people for Christ's return. We have already explored 3 verses of this chapter, but let's read this chapter from *The Remedy:*

> Then I looked and saw Jesus the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, which represented the place of victory over sin. He was with the 144,000 who had been healed and had the character of Jesus and the Father completely restored in their minds, which was symbolized by the name of the Father and Son written on their foreheads. [2] I heard the sound of God's presence—like the ocean roar or deep thunder—and with it, what sounded like many harps being played together, symbolizing the beautiful melody that comes from the lives of the healed. [Have you ever seen lives that were like beautiful music? Beautiful music requires harmony—this is a metaphor for those whose lives are in harmony with God and His law of love—it is beautiful. But, have you seen lives that are dissonant out of harmony with God and His design of love?] [3] As God and the four living beings and the elders were watching, the healed lived Christlike lives that were like the sound of beautiful music —a song which only the 144,000 who had been redeemed from earth could sing. [4] These are the ones who did not corrupt themselves by filling their hearts with false views of God or practicing Satan's methods—they kept their characters pure. They follow Jesus the Lamb wherever he goes, always revealing the truth about him. They were redeemed from fallen humanity and are the first fruits—the first ones so settled into the truth about God and the Lamb that nothing could move them. [5] No lie about God was found in their testimony; they are without blame.
>
> Rev 14:6 Then I saw another messenger flying in midair, and he had the eternal good news about God's character of love to proclaim to everyone living on earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people—which represents a movement of people who arise to proclaim the truth about God's character of love throughout the world. [7] He said in a clear, resounding voice, "Be in awe of God, and glorify him by living his methods of love, because the hour has come for everyone to make a judgment about God, and worship the Designer, Creator and Builder who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and springs of water—all of which operate upon his law of love." [Do you see this message as the message we are to give today?]
>
> Rev 14:8 A second messenger followed the first, proclaiming throughout the world: "Don't trust Babylon the Great—a symbolic description of religions that misrepresent God—as it is fallen into the lies about God and intoxicates the world with its pagan views of God, maddening the people with its adulterous idea that God coerces and must inflict punishment if not properly appeased."
>
> Rev 14:9 And a third messenger followed the first two and proclaimed in a voice that was heard throughout the world: "If anyone gives worth and honor to the beastly system of coercion by choosing the methods of the beast and thus marking themselves as 'loyal in heart' by

embracing the character of the beast, or marking themselves as 'loyal in deed' by practicing his methods, [10] they will reap the full fury of unremedied sin when God no longer shields them from their destructive choice. They will experience immeasurable torment of mind and burning anguish of heart when they stand in God's fiery presence and are bathed in unquenchable fire of truth and love—all in the very presence of Jesus and the holy angels. [11] The memory of their suffering and the lesson of their self-destructive choice will never be forgotten throughout all eternity. There will be no peace of mind—day or night—for those who prefer the methods of the beast and model after him, or for any who choose to mark themselves as followers of the beast." [12] This requires patient endurance on the part of the healed, who live God's methods of love and remain true to Jesus.

Rev 14:13 Then I heard another voice from heaven say, "Write this: Happy are those who die to sin and self, trusting the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from working to save self, and their loving deeds will follow them."

Rev 14:14 I looked, and I saw Jesus, the Son of Man, surrounded by a cloud of brilliant angels, wearing a crown of gold on his head—symbolic of his perfect character and rule of love. He had a sharp sickle in his hand, symbolizing his intent to bring his followers home. [15] Then another messenger came out of the heavenly temple and called in a clear voice to Jesus, who was in the cloud of angels: "Take your sickle and cut your followers free from all earthly ties and bring them home! The time to reap has come, because your people have matured and are ready to be cut free." [16] So Jesus, seated amongst the cloud of angels, swung his sickle and all throughout the earth his people were cut free and brought to heaven.

Rev 14:17 Then another angel came out from the temple in heaven, and he had his own sharp sickle. [18] Yet another angel came, from the altar, with the authority of the fire of truth, and called in a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle: "Take your sharp sickle and gather the cluster of those who—like grapes—have ripened, but ripened on the vine of earth's principles; for they are fully hardened in their selfish ways." [19] The angel swung his sickle and gathered those who—like grape clusters—were ripened into complete rebellion against God, and he threw them into the winepress where they were pressed down under the destructive force of unremedied sin when God no longer shielded them from their destructive choice. [20] When God finally let go, they were crushed—outside the city of God—under the weight of guilt, shame, despair and fear that unremedied sin brings. Their lives ebbed away, and the dead were piled up 6 feet (1.8 meters) high for nearly 200 miles (320 kilometers) around the city.

Does this sound like the Revelation you have always read? What is different?

Does it make a difference to read it through the lens of design law?

When you think of God's final judgment what comes to mind? Is it judicial or diagnostic?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Revelation's last-day message…" If we present the final message to the world as a legal message about the right rules and God having a judicial review of legal elements in heaven, are we presenting the eternal gospel or are we perpetuating the lie of Babylon?

The final message is about God's character of love and it is only understood correctly when we understand His law correctly. This is why the final struggle is over what it all began over in heaven, a question of God's law.

When Satan rebelled in heaven, was there a weekly Sabbath? No! The final question is not about the weekly Sabbath, but **it is about what the weekly Sabbath is a sign of—which is design law**.

The weekly **Sabbath was created for man** at the end of Creation week as a time filled with God's methods/law, i.e. truth, presented in love, leaving people free.

Thus, the Sabbath, as a day of rest, is evidence or sign of design law.

Sunday became a day of rest by legislation, thus it is a mark if imposed law.

The final issue in the war is whether God is like Jesus revealed, Creator, Builder of reality who governs on design law, or whether God is a dictator who makes up rules and inflicts punishment on rulebreakers.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "In an age…" What does this mean to you? What message do you hear?

When people believe the imposed law lie then they believe they can get away with sin, there are loopholes, there are exceptions, they might not be caught, the authorities might not know, they might get someone to erase the record of their sin, or get someone to hide the judge from seeing their sin.

We see this in society today that people are doing all kinds of violence, rioting, looting, murdering and thinking they can get away with it because many in authority are not enforcing human law.

But, we don't see people lining up to pour gasoline over themselves and light themselves on fire, or jump off the Empire State Building, or ingest radioactive toxins—why not? Because all of these actions operate upon design law and the law breaker cannot avoid the damage to themselves. This is how reality works.

All the looters, rioters, murderers are searing their own consciences, hardening their own hearts and this cannot be avoided. They take themselves further and further away from harmony with God.

What does it mean "only His righteousness is good enough to pass through the judgment?"

Do you hear this as something legal? If only His righteousness is good enough to pass through the judgment how does that help us?

Is it some legal loophole that for those who claim the legal payment of Jesus that in the judgment when the Father looks at our record He sees the righteousness of Jesus stamped in there?

Would you hear it differently if it was worded, "only His character is perfectly healthy enough to pass through the examination without being diagnosed as terminal?"

What does this text mean?

> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2Cor 5:21 NIV84

or this?

> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Gal 2:20 NIV84

or this?

> "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

If Jesus righteousness is the only thing good enough to pass through the judgment, where must it be applied? Where must we find it in the judgment? Would it be in the hearts and minds of the saved? And if Christ's righteousness actually becomes ours, and our characters actually become righteous because of the indwelling of Jesus, what will our records reveal?

And then, could we use the metaphor of covered by the righteousness of Christ? Yes, because He doesn't cover over, but covers for, He takes the sin away and gives us His righteousness and we are actually changed.

The penal legal lie teaches a fraud that I call the candy-coated rotten apply theory in which the robe of Christ's righteousness is like the candy on a rotten apply, it covers over the rot of sin. This is a lie that the imposed law penal substitution theology teaches.

The truth is we become righteous through our faith or trust in Jesus, this is the righteousness by faith message.

Here are a couple of historic quotes:

> **The righteousness of God never covers a soul all polluted with sin**. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). **Will you let Him take it**

> **away?** You cannot bear your own sin. **Christ says He will take your sin** if you lay hold of the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour…{1SAT 237.2}

From where is the sin taken away? This author says it is taken away from the soul, not from a record book. It is a literal, actual, healing of the person's character that is being described.

Here is another quote:

> **Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make** us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. "I counsel thee," He says, "to buy of Me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Rev. 3:18. {COL 311.3}
>
> **This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising**. **Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us**… By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees**, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but **His own robe of righteousness**, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. {COL 311.4}

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph, "Revelation 14 describes…" I agree it describes two systems of worship the Creator and the beast—and what is the foundational difference between these two systems or governments? The laws of each, and what is the type of law in God's kingdom versus the beasts? Design law in God's kingdom and imposed law in the beasts.

And what method does God use to govern with Design law? Truth, love freedom.

What method does the beast use with imposed law? Lies, fear and selfishness, and coercion.

What are the flags, pennants, signs, marks of these two systems or kingdoms?

Sabbath a sign of Creation and design law, built in the fabric of time itself as a day of liberty and freedom revealing God's design methods and…

Sunday a mark of imperialism, legislated by man as a day of rest and worship, thus a mark if imposed law and coercive enforcement.

If we were to promote Sabbath as an imposed law of God enforced by God through inflicted punishment then we are actually promoting the wine of Babylon, the lie of Satan that God functions like sinful beings. It is only by returning to design law that we can see the truth.

Can we do anything by our behavior to make the Sabbath more or less holy than it is? No—then when we "keep the Sabbath holy" are we keeping it holy or ourselves holy? And can we keep ourselves holy only one day in seven?

So, is Sabbath keeping a legal matter or a lifestyle that persists all week long, i.e. living God's design laws as represented by the Sabbath?

Consider this quote:

> **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter.** We are to **understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent the principles of His government. They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them**. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works. 3TT 20.3

Those Pharisees of Judaism and Adventism who keep a legal weekly Sabbath are actually not Sabbath-keepers—they are the ones who crucified Christ.

> In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. **The *breach made in the law at the time* the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired**. [She doesn't say the breach made in the law BY the change in the Sabbath, because the breach is much more than that. Remember when Satan broke the law of God in heaven the Sabbath didn't yet exist. We must of course recognize and accept the truth about the Sabbath, but accepting the day of the week while keeping the imperial law view doesn't repair the breach.] God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show t**hat the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** [why? Because it is the law of life, the principles upon which life is established and operates. One cannot have health in violations of the laws of health. So all enduring reform is merely putting people back in harmony with God's design laws for life.] and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as **a memorial of creation**, a constant reminder of the power of God. [What power? This is key—when you hear this do you hear physical might and power, the power to create? That power was demonstrated during the fist six days of creation week—but what power was revealed during the 7th day? Was a different power revealed? Paul says the the gospel is the power for salvation (Rom 1:6), Remember this quote from EGW: "God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's

> principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**." DA 759.1. What is the power of God that the Sabbath reminds us of? That God is moral—He presented truth in love and then leaves us free—God rested and did not compel. This is the power that the Sabbath is to remind us of. If we make it only about physical power we continue to obstruct the healing truth.] In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. See verse 12. {PK 678.2}

What was the breach made in the law **when** the Sabbath was changed? It was not the mere change of the day of worship—the breach was the idea that God's law is imposed law—this is the breach we are to repair.

Thus, we cannot repair the breach by teaching the right day of the week through imposed law lenses—that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test and that God will use power to punish those who don't keep it. This only perpetuates the lie, keeps the breach in the law open.

We are to repair the breach by returning to design law worship and this results in our transformation, for by beholding we are changed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SURPRISE — The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and will be added to the app soon.

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 Q3 Making Friends for God: Lesson 13
A Step in Faith

by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

I generally like the last lesson in the quarterly to kind of review and recap the concepts we've learned and discussed over the previous 12 weeks…to kind of hit the high points…to see how much we have really retained…how much of what we heard actually stuck…and then focus on practical application so we can put what we have learned into practice with the goal of implementing and integrating the concepts into our real daily lives – particularly considering the significance of what we have been studying on how to witness effectively, truthfully, the importance of our personal testimony…and how these are skills that can be honed and refined, and just like our muscles they must be exercised.

I didn't find too much of that in the Lesson 13 content, so hopefully it's okay with you if we take a bit of literary license from the quarterly this week and do a bit of an *interactive* recap…and quiz! I'm going to be quizzing you to see how much you remember, what concepts you found especially profound or those that really made an impact, maybe find out if there are some topics you still have questions on?

So all this quarter, we have been looking at making friends for God and studying the importance of our personal witness. In Week 1, we talked about the reasons why we witness and the primary goals of witnessing… remember any of those?

- To get people to accept the right doctrines? Not particularly—only as is necessary for healing their hearts and minds. It's more like our goal is to get them to accept the right understanding of their disease?
- To get them to join a particular denomination?
- To introduce people to Jesus and have them open their hearts in trust to Him so that they are turned from God's enemies to His friends?
- Will all of God's true friends agree on every point? Paul and Barnabas? Paul and Peter? What foods to eat or what days to treat as special?
- But what did the Apostles all agree on? Jesus is Lord and God's character and methods of love. Salvation is healing of hearts and minds through a trust relationship with Jesus.

Ultimately, we witness because we love and care about people…and love is outward moving and other centered. If God's love is poured into our hearts, we can't keep it to ourselves – it overflows onto people we come in contact with – we want the people we know and love to experience the peace, love, joy that we have found…particularly our family and loved ones.

We saw this concept so clearly illustrated **in Lesson 7** when we reviewed the parable of the laborers in the field. I know you all remember the familiar story from Matthew 20, where some laborers came early in the day looking for a vineyard job…agreed to the day's wage, and went to work. Then some other folks came at noon, were told by the vineyard owner, "I will pay you what is right," and then joined the others in the field. Later in the day, just an hour before quitting time, more workers joined for the same agreed-upon "right pay," and finished that last hour of the shift with the rest of the crew. Then when it was time to settle up, everyone got paid the same – the guy who *labored* 8-10 hours in the vineyard, in the heat of the day, got the same pay as the dude who came in at maybe 5 pm and only worked for one hour!

Don't you have an immediate kind of visceral reaction to that outcome? Doesn't it seem to violate some universal standard of fairness?

It definitely does – and under human law constructs, the whole story is completely unfair on every level. But the shift to a design law interpretation changes everything…and explains one of big reasons why we witness.

When we understand that the worker's reward – the agreed upon wage – the right payment – is eternal life with Jesus, and the vineyard is this earth where we witness and work to save souls…suddenly the story is completely fair and such a beautiful picture of reality. The ones who got called early accepted Jesus into their life early...and not only did they get reward of eternal life – just like the thief on the cross got in his last hour on this earth - but they also got to work with God their whole lives, they learned how to work in the field - which is the field of human souls. Thus, they learned God's methods, they learned God's principles of how to "fish" for men...they became more efficient in how to wield the sword of truth in love while leaving people free - these are skills that must be practiced, they must be exercised - remember the quote we read a couple of weeks ago that said,

> "In this work [witnessing/ministering], as in every other, skill is gained in the *work itself*...It is in the water, not on the land, that men learn to swim." – {AH 90.2}

Their characters are more developed, they have become more like the landowner! Whereas the one who came in at the last hour, he received eternal life...he got the same pay, but he didn't get the blessing of working all his life with the landowner. See how design law removes any hint of arbitrary-ness and unfairness from the story? How there is no prejudice or bias being portrayed, but rather just an accurate depiction of how reality actually works.

But back to witnessing...this is why we witness!! Talk about laboring in the field...how many of you...how many of us have *labored* over our parents, our spouses, our families, our loved ones, and

maybe especially over our children - not just over their eternal salvation, but because we want them to KNOW the God we know…so that, as it says in John 17:3, their eternal life can start right now…we want them to know the blessing of working in the field in close communion with the landowner…we want their minds, hearts, and characters to be molded and shaped by the Holy Spirit to be like Christ. This is why we witness.

Is all witnessing helpful, or can witnessing ever be harmful? Does anyone remember from Lesson 1 some of the ways that witnessing might actually cause harm?

> It is by training in the common duties of life and in ministry to the needy and suffering that efficiency is assured. Without this the best-meant efforts are **often useless and even harmful**. – {AH 490.2}

• What happened to Pharaoh when Moses witnessed to him? Why did this happen to Pharaoh? Does that mean Moses should not have witnessed to him?

• What did Jesus say about the cities in His day having had His witness to them? That their guilt would be greater than Sodom's. Does that mean Jesus should not have witnessed to them?

• So they are not harmed by the witness of truth—they are harmed by the rejection of truth, the witness of truth gives them opportunity for healing and eternal life—even if they reject it.

• What about if we witness because we want to get the most baptisms in the conference? Do we risk witnessing with wrong motive and perhaps not even witnessing the truth?

• Jesus told the religious leaders in His day that their witness caused their converts to become twice the son of hell than they themselves were, why was that?

In Lesson 2, we discussed the power of personal testimony and how telling people how your life has been changed by Jesus and your personal experience with Him can be a winsome, effective witness. But we also talked about how personal experience, strong feelings and emotions can be deceptive or misleading or even false…which is why the three overlapping threads of evidence are so important, and why experiences and feelings must be checked against testable laws, evidence, and reality. Remember this historic quote regarding people's experience?

> "Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and are constantly referring to the feelings they had at

> such and such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come their house is swept away. Many poor souls are groping in darkness, looking for the feelings which others say they have had in their experience. They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The convicted sinner has something to do. He must repent and show true faith. When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart? A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride. – {MYP 72.1}

See how reality always has evidence associated with it? A genuine experience with Jesus is always evidenced by a changed life.

This is the very evidence that can help us witness about Christ to folks who may not already believe in God or Jesus or even in scripture. Remember this from Lesson 2?

For people who may believe in the Old Testament or in the Bible, then perhaps going through the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled all of them would be helpful to bring a person to believe in Jesus. But what if a person doesn't believe in the Bible at all, then what do you do? What evidence can you provide to demonstrate Jesus is real? We just talked about it!

What do you think of this idea from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

> "When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. [But miracles are problematic because they can be counterfeited. Even so, people want something besides a verbal testimony or proclamation – that they hear as a claim without evidence, to base their faith upon.] Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees. He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan's insinuations. **He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride.** [Uh oh. Sounds like we might have to endure ridicule, accusation, condemnation from people who reject our belief in Christ?] But the gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. **Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan?** Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. **When one who has been controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God's heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought**; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral

> truth. [What is the miracle, the evidence that can be pointed to? The evidence of a life transformed to godly principles, the dishonest becomes honest, the exploiter becomes a protector, the cruel becomes kind, the fearful becomes courageous, the liar becomes honest, the cheat becomes trustworthy. Transformation of character is evidence of our risen Savior.] Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezekiel 36:26. **The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls**. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle…**This is God's witness before the world** to the divine mission of His Son. – {DA 407.1}

I once was lost but now I'm found…was blind but now I see.

In Lesson 4, we studied ways we can intercede for others - particularly the impact of intercessory prayer. What is the purpose of intercessory prayer? Is the purpose to influence God to love more, to be more kind, to get God to do something good that God would not otherwise want to do?

If God always wants to do good, always wants to heal and save, then why do we need to pray?
What are God's methods and how does He achieve His goals?
Does God violate freewill?
Does He force His way in?

Thus, one aspect of prayer is our freewill consent inviting God into a situation. But there is another aspect: Does the process of praying have an impact upon the one who prays? Can our conversations with God be healing, transforming, maturing to us?

Additionally, is there an aspect of prayer that exercises our own individual mental energies focusing our beings toward the welfare of others?

Prayer not only brings God into the equation, but it allow us as believers to join our energies together and focus our intentions on the healing of others.

In God's universe, can this directly exert a positive influence? Yes, if we understand quantum physics and string theory…which of course I don't, but I'm fascinated by it… our prayers, when focused with love and good intention, can have a direct positive healing physical impact on the one being prayed for, through the quantum connections that God built into His universe. Just as a person can use their physical body through Newtonian physics to massage muscles or put pressure on a wound, perform

CPR, set a bone, just as that direct physical contact and intervention can be healing, so too our prayers through quantum connections can exert positive impact on others!

In Lesson 5, we discussed Spirit-empowered witnessing…and honestly, God forbid that we attempt any of these witnessing endeavors without first inviting the Holy Spirit into the midst of it – to prepare/convict hearts (the witnesser and the witnessee), to have us cross paths with and make divine appointments with folks who are open and seeking truth, and to give us insight into unspoken needs and the right words to say. Consider the implication of this historic quote from *Acts of the Apostles*:

> "**Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension** [def: a condition of decline or moral deterioration] **and death**. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, **though offered in infinite plenitude** [does that offer ever expire?]. Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, **why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it?** The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. **For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God.** Companies of Christian workers should gather to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely. – {AA 50.2}

I know we do that here in this ministry.

What in the world might cause us to value the Holy Spirit so little? Perhaps being frightened by the fear of false spirits?

The Bible tells us to test the spirits, perhaps movements that smack of fanaticism, emotionalism, that claim to be the movements of the Spirit of God frighten us into not seeking the true Spirit of God?

Perhaps accepting a legal theology in which one falsely believes salvation is in claiming a legal blood payment to have one's heavenly record books adjusted—thus no real need for the Spirit, the payment is being made in heaven.

Perhaps anti-trinitarian teachings that propose that there is no Holy Spirit, that there is only God the Father and the Father is omnipresent, and we can ask for the Father's presence into our lives, but we don't seek the presence of the Holy Spirit because we don't believe He exists?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What happens if we reject or don't value the Holy Spirit? Here is one view of the importance of the Holy Spirit, from *The Desire of Ages*, do you agree?

> "In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. **The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.** – {DA 671.2}

This entire quarterly was about witnessing – witnessing the story of Jesus, the story of His saving remedy…and Lesson 4 contained such a brief, concise, on-point summarization of the central theme of scripture I wanted to include it here as something to really commit to memory – not memorized by wrote, but as a part of your story, that you can relate (during an elevator ride) when someone asks you why you believe the Bible or what is the Bible even about.

- There is a God in heaven who created the entire universe. This Creator God is love and created all things in sinless perfection—without disease or defect.
  Real love requires real freedom, so God did not create His intelligent beings as robots or puppets, but gave real freedom.
- This freedom was abused and lies were told about God. Those lies were believed, which broke the circle of love and trust, and resulted in fear and selfishness.
- God's design for life was broken, love and trust was displaced by fear and selfishness stemming from believing lies. This is a terminal condition, the result of being out of harmony with God's design for life.
  God's laws are the design laws He built life to operate upon and any deviation damages and destroys.
- God loved us so much that when humankind became infected with fear and selfishness, He did not abandon us but sent His own Son to reveal the truth to destroy the lies and win us back to trust, and to cure the condition by procuring the remedy that heals all who do trust.

- This remedy is freely available to everyone and will heal all who trust God and cooperate with the treatment plan.
- That Remedy is the perfection of Jesus Christ, the truth revealed about God that wins us back to trust, and then in trust we open our hearts and receive a new human character by the indwelling Spirit…and by partaking of that divine nature, we are transformed in character, our hearts actually change, and we develop new desires and new motives.

In Lesson 7, we covered almost every single one of Christ's parables through the natural design law…we don't have time to go through them all here, but I encourage you to get those notes and save them, because they're profound. One key point that really stuck with me was the differences between the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son…remember those?

- The lost coin was lost but didn't know it was lost, and the owner searched for it and found it. The lost sheep knew it was lost but didn't know how to get home and the owner searched for it and found it.
- The lost son knew he was lost *and* he knew the way home, and the father waited for the son to make the choice to come home.
- In all three what does the father/owner reveal about himself? He is always, always working to woo, to heal, to save…in whatever way is in our best interest and for our best good. What kind of law is involved?

Just a couple of high points from **Lesson 8,** we reviewed some prescient quotes from an interview of Ellen White that took place in 1895, where she said this:

> "**When you begin to work with parliaments, that sets the devil to work**, and if he cannot make the work hard for us, who can? [If we seek human governments to work with us in the advancement of God's kingdom we set the devil to work. We corrupt the gospel and the church by ultimately bringing in the methods of the world—imperialism and coercion into the work. This corrupts the minds and hearts of people and obstructs the kingdom of God.]

This gives us some insight into the extremely practical applications we have learned this quarter, and how what we are learning about design laws…about how human governments work – *all* human governments – the methods they use…and how we apply these concepts to what's going on in our world today…how we interpret end time events…and how important it is to recognize what methods and principles are being used, even in the promotion of righteous and just causes. Check out the rest of that jaw-dropping interview in the Lesson 8 notes.

One last concept from Lesson 8 that I don't believe we got around to covering in class. The quarterly asked the question, "Is it possible to live the abundant life Jesus offers if you are poverty-stricken or sick? Did Jesus offer people something deeper than physical healing?"

Have you ever heard the name Fanny Crosby? She was a prolific song writer who wrote many famous hymns such as:
• "More Like Jesus Would I Be"--1867
• "Safe in the Arms of Jesus"--1868,
• "Near the Cross"--1869,
• "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus Our Blessed Redeemer!"--1869,
• "Rescue the Perishing"--1869,
• "Blessed Assurance"--1873,
• "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"--1875,
• "To God Be the Glory"—1875
• "Take the World, But Give Me Jesus"--1879,
•"Tell Me the Story of Jesus"--1880,
• "Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!"--1882,
• "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home"--1883,
• "He Hideth My Soul"--1890,

Now Fanny was blind from infancy and later in life, wrote:

> "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour."

So can we have the abundant life with sickness, poverty, infirmity?

What is it that Jesus promises us today?

What happened to all the people Jesus healed of physical illness 2000 years ago?

Is God's primary concern that we live an extra 50 years here on earth?

What is God's primary concern? That we receive eternal life, and that we are reconciled to Him.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 1
Education in the Garden of Eden

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Received this email this week:

> *Thanks very much for what you guys do – I'm fairly new to Come and Reason and took my time listening to lectures and the Bible studies before 'buying in'.* 😊 *I'm very thankful that Dr. Jennings has been able to articulate the 'penal legal theory' in a way that has resonated with so many people. It is one of those concepts in Christianity that I grew up believing was wrong, but could never really define it or see the bigger picture associated with it. It's also funny because I'm in my late 40s and have recently gotten into Law school, and yes the Socialist/Marxist ideas hinted at in lesson studies are alive and well in Canadian Universities as well.*
>
> *Thank you again for all you do. I enjoy the podcasts when I have some spare time to clean up in the shop (remnants of summer projects), or when I get to prepare to lead out in our local Sabbath School Lesson study (I too have difficulty making it past 'Sunday').*

We are starting a new quarter on Education—what is the purpose of education?

- To learn
- To develop

But for what purpose are we to learn and develop?

> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
> and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Proverbs 9:10 NIV84)

Read the first paragraph in the introduction: "Think about the above text…" This is so well said, so what is the purpose of education? To learn and develop to become wise, which means….we come to know the truth about God and His kingdom, methods, principles…which means….we grow to be more and more like Him—to develop Christlike character!

Are there laws involved in this process? What laws?

- Worship—by beholding we are changed
- Exertion—strength comes from exercise
- Truth—truth destroys lies and ennobles and develops the person
- Love—we live out the principles of love in how we treat others as we grow in our love and appreciation for God

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

I want to read to you the first paragraph of the book *Education*:

> Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. [What does this mean? Reading, writing, arithmetic, academic learning, vocations, degrees, scholastics—this is the lower education, the narrow education, focused on things, facts, fields of study—but not the larger reality of God's kingdom, who we are, the war, God's methods and purposes. One can get advanced degrees in this world and still be most ignorant of reality. Think of all those scientists who teach there is no God.] There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. **It means more than a preparation for the life that now is**. [What does this mean? That our education is first and foremost for our lives in God's kingdom, not the kingdoms of this world.] **It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man**. [The whole being—is that more than cognitive? Is it more than physical? What is the whole period of existence possible to us? Eternity—what is the focus of education for eternity?] **It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers**. It prepares the student for **the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come**. Ed 13.1

What is the difference between mental and spiritual powers?

What is the spirit of a human—we are not speaking about a vapor that floats around—but what is the spirit of a man? Is it attitude—"he's got good spirit?" Is it heart affection, "I'll be with you in spirit?"

Is it that part of humanity that is sensitive and responsive to God?

What are spiritual powers versus mental powers and how to we develop them?

My view is that the spiritual powers are those powers we get from being connected with God. Mental powers are abilities or capacities God created us with that we can still exercise while in rebellion against God, but the spiritual powers can only grow to the degree God is working in us.

Spiritual powers include:

- Love—the process of compassion, altruism, empathy—to the degree a person loves with genuine love for others it is an evidence of God working in their life.
- Truth bearing—the ability to know, live, and share real truth—the truth of God's kingdom and reality.
- Living Faith—not the mere capacity to have faith, but the functional faith in God that results in ability to stand in the face of opposition, to trust God with outcomes and do what is right when pressure is applied not to. Like the three worthies on the plain of Dura.
- Hope—genuine hope comes from knowing God and the eternal realities of His kingdom. There is a futile earthly hope—in which we hope for things or earthly results, but all such hope fails in the end and leaves us hopeless. This earthly hope would be similar to the counterfeits to love, when we love things or people for what they do for us rather than love God or love the people for who they are.

- Discernment—the ability to differentiate good and evil
- Wisdom—the ability to apply truth and knowledge in harmony with God's principles for the outworking of God's purposes
- Knowing God's methods—how reality works—God's methods are foolishness to the world. In the world the more you take and hoard the more you have. In God's kingdom the more you give the more you have.
- Conscientiousness/conscience—the closer we come to God the more sensitive our conscience becomes. Things of the world become offensive and we rejoice in the good. We are quick to realize when something is off. The more we develop this power the more sensitive we are to deviations from God's design laws.
- Others?

Mental powers include:

- Reasoning ability
- Scholastic ability
- Knowing people and things
- Memory
- Problem solving skills
- Strategic thinking
- Concentration/attention/focus
- Situational awareness
- Psychological mindedness (ability for introspection)
- Abstract thinking ability

How do we develop the spiritual powers? By experience and exercise.

- First and foremost is being loved—healthy nurturing, loving environment develops in the infant and child the spiritual ability to love.
- Parental reliability, predictability, keeping one's word with the child develops the child's ability to trust. Trust is further developed in situations of distress and deliverance.
- Teaching children reality by both didactics and experience—application of the lesson in reality, develops discernment.

Then, as with all powers, we must exercise—if we want more love we must love more. We must spend time in communion with God, the source of love, but then share what God has revealed and given to us with others.

In researching for class I came this quote:

> The humble worker who obediently responds to the call of God may be sure of receiving divine assistance. [What is described in this sentence? God calls, we humbly exercise our freedom to choose to say yes, and when we do we receive divine assistance. We are not left to our own power.] **To accept so great and holy a responsibility is itself elevating to the character**. [Why? What is described? The act of choosing changes us, either aligning

> ourselves with God and His kingdom or alienating us. Every choice to follow God is healing to us.] **It calls into action the highest mental and spiritual powers, and strengthens and purifies the mind and heart.** Through faith in the power of God, it is wonderful how strong a weak man may become, how decided his efforts, how prolific of great results. **He who begins with a little knowledge, in a humble way, and tells what he knows, while seeking diligently for further knowledge, will find the whole heavenly treasure awaiting his demand**. **The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive**. [What laws are described? Both the law of exertion and the law of love, the more you give the more you receive.] **The more one tries to explain the word of God to others, with a love for souls, the plainer it becomes to himself**. [Notice the caveat—with a love for souls. If one tries to explain it without love, one is a Pharisee, outside of God's kingdom—many theologians through history have become educated academically but still are ignorant of the kingdom of God. It is when we have love for others in the heart that we are connected with God and His Spirit is there to direct and enlighten our minds.] **The more we use our knowledge and exercise our powers, the more knowledge and power we shall have**. COL 354.1 [Again the law of exertion.]
>
> **Every effort made for Christ will react in blessing upon ourselves**. If we use our means for His glory, He will give us more. As we seek to win others to Christ, bearing the burden of souls in our prayers, our own hearts will throb with the quickening influence of God's grace; our own affections will glow with more divine fervor; our whole Christian life will be more of a reality, more earnest, more prayerful. COL 354.2

How can we strengthen our spiritual powers? By exercise, by applying whatever truth we currently know. By diligently seeking to add to our current understand and practice more of God's methods and principles, by sharing what God has done for us with others.

> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:14 NIV84)

Spiritual powers cannot function without the mental powers or physical powers, but both the mental and physical can function without the spiritual.

- Evil people who reject God (and Satan and his demons) can reason, strategize, memorize, learn to facts, gain new skills and abilities both mental and physical—the mental and physical abilities can operate without developing the spiritual
- But one cannot know truth, love, hope, be conscientious, having living faith, discern, have genuine wisdom without mental abilities, without a physical body. And to the degree our physical health is undermined all of our spiritual abilities are undermined—even if we have a heart desire to act, if we are physically sick, we are limited in spiritual power.

So, Satan seeks to destroy by:

- Infecting our thinking with lies about God, which undermine the development of spiritual powers, we don't really trust, but make up theologies to keep us hidden or protected from God.

This impairs our unity with God, it impairs our ability to grow in love, it impairs our hope, it keeps fear alive. It makes us spiritual weaklings.
- Getting us to overtax ourselves either mentally or physically to the point of burnout—i.e. we don't rest and recover
- Getting us to live in violations of the laws of health which undermines our spiritual powers.
- Undermining healthy education so we don't develop our mental powers in godly lines, but in godless lines, thus dwarfing our spiritual powers—this is what public education does.

Destructive factors cause contradictions and work against God's design laws:
- a caregiver, parent, teacher, pastor who claims to love but exploits
- a caregiver, parent, teacher, pastor who claims to love but is inconsistent, doesn't keep boundaries, thus can't be trusted
- a person in a role of authority teaching things that are contradictory to reality—made up rules and threats of punishment under the guise of love
- failure to live in harmony with the laws of health—thus toxins, poor diet, no physical exercise
- believing that faith means believing what doesn't make sense or believing without evidence—thus no exercise of one's reasoning abilities
- believing lies about God and God's laws that lead to fear-based religions

Do our spiritual powers operate independently of our mental and physical powers? No!

If we neglect or injure one domain will it impact the other domains?

Healthy education starts in the home with a healthy environment that provides good nutrition, sleep, fresh air, but also healthy love, touch, affection, healthy boundaries, and as the child is able they are engaged in discussion, explanation leading them to understand the world God created, ultimately connecting these lessons back to a knowledge and experience with God. Thus, it includes teaching them the Bible and all reality through the lens of Bible truth.

Read second paragraph, "The system of education…." What are the principles of education you gain from considering Eden?
- Daily communing with God
- Learning from reality—from nature, how reality actually works, which teaches what kind of law? Were there any keep off the grass signs in Eden?
- Learning from examination, study, evidence and experience. God brought the animals to Adam and Adam evaluated them and gave them names appropriate to their kind.
- Learning from doing—God had Adam and Eve tend the garden, put their abilities to use, to act, evaluate and assess, and learn.
- Learning through relationships—Adam and Eve conversed with angels and shared experiences with each other

If we want to damage true education we would interfere with these elements or principles. We would:

- Remove or replace God with a false god, no god, or a human mediator in God's place—and look at what happened to humanity when the Roman church replaced God with both a false god and human mediators, and later when society rejected God altogether.
    - On our Facebook page we frequently get people posting critical comments about those who believe in God. Claiming that the Bible and Christianity support slavery or murder or war or other abuses. What these comments reveal is how deeply the lie that God's law being imposed has infected the world.
- We would replace design law and how reality works with man-made law and legal requirements and restrictions—
    - This leads to all kinds of inconsistencies, loopholes, abuses, extortions, taxes, domination, ever increasing fear and damages the reasoning powers. People become legal, rigid, rules-oriented, irrational to reality applying rules because the rules say so. We see this so much right now with how COVID is being handled so differently in different jurisdictions. So, it destroys discernment and wisdom, love, faith and hope.
- We would replace actual examination of reality with textbooks filled with claims, proclamations, lists, theories—whether religious dogmas or creeds or godless theories of origins, or claims there is no male or female, all that contradict reality and thus requires the denial of evidence
    - This leads to increasing intolerance of those who don't see it the socially correct way. We have less willingness to intelligently discuss, explore, examine, and greater use of power over to enforce our way, through firing, socially rejecting, ostracizing, or violence. This happens in academia with those who want to show the evidence for creation and God, and is happening now with any who disagree with a certain social agenda. This is what always happens when views are held that are not based on truth—truth must be suppressed and those bring truth must be attacked. Thus God's prophets were perpetually attacked; Jesus was attacked; the apostles were attacked; the Reformers were attacked; and who is being ostracized, vilified, attacked by mobs today?
- We replace doing—the practical development of abilities—with academic memorization of narratives, histories, worldviews, philosophies and humanistic values
- We replace God's design for relationships, marriage and family, loving other people by seeking their best interest, with all kinds of distortions based on the law of this sinful world—survival of the fittest. And relationships get distorted in which men dominate women, marriage becomes polygamous, slavery occurs, might makes right, power is in arms or wealth, the economy of heaven is replaced with capitalism, communism, socialism all of which operate on imposed law and me-first principles.

Do you see how the public educational systems of this world are completely corrupt, are destructive to our spiritual nature and abilities, and interfere with human beings developing into the full stature that God has designed for us?

My sister sent me this quotation this week from *The Great Controversy,* the context is Jesus distraught over Jerusalem just before His crucifixion:

The Majesty of Heaven in tears! the Son of the infinite God troubled in spirit, bowed down with anguish! The scene filled all Heaven with wonder. That scene reveals to us the exceeding sinfulness of sin; **it shows how hard a task it is, even for infinite power, to save the guilty from the consequences of transgressing the law of God**. [What do you hear? Why is it hard? If it is just a legal problem and Jesus was willing to pay the penalty, and all we need to do is accept the legal application and have the judge make a ruling, why is that hard? Because that entire idea is a lie, it is a fraud, it is not true. The real problem is not legal but the actual state of our hearts and minds operating out of harmony with God and His design law for life. It is hard to get people to choose God, to reject the lies they love, to reject fear and selfishness and choose to trust Jesus and be transformed in heart. To reject the methods of this world in seeking justice and apply the methods of God. I see how hard it is every day. Look around and you will see those who refuse truth and prefer the way of the world.] **Jesus, looking down to the last generation, saw the world involved in a deception similar to that which caused the destruction of Jerusalem**. The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; **the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God**, the foundation of his government in Heaven and earth. [The great sin of the Christian world, not the agnostic or atheistic world, or communist world, or the Buddhist or Hindu world, but of the Christian world. Consider the meaning. Do we have Christians around the world teaching lawlessness—i.e. there is no law of God, sin doesn't exist, no one will face judgment, God will not punish, or do we have the entire Christian world teaching that all have sinned, and sin is transgression of the law, and we are in legal trouble, and God is required by His holy law to inflict punishment upon lawbreakers? So, understand what this author is saying, that God's design law would be rejected by Christianity, not that they would teach there is no law, but that Christians would accept a replacement to God's law. The would replace God's law with human imposed law and to do so is actually lawless. This is what has happened.] **The precepts of Jehovah would be despised and set at naught. Millions in bondage to sin, slaves of Satan, doomed to suffer the second death,** would refuse to listen to the words of truth in their day of visitation. Terrible blindness! strange infatuation! (pp 22) [Why are they doomed to suffer the second death? Because having accepted the lie about God's law, that it is imposed rules, they have accepted a false diagnosis—that we are in legal trouble. Having accepted a false diagnosis they have created many false legal solutions to the sin problem, but those theological constructs all based on human law fail to actually heal the heart and mind and renew the character. Thus millions remain in the bondage of sin, fear, selfishness, abusing their spouses, or children, yet claiming legal payment for their sins.]

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Though we don't think of a garden…" There are multiple benefits from being in nature that would enhance learning, less anxiety or stress, better cognitive performance, and real-world experiences.

- A study of 498 Japanese individuals evaluated the impact of walking in the forest versus a routine day. The study found hostility (P<0.001) and depression (P<0.001) scores decreased significantly, and liveliness (P=0.001) scores increased significantly on the forest day compared with the control day. (Morita, E. et al., Psychological effects of forest environments on healthy adults: Shinrin-yoku (forest-air bathing, walking) as a possible method of stress reduction, *Public Health* , Volume 121 , Issue 1 , 54 – 63).

- Great Britain has over 100 schools that operate in outdoor forest settings. Observation of students from these schools noted improvements in the children's confidence, motivation and concentration, language and communication and physical skills. (O'Brien, L., Learning outdoors: the Forest School approach, Education 3-13, Vol. 37, Iss. 1, 2009, Pages 45-60. O'Brien, L., Forest School and its impact on young children: Case studies in Britian. Urbaan Forestry and Urban Greening, Vol 6, Iss 4, November 2007, Pages 249–265).

Read second paragraph, "God made man and woman…" Why did God give Adam and Eve work to do?

Because it is only by application of one's abilities that a person develops. Useful labor is beneficial for us. The benefits include:

- Improved self-esteem, from actual accomplishment and achievement.
- Better physical health, from increased physical activity and the reduced firing stress pathways as we experience satisfaction with completing tasks, or fulfilling our life goals, aspirations, and dreams.
- Development of our brain circuits that control physical movement, which in turn improves our thinking and reasoning.
- Benefits those around us: as we engage in useful activity our activities will result in blessings in our environment—whether we are creating works of art, or music to brighten the heart, or are mopping, vacuuming, picking up trash to create clean environments, or growing food. All useful activity blesses those around us.
- Reduces burdens on others: by staying active we reduce the likelihood of our own disability and the need for others to care for us.
- Harmonizes with law of love, which is the principle of giving; and the more we give the more we receive
- In the world of sin, working reduces opportunity for temptation, and this is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of useful work today and thus helps us develop mature character

So useful labor operates upon the laws of exertion and love. If you wanted to injure people, to undermine their development, to cause them to be less capable—what action might you take?

Which group would be most likely to develop to their highest potential:

- Those who have liberty, freedom, and equal opportunity but have to work for everything they get, no freebies, no handouts

- Those who also have liberty, freedom, and equal opportunity but everything necessary to live is given to them, monthly stipend, free housing, food vouchers, whether they achieve or don't achieve they will always have a place to live, clothes to wear, food to eat.

It is a violation of God's design to give everything to people and never require them to exert themselves, never place them where they have to work, to apply their energies, to grapple to overcome and achieve.

In the third paragraph the lesson points out that God wants humans to be happy. From where does happiness arise?

As I have said previously happiness is the byproduct of healthiness in all domains – physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. When we are physically ill, we are not happy; mental or emotional illness – not happy; relationship conflict – not happy; spiritual sickness (guilt, shame, condemnation) – not happy.

Just this week I came across a quote from Viktor Frankl—Austrian Neurologist, Psychiatrist and Holocaust Survivor:

> *Success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself.*

Many people who are unhappy, because they are unhealthy spiritually and psychologically, substitute pleasure seeking for happiness and most pleasure seeking violates the laws of health in some way and thus they only get worse.

Happiness is the byproduct of healthiness in all domains, and healthiness is experienced only when we are in harmony with **God's design laws for life** – the protocols upon which the Creator God has built reality to operate. When we break the laws of health, sickness, disease, and suffering occur – thus undermining our happiness. This is why the Bible repeatedly tells us, "Happy are those who keep God's law!" (Proverbs 29:18 GNT).

While we cannot choose to "be happy" or seek to directly obtain happiness, we can choose to be healthy, choosing to live in harmony with all aspects of God's design laws for life. And as we choose healthiness, the byproduct is ever increasing happiness.

Over the last several decades a lot of research into happiness has occurred. And what do you think the research shows?

- In one 6-week study the researchers had participants randomized into a control group and two active groups. One group was to "count your blessings" once a week on Sunday, the other active group was to "count your blessings" 3 times per week Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. This was done by making lists of things they were thankful for.

- Those who counted their blessings once a week had improvement in gratitude and happiness
- Both the controls and those who counted their blessings three times per week had reductions in both gratitude and happiness
- Once a week caused actual thankfulness and appreciation, three times a week caused a desensitization where the list making became rote, a chore, proforma, routine and perhaps even a burden. (Lyubomirsky, S et al, Pursuing happiness, the architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*. 2005;9(2)111-131).

- In a different 4-week study they had a control group and two study groups, one group was to do acts of kindness for others, the other study group was to do acts of kindness for self. At the end of the study, and at a later follow up.
  - Those who did acts of kindness for others were happier than the control group, but those who did acts of kindness for self were no different from the control group. (Nelson, SK et al., *Emotions*. 2016;16(6):850-861).

- In another 4-week study researchers wanted to see if acts of kindness did more than just bring an emotional state of happiness. Are their physical benefits to acts of kindness. They had four groups—controls, those who were to do acts of kindness for others, those who were to do acts of kindness for the world—like picking up trash along the road, and those who did acts of kindness for self. Then they examined gene expression in WBC's to see if there was a difference in immunity.
  - Those who did acts of kindness for others had reduced inflammation and improved viral fighting ability when compared to controls. In other words, gene expression changed, epigenetically, based on acts of kindness toward others.
  - But those who did acts of kindness toward the world or for self, did not differ from controls. (Nelson-Coffey, SK, et al., *Psychoneuroendocrinology*. 2017;81:8-13).

- Researchers found that acts of kindness or happiness interventions could backfire in some situations and make a person less happy;
  - When the motivation is self-focused, doing acts of kindness so others will like you more, or you will get advancement, or praise etc.
  - When it becomes a burden, rote, work, rather than actual love
  - When it contradicts one's heart, beliefs, or current mindset
    - Such as a person who is in clinical depression making a thankful list—this can actual cause the person to feel guilt, feel like a burden to others as they think about how much others have done for them
    - Cultural contradictions—like in some Eastern cultures to give thanks to parents for a good job in raising their children is viewed as an insult as if they wouldn't have fulfilled their duty to their family
    - Actions that go against a person's baseline personality, such as an introverted person being directed to give thanks in front of a group

- What the research has thus far demonstrated is that the greatest action one can take that consistently brings increased happiness is acts of kindness for others.

MONDAY

Near the bottom of the lesson we read, "In Genesis 3:1-6, examine the description the serpent used and that Eve repeated. What do you notice about the information that the serpent offers Eve? What do you notice about how Eve then regards the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?"

This is from the NIV:

> Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
>
> 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "
>
> 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
>
> 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

What do you notice from this exchange? What did the serpent do? What lies or distortions did the serpent introduce?

What is meant by the claim "you will not surely die?" What is implied? Is the serpent saying there is nothing actually harmful about eating the fruit?

If the serpent is saying there isn't anything harmful in eating the fruit, yet God has said if you eat of it you will die, then if the fruit won't kill them, what is the unsaid implication?

This is where Satan introduces the idea of God's law being imposed—there is nothing inherently wrong with eating the fruit, so you can eat it and not die, God may use power to kill you, but the act of eating the fruit itself is not harmful. This is the subtle lie woven into the temptation.

But there is another tactic of Satan seen here that is being used widely in society today—he globalizes. He takes a minor or narrow restriction or issue and makes it appear like it is a total issue. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from **any** tree in the garden'?"

"You can't eat anything in this place—all the trees are off limits. God is restrictive"—globalization.

Do we see this being done today to incite people to rebel against love, to turn against their neighbors, to attack their communities?

What about the narrative of white police officers shooting black men being a global, society wide problem leading to hostility, violence and calls for police departments to be defunded? This narrative is a lie, not all the trees in the garden are off limits, not all the millions of righteous and honest police officers are hunting down black men.

But there is a globalization, a distortion of reality, taking a narrow point and making it sound like it is globalized as a free-for-all killing spree of a system that targets blacks. Do we want the truth?

Candace Owen, a black American woman, granddaughter of a sharecropper, writes in her newly released book: *Blackout: How Black America Can Make Its Second Escape From the Democrat Plantation:*

> *The narrative that black me are routinely discriminated against and slaughtered by white police officers has become a dominate theme across mainstream media, inspiring protests, boycotts, and clashes with police officers. Across social media, footage of black men dying at the hands of white police officers has received hundreds of millions of views, garnering an emotional response from many who have decided that police brutality is a problem that needs to be solved. Of course, virtually no American would stand in support of something has horrific as police brutality, but the truth is, the issue of blacks being murdered at will by vigilante police officers is but a dishonest distortion, blown out of proportion by the liberal media's foundational need to highlight the suffering of the black community—whether real or imagined.*
>
> *In an op-ed published by the* City Journal *on September 25, 2017, writer and attorney Heather Mac Donald used indisputable numbers to dispel the narrative that killing of black men by white cops was such a frequent, senseless occurrence that all black mothers ought to keep their sons locked up in their rooms… 'Contrary to the Black Lives Matter narrative, the police have more to fear from black males than black males have to fear from police,' Mac Donald wrote. 'In 2015, a police officer was 18.5 times more likely to be killed by a black male than an unarmed black male was to be killed by a police officer.'…*
>
> *The FBI's 2018 data on homicides clearly shows that blacks do not need to be protected from white police officers—they need to be protected from themselves. of the 2,925 blacks who were killed in 2018, 2600 of their murderers were other blacks; only 234 were white. I need not point out the fact that even if those 234 white-on-black homicides were all committed by cops (they were not), blacks are still 11 times more likely to be killed by someone within their own community."* pp 167-171.

She goes on to document that research shows that the most relevant variable that increases the likelihood of being shot by police is not race, but the amount of crime in the county in which one lives. If you live in a county in which a lot of white people are committing crimes then white people are more likely to be shot, but if you live in a county in which a lot of black people are committing crimes then black people are more likely to be shot. Police shootings have nothing to do with race and everything to do with crime.

Why do I present these data in a Bible study? Because we are examining the methods of Satan—how he distorts reality and deceives. How he takes a minor narrow issue and tries to globalize it in order to incite fear, resentment, and rebellion.

Satan is described in the Bible as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. When the lion roars it incites fear. When you see all these messages inciting fear in our society today, causing people to pull back, to isolate, to stop ministering to each other, to attack others who don't live by their fear-based restrictions, do you see the roaring lion?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Though she [Eve]…" The Bible says Eve was deceived—was it about not taking God seriously, or about believing a lie?

And how would you describe the lie that she believed? Was it merely about the dangers of the fruit, or about the trustworthiness of God?

This is where the devil really tricked her. In demonstrating the fruit wasn't harmful he got her focusing on the fruit and diverted her mind away from what really mattered—this trick works today on so many. This issue was not about the fruit, it was about who she trusted.

Life, health, happiness all have their source in God. The key was not a piece of fruit, but their love/trust relationship with God. Satan was using the Tree of Knowledge to introduce doubt about God, not to get her to eat a poisonous fruit.

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness (survival of the fittest)
- Fear and selfishness result in acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, relationships a terminal condition

Here are a couple of historic quotes, demonstrating what I am teaching has been understood for years and is part of historic Adventism.

> **Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband. They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors..**{RH, January 5, 1886 par. 8}

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Now consider this quote:

> **Through belief in Satan's misrepresentation of God, man's character and destiny were changed, but if men will believe in the Word of God, they will be transformed in mind and character, and fitted for eternal life** {1SM 346.1}

Jesus said the truth will set us free—truth from what? Lies about God. The truth about God's character of love is the final message of mercy, this is the 3 angels' messages, this is our mission.

- Truth believed destroys lies and restores trust
- In trust we open the heart and love casts out fear
- Love and trust leads to acts of righteousness, service, altruism
- Acts of righteousness results in maturing of character and witnessing the kingdom of God

But it all starts with the truth about God—as long as we cling to the penal legal lies about God the healing plan is obstructed!

What do you understand the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to be?

What do you take from the name of this tree?

Do you see it is a tree of reality—it is the place where Adam and Eve would decide what they would know.

> This is life eternal that they might **know** you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent John 17:3

This knowledge of Good and Evil, wasn't theoretical knowledge, it wasn't cognitive knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, about death being result of sin.

Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. That is not what the Tree was about—it was about experience, knowing by experience Good or Evil, by the choice to trust and believe God, or to believe lies and disbelieve God thereby breaking trust with Him.

God tells them, at this tree you will have knowledge—choose well, choose not to partake of the fruit and you will know Good—you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness all of this will solidify in your character. But if you choose to partake the fruit, you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering and death—you will know evil.

God already knew evil—not in His character, but in His heart as His heavenly home had been fractured and He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, being lied about and the loss of His most loved angel.

God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, heartache. He wanted humankind do know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God and choose the good in order for them to know it.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character**. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. {CC 13.3}

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph, "The good news is…" What has Jesus done for us? How would you describe it? And how is what Jesus has done for us to be connected to education?

Do we alter the education we provide when we teach the plan of salvation (what Jesus has done for us) through the imposed law view, when we teach a penal legal salvation?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on those who despise authority. What do you understand authority to be?

What is the difference between the authority wielded by humans and the authority wielded by God?

What kind of law do the two systems operate upon?

Does our understanding of law impact our understanding of authority?

Do we view authority like the authority of a:

- referee
- umpire
- official
- judge
- magistrate

What gives the people in these offices authority? The rules of the various organizations—and ultimately the consent of those upon whom the authority is visited.

In other words, human authority arises out of the consent of the governed—we must go along.

But God's authority rests in truth—in reality itself and thus it is authoritative even for those who refuse to accept it. It is the authority of design law.

The lesson asks us to read 2Peter 2. This particular passage is grossly misunderstood and in my view seriously mistranslated through the lens of imposed law in most translations. I will read it from *The Remedy:*

> **1**In the past, among God's people were those who claimed to speak for God and bring his Remedy, but they did not speak for God at all, and they brought a false remedy. Likewise, there will be people among you who claim to teach God's truth and have God's Remedy but will teach lies. They will subtly introduce false remedies — destructive doctrines purported to heal but actually incite fear, shut down thinking, and damage the mind. They will even deny the Sovereign Lord who procured the Remedy, thus bringing rapid deterioration and destruction upon themselves.**2**There will be large numbers of people who embrace their corrupt ways while calling themselves Christians, thus causing the Remedy to be considered worthless.**3**In their eagerness for power, fame and wealth, these false teachers will mislead you with theories and doctrines they have made up on their own. Because of this, their terminal condition only worsens, and their ultimate destruction is unavoidable.
>
> **4**For God did not suspend reality to let the angels avoid the consequences of their deviation from his design for life, but he expelled them from his presence, suspending them in utter darkness for the day they reap the full result of unremedied sin.**5**God did not allow the gangrenous ancient world to completely cut itself off from him but brought the flood to excise the necrosis and save Noah–a teacher of the Remedy–and seven others.**6**He diagnosed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as beyond healing, and in mercy, he cauterized those festering lesions to ash, making it clear that the unhealed will not be made to suffer eternally, but the torment of sin will mercifully be ended;**7**and God delivered Lot–a man who partook of the Remedy and was tormented by the disgusting lives of those living in violation of God's design–**8**for it was torture for that man with a healed mind and sensitive heart to live day after day among such vileness and see and hear such vulgarity.**9**If God can do all of this, he also knows how to rescue from affliction the godly — those who have partaken of the Remedy — while preserving until the day everyone is accurately diagnosed, the ungodly — those who by refusing the Remedy suffer in persistent sin,**10**and especially those whose minds are controlled by selfishness and who are so self-centered that they despise any authority, oversight, or redirection. They are presumptuous, pompous and arrogant; they are so self-absorbed that they have no respect for heavenly beings, but instead, they denigrate them.**11**Yet even angels, who are mightier and stronger than these false teachers, do not slander such beings in the presence of God–the source of all truth.**12**These people speak foolishly about things they don't even comprehend; they are like unthinking animals, driven by fear, rage, and lust. They are caught up in their own destructive choices, and — like the unthinking beasts — they will also perish.
>
> **13**They will reap what they have sown, receiving as their wages the harmful results of living outside God's design. Their idea of health and happiness is to violate trust, stay faithful to no

one, and openly indulge the basest passions. They are festering lesions of decay, reveling in their orgies.[14]They constantly backstab, betray and exploit; they never stop violating God's design for life — the law of love — and instead, constantly promote selfishness. They seduce the immature and unstable; they are experts in taking for themselves, regardless of how it hurts others. They are unhealed, dying under the curse of sin;[15]they have chosen to leave the design protocols for life and have embraced the methods of Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the rewards procured by exploiting others.[16]But a donkey had more sense than Balaam and told him he was wrong. With the voice of a man, the donkey spoke and stopped the prophet's insane action.

[17]These people have nothing to offer; they are like dried-up springs, having no more substance than a vapor trail in the sky. Eternal darkness is what awaits them.[18]They proclaim a false message, empty of any healing power but appealing to the selfish human desire to advance self. They entice people who are only just escaping the dog-eat-dog world.[19]They promise freedom from fear and selfishness but are themselves slaves to their own insecurities, lusts and depraved natures — for a person is a slave to whatever controls them.[20]If they have broken free from the corruption of the world by experiencing a genuine intimacy with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ but choose to entangle themselves again in the web of selfishness, lust and deceit, they are worse than they were before they knew the freedom in Christ.[21]They would suffer less if they had never experienced the joy and freedom of righteousness than to have known it and turned back into slavery and pain, ignoring God's design–the sacred protocols that were passed on to them.[22]Their characters prove true the proverbs: "A dog swallows its own vomit," and "You can clean a pig, but it will return to wallowing in the mud."

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

BLOGS are a Resource: Remember if you have a question about some Bible issue, go to our website and use the search engine with key words and check out the results. We receive many emails asking questions, and often we can reply by sharing the link to our blogs.

July 1, we launched our SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available. **September 1-30, while supplies last, *The Aging Brain: Proven Steps to Prevent Dementia and Sharpen Your Mind*. BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.**

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 10: We will have two classes doing lesson 3 & 4: We will start class at 9:25 and go to 10:25 and then restart at 10:35 to 11:35

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and will be added to the app soon.

The Remedy App, which is free, is Updated, and now includes the Psalms! Please go to your app store and update The Remedy.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month. There are now 30 blogs translated into Polish as well as *Could It Be This Simple?* all available on our website—thank you Mirra Huber!

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and

without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at http://theriverconference.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 2
The Family

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Over the last year have you perceived that we are nearing the second coming of Christ?

- Have you perceived evil forces increasing their assault?
- Have you seen evil more clearly exposed in society than ever before?
- Have you heard the roar of our enemy working to incite fear?
- Have you seen society fracturing into ever increasing hostile groups?

I have as well. We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus—the Author and Finisher of our faith. Jesus is they key—the true Jesus, not the pagan fraud that infected Christianity when Constantine converted.

As we return to Jesus the Creator and His design laws we want to practice His principles. We gain discernment and we have a duty to promote God's principles. But should we teach God's principles only in history, or should we teach people living at this time how God's principles are applied today? Should we teach people how to discern, to differentiate God's workings from the enemy of God?

Should we expose violations of God's principles in various movements and activities in the world today?

Consider these three descriptions:

> **Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which the flesh is heir.** He has represented him as a God who delights in the sufferings of his creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. RH November 17, 1891, par. 5

What method does Satan use? Projection—do evil or incite evil and then ascribe it to God as the one who is the source of the evil. Projection is a form of denial, a form of deceit, a form of lying. Not only is evil being done, but the one doing it blames some other for it.

> By departing from God's law the Hebrews had failed to become the people that God desired to make them, and **then all the evils which were the result of their own sin and folly they charged upon the government of God.** So completely had they become blinded by sin. PP 605.2

What method did these apostates use? They did evil and blamed it and it's consequences on God.

> **In the days of the Reformation its enemies charged all the evils of fanaticism upon the very ones who were laboring most earnestly against it.** GC 397.1

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What method did Satan's agents use here? To do evil, fanatical evil and charge their evil to the Reformers.

Do we see in our society today movements and groups doing evil and then blaming it on others? Whenever you see this method you can know those practicing it are not from God regardless of the cause they advocate.

Do we have a role to play, at this time in earth's history to sound the alarm, to wake people up, to promote the methods of truth, love, freedom and expose the methods of deceit, coercion, and selfishness?

But what if in doing so, we are accused of being political, should we stop?

Is there a difference in exposing the destruction that occurs when God's methods are violated and advocating for a politician, political party, or legislation?

Come and Reason Ministry advocate for no politician, political party, or legislation. We are not interested in getting any person elected or law passed—we are interested in freeing people's hearts and minds from worldly methods and establishing people into the kingdom of God.

I was reflecting on this issue again this week because several messages have come in from people who accuse me of being political when I apply truth to reality and society. As I was reflecting, I read Psalms 49 from *The Remedy of the Lord in Song* and wanted to share it with you. Consider what it says in light of what is happening in the world today:

> Hear this, everyone; listen carefully, every person who lives on the earth,
> [2]both young and old, rich and poor alike:
> [3]I will tell you real wisdom, because I understand how reality works.
> [4]I will use my insight to discern profound proverbs
> and bring forth the hidden meaning like music from a harp.
>
> [5]Why should I fear in the days when evil abounds,
> when the depravity and villainy of my enemies surround me —
> [6]those who believe they are spiritually superior because of their wealth
> and boast of their great riches?
> [7]No one can ever cure their own terminal condition,
> no human can buy the remedy from God —
> [8]the cost to procure it is beyond our means.
> Nothing we could provide would ever cure our mortal state
> [9]so that we would live forever and never experience death.

10 For all can see that everyone dies —
the wise, the foolish and the thoughtless brutes —
everyone perishes and leaves their wealth to others.
11 Their inner thoughts (characters) are fixed
as their permanent state of being.
Though they claimed the earth as their own,
12 their prized selfish — sin-infected — world will not last:
they will die just like brute beasts.
13 This is the inevitable end for those who trust in themselves,
and of all who follow them and embrace their selfish ways.
14 Like mindless sheep they are destined for the grave,
and death will consume them.

When the earth is made new,
the righteous — those restored to God's perfect design — will walk over their graves; their bodies will turn to dust in the grave,
and they will never live in heavenly mansions.
15 But God will heal my terminal condition and resurrect me from the grave;
he will most certainly take me to live with him.
16 Don't be distraught when the selfish become rich,
when their estates become increasingly opulent and grand,
17 for they will take nothing with them when they die —
their wealth will not follow them into the grave.
18 Though they proclaim themselves fulfilled and triumphant —
and they are praised for their success —
19 they will die like all the other selfish people before them;
they will never see the light of life again.
20 A person who is wealthy without understanding the reality of God's design is like the mindless beast doomed to perish.

What do you hear in this psalm that is a lesson for today?

Do you hear messaging from certain groups in society today that is designed to incite jealousy, envy, make people feel it isn't right that some people have more wealth than they have? Do you hear messaging that is designed to inspire people with a sense of unfairness and inspire them to seek power in order to take from others rather than earn for themselves? When you hear this messaging do you see it inspiring love for the less fortunate or class division, resentment and hostility?

Selfishness leads to jealousy, envy, anger, and hate at not having as much as others, which leads to feeling one is being taken advantage of. It causes people to value this world and the wealth and possessions of this world more than the riches of God's kingdom—which are truth, love, freedom, and godly character. When people are filled with love of possessions and become envious and demand equality of stuff, what happens? Do we see people being uplifted, coming together in mutual love and respect or do we see people being destroyed?

This is a great trap of Satan which he has used successfully over and over again throughout human history; he incites the fearful selfish heart to become jealous and envious, to look at the world's wealth as the ideal, to accept the world's methods as right, to believe the lie that the-power-over-others method of domination, of imposed law and violence to force one's way is right. In Satan's world the strong survive and the weak die.

And Satan leads such selfish and envious people to use human governments to take from others in order to get for self—this is what all aristocracies do, what all Marxism does, what Socialism does, what Communism does, what Stalinism does—100% of the time when these principles are practiced in society the masses are exploited for the benefit of the few, but what makes this so evil is that the masses are hurt under the umbrella of the lie that they are being helped—that it is for their good. What makes it so diabolical is that the people themselves, by embracing selfishness, by embracing envy, are tricked into embracing these practices under the guise of doing good. It is a great deceit and it occurs because people have embraced Satan's law of me-first, of getting more for self, of jealousy, envy and that imposed law is how one gets righteousness. They don't actually love others functionally; they have not sought to live in harmony with God's kingdom and methods.

There are many compassionate people who get deceived into this destruction because they allow their feelings to rule them and don't understand how love actually functions; they don't understand the difference between God's law and the laws of this world and they go along with these destructive methods because they want to help the less fortunate. But they are the blind who are following blind leaders.

We have a higher calling—we are not to make the riches of this world our focus. We are to make God's kingdom, God's reality, God's methods the focus. We are to love God supremely and every human being as ourselves—as part of our own body—seeking their best, but always under the umbrella of God's methods and principles. It is only with God's methods that we find true unity, equality, and harmony.

But as soon as we try and achieve God's methods of righteousness through human governments, we corrupt the message, damage the mission and ultimately end up promoting Satan's methods and kingdom.

Read first paragraph, "As human beings…" this is so true, we are always learning and life teaches—the question is what are we learning?

Does the fact that we are always learning me we are always learning truth?

Can we be lifelong learners and learn falsehoods?

What would you say would be keys to right learning?

Establishing the right principles for learning, having the right sources of truth and having mature teachers? What are the keys to having these?

- Understanding reality—the ways in which we learn. We learn by experience, we learn by instruction, we learn by doing, we learn by observing, we learn by worshipping, we learn by relationship (which is a form of experience).
- The integrative evidenced-based approach, which harmonizes Scripture, Science and Experience—separating these three threads opens the door to distortion and misunderstanding.
- Having the right worldview, lens through which to understand facts.
    - There are facts and there are interpretations of facts. The facts can usually be agreed upon, it is the interpretations that cause disagreement.
- Understanding God's law as design law and then identifying those laws and how they function. These become constants upon which we can take confusing pieces of data and test them, examine them, and draw reliable consistent conclusions.
- Understanding the nature and character of sin, as a condition of being out of harmony with God's design for life which damages the sinner and if unremedied results in death and not a legal problem.
- Understanding that we are finite and that truth is unfolding and we never arrive to a place that we stop learning.
- Trusting God as the source of truth and therefore studying and pursuing truth in any field of study with a heart humble before God seeking His enlightenment.

Methods of learning in include:

- Receiving
    - Listening
    - Reading
    - Watching
        - But receiving can be done actively or passively
        - Passive: listening and accepting what you hear because you invest the source (speaker, author) with authority; my teacher said it therefore it must be true. I read it in a textbook or science journal therefore it must be true.
        - Active: hearing what someone is says or teaches, but thinking for yourself, examining the evidence for yourself, and only believing or accepting what is being taught when the evidence supports it and it actually makes sense.
- Participating
    - Discussion
    - Role play
    - Playing
    - This type of learning can be less obvious—people can be taught things without actually realizing they are being taught, without active thinking things through. This is how many people come to understand the imposed law lie about God's government, because all human systems operate this way. All games have made up rules and we accept them as right and learn that right and wrong is determined by the rules. Thus the focus of the play is on the specific game and learning the rules of the game, but one is also being

taught that right and wrong is determined by the rules and eventually outside rule-enforcers—referees, umpires, police, judges, God.

- Doing
  - Application
  - Practicing
  - Editing, rewriting, correcting,
  - Building
  - Teaching

In medical school they had the phrase, See One, Do One, Teach One.

Our lesson title is The Family, and we received this email recently:

> *We are so blessed to learn about God's design laws, Sanctuary, His character of love, His principles and methods from you. Thank you so much for bringing a greater understanding and love for God. I grew up in Church with the legalistic view of God.*
>
> *By being legalistic while the children were growing up at home we have failed as parents. We should have helped them experience God! Although three of our children are professionals they are not interested in coming to Church. But since our understanding and attitude has changed they are still close in relationship to us. We gave them your books and encourage them to listen to your SS class. We pray for them, love them and remain helpful to them. We wait for the Holy Spirit to continue to work in their hearts as we did mess up totally.*
>
> *But there is a lot of resistance from our Church members to study and see if what you are saying is right! One of them did started listening to you. We keep sharing these truths with our SS Class as it is vital and we hope one day they will be open to have you in our Church.*
>
> *We want to let you know how much we appreciate your ministry. We enjoy SS Class discussions with all of the member's participation…*
>
> *May God continue to bless your ministry that all will be enlightened and our Savior will come and take us home soon. We are tired of all the confusion and chaos here.*
>
> *We pray for your ministry and for all of you who are participating and giving sacrificially*.

Read second paragraph, which is a quote from *The Desire of Ages*:

> From the earliest times the **faithful** in Israel had given much care to the education of the youth. [Do we do this today? If we are not giving care to the education of our children, would that mean we are not faithful? What is the purpose of the education of our children? What are the consequences of allowing the state to take over their education? If a person today has grown children, like our email above, and in their personal journey has come to new insights about

> God should they look back on how they raised their children with guilt? Can they look back with regret or disappointment, but without guilt? When is guilt appropriate? When we knowingly do wrong. Can a person teach what they do not know? Can you teach your child Spanish if you don't know Spanish? Could parents in the 19th Century teach their children to floss their teeth? Why not? Because floss didn't exist and no one new about it or its importance. Should parents, once floss was discovered and made available, look back and feel guilty they didn't know and teach this? We must not punish ourselves with false guilt for not teaching our children what we ourselves didn't know.] The Lord had directed that even from babyhood the children should be **taught of His goodness and His greatness**, **especially as revealed in His law**, and shown in the history of Israel. Song and prayer and lessons from the Scriptures were to be adapted to the opening mind. Fathers and mothers were to instruct their children **that the law of God is an expression of His character, and that as they received the principles of the law into the heart, the image of God was traced on mind and soul**. Much of the teaching was oral; but the youth also learned to read the Hebrew writings; and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures were open to their study. DA 69.2

Teach our children of God's greatness and goodness revealed in His law and that the law is an expression of His character and when we receive it into our hearts the image of God is traced on mind and soul.

What do you hear in this?

What law lens? If you were raised, and always believed, that law means rules—imposed law like humans make, that require oversight and legal enforcement, does that impact what you teach your children? Does it create contradictions in which God is presented as something other than love, but at the same time you tell your children that God is love?

If we read this through design law, then do we find a perfect harmony—God as our loving Creator, who built reality for life, for our health, our happiness and deviations from those parameters injure us and require healing from God. But harmony with God and His law transforms us to be like Him.

Will our children receive this type of education—an education which centers on God and His methods and design—in public schools? Are there political movements that want to get rid of private Christian schools and mandate everyone get a public education? What might happen to private schools if the government could require students to stay home for a year or more and take online classes? Will parents continue to pay $15,000 a year for their children to take classes on a computer? In fact, in some places in the US today private schools are struggle, some are closing because of the current government restrictions. Are the actions of the government merely designed to save lives, or are they malicious, calculated to destroy private schools and get our children into public schools for a socialist/humanist indoctrination? Consider the restriction of religious liberty being impose by government—do you see Bible prophecy being fulfilled?

https://www.masslive.com/news/2020/06/future-of-private-schools-in-question-with-wave-of-closures.html

https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-0717-private-schools-trouble-20200716-j4lhjelbmrfwfjkxvyyvibka6m-story.html

Should we stand up and while not becoming political, should we voice opposition to practices that restrict religious liberty? Should we help people see that there is a consistent attack against religious liberty from the philosophy of humanism, evolutionism, and secularism?

One city in America, which is extremely "progressive" has restricted attendance in churches to 1 person at a time, while other businesses (barbershops, nail salons, day cares, stores) are not restricted in this way. Why such restrictions focused on houses of worship? Does anyone truly believe this is about protecting from a virus? Do you see the signs of the time?
https://www.foxnews.com/politics/justice-dept-calls-on-sf-to-end-draconian-coronavirus-rules-for-houses-of-worship

If you read my blog King of the South Versus King of the North—I take the position that these kings represent two philosophical forces—godless secularism as the king of the south and religious imperialism as the king of the north. The final movements are an attack from the king of the south, which enrages the king of the north to storm out against the king of the south destroying the king of the south. This would be the forming of the image of the beast of religious imperialism.

SUNDAY

Family first—all learning begins in the home.

Where do children learn to speak their first language? And consider this learning—

- Are we born genetically programmed to speak a certain language?
- Does anyone make the choice on which language they speak first?
- Can a person by force of will choose to start speaking a different language than their family?

Now consider this—this language we learn simply by our environment, that we didn't choose, isn't genetically programmed, we couldn't avoid it, we simply assimilated it from our environment—and EVERYTHING we think is filtered through it. When we look outside and see an object with limbs and leaves we see a TREE we do not see a BAUM—which is the German word for tree.

Do you think English is the only filter we learn like this?

- What about the filter of who we are?
- How men and women treat each other?
- Whether people can be trusted?
- Whether we have value and are loved?
- What love is and how it functions?
- Whether there is a God or not?

- Whether God can be trusted or not?
- Whether people of other cultures and races are equal to us?
- Whether people of other religions are equal to us?

How do we learn such things? First—at home in what we experience, in how we are treated, in how we see others in the family and community treat each other, in how we see our parents live—not just what they say, but what they do.

Would this mean that there is a generational influence to education? In other words, what the parents know and live is passed on to the children. If the parents want to pass something different on to the children the parents must introduce something new into the home.

Consider immigrant families that historically required English to be spoken in their home by their children. Why did they do this?

Read fifth paragraph, "Christian education is a commitment…"

Educating families, where would such education take place?
Consider the list of things in this paragraph:

- Doctrine—which means teaching
    - Is there a difference between teaching a list of beliefs, a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs versus how to reason and think?
    - Are there some core beliefs, foundational to understand in order to learn how to discern, reason, think and problem solve? What are they?
        - God is love—and God loves you personally, individually and is your friend and will never forsake you
        - God is Creator and His laws are design laws
        - Teaching children God's design laws as the child is able to comprehend
- Worship—is there a law involved?
- Instruction—method of teaching, how to teach whereas doctrine is what we teach
- Fellowship—is about relationship
    - Do we fellowship with everyone?
    - Do we let our children fellowship with everyone?
    - Where do we draw the line and why? What do we teach our children when we draw lines in regard to fellowship?
    - How do we set boundaries with people we don't want our children to fellowship with while not introducing into our children ideas of superiority or inferiority?
- Evangelism—what is this? Is this sharing the gospel of Jesus or is this sharing the right Creed and getting people to join the right organization?
- Service—do we all give the same service? Why or why not?

The last paragraph points out that even in Eden, with perfect parenting, things don't always turn out well, it states: "Of course, as the story shows, a good education doesn't always lead to the kind of outcome that one would hope for."

Are parents responsible for how their children turn out?

This a critical point that many parents struggle with because of a Bible verse

> Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6 NKJV)

And many parents are taught that this is a promise that if they do a good job they will be guaranteed a good outcome. They are taught that if they teach them right then even though their children may stray, when they get older they will come back.

But if they don't, then the parent is left believing a lie that it must mean the parent did something wrong. And because we are all finite, we always will find new truths later in life we didn't know when we were younger; people who believe this view will turn on themselves and say "Its my fault, if I had only known this truth or that truth then my children wouldn't have left the church."

But parents are not responsible for how another human being turns out even their own children—**They are responsible for their conduct in parenting**.

The better translation of this passage is:

> Train up a child according to his way, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6 NKJV)

In other words, if you let the child dictate the terms of his rearing, what to watch, whether to go to school what to eat, whether to do chores, etc. you can be sure the child will be a self-indulgent out of control adult who doesn't have any capacity for self-control or handling life's stressors. This is not a promise that if you do a good job you get a good outcome, but if you do no job you get a bad outcome.

In the moving *The Miracle Worker* about Helen Keller, you see this in Helen before Annie Sullivan came into her life. The parents set no boundaries and let this child do whatever she wanted and she was more out of control that a family dog.

In truth, the Proverb can be translated either way, so which is right, how can we be sure that what I am saying is true? A perfect, flawless, sinless test case of a parent—God parenting Lucifer, and Adam and Eve—did God make mistakes and do things wrong? Did God get the outcome He wanted? So, the passage cannot mean we are guaranteed a good outcome, but a bad if we do not job at all.

Just consider all the influences beyond parental influences that can impact the outcome of children's lives.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the little we know about the childhood of Jesus.

Read the third paragraph,

> The child **Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools**. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee. As He advanced from childhood to youth, **He did not seek the schools of the rabbis.** He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor. DA 70.1

Why was Jesus not put in the parochial schools of His day?

Weren't the schools of His day in existence because God had instructed them to establish these schools?

Shouldn't a parent simply trust that the church school will give the child a proper education? What was wrong with the schools in Christ's day that Jesus was not to attend them?

They taught traditions of man over the truth of God! They indoctrinated into a false system of legal religion with all kinds of rules and did not teach the reality of God's kingdom.

Where could Jesus find the reality of God's law to study in addition to Mary sharing with Him the various Scriptures she had learned throughout her life?

- **Jesus followed the divine plan of education.** The schools of His time, with their magnifying of things small and their belittling of things great, He did not seek. **His education was gained directly from the Heaven-appointed sources; from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life—God's lesson books**, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. – {Ed 77.2}

- **The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life**.– {COL 125.2}

What method is this? The integrative evidence-based approach! Why is this the best method? Because God's law is design law, which is what reality operates upon and when we harmonize Scripture with nature and experience we avoid the imperial human law model—Satan's counterfeit.

This is critical—and you can see why those who teach the penal-legal lie are so insistent that Scripture be studied separately from science and experience.

The last paragraph states that there was much Mary and Joseph didn't understand about Jesus "because Jesus had knowledge and wisdom that had been imparted to Him only by the Lord."

What are your thoughts about this? I certainly agree that Jesus did have knowledge and wisdom imparted to Him by the Lord, no question about it.

But, does that mean that Jesus learned in ways that we cannot learn, or if it is true for Jesus it can also be true for us, that we can have knowledge and wisdom imparted to us directly from the Lord IF we also have a heart that loves God and is humbly seeking to be taught by God, and is faithfully applying to oneself what God has revealed and continues to use the methods and resources God has put in our lives? In other words, we don't neglect the Bible and insist God reveal things to us directly.

But, if we are humble and faithful, can we expect God and angels to reveal things to our minds?

Well, the author of *The Desire of Ages* thought so:

> **Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour**. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God. While the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. **Communion with God through prayer** develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things. DA 70.4

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that teaching is communication—and communication is transfer of knowledge that occurs through relationship, which works on both an emotional level and personal one.

The lesson states a good relationship must be built. The lesson is definitely onto some principles of education—but the relationship doesn't have to be good to teach—it can be bad and still teach—but the quality of the relationship impacts what is taught.

Consider:

- Military training—are things taught? Do people learn? Are there relationships? Are those relationships always nurturing, positive, encouraging? Or are they sometimes hostile, critical, stressful, abusive even? Does learning take place? What kind of learning? Are there skills learned in such an environment that if one succeeds in the process strengthens them? But can people also be broken or damaged? Do both groups learn—those who succeed and those who wash out?
- Consider cult indoctrination—are there relationships involved? Does learning take place? But what kind of learning? What impact does it have? What is it designed to do? What methods are employed?

  - In cult indoctrination (as well as gangs) one of the central, core, primary tools that is essential for their success is relationships. They use the power of peers, along with a controlled environment in which divergent views or perspectives are restricted, to break down the individuality and surrender thinking to the group norm and ultimately the cult or gang leader.
  - Individuals with strong sense of self are not attracted to such groups and anyone who cannot be molded and have self surrendered will be terminated from the group
- Healthy use of these principles is as Jesus functioned, first having mature individuals who have a trust relationship with God and who understand God's design for life and the problem of sin in people, then who present the truth in love and leave others free. We love those who don't accept our views or the truth of God's kingdom, but it isn't possible for them to really unite with us in heart as long as they hold to principles outside God's design. So we intelligently keep healthy boundaries with people while we still love them and treat them with respect.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Parents have an awesome…" What do you think about the idea that if fathers are weak family, society and the church suffers?

What are the qualities that make for strong men in society and what factors would weaken them?

Is the modern feminist movement, what is happening in society today, healthy for families, healthy for women, healthy for men?

What is God's design for male-female relationships? Equality, Adam and Eve co-equals, two individuals united in love as one joint entity, neither ruling over the other and **united they are able to be more and achieve more than either could by themselves**:

- United their experience in love is magnified beyond anything either could do alone.
- Their ability to procreate and have children is only possible together.
- Their ability to learn, discern, develop, is expanded as they share their perspectives with each other.
- I believe their united selves also created strengths that neither would have alone—they are healthier. Research shows healthy marriages do convey physical health benefits compared to single people.

God's design builds up both parties to be more than either is alone—when God's principles are practices in the relationship. BUT when God's design, methods and principles are violated then injury and harm occur.

It is better to be single than to be married to the wrong person or be married to a spiritually emotionally unhealthy person.

God's design for marriage is warped, damaged, distorted in ways that injure both men and women by:

- Polygamy
- Male domination over women—women becoming property to be bartered by their father's to other men; women having no individual rights separate from what her husband grants her; women being physically, emotionally, spiritually, sexually abused by their husbands
- Women being denied education
- Women being denied liberty, free speech, or other autonomy
- Women being denied equal job opportunity—can't work in certain fields merely because of gender, not because of their ability, or being paid less than a man for the same work

To the degree initiatives work to restore God's principles of truth, love, liberty and equality they are healthy. So initiatives that give women rights of equality of individuality, freedom these are all healthy. But initiatives that go beyond this are damaging.

Is the modern feminist movement today seeking **only** to promote the equality of men and women? Or, is the modern feminist movement seeking to destroy maleness, masculinity?

I want to suggest that the modern feminist movement is a great example of how everything we pursue separate from God's design, law and principles will be corrupted and perverted. If we pursue converting people to Jesus Christ through the methods of the world we will not convert people to Jesus but will harm others as we coerce and force our way upon others. The principles of the world are the principles of imposed rules and laws that coerce and corrupt.

Let's examine and compare God's design with modern feminism.

Do you see messages in society that uplift maleness, masculinity, and men in general to see them be the most godly bastions of Christlike leadership possible, or is the messaging from feminism that maleness, masculinity is bad, abusive and something to be opposed—that if a man is leading women will be exploited?

Well just consider, did God make male and female and give men and women different, but complimentary qualities? If we dominate and suppress women, as has happened in the past, this damages, injures and corrupts, likewise movements that seek to correct the historic domination of women, by suppressing maleness will also damage and corrupt.

Which of the following is held up by feminism today as the greater ideal?

- Retain your virginity until you find a man to marry and then enter into a lifelong marriage OR your body is your own and have sex outside of marriage with anyone you please—male or female?
- Embrace your femineity and love others more than self by becoming a mother and live at home raising your children in goldy love with the support a godly loving husband OR seek to get the best career for yourself, don't sacrifice your career for a family, don't surrender yourself for others, get ahead in this world!

- Men have abilities, strengths and qualities that women do not have and they can do some things better than women and society functions best when we embrace and promote a healthy harmony of both male and female strengths in which they are united in love OR Men have nothing of any real value to offer and society and women would be much better off if men would simply withdraw from leadership and let women run everything?

What is a healthy message for Christians parents to teach their children about men and women, their roles, their place in society and the church?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, this is so important to never forget what God has done for us as a species, the history of His interventions as recorded in Scripture, but also for us individually. I love this quote:

> We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. 3SM 162

What does this mean to you?

Not only the actions of the Lord in the past, but the truths the Lord has revealed to us throughout history. Have these truths been forgotten? What about the truth of God's design law—and how accepting the lie of imposed law has caused us to forget the truth of what Christ achieved on the Cross and now it is taught in a penal legal lie that makes us forget the truth of God's character.

This is why the final message of mercy is the truth of God's character of love, which is the message of the 3 Angels of Revelation 14, which is also the righteousness by faith message.

The second paragraph points out that Israel was taught to teach their children the marvelous works of God among them and for them: For what purpose?

What if those works are taught to the children in a way that leads to "We are a special people from the rest of the world?" Could it lead to elitism, religious narcissism, exclusivism etc.?

So, what is the purpose of teaching what God has done in the past? To increase our faith in God of course, but does our worldview, our understanding of what God is accomplishing important to understand God's actions in the past?

Thus we need to teach:

- God's character of love—His design law of love, how God built life to function
- What sin actually is—deviation from God's design for life which is a terminal condition that needs healing by God

- That Jesus is the remedy that must come to Earth, He must become human or all humans are lost
- This then enlightens us to the OT as a war between Satan trying to obstruct Jesus becoming incarnate and God working to keep open the avenue for Jesus—the Jewish people then become the focus once God chose Abraham as the one that through his descendants the Messiah would come

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "Upon fathers…" Do you agree that many don't consider the responsibility of parenthood before becoming parents?

What could we do to help this? Is the messaging of the godless modern society, humanism contributing to this?

Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available.

> October—Sharing Tracts: How To Resolve Your Feelings of Guilt; The Infinite Sacrifice of Christ; Overcoming Addiction Lasting Freedom; The Insidiousness of Sin and God's Remedy; The Design Laws of God.

USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL!

Saturday, October 3, 2020! Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click here for more information.

October 10: We will have two classes doing lesson 3 & 4: We will start class at 9:25 and go to 10:25 and then restart at 10:35 to 11:35

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 3
The Law as Teacher

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "In warning…" What do you hear when we read this? What is Paul dealing with—legalism, the idea of God's law being rules imposed and that by law-keeping we can obtain healing from sin and experience righteousness and eternal life. Is it possible for us to do this?

Life doesn't come from the law—but does life come in violation of the law? Consider these historic quotes in light of what Paul is saying—can we harmonize them?

> **It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love**. In the light from Calvary it will be seen **that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven**; **that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God**... DA 19.2

> **Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give**. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "**I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me**. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: **through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life**. DA 21.2

> **All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great law of life is a law of service.** The infinite Father ministers to the life of every living thing. Christ came to the earth "as He that serves." Luke 22:27. The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Hebrews 1:14. **The same law of service is written upon all things in nature.** The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees of the forest, the leaves, the grass, and the flowers, the sun in the heavens and the stars of light—all have their ministry**. Lake and ocean, river and water spring—each takes to give**. Ed 103.2

Then, understanding the idea that God's law is the law of love, the law if service or giving, which is the law of life, we read the following Bible texts:

> This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. **I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people (Heb 8:10 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, (Rom 2:12-15 NIV84).

So what is going on with the idea that life doesn't come from the law, but restoring us to life requires God putting His law in our hearts and minds?

From where does life originate? God is the source of all life—no creature or living thing has life in and of itself. (That's Satan's dream to have life eternal apart from God, that is the doctrine of eternal hell, life eternal apart from God, that somehow created beings have life in and of themselves.)

Do the design laws of God give life or are they the protocols upon which life exists?

For instance—do the laws of health give life? No—God gives life, but does maintaining life require we live in harmony with the laws upon which God built life to operate? And if someone is sick with cancer from years of smoking (violating the laws of health) and is dying and God heals them of the cancer—in order for them to live will they also need to stop smoking—live in harmony with the laws of health?

So, the laws do not give life, but breaking God's laws damage and ultimate result in death by cutting us off from the source of life.

Do you see how the design law understanding makes perfect sense of all of this, but an imposed law view causes confusion?

The most important question that underpins essentially everything Christian doctrine is: **How do you understand God's law?**

When you are discussing issues with others and come to points of disagreement, before getting into the specific doctrine or question or text, step back and clarify with them, *How do you understand God's law?*

If they understand God's law to function like human law, imposed rules, legal accounting, judicial action, imposed punishments, the will *never* understand your perspective. They are operating in a false worldview and all their conclusions about the Bible and God will be tainted with Satan's lie about God and God's law. They might accept Jesus as their Savior and teach that He died to save them—but they will teach it through the lie that it was to pay a legal penalty to an offended god who without that payment would use his power to kill them.

The entire world is drunk on the wine of this lie and we have a message that is to go forward at this time in earth's history to enlighten the world for the second coming of Jesus. This message calls people out of the confusion of Babylon—that system of thousands of Christian groups all arguing back and forth over this verse, this doctrine or that ritual because that is what you get with imposed law-confusion and argument. We call them to worship the Creator whose law is design law and reveal to them how God's law is constant and the law upon which life is built, upon which reality works!

Why are so many confused about this? Because of how God did use what *appears* to be imposed law in the Bible, like the Levitical laws and the 10 Commandments.

Then people read quotes like this one from *Christ's Object Lessons*

> **God's law is the transcript of His character**. It embodies the **principles** of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept **these principles** is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow. COL 305.3

Many people read things like this and think that God does impose law, that He gave the 10 Commandments at Sinai and they are the full and complete law of God. They don't understand the author's use of "principles" and instead latch onto the 10 Commandment list as a list of imposed rules.

But they have problems with Paul in Galatians where he says the 10 Commandments were added later—in other words the 10 Commandments didn't always exist. The principles of love for God and others, which are the basis of the 10 Commandments, existed eternally, emanating from the heart of God, but the 10 Commandments were added much later, after humans sinned.

The same author who wrote the quote from *Christ's Object Lessons* above also wrote the following:

> **If man had kept the law of God**, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, **there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision**. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have **kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone**. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}
>
> **The law of God existed before man was created. The angels were governed by it**. [Did angels have a law to honor their father and mother? Not to commit adultery? That sins would pass down 3-4 generations in beings who were at that time sinless? Did angels have a law in heaven, prior to sin, commanding them not to make graven images, not to worship other gods? Was the law that existed in heaven at that time the 10 Commandments?] Satan fell because he transgressed the **principles** of God's government. [Are principles rules or are they protocols, design laws?] After Adam and Eve were created, **God made known to them His law**. [What

do you think this was? Was it a list of 10 rules? Did Adam and Eve have a law posted in Eden PRIOR to their fall that said their sins would pass down 3-4 generations, when they were at that time sinless? Did Adam and Eve have a law posted in Eden for them to honor their father and mother?] **It was not then written**, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah. {SR 145.1}

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden. [If the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden it was not instituted at Sinai correct? But that means it was also not in existence before Eden. So did the angels have a Sabbath commandment when Lucifer rebelled?] After God had made the world and created man upon the earth, **He made the Sabbath for man**. After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. **The principles of the Ten Commandments existed before the fall and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state**. {SR 145.2} [Additional precepts? Yes, like sins passing down 3-4 generations, don't commit adultery, don't murder, etc. None of this has to be given to beings who are sinless and operate upon the principles of love because when we love as God designs we would never cheat, steal or murder.]

The law of God existed before the creation of man or else Adam could not have sinned. **After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition**. (Ibid., March 14, 1878). {1BC 1104.5} The principles of love don't change, but what love does in different situation does change.

So, why did God give the 10 Commandments? Are the 10 Commandments the full expression of God's law? No!

From *Could It Be This Simple?*

The Ten Commandments are like your DNA code. Yes, we can document a person's specific DNA sequence, offering us an accurate transcript of certain aspects of the individual. But would we know the fullness of the person--the sound of his laugh, the brightness of her smile, the warmth of his or her love--by studying the DNA code? Likewise, the Ten Commandments are but a dim reflection of God's law of love and liberty. Just studying the Ten Commandments will never reveal the fullness of God's law. Instead, we must see the law in living flesh.

God created humanity to be the repository of His living law of love. It was only after the human race fell and the divine law of love was no longer written in the mind that it became necessary to put it on stone in an attempt to awaken us to our sickly state. But it is God's plan to restore His law of love and liberty in our minds. Regarding the new covenant, the writer of Hebrews, quoting Jeremiah states, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). pp 65

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

If God's law is design law, the protocols upon which life operates and not imposed rules like humans make, then why did God give the 10 Commandments?

Because we needed it to reveal to us our sin-sick hearts and minds and act as a hedge of protection. The written law, the 10 Commandments are simply a diagnostic took to diagnose us, but the written law has no capacity to heal. It is like an MRI, which can reveal disease inside us hidden from sight, but cannot cure what it reveals. That is the purpose of the 10 Commandments.

Paul writes in 1Timothy 1:8 that the law was not given for the righteous—the spiritually healthy—but for the unrighteous, those who are still terminal in sin and have not repented and had God's law written on their hearts and minds.

SUNDAY

Read the last two paragraphs, "First, they hear, and then, they learn to fear God…." Does this make clear and perfect sense, or is some part of your mind going—"wait a minute?"

"the more we come to know about God, the more we can fear Him, too, because we can see just how holy and righteous He is and how sinful and unrighteous we are in contrast, and how it is only by grace—undeserved merit—that we are not destroyed."

So, does this sound like they mean fear as awe and admiration or fear as in, dread, terror, to be afraid?

But, what about 1John 4:18:

> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. NIV84

Wait—we are to come to know God so that we love Him, and the more we love Him the less fear we have, because if we remain in fear we are not made perfect in love. But the lesson says that the more we come to know Him the more fear we have while we love Him….

Do you see the infection of Satan? **This idea of combining fear and love as being holy or virtuous is a lie of Satan**. It stems from the imposed law lie, which teaches sin must be punished. When we cling to the lie that God's law functions like Satan's, imposed rules then we cling to the idea that God must punish sin, we love Him for punishing Jesus in our place, but we fear Him because we know He would punish us if it wasn't for Jesus hiding us from His gaze.

This entire idea is false—God is not the source of pain, suffering or death. God is the source of life; pain, suffering and death are the results of actions that break God's design laws, that separate us and distance us from God.

The closer we come to God the more we are restored to God's design for life until we are ultimately healed completely by God and experience eternal life with Him.

Anything that incites fear of God obstructs God's plan to save us. Let me say that again, anything that makes us afraid of God obstructs God's plan to heal us.

Now, there is a place where the immature, the child, who doesn't understand reality, may attribute fear to their parent, and the loving parent allows the child this misunderstanding in order to protect them in their immaturity from outside dangers—but the parent expects the child to grow up and stop being afraid of the parent.

For instance, a loving parent will set a rule for their small children not to play in the street. If the child disobeys and plays in the street the loving parent will discipline—inflict a painful consequence upon the child in order to protect the child from what would happen if they were hit by a car.

- In the child's mind why is it wrong to play in the street? Because mommy or daddy will punish.
- In the child's mind where is their fear focused? On what mommy or daddy will do.
- But where is the real threat?
- What should the child truly be afraid of? Being hit by the car—which takes them out of harmony with the laws of health causing pain and death.

Notice how the loving parent steps in between the child and reality and takes onto themselves the role of being the inflictor of pain allowing the child to view them as the source of suffering, but in reality the parent is never the source of the suffering, but is merely stepping into that role long enough for the child to grow up and understand reality and realize that they never needed to have fear of the parent—ever. This is what God often did in the Old Testament and what He wants for His immature children to grow up and understand. When we understand reality, God's true character and methods of love, His design laws, then we love Him and all fear of Him goes away.

Satan has tricked billions, by his lie about God's law, to be more afraid of God who is trying to save them than the sin in their life which is killing them.

The persistent idea that a right attitude toward our Heavenly Father is to both love and fear Him comes straight out of Romanism—the imposed law lie:

From my book *The God-Shaped Heart:*

> Our instinctive notions of dictator gods are based on human imposed-law constructs—gods of power who rule by coercion. This is level four and below thinking. This is immaturity. But Jesus overturns such ideas! Jesus reveals a God who presents truth in love and leaves his creatures free. The apostles, once freed from the false-god view, preached Jesus and him crucified and presented God's law as love—and the New Testament church grew (Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8).

But sadly, after apostolic times, Christianity gave up its hold on the selfless God of love. The church rejected the understanding that God is Creator and his laws are built into the fabric of reality and replaced this truth with an authoritarian god in the mold of Caesar, a dictator who demands worship on the threat of punishment. [Jurgen] Moltmann [in his book Sun of Righteousness, Arise, writes]:

> The Roman father of a family corresponded to the Roman father gods and to the later father of the gods, Jupiter, acting as a household priest. The Caesar was seen as the pater patriae, the father of his country, and ruled as priestly king of priestly father, the pontifex maximus. On the one hand these titles reflect the people's expectation of protection by the ruler, and on the other his unrestricted power: the father of his country is omnipotent—pater omnipotens. In Lactantius's writing about "the Wrath of God," we can clearly see how the Roman idea of the father has been transferred to the Christian God: the one God is both Lord and Father, his power being fatherly and also supreme. "We should love him because he is the Father, but we should also fear him because he is the Lord. . . . In both persons he is deserving of worship. Who would not love the Father of his soul with a proper childlike reverence? Or who without punishment could disdain the one who as the ruler of all things has the true power over all?" [Jurgen Moltmann, Sun of Righteousness, Arise: God's Future for Humanity and the Earth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 89.]

When the God of love whom Jesus revealed is replaced with this dictator view, it is no surprise that Christian husbands abuse their wives just as frequently as men who have never heard of Jesus. Why? Because they are operating on the same imposed law. And just as an apple cannot avoid falling to the ground when released, so too our characters (our hearts) cannot avoid becoming like the god we worship—it is the law of worship! pp. 129

This idea that we are to love and fear God is a strictly pagan idea stemming from accepting Rome's lie about God's law. Our message is to return people to worship our Creator God, whose law is design law, be healed in our hearts and minds such that His perfect love casts out all fear. Yes, we have ever increasing awe of God but ever decreasing fear of God.

MONDAY

What does it mean that the law is a witness against the people?

The lesson asks us to read from Deuteronomy 31, let's start in verse 15 from the NIV84:

> Then the LORD appeared at the Tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the Tent. 16 And the LORD said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your fathers, and **these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods** of the land they are entering. **They will forsake me** and break the covenant I made with them. 17 **On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they**

will be destroyed. Many disasters and difficulties will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?' 18 And **I will certainly hide my face on that day** because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods. [What is described? What kind of law? What action does God take when people turn away from Him? He leaves them free—the law of liberty. Why does God do this? What choice does God have? If God were to use His power to continue to bless and protect people from rebellion what would that mean? It would mean God violates His own law, it would mean that freedom doesn't exist, which means love doesn't exist, it would teach people that destructive ways are actually healthy. What does the Bible call it when God let's people go to reap what they have chosen, in other word, turns His face from them? God's wrath. Why does harm come to them? Is God inflicting it? What is the only result of breaking God's design law for life? Pain, suffering, ultimately death. So, what is God wanting for them to understand? Do we understand any better than they did? Was the law written a witness against them? How?] 19 "**Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them**. [Why will this be a witness? If you read the words to the song in DT 32 you will see it describes reality, what God did for them, how they rebelled and worshipped demons, how God leaves them free, how they reap what they have sown and how God is always love. It witnesses that God's law is design law and people are free to accept God and be healed or reject Him and get worse.] 20 When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive, **they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me** and breaking my covenant. 21 **And when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song will testify against them**, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. **I know what they are disposed to do**, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath."[God knows the selfishness in their hearts and He knows what unremedied selfishness will result in. He also knows the future so He knows this is how it will go. But God's actions of love and grace despite this testifies that their suffering and loss are not from God but from sinfulness in them.] 22 So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites.

WEDNESDAY

Read second and third paragraphs, "Whatever education venue…" Wow—what do you think of the idea that we cannot explain why pain and suffering happens to the faithful, the obedient? Really?

It makes me wonder if this is written by a level two thinker. Remember the 7 levels of moral decision making? Level two is Marketplace Exchange, the quid pro quo, you do something for me in exchange of an agreed upon reward.

This is the health-wellness gospel, if you do right you will get health and wealth, but if you do wrong you get sickness and poverty.

This was the thinking of the Pharisees 2000 years ago when they taught that disease was punishment from God for sin and thus they got angry at Jesus for healing disease. In their view He was overruling God's just punishment upon sinners.

This is the thinking of the Apostles when they asked Jesus who sinned the blind man or his parents that he was born blind. And what did Jesus say?

This is the thinking of those who when tragedy strikes and a child dies they say, "Oh, you must have had some sin in your life for this to happen."

It is sick, it is childish, it is immature and it is NOT how God's kingdom works.

While it is true there is cause and effect and we do reap benefits from living in harmony with God's design laws and suffer when we violate them. We must remember we are not living in sinless Eden—we are living in a war zone. We are living in enemy occupied territory. We are living in the world of the prince of darkness where Satan has power to act. Thus, in this world God's law is not lived out perfectly, but God, His agents and His design law are at war with Satan's design, law and agents.

Thus—all nature groans under the weight of sin. There are all kinds of physical diseases and defects that affect every human being regardless of their righteous character. All people age and die the first death—this is the law of sin and death at work on planet earth.

But more than this, there are evil people who seek to do evil and the righteous suffer.

There are natural disasters because nature is unraveling as a result of God's slowly loosening His restraining hand and giving Satan more and more freedom. Why? Because the Holy Spirit dwells in hearts and minds of people and as people harden their hearts the Holy Spirit is slowly withdrawn from the earth and Satan gets more freedom and nature becomes more violent.

There are pestilences and poisons in the environment that affect the righteous as well as the wicked.

The reason the righteous suffer is not a mystery, it is clear and understandable. Yet, in their suffering the righteous always have God with them—they retain their peace with themselves, they retain their new heart and right spirit, they retain their love for God and others, they retain their hope and surety in a better world to come.

Right in the middle of the faith chapter, Hebrews 11 we read from *The Remedy*:

> Based on his confidence in God, [Abraham] made his home in the land promised to him, even though he was like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, who were also heirs of God's promise. He wasn't concerned with earthly palaces, because **he was looking forward to living in the city whose foundation, architect and builder is God**.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **All of these people were living in trust**, confident in God when they died. They did not receive all the things promised, but they understood them in their minds and rejoiced in their reality. And they openly acknowledged that they were strangers and aliens, and **not part of this selfish earth**. They were making it plainly known that they wanted a different land–a land of their own. And they didn't want the land they had left, for they could have easily returned from where they had come. No! They were longing for a better country — **a land free from selfishness, disease, death, crime and exploitation, where guards, police and security are no longer needed — they were longing for heaven. Therefore God is honored to be known as their God (for they value his methods of love, truth, and freedom) and he has prepared an eternal home for them**.

Do we have this perspective that we are foreigners and aliens in a world infected with selfishness and because of this, bad things will happen to God's people, but we know that this sinful world is not our home?

And this is why we at Come and Reason Ministries refuse to promote one political group or politician or nation over another—because this world is not our home—Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world. **We cannot achieve or mission for God through human governments**. Recently, as I have pointed out the failings of trying to do so, some who have aligned with one political movement or another have gotten offended and think I am taking political sides, but I am not.

Hear me clearly—what I am trying to do is to **FREE YOU FROM LOYALTY TO ANY HUMAN SYSTEM AND ESTABLISH YOU IN LOYALTY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD!**

Read last paragraph, "Without question…" Can we have a heavenly perspective to understand that we **can** prosper in God's kingdom while not prospering in the world?

What happens to the gold of godly character when we start focusing on the riches of the world and how others have more than we do?

Do we see movements afoot today that are stoking the flames of envy and jealousy based on the riches of the world?

What is the Christian response? Where are we to focus?

The lesson references Psalms 84:10, this is from *The Remedy of the Lord in Song:*

> Better is one day spent in the courts where you dwell
> than a thousand away from you;
> I would rather stand at the entrance to the house of my God
> than live in comfort in the tents of the wicked.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus Christ…" Why did Jesus have to die in order to save us? What law lens do you look through?

Why and how was He our just substitute?

> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**. 2COR 5:21 NIV84

He became our substitute so that we might *become* the righteousness of God. In other words, it was for our healing, actual fixing of the brokenness in us, not a legal adjustment or declaration. But how, what did He need to achieve? Couldn't God, in His grace and love, merely give us a legal pardon?

If your child disobeyed your instructions to never touch the pesticides in the garage and for some drank some of the poison and were convulsing, would your legal pardon or personal forgiveness fix the problem? What is needed a remedy and a cure.

This is a metaphor of the reality that transgressing God's design law for life is like transgressing the laws of health—it actually damages the transgressor. Because of Adam's sin humanity became terminal, dead in trespass and sin and needed a remedy and a cure for the condition.

Thus Jesus merged His sinless divinity with or terminal sinful humanity in order to live as a real human being, be tempted in every way just like we are but without giving in to any temptation and thus develop a new humanity purged of the fear/selfishness infection.

> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. [The two one, referring to Jews and non-Jews. In other words, unifying people into one body. How, by destroying the dividing wall of hostility—what is the dividing wall of hostility? What caused Cain to kill Abel? What causes all hostility, division, violence, conflict? Sin, fear and selfishness, the carnal nature—thus Jesus came to destroy sin that exists in the heart of sinful humans. Sin is the dividing wall. What about abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations? What is the purpose of the added law, the 10 Commandments and other ordinances? They were ADDED as a diagnostic instrument to expose sin, and are they necessary when sin has been eliminated? Are MRIs needed when there is no disease? So Jesus destroys the need for the written law which exposes sin, by destroying sin in the heart. Why did He do this? Next verse] His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [One new man? Yes, the second Adam, a new human being that is free from sin, free from fear and selfishness, free from the carnal drives. In Jesus the carnal nature was eliminated and God's perfect character of love was established. Thus, through Jesus we may partake of the DIVINE nature and be part of a new humanity, cleansed and renewed, and all who do are reconciled or at-one with God through the

> cross where Jesus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and thus put to death their hostility.] (Ephesians 2:14-17 NIV84)

His sinless life and sacrificial death destroy the infection of fear and selfishness—the carnal nature—and restore God's perfect design of love into the humanity He assumed, thus becoming the second Adam the new head of a perfected humanity.

> once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Heb 5:9 NIV84)

Remember Bible perfection is not sinlessness, Adam and Eve were sinless in Eden, but they were not perfect because Bible perfection is about character, which cannot be created, it must be developed. Jesus as a human developed a perfect character and thus became the Remedy, the source of salvation for all who trust Him!

This is what the law requires:

> **The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character;** and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them**. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have **remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God**. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of **the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

Read second paragraph, "Perhaps John…" What law is involved here? The law of worship.

What happens when we replace Jesus as Creator whose law is design law and His mission was to fix the damage Adam did, with Jesus as imperial dictator whose laws function like Caesar's who came to pay a legal penalty to the divine punisher of sin-crimes?

Read last paragraph, "That so-called…."

Why can we not be released from obligation to obey the law? For the same reason you cannot be released from the obligation to obey the law of respiration—to stop living in harmony with the law is only possible by death.

TUESDAY

Read second and third paragraphs, "The Lord tells Joshua…" What does this mean?

What law? Why do blessings come from obedience to God but cursing come from disobedience?

Is it imposed—does God use power to miraculously give blessings and inflict punishments? Or is it how reality works? Any examples?

What about David and the showbread versus Uzzah and the ark?

Why didn't David get into trouble for going in and eating the showbread and giving it to his men, which broke the Levitical law, but Uzzah died when he broke the Levitical law by touching the ark?

Ancient Israel is not only a historical reality—real people who did real things, which are accurately recorded in the Old Testament—but its history is also recorded "as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Israel, to help them learn and teach the larger reality, was given a little theater (the sanctuary), with intricate props, beautiful costumes, and a precise script—all designed to help them act out God's plan to save humans from sin. We must recognize this perspective in order to understand why it was okay for David to take the showbread from the temple and give it to his men to eat, but it was not okay for Uzzah to touch the Ark of the Covenant during transport on a wagon pulled by oxen.

Symbolically, the showbread represents Jesus, the Bread of Life, of which the priesthood of believers, as sinners on earth, are to partake. It is in partaking of Jesus that sinners are healed (saved) from sin and death and receive righteousness and life.

This was acted out theatrically on a weekly basis, when, on each Sabbath, the daily priests, in their white robes (which represent the righteousness of Christ), joined the High Priest (representing Jesus), in the Holy Place to eat the showbread. Thus, when David and his men ate the showbread, they not only received physiological nurturance, but their actions were in harmony with the script—sinners partaking of Christ and receiving life.

The Ark of the Covenant represents a universe healed completely from sin, a universe restored to the sinless presence of God. Symbolically, only the High Priest, who represents Jesus, entered the Most Holy Place, where the Ark resided. He did this at the end of the annual drama, in order to bring sinners into oneness (at-one-ment) with God. Following this came the Feast of Tabernacles, symbolically the time when the saved tabernacle, or dwell, with God again.

It is only through Jesus that the rest of humanity can be healed, restored to righteousness, and made ready to live in God's presence. Sinners on earth can enter into the presence of God only through "the new and living way" opened through the veil by Jesus (Hebrews 10:20).

When Uzzah touched the Ark, his actions, within the drama, said that he was entering God's presence without Christ. But any sinner apart from Christ remains unhealed from sin and cannot live in the unveiled glory of God—thus, Uzzah died.

We must remember, however, that this was all theater—meaning Uzzah's death was the death the Bible calls "sleep" and from which all will experience resurrection (Daniel 12:2). It is the same death that God told Daniel he would experience (Daniel 12:13). We don't know the condition of Uzzah's heart; we don't know in which resurrection he will arise. The death of Uzzah was not the "wages of sin" death that comes after the Judgment—it was the first death. Therefore, it was not a punishment for sin; it was the proper demonstration, within the object lesson theater, of what happens to unhealed sinners who enter God's presence. This was done to educate all humanity that sinners can come into God's presence only through Christ.

Also note that the Ark was captured at one point by the Philistines and they did not die from touching it. Why? Because they were not part of the acting troupe—they were not on stage—they were not part of the script. God in love revealed to them with tumors and breaking their idol that their gods were false, but there was no penalty for touching the ark that God was required to inflict upon them.

So, when we discuss "law" we must always discern the difference between design law and imposed law, and how love can use imposed rules, like a parent with teeth brushing, to help the immature learn and stay safe.

FRIDAY

Read top two paragraphs and discuss

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SHARING campaign: October—Sharing Tracts:

- How To Resolve Your Feelings of Guilt;
- The Infinite Sacrifice of Christ;
- Overcoming Addiction Lasting Freedom;
- The Insidiousness of Sin and God's Remedy;
- The Design Laws of God.

BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the APP. Go to the App store and Update and you will have it.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 4
The "Eyes of the Lord": The Biblical Worldview

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Starting in the second paragraph the lesson state:

> Today, many of the smartest and best-educated people think that humans evolved from what was originally a simple life-form.
>
> As human beings, we never look at the world from a neutral position. We see it, always and only, through filters that impact how we interpret and understand the world around us. That filter is called a worldview and it's so crucial that we teach our young people, and even older church members, the biblical worldview."

Is there more than one biblical worldview?

- Is there a biblical worldview that teaches a god who tortures people in hell for all eternity?
- Is there a biblical worldview that teaches god imposes law like we do and inflicts punishment for rule breaking?
- Can one accept a biblical worldview and still reject God and crucify His Son?

Understanding that one can have a so-called biblical worldview and still be an enemy of God, what are some healthy biblical filters that will help us form an accurate biblical worldview and help us be a friend of God's?

- God is Creator—thus life originates in God and was created by God
    - What is the problem if we reject this and replace it with the godless worldview?
        - Survival of the fittest is seen as right
        - There are no absolute truths only relativism, meaning there are no moral absolutes—what is deemed good changes with whoever is in power
        - No purpose to life other than to pass on one's genes—this leads to nihilism, hopelessness, pleasure-seeking, and corruption

- God's laws are Design Laws
    - What is the problem if we reject this and replace it with imposed law that God's law functions like human law?
        - God is no better than us, one who rules over by force of might and coercion
        - That might makes right
        - That there is nothing wrong with sin except the inflicted punishment from God
        - God is viewed as arbitrary
        - God violates liberty which destroys love and incites rebellion

        - Doctrines like the divine right of kings—which results in domination and abuse
        - Irrational traditions and superstitions
        - Rituals or symbolic teaching tools become legal requirements rather than learning lessons
        - The Bible is interpreted through a worldview that makes God out to be untrustworthy and leads to the rejection of God altogether and a godless worldview
- Sin is a condition of being out of harmony with God's design and thus is a terminal state that needs a remedy provided by God
    - What happens if we replace this with the lie it is a legal status?
        - Then sin is viewed as a legal problem which requires a legal solution
        - Jesus becomes a legal substitute who is punished by the ruling authority in our place and thus it is taught that God killed His own Son to satisfy divine justice
        - Salvation is perverted away from healing our characters to getting legal adjustment in heavenly records, which leaves people dying in sin with false security
        - This mindset leads to intolerance of others, attempts through history to enforce religious rules on those we see sin as violating God's law—because we become like the God we worship and thus become punishers of lawbreakers
- The Old Testament is the battle between God working to fulfill His promise to send Jesus to provide the Remedy to our terminal condition and Satan working to stop that plan, i.e. destroy the line of the Messiah.
    - What happens if we reject this worldview and accept the false imposed law worldview instead?
        - Old testament is seen as a time when salvation was achieved through animal sacrifices but now we are saved through Jesus' blood payment
        - God is viewed as angry and wrathful in OT but gracious and loving after His Son dies and presents Him His blood
        - God is viewed as a being from whom we need protection

So some healthy beliefs to form healthy filters for a healthy biblical worldview include:

- God is Creator—thus life originates in God and was created by God
- God's laws are Design Laws
- Sin is a condition of being out of harmony with God's design and thus is a terminal state that needs a remedy provided by God
- The Old Testament is the battle between God working to fulfill His promise to send Jesus to provide the Remedy to our terminal condition and Satan working to stop that plan, i.e. destroy the line of the Messiah.

SUNDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "Central to any Christian…" What do you hear in this paragraph?

First, we do have a personal God, a God who loves us and cares for us and who has revealed His character of love to us. Though He is all powerful, He never abuses His power or takes away our freedom.

But what do you think of this idea, "He is a God of miracles who, though using natural laws, is not bound by those laws and who can transcend those laws when He wills (such as in the virgin conception of Jesus)."

Let us agree that God is a God of miracles—no question about it.

But, what do you hear is the idea being promoted that "though using natural laws God is not bound by those laws and can transcend them"? Is the lesson suggesting that God overrules, overrides, bends, goes around, or breaks His laws?

Do you think if we asked the authors if their statement also applies to moral law that they would agree that God is not moral can transcend the moral law?

They didn't include moral law in their paragraph so it could be implied that they are specifically making a distinction between natural law and moral law.

To me this is the type of statement you get from a level four thinker who is trying to acknowledge God's natural law, but at the same time make a distinction between natural and moral law. It is an evidence that whoever wrote this may not fully appreciate God's law—natural or moral—because all of God's laws are manifestations of God's presence and character.

Here are some historic quotes—let's consider them in light of this question of God's relationship to natural and moral law.

> **All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great law of life is a law of service.** [Is this speaking of the moral law or natural law or both? Is the moral law the law of service?] **The infinite Father ministers to the life of every living thing.** Christ came to the earth "as He that serves." Luke 22:27. The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Hebrews 1:14. **The same law of service is written upon all things in nature.** [Ah, this author was first speaking of the moral law and now applies this same law to natural law. Wow, no difference for this author.] The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees of the forest, the leaves, the grass, and the flowers, the sun in the heavens and the stars of light—all have their ministry. Lake and ocean, river and water spring—each takes to give. Ed 103.2

Do you believe that God is not bound by this law, that He operates outside it, that He does things not in accord or in harmony with it?

> The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life**. **The laws that govern the heart's action,** regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, **are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul**. **From Him all life proceeds**. [What law has jurisdiction of the soul? Isn't that the moral law? Yet this author says it is the same law that guides the star and atom.] Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--**a life sustained by receiving the life of God**, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. **To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin**. {Ed 99.2} [Does this sound like God operates outside His own designs, structure, laws? Or are all of them manifestations of and extensions of His own nature and character—i.e. Himself?]

Does God operate outside of this law? Why or why not?

> **By the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unvarying certainty.** [Does God operate outside of this law? Or when God acts God is the cause bringing about the effect? And what allows for us to act in ways that bring effects? Isn't it because of the orderly results of God's laws built into the universe? And where do all God's laws have their origin? And where does the power come that sustains and maintains the operations of God's laws? From God. So does God change His character? Does God change His methods? Does God change His laws? Or is God the same, always love, always consistent, always reliable? If we introduce ideas that God can do what He wants whenever He wants regardless of His laws (which in reality are manifestations of His character) then what have we introduced? Satan's lie that God is arbitrary. The problem is that people want to understand God's law like tax laws, human imposed rules, which should not apply to the one who governs or collects the taxes. That is the fallacy of trying to understand this through the false law lens to start with.] The reaping testifies to the sowing. Here no pretense is tolerated. Men may deceive their fellow men and may receive praise and compensation for service which they have not rendered. **But in nature there can be no deception. On the unfaithful husbandman the harvest passes sentence of condemnation**. **And in the highest sense this is true also in the spiritual realm.** [Does God supersede this law?] **It is in appearance, not in reality, that evil succeeds**. [This is an important truth—it is deception and falsehood that allow people to believe that evil succeeds and incites people to be envious of those who do evil and then seek to be like the evil doer in order to get ahead] The child who plays truant from school, the youth who is slothful in his studies, the clerk or apprentice who fails of serving the interests of his employer, the man in any business or profession who is untrue to his highest responsibilities, may flatter himself that, so long as the wrong is concealed, he is gaining an advantage. **But not so; he is cheating himself. The harvest of life is character**, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come. Ed 108.2

Does God change this law or operate outside of it? When God performs the miracle of salvation, the new heart, the rebirth in a person—is God operating outside of this law or working in harmony with it to heal and restore?

> **God's healing power runs all through nature**. If a tree is cut, if a human being is wounded or breaks a bone, nature begins at once to repair the injury. **Even before the need exists, the healing agencies are in readiness;** and as soon as a part is wounded, every energy is bent to the work of restoration. **So it is in the spiritual realm. Before sin created the need, God had provided the remedy**. Every soul that yields to temptation is wounded, bruised, by the adversary; but whenever there is sin, there is the Saviour. It is Christ's work "to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, ... to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18. Ed 113.1 [In doing this is God working outside His law or in harmony with His law?]
>
> In this work we are to co - operate. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ... restore such an one." Galatians 6:1. **The word here translated "restore" means to put in joint, as a dislocated bone. How suggestive the figure! He who falls into error or sin is thrown out of relation to everything about him**. He may realize his error, and be filled with remorse; but he cannot recover himself. He is in confusion and perplexity, worsted and helpless. **He is to be reclaimed, healed, re - established**. "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one." **Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal.** Only he in whom that love flows, even as the sap in the tree or the blood in the body, **can restore the wounded soul**. Ed 113.2

Is God bound by the law of love—by His own character—by the way He built life to operate—by His own nature—in other words is God self-governed?

God never operates outside His own laws because they are the outworking of Himself—His own personhood, energy, life flowing out from Him to His universe to create and then to sustain, and after sin, to heal and to restore. **It is Satan who wants to divorce God from His law to suggest that either the law operates without God or God operates independently from the law**.

If the law operates without God then we can be in charge of our own salvation, nature itself becomes our god or we are left without hope. If God operates independent of His law then His laws are something distinct and separate from God and are like made up rules and thus it sustains Satan's charges against God.

Consider this historic quote:

> As regards this earth, Scripture declares the work of creation to have been completed. "The works were finished from the foundation of the world." Hebrews 4:3. But the power of God is still exercised in upholding the objects of His creation. **It is not because the mechanism once set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy** that the pulse beats, and breath follows breath. **Every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the care of Him in whom we live and move and have our being**. From the smallest insect to man, every living creature is daily dependent upon His providence. Ed 130.5

> **The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science claim, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being,** for man was made in His image. As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son. Jesus, the outshining of the Father's glory, "and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3), was on earth found in fashion as a man. **As a personal Saviour He came to the world**. As a personal Saviour He ascended on high. As a personal Saviour He intercedes in the heavenly courts. Before the throne of God in our behalf ministers "One like the Son of man." Daniel 7:13. Ed 131.5
>
> The apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declares of Christ that "all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." Colossians 1:16, 17, R.V., margin. **The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.** Ed 132.1
>
> The greatness of God is to us incomprehensible. "The Lord's throne is in heaven" (Psalm 11:4); **yet by His Spirit He is everywhere present**. He has an intimate knowledge of, and a personal interest in, all the works of His hand. Ed 132.2
>
> It was the Maker of all things who ordained the wonderful adaptation of means to end, of supply to need. It was He who in the material world provided that every desire implanted should be met. It was He who created the human soul, with its capacity for knowing and for loving. And He is not in Himself such as to leave the demands of the soul unsatisfied. **No intangible principle, no impersonal essence or mere abstraction,** can satisfy the needs and longings of human beings in this life of struggle with sin and sorrow and pain. **It is not enough to believe in law and force, in things that have no pity, and never hear the cry for help**. We need to know of an almighty arm that will hold us up, of an **infinite Friend that pities us**. We need to clasp a hand that is warm, to trust in a heart full of tenderness. And even so God has in His word revealed Himself. Ed 133.2

All manifestations of God's laws are manifestations of God's presence, God's personal, loving, active interest in creating, sustaining and healing His creation.

Then, what of the supposed example in the lesson that the virgin birth of Jesus was a miracle that operated outside natural law?

I find this incredible that they would use such an example, why? Because we fallen human beings can cause a virgin—a woman who has never been intimate with a man to become pregnant—by invitro fertilization and implantation of a fertilized egg.

Imagine going to a primitive society and one night you have a 3-D projector with stereo audio projection equipment and you project the image of a brilliant angel into a young woman's room and tell her that the power of God will come upon her and she will conceive and give birth to a son. Then that night you have an aerosolized anesthetic pumped into the room, once she is asleep your team goes

in, harvests one of her eggs, fertilizes it with a Y carrying sperm and artificially implants her with the fertilized egg. She is now pregnant and will give birth to a son—how might the locals record this event?

Is this scenario I just described science fiction, completely preposterous, fantasy, or is what I described within the ability of our known science to do? If we were to do this would we be violating any of God's laws?

So, would an actual angel visiting Mary be violating God's laws to communicate with her? And would God Himself be violating His own laws that He built nature and reality to operate upon in order to have Christ become incarnate?

It is just the opposite—the reason Jesus became incarnate was because God's laws could not be violated and life as God built it still exist. The only way for God to save us was for Him to do it in harmony with His laws. Thus Jesus became human to restore God's laws into the human species that was no longer living in harmony with God's design laws for life.

And there is Scripture to support that God did not violate His law on this very point:

> But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Gal 4:4,5

Is this speaking only of the moral law or physical law? Or as the quote above, all law of God is the same, a manifestation of His character and nature of love?

MONDAY

Read the third paragraph, "The doctrine of Creation…" Why is believing the truth that we were created by an intelligent God essential to the most accurate and healthiest worldview?

Consider the implications if there is no God versus if there is God on the following points or questions and the consequences to us and society depending on which worldview we hold:

- Who humans are
    - God-created—we are God's creation, made in His image, to be the repositories of His living law, to love and be loved, to exist in a universe of health, happiness, discovery, a universe constructed for our joy, with infinite never-ending growth and development
    - godless—we are an accident, something that just randomly came into being against all the forces of a chaotic universe that are working to destroy us. We are nothing more than animals here today and gone tomorrow with no purpose beyond reproducing
- Why we are here

    - God-created—because God loves us and we are here because of love, like loving parents have children and invest all they have in the health and welfare of their children and the parents experience joy as they see their children happy
    - godless—there is no purpose or reason we are here it's an accident of random forces
- Where we are going
    - God-created—we are going to a future in which all sin is eliminated, all pain eradicated, all selfishness purged a new heaven and earth where we will live eternally growing, discovering, loving, sharing
    - godless—we have a few specs of time on the cosmic scales and then we die and are no more
- What happens at death
    - God-created—we sleep and will be resurrected to everlasting life
    - godless—we cease to exist
- What is right and what is wrong—moral decisions
    - God-created—what is right is determined by God's design laws, which are expressions of His character and methods of love. Any violations injure and damage those who break His laws and will result in death unless we let God heal us back to harmony with His design for life
    - godless—there is no absolute right and wrong, it changes based on culture, opinion, perspective, and ultimately the only law that really governs is the law of survival of the fittest, the strong will survive the weak will die. This becomes the law because in the godless worldview death is necessary for advancement, we must kill off the inferior in order for the superior to pass on its genes and the species improve over eons of time.
- The condition of the earth
    - God-created—the earth is slowly deteriorating from sin and separation from God and despite all efforts to be good stewards, this earth will unravel, disasters will increase and this earth will be destroyed and God will make a new earth the home of the righteous. The people are more important than the planet itself. Jesus died to save the people—not simple to save the planet—He can make a new planet in an instant.
    - godless—this earth is our mother and we are killing our mother and we can save the earth and ourselves if we make the right decisions for the environment, for the earth. This means ultimately that we must not only decrease carbon emissions, but **we must reduce the population** for without population control all other efforts will fail. The earth is more important than the people on the earth

Do you see if we reject Creation we reject the foundation of everything that makes us in God's image and we degrade ourselves into nothing but brute beasts? Who would want this for us? It is Satan who is behind the godless theories.

But how could Satan get honest seekers of truth to reject God and the Bible? By infecting Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law, thus Christianity became abusive, irrational, superstitious and contradictory to how reality works—the Dark Ages—and people of reason, who saw

God's true design laws in nature, moved away from the coercive power of a state religion and rejected God altogether.

The results have been just as devastating as the Dark Ages. We don't find health by replacing one lie with another lie—we find health when we replace lies with truth!

When talking with people who believe in the godless theories of life, it is important to clarify the difference between origins science, and common "evolution." Too often the term evolution gets applied to origins, but in strictest sense evolution is how things adapt and change *after* they already exist. They must exist before they can evolve. So evolution really doesn't explain in any way how life or the universe originated.

Once you clarify and focus on origins then the science is overwhelmingly supportive of Creation and refutes godless origins:

We cannot test the moment of Creation or the Big Bang, but both views rest upon premises that are testable and reproducible, in other words science can prove one true and the other false. Let's do that:

Godless origins	**God Created origins**
Something came from nothing (Big Bang)	Something came from something (Creation)
Life came from non-living matter	Life came from living matter
Complexity comes from chaos randomly with no intelligent input	Complexity comes from chaos with intelligent input
Random mutation of genetic code adds vitality and genetic fitness causing a species to develop over time	Random mutation damages the genetic code reducing fitness and degrading a species over time
Selection can select out the damaging mutations leaving the next generation more fit than the previous	Selection occurs, but it is insufficient to select out all the damaging mutation, so despite selection, the next generation is less fit than previous generations

If all of this isn't enough, we have even more evidence. For all living organisms three elements are required for life: physical matter, energy and coded usable information found in the DNA or RNA of the organism.

Scientists who deny God focus entirely upon the physical components which are the building blocks of living organisms, the DNA, proteins etc. They ignore entirely the complex information stored within the DNA itself—where did that information originate? The idea that living beings originated on their own without any intelligent input would be similar to believing that a storm arose with high winds, rain and lightening that raged for years, and during this storm the strong winds blew rocks and sand at high speeds until some were shattered and worn down to formed letters of the alphabet. This is

analogous to believing that the random forces of nature in some chemical soup with lightening strikes eventually formed DNA molecules.

But, even if we accept that this happened (which is a big leap of blind, evidenceless faith) scientists still ignore the most critical aspect of what is required for life—the encoded information contained within the organized DNA sequences. Having an alphabet does not mean we have usable and functional information. To believe that random forces brought life about would require we not only believe the alphabet formed on its own, but beyond this we must also believe that the winds, rains, and lightening strikes—all on its own—organized the letters into the entire encyclopedia Britannica. Yet this is exactly what millions of good-hearted, honest, thinking people do believe.

But why would thinking, honest-of-heart, scientists choose to believe something that the evidence refutes? Because the historical alternative belief system is significantly more destructive! What is the historical alternative belief system—the one that reasonable people reject? The belief in an all-powerful god who functions no differently than the worst despots in human history—a god who says, "Love me or I will burn you in hell forever."

So, Darwin came along at a time when people were rejecting the Dark Ages false view of God, and rightly so, and he came up with a godless theory. Unfortunately, Darwin didn't have the scientific tools to investigate his theory. Had he, the world would have been saved this foray into another dead-end trail of falsehood. Why? Because the science has proven Darwin wrong.

Darwin observed finches with different beaks, some designed to be efficient at getting grubs from the dirt, others with beaks for getting under bark etc. He hypothesized that these beaks changed over millions of years as mutations entered the DNA altering the beaks and those with the more efficient beaks survived to reproduce and pass along the new better DNA. Interesting theory, but no way to test it, until now. And guess what? Darwin was wrong and the Bible was right.

> The different beaks that Darwin observed didn't happen over millions of years due to random mutation, but happened in 1-2 generations due to epigenetic modification. Amazingly, Darwin's finches are evidence of creation, not evolution. [1] Had Darwin had the advantage of modern DNA science his theory of change over millions of years would have been refuted.

But, but the time science was available to test Darwin's theory and prove it false, it had already become a new religion that people believe based on faith without evidence.

---

[1] Abzhanov, Arhat; Meredith Protas, B. Rosemary Grant, Peter R. Grant, Clifford J. Tabin (September 3, 2004), "Bmp4 and Morphological Variation of Beaks in Darwin's Finches",*Science* (USA: AAAS) **305** (5689): 1462–1465, doi:10.1126/science.1098095,ISSN 0036-8075, OCLC 1644869, PMID 15353802, retrieved 2008-03-08
Abzhanov, Arhat; Winston P. Kuo, Christine Hartmann, B. Rosemary Grant, Peter R. Grant and Clifford J. Tabin (August 3, 2006), "The calmodulin pathway and evolution of elongated beak morphology in Darwin's finches", *Nature* (UK: Nature Publishing Group) **442**(7102): 563–567, doi:10.1038/nature04843, ISSN 0028-0836, OCLC 1586310,PMID 16885984, retrieved 2008-03-08

TUESDAY

How has the Biblical worldview helped you understand the world around you?

What do you believe is going to happen to this planet?

Is the modern green movement a Bible-based movement, or is the modern green movement a modern form of paganism, of nature worship?

In history has there been many cultures that worshipped either nature or gods that were manifestations of some aspect of nature?

And if we reject the true Creator and promote a godless worldview what is likely to happen? Other belief systems that humans can believe in will emerge—, evolutionism—a false religion, communism/socialism—false religions, and most recent one, which is one of the most popular today is the green movement.

Notice in these godless movements, who is the savior in all of them?

- Evolutionism, we are the highest life-form and now we are working to artificially advance or evolve ourselves to the next level. Elon Musk is funding new research into creating true cyborgs, humans with brain computer interface chips implanted in the skull. We will evolve ourselves higher. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVvmgjBL74w&feature=youtu.be
- Communism/socialism—we will create a utopia, an Eden-like world in which everyone has everything and there no haves and have nots
- Green movement—earth is our mother and we are a plague destroying our mother, we must act to save our mother and thus ourselves. But the only way for the green movement to succeed is to reduce the population. Understand, it is not possible to sustain the current population of the earth and implement everything the green movement wants to implement. The Greens have not God, they have no hope for the future other than the hope in saving themselves by saving the planet.

All of these religions (evolutionism, communism, socialism, greenism) are false and all lead to the destruction of people. They are all based on fear and selfishness, not love.

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph, “Look also at the first angel’s message…” Why is this message linked to God as Creator? What kind of law is creation built upon? What kind of law did the Roman church infect Christianity with?

Is this message intended as a remedy to the lies that came out of Rome?

Then it must turn people back to God as Creator and His laws as design laws.

Do we present the 3 Angels' messages correctly if we present it as judicial, as God holding a tribunal, as God inflicting external punishments? No! We sustain the lie of the enemy.

How do we present the 3 Angels' messages correctly?

Revelation 14:6-12 from *The Remedy:*

> **6**Then I saw another messenger flying in midair, and he had the eternal good news about God's character of love to proclaim to everyone living on earth–to every nation, tribe, language, and people–which represents a movement of people who arise to proclaim the truth about God's character of love throughout the world.**7**He said in a clear, resounding voice, "Be in awe of God, and glorify him by living his methods of love, because the hour has come for everyone to make a judgment about God, and worship the Designer, Creator and Builder who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and springs of water– all of which operate upon his law of love."
>
> **8**A second messenger followed the first, proclaiming throughout the world: "Don't trust Babylon the Great — a symbolic description of religions that misrepresent God — as it is fallen into the lies about God and intoxicates the world with its pagan views of God, maddening the people with its adulterous idea that God coerces and must inflict punishment if not properly appeased."
>
> **9**And a third messenger followed the first two and proclaimed in a voice that was heard throughout the world: "If anyone gives worth and honor to the beastly system of coercion by choosing the methods of the beast and thus marking themselves as 'loyal in heart' by embracing the character of the beast, or marking themselves as 'loyal in deed' by practicing his methods,**10**they will reap the full fury of unremedied sin when God no longer shields them from their destructive choice. They will experience immeasurable torment of mind and burning anguish of heart when they stand in God's fiery presence and are bathed in unquenchable fire of truth and love–all in the very presence of Jesus and the holy angels.**11**The memory of their suffering and the lesson of their self-destructive choice will never be forgotten throughout all eternity. There will be no peace of mind–day or night–for those who prefer the methods of the beast and model after him, or for any who choose to mark themselves as followers of the beast."**12**This requires patient endurance on the part of the healed, who live God's methods of love and remain true to Jesus.

How do we explain that Jesus bore the punishment of sin for us? Does the law lens we use matter?

THURSDAY

The entire lesson is about God's use of law and the focus on the 10 Commandments.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is the purpose of the 10 Commandments?

I have nothing in the notes because I have written so much about this already, I want to hear your questions, explore your concerns.

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SHARING campaign: October—Sharing Tracts:

- How To Resolve Your Feelings of Guilt;
- The Infinite Sacrifice of Christ;
- Overcoming Addiction Lasting Freedom;
- The Insidiousness of Sin and God's Remedy;
- The Design Laws of God.

BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the Remedy App, just go to the App store and update.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Education Lesson 5 4Q 2020
Lessons from the Sanctuary

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

> "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6, NKJV).

Any other scriptures coming to mind when you read this passage?

> Gen. 1: 3 "Let there be light."
>
> Ps. 19: 1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."
>
> John 17: 3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
>
> Rev. 21: 23 "The city foes not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."

What made/makes Jesus the "Master Teacher"?

SUNDAY

Revealing the Father.

> From the lesson: "Jesus also is "the express image of his person"(Heb. 1:3). The term used here, the Greek word charactēr, is sometimes used of the impression a seal makes in wax or the representation stamped on a coin. So, Jesus is "the exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb. 1:3, NRSV). If we wish to know the Father, we must listen carefully to what the Master Teacher says about Him. And we must watch the Master Teacher, as well. The Father is seen in the Son."

I think this is very well said. How, then, do Adventist Christians promote contradictory doctrines like those contained in the penal substitution theologies if the above is true?

WHICH LAW LENS ARE WE VIEWING THE DOCTRINES THROUGH?

If Jesus is the "express image" of God, then we need to reject many of our Christian [read – Adventist] dogmas.

Can you name some of them?

Sabbath as an arbitrary test of obedience.

Jesus is pleading His merits [or blood] before the Father in order to secure forgiveness from sin or just to allow us to avoid the "punishment" for sin.

God put all sins past, present, and future on Christ at the Cross and punished Him in our place.

God won't burn you forever – that would be evil. No, He will use his miraculous power to keep you alive in order to burn you only as long as you deserve. Now let's all gather around, hold hands, and sing Kum-ba-Ya.

MONDAY

Revealing the Father [Cont.]

Consider the EGW quote in the middle of the lesson.

> "The Light appeared when the world's darkness was deepest. . . .
> "There was but one hope for the human race . . . that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world.
>
> "Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest the nature of His law, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness."—Ellen G. White, Education, pp. 74–76.

Have you ever considered that Jesus came when the darkness about God was at its deepest?

Didn't the Jewish church leadership have all of the Scriptures? The oracles of the prophets? The Torah? The ten commandments?

Didn't they have the lessons from Creation? Didn't they have their own experiences both as individuals and as a race?

In what manner was "darkness" the deepest when the Jews had all of these advantages?

Did the Jews know God? Of course not. Otherwise they would not have murdered Him.

If you've not yet read Tim's blog on Christ's parables, you're missing out. The overarching theme of all of them is **design law**. Much [? all] of Christ's work in revealing God the Father included revealing God's Law as **design law.**

https://www.comeandreason.com/index.php/en/blogs-main/842-parables-of-jesus

Every single parable He told in Scripture revealed God's design for life and how to apply it to our current state of being out of harmony with that design.

The lesson went to great lengths to point out that Jesus's mission was revealing the Father and His character. Was this the only thing needed to provide salvation? What's missing from the lesson?

TUESDAY

Reading the Master Teacher's Mind

The lesson references Philippians 2: 1-11.

> Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, [2] fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. [3] Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. [4] Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
>
> [5] Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [6] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. [9] Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, [10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, [11] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NKJV.

Here's the passage from the NSRV.

> If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, [2] make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. [5] Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> something to be exploited, [7] but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, [8]he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Is Paul [generally considered to be the author of Philippians] trying to draw a distinction between Jesus and another being, who thought [wrongly] himself equal to God, and did consider exploitation or "robbery" to get his way?

Does this ring any Scripture bells?

How about Isa. 14: 13-14?

> "I [Lucifer] will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; … I will make myself like the Most High."

Or Eze. 28: 2-19?

> "Because your heart is proud and you have said, "I am a god…; you were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; … You were blameless in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you; … So I brought out fire from within you; it consumed you."

Get your minds around this. Jesus, fully God – pre-existent, The Source of life, eternal past, present, & future did not exercise power in order to maintain that prerogative. He allowed his creation to murder Him instead of using His power to prevent it.

Meanwhile, a created being was so enamored with himself that he tried to "rob" God of the adoration of other created beings. The Greek word for robbery" used in the Philippians passage is *"harpagmos"* and is used only once in all of the New Testament. The word implies robbery by violence or "something to which one can claim or assert title by gripping or grasping."

This is quite a cosmic contrast.

Going back to our lesson's title – Jesus as the Master Teacher, what does this "teach" us?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

WEDNESDAY

The Master Teacher and Reconciliation.

The lesson does an excellent job of bringing out Christ's role as a reconciler, and of God's lead role in the task or reconciliation. It also does well to include the cosmic element of the need of reconciliation referencing Colossians 1: 15-20 – "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" [v.20].

In the past, it was difficult for me to conceptualize the need for unfallen angels to be reconciled back to God. Now with a better understanding of Design Law and the remedy for sin, it makes complete sense.

How can we function as reconcilers today?

THURSDAY

The Master Teacher's First Pupils

The lesson asks us to imagine gazing in to the manger on the night of Jesus's birth.

What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? Was Jesus born with the ability to speak, or was language learned? Was it cold / warm? Was He crying or peaceful?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 6
More Lessons From the Master Teacher

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

I am excited to share a special resource, recently made available by Pineknoll and it is their new book, *Conversations about God* by Graham Maxwell, with Louis Venden and edited by Jon Paulien.

In 1984, Graham Maxwell conducted a lecture series at the Loma Linda University Church entitled, *Conversations about God*. After each presentation he would have a Q&A period with Louis Venden. These were all recorded, and recently Pineknoll has transcribed and edited these presentations and discussions and produced a beautiful book and are giving these away at no cost. We have enough here for all of you who attend our class, so pick one up today.

If you watch online, please go to **Pineknoll.org** and request your free copy and they will ship it to you at no cost, **anywhere in the world**!

SABBATH

Read memory text:

> Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. (Mark 10:52 NKJV)

What does this mean, "your faith has made you well?" Didn't Jesus—God—make him well?

Does wellness come from faith? Did this man have real physiological blindness of his eyes or did he have a conversion disorder—a psychological blindness and he just resolved his psychological stress and that is why his vision was restored?

I believe he had physiological blindness, not a conversion disorder, so what does it mean his faith made him well?

Doesn't the healing power come from God? Then what is the role of his faith? Would his faith be his consent, his trusting connection to God that opens the way, the path, the bond between this man and God for God's healing power to work in the man?

Then what do we do with people who pray for healing of various kinds and don't receive it? Does that mean they just didn't have enough faith? It is certainly possible a person could pray without actual faith in God—consider the prophets of Baal at Mt Carmel praying for a miracle and didn't receive it. So a person can pray to a false god, or to the real God but with a selfishness heart, but can we tell a

person's faith level, the condition of their heart connection with God, by whether a miracle happens or not?

Was Paul a man of faith? Did Paul receive the healing for which he prayed?

There is another element involved beyond our faith or trust in God when it comes to miracles occurring—and what is that other element? God's will—God's knowledge of events and God's working out His larger purposes for the good of all.

Consider this historic quote, what do you think of it?

> We have united in earnest prayer around the sickbed of men, women, and children, and have felt that they were given back to us from the dead in answer to our earnest prayers. **In these prayers we thought we must be positive and, if we exercised faith, that we must ask for nothing less than life. We dared not say, "If it will glorify God," fearing it would admit a semblance of doubt.** We have anxiously watched those who have been given back, as it were, from the dead. We have seen some of these, especially youth, raised to health, and **they have forgotten God, become dissolute in life, causing sorrow and anguish to parents and friends, and have become a shame to those who feared to pray. They lived not to honor and glorify God, but to curse Him with their lives of vice**. {2T 148.3}
>
> **We no longer mark out a way nor seek to bring the Lord to our wishes. If the life of the sick can glorify Him, we pray that they may live; nevertheless, not as we will but as He will**. Our faith can be just as firm, and more reliable, by committing the desire to the all-wise God, and, without feverish anxiety, in perfect confidence, trusting all to Him. We have the promise. We know that He hears us if we ask according to His will. Our petitions must not take the form of a command, but of intercession for Him to do the things we desire of Him. When the church are united, they will have strength and power; **but when part of them are united to the world, and many are given to covetousness, which God abhors, He can do but little for them.** Unbelief and sin shut them away from God. We are so weak that we cannot bear much spiritual prosperity, lest we take the glory, and accredit goodness and righteousness to ourselves as the reason of the signal blessing of God, when it was all because of the great mercy and lovingkindness of our compassionate heavenly Father, and not because any good was found in us. {2T 149.1}

What I have discovered in the Bible when it comes to miracles is that most of the time miracles occur through the strong in faith FOR the weak in faith. Miracles rarely occur for the direct benefit of the strong in faith.

- Gideon and the fleece—was the miracle because Gideon's faith was strong or needed encouraging?
- The miracle of no rain for 3.5 years followed by the miracle of fire from heaven—were these miracles for Elijah's benefit a man of strong faith, or were they for the benefit of the people who were confused and had weak faith?

- The miracles of the 10 plagues of Egypt and the walking through the Red Sea on dry ground, were these for Moses benefit a man of faith, or for all the people Hebrew and Egyptian who had weak faith in the true God?
- All of the miracles that Jesus did, were they to strengthen Jesus' faith or the faith of those who saw or benefited from them?
- The miracles worked through the Apostles—for the Apostles or those to whom they were seeking to reach with the gospel?
- The miracle of opening the prison for Peter, was it to strengthen Peter's faith, or to open the way for Peter to share the gospel?

Again and again miracles happen through the strong in faith for the benefit of those whose faith need strengthening. Gideon had faith, but it needed strengthening. I would suggest the blind man had faith, but it needed strengthening and the miracle strengthened it—or perhaps the blind man was a person whose healing could reach others in the community whose faith in Jesus was weak or both.

As we grow in our faith relationship with God we will become "perfect" i.e. mature in our faith or trust in God such that we cannot be shaken out of our trust in God even if miracles don't happen for us. This is what we find in the life of Job—he was described as perfect and righteous in all his ways—not sinless, but he was mature in his trust in God. He didn't know or understand everything, and when multiple tragedies struck him, he continued to trust God with his life.

Does it matter in what or whom we place our faith, or is all that matters is that our faith is sincere?

Consider this historic quote:

> "**Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character**. [Is this a legal thing? Is it they didn't have faith in the right legal payment or they had faith in the wrong god and therefore God was legally required to injure their character, or was legally restricted from healing their character, OR is it describing reality, design law, that our faith actually works to impact and change us?] **No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it**. **Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error**. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. **The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies.** [What is blind credulity? It is talking about the so-called blind faith, believing without evidence, accepting claims, proclamations, rhetoric, words, but not actual evidence. This is Satan's ground, Satan is the father of lies, he has words, rhetoric, claims, but he has no evidence. God is the source of all truth, God also has words but all God's words, directives, verbal revelations are backed up by reality, the actual facts of history, the evidence of outcomes, of cause and effect, of truth itself; all reality supports God as worthy of our trust and exposes Satan as a liar. So be very leery of any person, group, party that wants you to believe without evidence, on the weight of claims or powerful rhetoric, who wants to shut down investigation, who wants to silence other voices or stop new evidence from being presented.] **The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to**

> **know what is truth**. [What does this mean? We talk about justification by faith and sanctification by faith, but this author says the truth is the principle that sanctifies—what does it mean? Can we be sanctified by lies, by believing falsehoods? No, only the truth sets us free!] We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action." Letter 12, 1890; Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 56

Read the first paragraph, "Who among us…" From where does guilt and shame originate? From sin itself—when we sin we take ourselves out of harmony with God and God's design laws for life and we experience guilt and feel shame. This is legitimate or appropriate guilt and shame. However, the feeling of guilt and shame can also come from lies—Satan is the father of lies—which means if we accept lies they infect our minds and cause guilt and shame even if we didn't actually commit a sin.

Either way, if we feel guilt and shame, what do we want? We want to stop feeling of guilt and shame, but appropriate and inappropriate guilt and shame are resolved differently:

Appropriate guilt and shame are resolved by repentance and restoration—experiencing healing of our hearts, minds and characters by God in us.

Inappropriate guilt and shame are resolved by truth and eliminating the lie

Either way, **appropriate or inappropriate guilt and shame** if unresolved cause what? Fear—fear of rejection, fear of reprisal, of punishment, fear of not being good enough, fear of embarrassment, fear of loss of position or relationship—and what does fear lead us to do? If instead of going to Jesus, we allow the fear to direct our actions we seek to protect self in a variety of ways:

- **Blame game**—it wasn't me it was the woman; it wasn't me it was the serpent. It's not my fault because I was abused as a child, or grew up in a poor neighborhood, or didn't have a father in my home, or my parents were alcoholics or drug addicts, or no one ever loved me. I have every right to lie, cheat, steal, rob, rape, shoplift, assault—it's not my fault I had a bad childhood. But, the truth is, regardless of our histories, our wounds, our mistreatment, our circumstances, as we grow up we have the responsibility for what we do with our lives—do we heal, maturej, overcome, embrace God, accept Jesus, practice His methods and principles, or do we reject God, reject Jesus, reject the healing grace of God and instead practice the methods of the world?
- **Denial, justification, rationalization**—I did what I needed to do. It is right to watch out for self, to protect self, and if that means stealing it is right to do. These big corporations are stealing all the time, they cheat us and don't pay the taxes they are supposed to, they don't pay a living wage. I have the right to take what I need. I don't have a problem, you're just judgmental and mean—stop being so racist, sexist, xenophobic—you are supposed to love others—you just a hypocrite.

- **Self-medication** through alcohol, drugs, shopping, serial relationships, seeking to numb the guilt and shame, which typically results in more guilt and shame, more denial and distortion and more self-medication
- **False penal/legal theologies** that hide us and cover us rather than heal us. God can't see my sin because Jesus' righteousness covers me. My record book gets erased and God can't judge me etc. We place our faith in a false system that gives false security and fails to actually fix the sin problem in our hearts. This leads to the false-Christian, the Pharisees, the legalistic Christians that are hyper-vigilant to make and keep their religious rules, and these become the ones who must seek out and destroy those in the church and community who don't keep their rules. Historic examples:
    - Crusades—go kill Muslims and you will have forgiveness for your sins
    - Indulgences or other payments to the church, building a Cathedral will earn forgiveness
    - Hunting down and abusing or killing Jews, blacks, homosexuals
    - Using the power of the state to force one's religious agenda

How do we get past guilt and shame?

The only true way past it is God's way, to heal our hearts and minds which requires the application of truth and love:

If legitimate guilt and shame then:

- the truth that diagnosis our condition so we admit we have a problem
- the truth of what that problem is—not a legal problem but an actual condition of being out of harmony with God, infected with fear and selfishness
- the truth about God, His character and trustworthiness
- the truth about Jesus, what He achieved—our remedy to heal and restore us
- This truth wins us to trust and in trust we open our hearts to God and invite Him in and He pours His love into our hearts (Rom 5:5). And God's love casts out fear and selfishness and we are reborn with new identity, the old is gone, the new is come and thus we no longer live in fear, guilt, shame, because we have a new life in Jesus.

If illegitimate guilt and shame:

- then the truth to displace the lies and free us from the false guilt and shame

The lesson points us to Psalms 32. I want to contrast this Psalm from the NIV and *The Remedy* because it will reveal how the lens one has when translating impacts how it is written. Do we have an imposed law lens and the sin problem is legal and salvation is legal adjustment, or do we have a design law lens and the sin problem is a condition of being out of harmony with God and His protocols for life and salvation is being healed and restored to harmony with God?

Now I will say that if one has the design law understanding one can read the NIV without a problem at all. But, if one does not have the design law view, if one has the imposed law view, then the NIV and

other traditional translations work to keep people stuck in the false imposed law worldview. This is where *The Remedy* can be helpful.

From the NIV:

1 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
[If your worldview is imposed law then this seems to be penal legal. Sins are deeds and forgiveness is legal pardon covering sins is having Jesus' perfect life record cover over my record of bad deeds to hide the record and me from God. But if one has the design law view, then one understands forgiveness in its fuller and true sense of reconciliation with God and covering is taking the responsibility to fix and heal the problem, not covering over. We could do this contrast with every verse, but I will just read the rest of the psalm and then contrast it with *The Remedy* version.]
2 Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah
5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave
the guilt of my sin. Selah
6 Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be
found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah
8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.
9 Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
10 Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the man who trusts in him.
11 Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

From *The Remedy:*

1 Happy are they whose wicked minds are restored to perfect purity,
whose selfishness is eradicated.
2 Happy is the person whose infected heart the Lord transforms to perfection, in whose mind there is no deceit.
3 When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God,

I stressed myself and my body decayed because every day I screamed, "no!" denying the truth.
4 But day and night your healing hand pressed firmly upon me;
my resistance evaporated like water in the summer heat.
5 Then I admitted my sin-sickness to you and did not hide my character-deformity. I said, "I will confess my selfishness to the Lord" —
and you healed me and freed me from guilt.
6 Therefore let all the faithful ask you for this same healing
while healing is still possible; then when the guilt, shame and regrets of life come flooding in, the faithful will not drown in them.
7 You are my safe harbor; you protect me from the storms of life
and turn my life into a song of deliverance.
8 The Lord says, "I will teach you my methods and how to live in harmony with my designs; I will guide you and watch over you.
9 Don't be like the unthinking horse or mule that do not reason or understand and must be forced by bit and bridle to follow the simplest instructions."
10 Many are the sufferings of those who defy your designs,
but those who trust the Lord are healed by his never-failing love.
11 Celebrate God's goodness and be happy, you spiritually-healthy;
sing for joy, all you with hearts like God's!

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Typical stories of the Fall…" What was the purpose of this tree? Why was it there? How does reality work? Was the tree there because of how God's design—His law of life—actually operates?

Was this tree there for the good of Adam and Eve and all humanity?

When we consider the *reason* for the Tree of Knowledge, do we understand it through design law or imposed law?

Satan tricked them into believing a lie in regard to how God's law functions. Right there in Eden, at the Tree of Knowledge is where Satan first introduces humanity to his lie that God's law is imposed and by doing so undermined our first parent's trust in God.

Satan makes the claim, "you will not surely die." What is implied Satan's declaration? Does this lie say, "God is not capable of executing you so you cannot die?" Or simply that eating the fruit is not harmful, "You won't die from doing so. Look at me. I am not dead, that's proof that eating the fruit doesn't kill."

Think through the subtle imbedded lie: If there is nothing inherently harmful with eating the fruit, if the action itself won't cause death, and yet God said that they would surely die if they did eat it, then

what would that mean? That God would have to inflict death upon them. So, what type of law is this that requires the ruling authority to inflict the punishment? Imposed!

And this is what essentially all of Christianity teaches with its penal legal lie that God must kill the unrepentant sinner in order to be just.

But through design law (how reality functions), what is God's purpose in placing the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden. What did God want for Adam and Eve? How was this tree necessary for them to fulfill and achieve what God desired for them?

What meaning do we take from the name of this tree—the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?

Do you see it is the tree of *knowing* reality? Do you understand it as the place where Adam and Eve would decide what they would *know*?

What does it mean to know something or someone?

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3 NIV84 emphasis mine).

Is knowing God and Jesus merely cognitive, to know facts, information, data? No, in the Bible to know means to have an intimate experiential knowledge of something or someone. Think of the difference between knowing about someone from reading a biography, and actually knowing them as a friend or family member. Or the difference between knowing how to swim and knowing what swimming is.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't a place of theoretical knowledge, or cognitive knowledge, or academic knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, and about death being the result of sin. They had been instructed.

Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. But mere facts is not what the tree was about—it was about experience, knowing by experience either good or evil. Choose to trust and believe God and know good, or choose to believe lies and distrust God and know evil.

God tells them, "It is at this tree you will have knowledge, so choose well; choose not to partake of the fruit and you will know Good—you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness. All of this will solidify in your character. So please, my beautiful children, choose to know Good! But if you choose to partake the fruit then you will know Evil—you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering and death. Please, my beautiful children, don't choose to know Evil."

God already knew evil—not in His character, but in His heart as His heavenly home had been fractured and He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, rebellion, being lied about and the loss of His most loved angel.

God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, or heartache. He wanted humankind to know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God—to choose the good in order for them to know it.

There was nothing poisonous about the fruit; it was not physically harmful. The tree was not dangerous or deadly. What was dangerous or deadly was to break trust with God, to believe lies and act on them, to deviate from His design for life, to choose to know evil, to infect themselves with fear and selfishness.

Read bottom pink section, "Whatever else Christian education entails…" This is so true and consider how this need to hide from God has infected Christianity and is taught in a variety of ways:

- Covered by the robe of righteousness which is perverted to hide us from the Father, rather than teaching the beautiful truth of actually being healed such that our characters become like Jesus. Consider this historic quote:
    - When we submit ourselves to Christ, **the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. COL 311.4
- Jesus our mediator stands between us and the Father and pleads our case to the Father—again hiding us, rather than the truth that Jesus came from the Father to mediate to us and in us and bring us back to love, trust and unity with the Father.
    - In other words, Satan lied about God and we believed those lies and no longer knew or trusted God. WE needed someone to bring us the truth about God to dispel the lies and win us back to trust. Thus Jesus is the mediator of God's government, kingdom, truth, love to us. God didn't need truth and love ministered to Him—we did. Thus the metaphor of the animal blood and flesh Jesus applies to us, we must eat His flesh and drink His blood—not God!
    - Understanding this reality we understand that Jesus has always been the bridge builder between the infinite God and His finite creation. Jesus has always been the one interacting in the form of His creation. Prior to the incarnation Jesus manifested in the form of an angel to angels—building the bridge, mediating to angels.
    - Jesus said "if you've seen me you've seen the Father." It is Jesus who left heaven to connect us back to God. Jesus is the mystical ladder that Jacob saw and upon whom all the resources of heaven travel to reach us on earth.
    - Consider this historic quote: "While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, **as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity**. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has

preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. **Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his mediatorial work.** {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4}

- Unfallen angels needed the same truth about God that we need in order to expel all doubt caused by Satan's lies and solidify them in love and loyalty, but we needed something MORE than the angels—we also needed a new heart and right spirit—i.e. a sinless character. Jesus provides both, the truth to the angels and us and to us a new humanity, a sinless character He wrought out as a human. This is represented in the flesh and blood—the flesh is representative of the truth (as is the bread), both we and the angels ingest the truth. But we also ingest the wine or the blood, which is symbolic of His sinless life, i.e. perfect character and thus we become partakers of the divine nature. Jesus shares His perfection with us and uplifts the human species to a height higher than before Adam fell. Unfallen angels do not partake of the blood, i.e. the life of Christ.

- Covered by the blood of Jesus perverted to teach some type of blood payment or covering to hide our sins rather than the sinless life of Jesus becomes ours as we eat the flesh and drink the blood, we get new hearts and right characters and the Father sees us as healed and restored by possessing the mind of Christ
- The blood of Jesus is perverted to be a legal payment put in a legal book in heaven that erases the record of ours sins so in the judgment the Father doesn't know what we have done, instead of the blood being a metaphor of His sinless life and we internalize it and are healed and transformed having the law written upon our hearts and minds.

MONDAY

The lesson is about Jacob after he cheats Esau and deceives his father and runs for his life and how God comes to Jacob in a dream and reassures Jacob that God had not abandoned him and through his descendants God would work out the plan to save humanity and through them the Messiah would come.

The lesson uses this story as an example of how God does not abandon us when we sin but continues to pursue us in order to save us.

Read bottom pink section, "What can we learn…" Does it depend on how we understand the sin problem?

What determines how we understand the sin problem? Would our understanding of God's law impact how we understand sin?

If we understand the law like human law, then sin is bad deeds, but if we understand law as design law then sin is a condition of being out of harmony with how God built life to operate that occurred to humanity because of Adam's choice to break trust with God.

Are we born guilty, legally condemned to death by the government of God, or are we born terminal, with a condition that will result in death if not remedied?

Imagine an HIV infected man and woman have a child born HIV infected, what did the child do wrong? Is the child guilty? But does the child have a condition that if unremedied will result in its death?

This is every human being since Adam and Eve sinned, we are born in sin conceived in iniquity—Psalms 51:5

Now, consider the HIV infected child—if no remedy is provided will they simply die, or will they have various symptoms and sicknesses before they die?

What is the unavoidable result of sinfulness in our lives if we do not have God in our lives? Will we have symptoms of the sin condition—and what does the Bible call those symptoms? Sins—so the deeds, the acts of sin are the manifestation of sinfulness, they are not the problem directly, but are the result of the problem that infects the heart.

This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 5 when He said:

- "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. vs 21-22 NIV84
- "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. vs 27-28 NIV84

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the story of the Canaanite woman who asks Jesus to heal her daughter and Jesus initial refusal followed by doing so.

How do you understand this story? Why would Jesus choose to handle it this way?

- To strengthen the faith of the woman?
- To expose the biases and prejudices in the disciples?
- To reveal that the Gentiles are heirs with the Jews to the promises to Abraham and through faith may receive those promises?
- Other reasons?

Here is one historic view:

> **The Saviour longed to unfold to His disciples the truth regarding the breaking down of the "middle wall of partition" between Israel and the other nations**—the truth that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs" with the Jews and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 2:14; 3:6. This truth was revealed in part at the time when He rewarded the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and also when He preached the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar. **Still more plainly was it revealed on the occasion of His visit to Phoenicia, when He healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman**. These experiences helped the disciples to understand that among those whom many regarded as unworthy of salvation, there were souls hungering for the light of truth. AA 19.3
>
> Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that **in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour's love**…AA 20.1

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "Jesus and His followers…" Jesus wanted to bring hope to the world—what hope?

- Did Jesus want to bring hope that He would overthrow the Romans and establish an earthly government that would punish the Romans for what they had done to the Jews?
- Did Jesus want to bring hope that might and power over others would win the day?
- Did Jesus want to bring hope in earthly governments and earthly methods?
- But weren't there slaves in Jesus' day? Weren't there human rights violations? Weren't there problems with racism and sexism? Weren't women disadvantaged and mistreated? Did Jesus provide hope to all of the people who suffered under every injustice of every kind? What hope did Jesus bring?

Can we achieve the purpose of God—which is the hope of a new heaven and new earth the home of the righteous—can we achieve this purpose through human governments? Can we achieve it through passing human laws, through coercion?

Is it possible that one of Satan's strategies to deceive the elect, to delay the second coming of Christ, is to get Christians caught up in politics, to get Christians to identify **REAL** injustices in society and then to seek to remedy those injustices through the implementation of laws, through force, through coercion—and thereby obstruct the mission of the church which is to bring people to Jesus for healing of hearts and minds?

The bottom pink section asks us to read Hebrews 5:12-14:

> In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. NIV84

What do you hear? Do you hear a law being described? The law of exertion—if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it. If you want to gain wisdom, discernment, you must think, reason, and assimilate truth through the practice of application of God's methods and principles.

But the immature don't do this, the immature stay stuck on milk—and what is milk? The next verses tell what the milk is it is the dos and don'ts the rules, just like what children need, but the mature understand why parents give rules. The children don't understand and think the rules or the metaphors or the symbols or the teaching tools are the reality rather than understanding reality.

God wants us to grow up to leave behind the childish way of understanding and to actually know Him and His methods and designs.

This is the 3 angel's messages, to worship Him who made the heavens and earth, it is a call out of Babylon the system of imposed laws and rules, the penal/legal religions including penal substitution theology. We are to leave that behind because it is all based on Satan's lie about God and His law.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that Jesus functioned as a teacher—and what did Jesus teach? If you had to answer—what would you say is the central truth that Jesus wanted people to know?

- The truth about God—"if you have seen me you have seen the Father."

Why is this the central truth? Because it is the center of the war, it is the focus of Satan's attack. Satan alleges that God cannot be trusted, and Satan advances his war against God with lies and misrepresentation. Thus the Bible teaches:

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84)

Jesus came to reveal the truth about God, in His person, but also in His teaching and this means He came to reveal the kingdom of God. In other words, He came to reveal how God's government functions—meaning God's law and what kind of law did Jesus reveal in ALL of His teachings? Design law!

I won't go through them all again, but recently I wrote a blog demonstrating that 100% of the parables of Jesus taught design law and exposed the human imposed law model as false. But here are just a few:

The Sower | Matthew 13:1–23

- Why do the same species of seeds grow differently? Is it because God uses His power to miraculously make the seeds grow differently? Or are the seeds equally healthy when planted and receive equal amounts of sunlight and rain, but the soil in which the seeds are planted is different? Which represents what? The hearts of people into which the seeds of truth are planted; again, what kind of law is involved?

The Weeds Among the Wheat | Matthew 13:24–30

- Why do weeds grow in fields? Are they planted, or do they come up naturally? What happens when you pull weeds growing next to wheat? Does some of the wheat get pulled up? In the church, the unconverted grow up next to the converted; if we try to root out the unconverted, we will also pull out of the church the converted to whom the unconverted are connected. Thus, we are instructed to wait until the harvest, the second coming, to separate the wheat and the tares. And what determines which group one is placed into? Reality! Wheat is wheat, and weeds are weeds—they are separated based on what they actually are. So too, in the end, those saved are those who have had their hearts and minds set right with God (reborn), while the lost are those who have never had their hearts changed, despite many of them claiming a legal right of salvation via the blood payment of Jesus. What kind of law is involved?

What Comes Out of the Mouth | Matthew 15:10–20

- Why is it that what goes into a person's mouth does not determine his cleanliness, but rather what comes out of his mouth? What kind of law is involved? Is the person who speaks evil unclean because someone hears what they say, reports it to authorities, which causes a judicial review and a legal ruling that declares them unclean? Or do the words and actions of a person reveal the actual unclean nature of their character?

Laborers in the Vineyard | Matthew 20:1–16

- This is a great parable because it powerfully exposes the fallacy of imposed law—the lie of penal (legal) salvation. The workers who worked one hour got the same pay as those who worked all day. What did those who worked all day think? What do you initially think when you hear this story? What if we added to the story that those who worked all day were people of color while those who worked only one hour were white—and they all got the same pay? Is that fair?

  It is totally unfair *if we have an imposed-law view*, but if we have a design-law view and understand how reality works, we immediately see just how fair God's kingdom is.

  The payment is eternal life; this is the reward. The field is the earth, where we work with Jesus to save souls. Those who worked all day had salvation early in their lives and the privilege of

working with God and, therefore, coming to know Him and His truths more fully and growing in character and skill in God's methods. They applied His methods early in their lives and became more skilled in laboring for Him and applying His principles, which means they became more mature than those who worked only an hour. The thief on the cross came at the last hour and got the same pay (eternal life), but he did not have a lifetime of growing with God. But if one holds the human-law model, the penal lie, then this parable appears unfair. This is why the Pharisees hated what Jesus taught!

The Beaten Servant | Luke 12:47, 48

- The servant who knows his master's will but doesn't do it receives many stripes, but the servant who doesn't know his master's will receives few stripes. Is this, as the penal/legal adherents claim, proof positive that God's law is imposed and functions like human law, with God inflicting different amounts of punishment upon sinners?

  Not at all! Jesus did not say that the servants were beaten by the master—only that they would receive differing amounts of blows, or stripes or pain or suffering, depending on how much they actually knew. Jesus is again describing how reality works—we actually experience differing amounts of guilt, shame, regret, and sin-damage to our hearts and minds depending on how much truth we know and choose to reject. It is simply how reality works and how I paraphrase it in *The Remedy*:

  "The aide who understands the Master — his design, the problem being addressed, and how to apply the Remedy — and either doesn't heed his instructions or applies a false remedy will suffer many blows: a guilty conscience, warped character, damaged reason, broken relationships and ultimately, a destroyed soul. But the one who doesn't know about the Remedy or how to apply it and therefore doesn't share it, or applies a false remedy will suffer few blows — regret, disappointment, and grief."

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

BLOGS are a Resource: Remember if you have a question about some Bible issue, go to our website and use the search engine with key words and check out the results. We receive many emails asking questions, and often we can reply by sharing the link to our blogs.

SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available.

October—Sharing Tracts:

- How To Resolve Your Feelings of Guilt;
- The Infinite Sacrifice of Christ;
- Overcoming Addiction Lasting Freedom;
- The Insidiousness of Sin and God's Remedy;
- The Design Laws of God.

BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the Remedy App, just go to the App store and update.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 7
Worship in Education

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text:

> Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! (1 Ch 16:29 NKJV).

What does it mean to give the Lord glory?

What do we mean when we refer to His "name"?

When we pray, "in the name of Jesus" what does this mean? Does it mean:

- using the actual word "Jesus"?
- Must we use Joshua or rather Yeshua?
- Or does the name in the Bible mean character?

Jacob, the deceiver, when he was converted and experienced a heart change had his name changed to Israel—one who with God overcomes.

Do we understand name means character?

Here is one historic quote from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> **But to pray in Christ's name means much**. **It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works**. The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience. {DA 668.2}

So, the name of God means what? His character and what is your understanding of the character of God? Let's list character traits of God and contrast them with abilities—I will throw out some and you let me know whether this is a character trait or an ability:

- God is omniscient—all knowing
- God is love
- God is truth/truthful
- God is omnipotent—all powerful
- God is Creator (perhaps both as creating is a manifestation of both His ability and character)
- God is patient

- God exists outside time and thus has foreknowledge
- God is forgiving
- God is omnipresent
- God is just
- God is constant—never changing
- God is omnipresent—able to be everywhere at once

What has the conflict between Satan and God been about? What has Satan done to incite rebellion? Has Satan ever truly questioned God's abilities? Or has Satan's attacks always been on God's trustworthiness—God's character, the way God uses His abilities?

> **From the beginning** it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to **misrepresent the character of God**, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. **The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,--that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men**. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. **Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will**. {5T 738.1}

Do we see this in the world today? Can people who reject God and embrace godlessness be growing in godliness, accurately represent Jesus, be empowered by the Spirit to practice God's methods? Or will they grow more like selfish, more fearful, more controlling?

Can people who believe in God but accept a false view of God and thus worship a god who is like Satan in character become more like Jesus, or will they become more like the enemy? The law of worship—by beholding we are changed!

Should we expect that if we jump off buildings we will float? Should we expect that if we reject God that we will become more like Jesus?

Then, what can you expect people who reject Jesus to do when it comes to the methods and principles they practice in how they run their business, in how they deal with conflict, in how they would administer a school, in how they would run a government?

I want you to discern, to be able to differentiate God's methods from Satan's. Now, what is the most effective conman—the one who comes to you and says: "I am here to steal from you, to molest your children, and get you addicted to drugs." Or the one who says, "I am here to make you wealthy, to care for your children, to give you better health—and then steal from you, molest your children and addict you to drugs?"

And then when you find yourself impoverished and unhealthy the person who did this blames the ones with real solutions and remedies—this is true evil.

This is what Satan does—he infects us with sin, steals our joy, happiness, health, injures our families and then blames God or godly people or God's methods as being the problem.

Do you see this happening with various leaders or groups in society today—claiming they are here to help us while they or their followers are actually injuring and inciting the problems they claim they are there to fix?

What do we learn about God's character when we look to Jesus?

So, we are to bring an offering and come before the Lord—what does this mean, bring an offering? An offering of what?

- Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God—**this is your spiritual act of worship**. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1,2 NIV84
- I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me. Hosea 6:6 GNT

What are we to bring to God as an offering? Ourselves, for renewal, for healing, to be restored to love and trust and then when we do this we do what the rest of the text says, we worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

Does this remind you of any other Bible text that has a call to glorify God by magnifying His name and to worship Him?

The 3 Angels' messages—At this time in human history a message is to go forward to be in awe of God and give Him glory—meaning reveal His true character of love—because the time in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God, to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water, to worship the Designer and reject this pagan imperial dictator who imposes law and inflicts punishment for sin.

And we are to do this in the beauty of holiness?

WEDNESDAY:

The lesson asks in the middle highlighted section, "*The beauty of holiness?* What might that mean?"

Read third and fourth paragraphs, "For starters, think about how ugly…" I think the lesson is pointing us in the right direction, sin damages, distorts, corrupts, injures, infects, perverts, abuses, exploits,

harms, destroys and kills. Sin is ugly—in fact ALL ugliness is a result of sin, *not all ugliness is sin,* but all ugliness is a result of sin.

For instance, any disease, defect, illness, deformity such as blindness, paralysis, deafness, lesions, mental impairments are a result of sin but these things are not sin. Jesus instructed his disciples that the man born blind wasn't born blind because he or his parents sinned. But blindness wouldn't exist in the world if the world wasn't infected by sin.

Paul tells us in Romans 8 that all nature groans under the weight of sin. So, sinfulness or the condition of sin is a state of being out of harmony with God, God's design and that injures and harms and the greater the distance from God, from His perfection—His holiness—the greater the deformity, injury, damage. In other words, the greater we separate ourselves from God the greater the ugliness—and such ugliness is both physical and characterological.

This is from the book *The Desire of Ages* describing the scene in which Jesus confronts the satanic legion controlling the demoniacs:

> From some hiding place among the tombs, **two madmen** rushed upon them as if to tear them in pieces. Hanging about these men were parts of chains which they had broken in escaping from confinement. **Their flesh was torn and bleeding where they had cut themselves with sharp stones. Their eyes glared out from their long and matted hair, the very likeness of humanity seemed to have been blotted out by the demons that possessed them, and they looked more like wild beasts than like men**. DA 337.1
>
> **The disciples and their companions fled in terror**; but presently they noticed that Jesus was not with them, and they turned to look for Him. He was standing where they had left Him. He who had stilled the tempest, who had before met Satan and conquered him, did not flee before these demons. **When the men, gnashing their teeth, and foaming at the mouth, approached Him**, Jesus raised that hand which had beckoned the waves to rest, and the men could come no nearer. **They stood raging but helpless before Him**. DA 337.2
> **With authority He bade the unclean spirits come out of them**.... **a marvelous change had come over the demoniacs. Light had shone into their minds. Their eyes beamed with intelligence. The countenances, so long deformed into the image of Satan, became suddenly mild, the bloodstained hands were quiet, and with glad voices the men praised God for their deliverance.** DA 338.2
>
> The encounter with the demoniacs of Gergesa had a lesson for the disciples. **It showed the depths of degradation to which Satan is seeking to drag the whole human race, and the mission of Christ to set men free from his power.** Those wretched beings, dwelling in the place of graves, possessed by demons, in bondage to uncontrolled passions and loathsome lusts, **represent what humanity would become if given up to satanic jurisdiction**. Satan's influence is constantly exerted upon men to distract the senses, **control the mind for evil, and incite to violence and crime**. [Do we see this happening in society today? When you see rioters looting stores, assaulting people on the street, dragging people out of their cars, yelling,

> shouting down voices of that disagree with them, when you see liberty attacked, when you see freedom of speech oppressed, when you see big tech censoring and promoting falsehoods do you see the enemy of God at work destroying the image of God in people and inciting more division and conflict?] **He weakens the body, darkens the intellect, and debases the soul**. Whenever men reject the Saviour's invitation, they are yielding themselves to Satan. **Multitudes in every department in life, in the home, in business, and even in the church, are doing this today. It is because of this that violence and crime have overspread the earth**, and moral darkness, like the pall of death, enshrouds the habitations of men. Through his specious temptations Satan leads men to worse and worse evils, till utter depravity and ruin are the result. **The only safeguard against his power is found in the presence of Jesus**. [Do you believe this to be true? Are there groups today who are actively seeking to eliminate Jesus from our society? Do you find Jesus freely preached in communist countries? Why do communist leaders always seek to get rid of Christianity? Because the principles of God are freedom, liberty, truth, openness and Satan's principles are coercion, deceit, domination, control and communism cannot exist where people love God and promote the methods of Jesus. Do you see forces at work in America today that are seeking to lead people down a path that eliminate Jesus and the gospel from our nation?] Before men and angels **Satan has been revealed as man's enemy and destroyer; Christ, as man's friend and deliverer. His Spirit will develop in man all that will ennoble the character and dignify the nature. It will build man up for the glory of God in body and soul and spirit**. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7. He has called us "to the obtaining of the glory"—character—"of our Lord Jesus Christ;" has called us to be "conformed to the image of His Son." 2 Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 8:29. DA 341.1

Do we recognize that true beauty is found only in holiness and holiness is restoration to God's design, living in harmony with God's design laws, which is healthiness.

Ancient Israel was supposed to be separated from the evil and sinfulness of the world—but that didn't happen, they became just as evil and corrupt as the world; yet while doing so they came to believe they were being separate from the world what happened?

They accepted the lie about God's law as imposed rules and this lie led them to act, as all worldly systems function and focus which is upon behavior, deeds rather than character. Thus, Israel separated themselves from the world by:

- Dress
- Religious rituals
- Diet
- Day of worship
- List of doctrines

But because they did not separate from the world in understanding of God's law, or God's character or God's methods, they did not experience difference from the world in character—they remained filled with fear and selfishness and this led them to take all their differences in dress, ritual, diet, worship and doctrines and become:

- bigoted
- prejudicial
- arrogant, narcissistic and prideful
- hard-hearted and conceited
- to exploit those around them and to ignore the plight of the less fortunate even among Israel
- and kill the Creator when He stood among them

Accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law resulted in the Jews becoming just as evil as the pagans around them.

Are we at risk for doing this today?

Read second paragraph, "The place of worship was the tabernacle…" Don't we agree that central to worship is Jesus and the plan of salvation?

Yet, what do we do with the following text?

> Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.' Matthew 7:21-23

If we were to find people who fall into this group, the ones Jesus identifies here as evildoers, and we went to them today and asked them if they believed that Jesus and the plan of salvation was central to worship, what would they say?

So is there something more to it that just saying Jesus is central to salvation? Is there something more than saying "I accept Jesus is my Savior"? Is there something more than saying Jesus is our substitute? In other words, can a person claim all of this and still be an enemy of Jesus? How is that possible?

By accepting a false view of the character of Jesus and the Father—if one accepts a false view of them, then one values false character and by beholding we are changed. If one accepts God is arbitrary, severe, exacting, revengeful, that justice requires God to use power to torture and kill then one becomes like that false god and may claim that false god is Jesus and may claim to be a follower of Jesus but in reality is a follower of Satan.

In C.S. Lewis' last book of the Narnia series Lewis describes a Calormene soldier named Emeth and his encounter with Aslan the lion. Emeth was a worshipper of Tash, and as a result was terrified when he came face to face with Aslan. This is that encounter from the book:

> *I fell at his feet and thought surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him.*

But Aslan's response?

Son thou art welcome. But I said, alas Lord I am no son of thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child all the service thou hast done to Tash I account as service done to me.

I questioned the Glorious One: Lord, is it then true that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled and said, It is false. Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath's sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted".

Emeth questions once more:

Lord, I have been seeking Tash all my days.

Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou shouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.

And what is the root that would cause believers in Jesus to actually become enemies of Jesus? It is believing lies about God's law—if one believes God's law is imposed then one necessarily concludes that justice is inflicting punishment upon rule breakers and this leads to all the penal legal distortions and lies and the hardening of hearts of people. It obstructs people from actually being reconciled to God in their hearts and minds and gives them a false hope in a legal adjustment while they remain controlled by fear and selfishness.

Consider this historic quote:

> **Any measure** that is of such a nature as to **oppress the poor and afflicted**, bring neglect upon the widow and the orphan, is leading us away from the example given us in the life of Christ, and **misrepresenting the principles of God's law**. [What law is this? Is it a list of rules or the principle of love? And is love just an emotion or God's design for life? And what happens if we don't exercise love? What happens if we do? This is the law of exertion so not only are we helping others we are either growing in love or selfishness depending on how we treat others.] Representative men connected with the work and cause of God will bring **a heavy retribution** upon themselves if they mislead the people by their spirit and action, and misrepresent the principles of **the law of Jehovah.** [What does this mean? What law? The law of love, what kind of heavy retribution? An infliction, or the hardening of heart and the inevitable guilt and shame they will experience when they face infinite truth?] If they weave into the work that which springs from their own natural temperament, and mar the cause by disorders of their own natural disposition, **they will cause to appear in the work of God the attributes of the**

fallen foe and his confederate angels, rather than the attributes of Jesus Christ.[What are the attributes of Satan versus the attributes of Christ? Which is a greater act of love to give a fish to a hungry person to teach a person to fish? The idea being to give handouts to those capable of become independent and thereby, through disuse causing them to become less capable, not developing their abilities, losing confidence in themselves, and thus becoming more dependent on whomever is giving them the fish—is this love or is this a great deception of destruction hidden under the mantle of compassion?] The fashion of the work coming forth from every soul that is born of God has been clearly pictured before us. **He who is truly a child of God will experience the transforming power of grace upon mind and heart, and his character will develop after the divine similitude**. [What does this mean? Does this have anything to do with the law of God? Remember God's law is the law of love and is the design protocol for life, notice what comes next] The description of the work of Christ will be the description of the work of every one who is born of God, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The apostle says of such, "Ye are laborers together with God," **representing the holy law of God** to heaven, to worlds unfallen, and to the fallen world**. Representing the law of God** in its true character arouses the enmity of Satan. [What does it mean to represent the law of God? Would it mean to love like Jesus loves?] **Those who love God with all the heart, will love the law of his kingdom. They will not only profess to be guided by its principles, but they will actually live them out**, even in a world that is no more favorable to the development of Christian principles than were the inhabitants of the world before the flood, of whom it is written that the thoughts and imaginations of their hearts were evil, and only evil continually. **A similar condition of society exists in our world today, and if those who claim to be God's commandment-keeping people do not put in practice the principles of the law which Christ came to our world to vindicate, pronouncing it holy, just, and good, they misrepresent the character and mission of their professed Master. They mislead men in regard to the requirements of the law, and will be stumbling-blocks in the way of sinners**. The Lord of hosts has warned us that we shall **take heed not to misrepresent the law of his government by any unmerciful action on our part toward our fellow-men**. Neither are we to rob God in tithes and in offerings; for the remnant people of God are to be representatives to the world of the character of Christ. Not a thread of selfishness is to be woven into their practices. **The law of God is to be lived out**. **Thus in the character of God's people a living testimony will be borne that will contradict the fallacy of Satan, who has declared that the law of Jehovah is arbitrary, and holds its subjects under a cruel bondage**. RH August 13, 1895, par. 6

Wow—does this have application for us today? Do we see groups in our society today that either want us to deny God and His methods altogether, or they claim to believe in God but are willing to use human governments to advance their agenda and practice the same methods of the world?

SUNDAY

This takes us right back to Sunday, everyone worships something. This is the looking outside of oneself for a frame of orientation that gives life meaning, direction and purpose, whether the person realizes it or not.

Everyone does it, some may not worship God, but they worship—power, money, other people, idols, concepts, philosophies, nature.

Why does God say we are to have no other gods but Him?

> They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2:5

Romans 1 Paul describes how they didn't think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and preferred images made with their own hands and their minds became, depraved, darkened and futile!

It is a law that by beholding we are changed—this is the law of worship, we change biologically and characterologically based on what we admire and worship. As the highest created beings on planet earth there is nothing we can worship that advances us, anything on earth we worship degrades us. Thus, God wanting our highest development tells us to worship Him the infinite One! It is for our good, our development, not His need that God says to worship Him!

But can we do the same pagan false worship without images or idols? Here is one historic quote, do you agree?

> **Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? **God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love**, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. **He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God**. {FLB 59.8}

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on our responsibility to teach truth to our children, to teach of God's actions in the past, to teach our children to love, trust and praise God based on reality, on His attributes of character and the manifestations of His goodness in history and reality and then to repeat these lessons over and over in song and other forms of praise.

Why is this important?

- *repetitio est mater studiorum*—repetition is the mother of study/learning

It is the manifestation of the law of exertion, if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it. Thus, the more you do something the better you get at it. Your brain wires in neural pathways and things go from a piece of data one remembers to beliefs, filters, presets upon which one filters new information.

If we accept lies then those form false schemas, beliefs, perspectives that cause us to interpret the world around us in distorted ways.

Truth displaces lies and reshapes our minds and characters.

Why is it necessary to repeat?

- Because in this fallen world we are slow to learn
- Because there is a difference between learning facts and having them become part of our character
- Because there is a difference between learning facts and loving the person those facts inform us about
- Because there are many lies and distortions that seek to infect our minds
- Because we naturally bring up doubts, fears, selfishness and distortions and the seed of truth must be planted and constantly tended in order to bring forth fruit—analogy of a garden

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus encounter with the woman at the well and when the question of worship comes up Jesus tells her:

> Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. John 4:21-24

What does this mean?

The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma* and was translated to Latin as *spiritus* which literally means breath and was translated to English as spirit.

But the word actually has multiple meanings:

1. wind/air
2. breath/life energy/vital element/life spark
3. intelligent being/character/personality/attitude/attributes/emotions
4. mythical/superstitious entity that lives without physical body

And sometimes these different meanings occur in the very same passage:

> John 3:8 “The wind (pneuma) blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit (pneuma)."

Sometimes this one Greek word means more than one thing in the same use:

> Luke 8:55 “Her spirit (breath of life and her unique individuality) returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.” Meaning it wasn’t just life that animated her body, but that HER spirit, i.e. her unique self returned when the breath of life returned.
>
> Luke 23:46: Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

What did Jesus commit to the Father, just the breath of life, or His unique self?

Here is an historic view of what this means in this context:

> “Our **personal identity** is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. **The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved**. In the resurrection **every man will have his own character**. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the **breath of life**, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him.” {6BC 1093.2}
>
> HEB 1:14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?
>
> LK 1:46,47 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior…”

Then sometimes *pneuma* is mythological:

> Luke 24:39 "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost (pneuma) does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

So, what does it mean that "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Wind? Breath of life? Ghostly vapor? Or intelligent, sentient being with individuality?

Let's consider how we use the word spirit in English:

- When we say that team really has school spirit – what do we mean?
- When we say, a prisoner was tortured until his spirit was broken what do we mean?
- When we say someone is mean spirited what do we mean?
- When we say someone is a free spirit what do we mean?
- When we say someone is high spirited what do we mean?
- Though unable to join us today he is with us in spirit what do we mean?
- Though enemies they settled their differences with a kind spirit, what do we mean?
- The spirit of 1776 is not dead, what do we mean?
- He has the spirit of a rebel, what do we mean?
- How about he has an evil spirit?

Do any of these usages mean a demon or other intelligent entity is involved?

What is a spirit being? Any being that has intelligence, willfulness, personality, character, individuality.

Evil spirits are intelligent beings who are evil, who practice Satan's methods and reject God's.

What type of beings can be an evil spirit? Angels, who when fallen are demons.

What about humans, can they be evil spirits? Can a human being have their own evil spirit separate and distinct from a demon? If Satan and all demons were wiped out right now, could humans still have evil spirits—evil minds, hearts, attitudes and characters, selves?

Consider this quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

> Judas had naturally a strong love for money; but he had not always been corrupt enough to do such a deed as this. He had fostered **the evil spirit of avarice** until it had become the ruling motive of his life. DA 716

So we have as synonyms demons and fallen angels which can also be referred to as evil spirits. But a rebellious human who is warring against God could also be called an evil spirit or it could be said he has an evil spirit.

So, what does it mean God is spirit and wants worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth?

God is intelligent, with individuality (not a force of nature), who is rational, reasonable, purposeful and who operates upon love and is the source of all truth.

God wants worshippers who are intelligent, who exercise their individuality to love truth and grow in truth, thus they operate in harmony with God's design law and are purposeful in pursuing God and God's kingdom. They actually know and appreciate Him for who He is—these are the worshippers God seeks. Not the superstitious dark-minded worshippers who worship a false version of God that keeps them from growing and developing.

How can you tell whether your worship is of the true God, versus a false god or false spirit?

Here is the contrast:

- The Spirit of God is love; evil spirits are selfish
- The Spirit of God is truth; evil spirits lie
- The Spirit of God gives freedom; evil spirits coerce and enslave
- The Spirit of God is heals; evil spirits destroy
- The Spirit of God is giving; evil spirits take
- The Spirit of God removes fear; evil spirits incite fear
- The Spirit of God brings stability; evil spirits cause instability
- The Spirit of God is patient; evil spirits are impulsive
- The Spirit of God is kind; evil spirits are cruel
- The Spirit of God forgives; evil spirits are resentful, keep score, and require appeasement
- The Spirit of God sacrifices self for others; evil spirits sacrifices others for self

THURSDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "Many are the great intellectual ideas…"

The lesson asks, "What are some of the current popular beliefs that clash with Scripture…?"

- Godless origins
- We can save the earth through environmental initiatives
- Survival of the fittest is adaptive and helpful to advance the species
- Humans are less valuable than animals or the planet
- Equality means everyone deserves equal everything—but some aspect of outcomes, or equality is not about equal moral worth, but equal ability thus we demand all people be given equal roles

FRIDAY

Read and discuss first paragraph, "The heart is deceitful…"

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A special resource, recently made available by Pineknoll, is their new book, *Conversations about God* by Graham Maxwell, with Louis Venden and edited by Jon Paulien.

In 1984, Graham Maxwell conducted a lecture series at the Loma Linda University Church entitled, *Conversations about God*. After each presentation he would have a Q&A period with Louis Venden. These were all recorded, and recently Pineknoll has transcribed and edited these presentations and discussions and produced a beautiful book and are giving these away at no cost.

If you watch online, please go to **Pineknoll.org** and request your free copy and they will ship it to you at no cost, **anywhere in the world**!

If you are in **Australia** be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 8
Education and Redemption

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I am excited to share a special resource, recently made available by Pineknoll and it is their new book, *Conversations about God* by Graham Maxwell, with Louis Venden and edited by Jon Paulien.

In 1984, Graham Maxwell conducted a lecture series at the Loma Linda University Church entitled, *Conversations about God*. After each presentation he would have a Q&A period with Louis Venden. These were all recorded, and recently Pineknoll has transcribed and edited these presentations and discussions and produced a beautiful book and are giving these away at no cost. We have enough here for all of you who attend our class, so pick one up today.

If you watch online, please go to **Pineknoll.org** and request your free copy and they will ship it to you at no cost, **anywhere in the world**!

Read Memory Text: "**All Scripture is given** by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Timothy 3:16 NIKJV).

thoughts? What do we understand to be a better translation and why?

> **For all Scripture, inspired by God**, is beneficial for teaching, redirecting, correcting and training — to promote character transformation (2Timothy 3:16 *The Remedy).*

Do these two texts mean the same thing? What is the difference and is it important?

This is why we don't surrender our thinking but must reason through Scripture. This translation, the KJV and the NKJV have an error in the translation which suggests that all Scripture is given by inspiration. Is that so?

- What about the apocrypha? Books like:
  - Esdras (Vulgate 3 Esdras)
  - 2 Esdras (Vulgate 4 Esdras)
  - Tobit.
  - Judith ("Judeth" in Geneva)
  - Rest of Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4 – 16:24)
  - Wisdom.
  - Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach)
  - Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy ("Jeremiah" in Geneva) (all part of Vulgate Baruch)

- What versions of the Bible have included the apocryphal books?
  - Gutenberg Bible
  - Luther Bible
  - Clementine Vulgate
  - King James Version

- Pseudepigrapha?
  - 3 Maccabees.
  - 4 Maccabees.
  - Assumption of Moses.
  - Ethiopic Book of Enoch (1 Enoch)
  - Slavonic Second Book of Enoch.
  - Book of Jubilees.
  - 3 Baruch.
- Book of Mormon?
- Koran?

So we believe that all Scripture which is inspired by God is useful…

Read second paragraph, "But for the purposes…" What do you think of the idea that theme of the Bible is of a Teacher and His students?

Who is the Teacher? Who are the students?

What do you think of this perspective from the apostle Peter?

> Concerning this salvation… **Even angels long to look into these things.** (1Peter 1:10-12).

What about the angels in heaven—are they also students? Are they also learning things they didn't already know?

This is from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* and goes along the lines of Peter's view:

> **But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man**. [What? Isn't the entire gospel about us, about our salvation? No the gospel or good news is about God and it just so happens that God is so good that He did not abandon us after Adam sinned, but sent His Son to save us, but the good news is that God is not like Satan has made Him out to appear.] It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might **regard the law of God as it should be regarded**; **but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe**. [How should God's law be regarded? As design law—remember Satan in the opening of the great controversy took the position that every sin must meet its punishment. Satan is the author of imposed law, imposed punishments which distort the character and government of God and incite fear and rebellion.

> The message to lighten the world calls us back to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws] To this result of His great sacrifice--its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—[the sacrifice of Jesus was for other sinless beings? If so then it wasn't some legal payment for our sins as some like to claim; it was to reveal the truth and expunge the lies!] the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. [Cast out of where? What kind of action is Jesus' death on the Cross? Is it an act of force or the use of might and power by God to throw someone down? Is God using angels with flaming swords in a physical battle? This is an act of love, of surrender, of laying down of physical might and power, yet, Jesus says by this act that Satan is cast out—how? What does it mean? Cast out of where? Satan is cast out of the affections of heavenly beings and all human beings who, through the Sacrifice of Jesus, are won back to trust in God! The battle has never been a physical battle. It has always been a battle over who we love and trust!] The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. **It would establish the perpetuity of the law** of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

What does it mean establish the perpetuity of the law? If the law was a system of imposed rules, rules can be changed or bent or cheated—look around at every human government in history—all human laws get bent or cheated by those in power.

But God's laws are design laws and these cannot be changed, or bent, or cheated. To change the law of God is to change the very order of the universe, all we know, life as we know it would not exist if God's design laws were changed. If the law could be changed then Jesus would not have had to die, but the death of Jesus was the only way to reveal the truth and cure the problem while maintain God's design for life!

Are there any other Bible texts that support this view?

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and **through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:20 NIV84).

What is reconciled to Christ through His blood? Was this blood shed for angels? Was it shed to pay their legal penalty for their sins? Then what is the blood of Jesus doing for angels? Why did they need it?

Consider this from *The Desire of Ages:*

> To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance**. It was for them** as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. **They with us share** the fruits of Christ's victory.

> **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds**. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758}
>
> **Satan saw that his disguise was torn away**. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted**. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken**. DA 761.2

Thus Jesus' words that when He is lifted up the prince of this world is cast out—cast out of the sympathies of heavenly beings and out of the hearts of all who trust Jesus here on earth.

But why haven't all humans come to have Satan and his methods cast out of there hearts? Why haven't all Christians been freed from fear and selfishness and become true representatives of Christ?

Because Satan infected Christianity with a lie that God's law works like human law and essentially all Christianity of all denominations teach that it wasn't Satan that murdered Jesus, but it was God who killed Jesus at the cross for justice sake, to pay our legal debt.

Here are some references from various Christian denominations which document this infection of thought:

> **Roman Catholic:**
>
> What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? … Scripture teaches only that Christ became a 'propitiation,' a 'sin offering,' or a 'sacrifice' for sins…Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, **could offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath** against the sins of mankind… Anger against sin shows the personal side of God, for sin is a personal offense against him **God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased** in order to offer a personal forgiveness. In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, **the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ**. Robert Sungenis, Founder and President of Catholic Apologetics International Publishing: Not By Faith Alone (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), pp. 107-108.

Evangelical

We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, **propitiating the Father by paying for our sins** and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel. "A Call to Evangelical Unity," Christianity Today, June 14, 1999.

SDA—Since the 1888 GC and the rejection of the Righteousness by Faith Message—meaning since the rejection of design law and the embracing of imposed law:

Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin**. Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111.

What is the barrier between God and man according to this reference?

What happened to "The lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world?" (John 1:29)

Also from *Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111.

For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became 'a moral and legal necessity.' God's 'justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute judgment** on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will**. ibid.

Do you see the deep infection of Satan's lie about God's law being imposed, and then the lie about God's character being the source of death and the one from whom we need to be protected?

But Ellen White, one of the founders of the SDA church saw it differently:

To break **down the barrier that Satan had erected between God and man**, Christ made a full and complete sacrifice, revealing unexampled self-denial. He revealed to the world the amazing spectacle of God living in human flesh, and sacrificing Himself to save fallen men. What wonderful love! *Signs of the Times*, September 24, 1902, Review & Herald Publishing.

It is no wonder so many Christians don't trust God and have struggled to have Satan and his methods of fear and selfishness cast out of their hearts. The lie that God's law functions like human law with its poisonous fruit of penal substitution theology has kept Satan enthroned in the Spirit temple as a false god that is the source of pain, suffering and death inflicted upon sinners and who needs a blood payment to appease or assuage his wrath. Such ideas keep people afraid and worshipping a false god.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

Read the first paragraph, "The phrase…" What do you understand the image of God in humanity to be?

- character of love?
- intelligence?
- individuality?
- capacity for procreation?
- capacity for dominion and ruling the planet?
- other?

What does it mean that education is to restore the image of God in man?

Would that suggest that the image of God language refers to something beyond the physical appearance?

What does the Bible describe as God's core identifiers?

- God is Creator
- AND
- God is love

These are the two characteristics that are prime that set the true God apart from false gods.

Humankind was created in God's image to be pro-creators and to be the repository of God's design law of love. This law is a living law a law upon which life operate and cannot be understood written on stone. God's law is only truly seen in a living being. Adam and Eve were designed and built to operate in other centered love, to give of themselves, to create little beings in their image, to govern the planet upon the protocols of love.

While we still have procreative abilities—do we, as a species, operate upon the principles of love or has selfishness infected humanity?

If selfishness is operating as the motivator to our actions, then whose image to we bear? This is the battle between Christ and Satan—God wants to write His law in our hearts and minds—His design methods of love, truth and freedom. Satan wants to destroy God's law of love from our hearts and fill us with fear and selfishness.

Consider this quote from *Acts of the Apostles:*

> "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17. Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. **They have renounced selfishness**. [Is this a legal process or a healing process?] The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate [the

> shameless immoral] pure. **Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God.** This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." AA 476.1

What is it to bear the likeness of Satan? To be selfish, to exploit others for self, to be profane, to debase oneself, to be immoral.

What does it mean to bear the image of Christ? To be purified in heart, mind and character to love God and others, to no longer be selfish, to be honest, kind, generous.

After Adam and Eve sinned, Satan has sought to destroy the image of God in humanity—what are some of Satan's methods to accomplish this?

Consider this quote:

> It was Satan's studied effort [in the antediluvian age] **to pervert the marriage institution,** to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness; **for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man and open the door to misery and vice**. AH 326.1

How has the marriage institution been corrupted throughout human history?

- Male abuse, control, domination of their wives and daughters, treating them like property and subordinating them to their husbands and fathers as if they had no individuality of their own,
- Wives who abuse and mistreat their husbands
- Adultery—betrayal of any kind
- Polygamy which makes women into objects of passion and pleasure to be used for the benefit of the man
- Prostitution which corrupts the sexual union into a transaction for selfish indulgence and exploitation
- Pornography
- Fertility cults which elevate sexuality to the object of worship and typically worship the feminine
- Living together without marriage, without commitment, without self-sacrifice only as long as it is convenient
- Hardness of heart that leads to lack of love in a marriage that results in divorce
- Progressivism in which there are no genders, no male no female and no purpose or need for marriage

Why is marriage, as God designed, related to our sanctity? Why is perverting marriage so destructive to us and so damaging to the image of God in people?

- Where did God design love to operate at its fullest and purest?
- Where did God design two people to experience unity as "one" in its fullest sense?
- What happens in the heart and mind of people who do experience this?
- If we experience marriage as God designed it to operate, do we become more selfish or more selfless? Do we become more exploitive or more caring, compassionate, concerned for others? In other words, does our ability to love others grow in marriages where God's design functions?
- What happens to our abilities if we exercise them?
- What happens to people if they allow fear to rule them in their marriage? Fear of rejection, fear of not being good enough, fear of being abandoned, fear of loss, fear of exploitation?
- Does fear allow people to experience genuine love?
- Does fear lead to greater development of noble traits of character?
- If fear rules the heart then what actions follow? What character develops if fear rules?
- What happens to fear where love is experienced? Is marriage as God designed a place where one's fears can be washed away in love?
- What happens to the character of people in whom sex becomes merely selfish gratification—pornography, prostitution, serial relationships, frequent one-night stands, polygamy, or using the spouse merely as a sexual object?
- Do we see how marriage as God designed is for the development of God-like character, the joy of God-like love, the expansion of God-like abilities and thus Satan attacks marriage to deface the image of God in people?

Consider this historic quote, do you agree?

> **Satan worked upon such principles as would conform those who sympathized with him to his own corrupt standard, and would assimilate them with his own Satanic nature. It was his determined purpose to efface from man the image of God, and stamp upon the souls of his subjects his own image and superscription.** He employed in his work the most **deceptive methods,** and was successful in leading men to cooperate with him in rebellion against God. Christ gives to him the title of "the father of lies," "the accuser of the brethren," "a murderer from the beginning." By his bewitching power he instilled into man the same spirit of opposition and hatred of God as he himself had, and set up his throne as the rallying point for the confederacy of wickedness. ST June 13, 1895, par. 1

What are the principles of Satan?

- lies
- fear
- selfishness
- coercion
- corrupt standards—which means what? false standards, this would include the false standards on marriage, but also false laws i.e. imposed laws or rules that contradict or are not in harmony with design laws

The lesson points out that one of the main purposes of education is to restore the image of God in us.

Where are children to receive a godly education? At home, at church, and at school?

How are we doing in society today?

Do our children receive a consistent godly education in our homes, churches and schools?

Can we look at history and see how the education of children changes a society?

- Does it make a difference if children are educated to believe they are created in the image of God versus there is no God and they merely evolved from lower life forms?
- Does it make a difference if children are taught that some groups of people are less human than others?
- Does it make a difference if children are taught that the only thing that matters is winning—all is fair in love and war?
- Does it make a difference if children are taught God's law is like human law imposed rules and that God must punish rule breakers?

And what is happening in the world today? What kind of education are the children receiving in our public schools around the world? Are they being taught about God and God's design for human beings or are they being taught a godless philosophy of humanism?

Does the godless education, the progressive worldly education, have an impact on developing minds and characters? Is the image of God being restored into people or is it being effaced by this worldly education?

How can so many Christians support the worldly education? Because they are deceived—they are tricked into believing school is merely about reading, writing and arithmetic. Millions have failed to understand that **education is about restoring the image of God in people!**

What would happen if that was the primary issue when parents consider schools? Is it, when parents are considering schools is their primary concern—*what impact will this school have on restoring the image of God in my child?*

And thus, millions of Christians support education that undermines the image of God in their children.

Should we support government run religion in schools? Why or why not?

What would be a solution? What about vouchers in which parents could decide where their children go to school and regardless of income parents could still choose to send their children to private Christian schools?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

The lesson states regarding Jesus, "Somehow His work of Redemption is akin to the work of teaching."

If Jesus is teaching, then we are learning and what does learning require of the student?

- Does Jesus want simple memorization—here is the list of fundamental beliefs you must accept—memorize them?
- Does Jesus want us to believe because the Teacher said so? Jesus said it, I believe it, that settles it?

What does Jesus want from us?

> "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84)

What does this text mean? Why is reasoning with God connected with cleansing from sin?

What about:

> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32 NIV84)

What does this text mean? What does truth set us free from?

- lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- fear and selfishness result in acts of sin
- acts of sin damage our minds, body, relationships a terminal condition

What is the cure, the solution?

- Truth believed destroys lies and wins to trust
- In trust we open our hearts and the Spirit fills us with the love of God (no longer I that live but Christ lives in me) fear and selfishness is cast out
- In love and trust we carry out acts of love, service, giving
- In living God's methods and principles we grow in godliness and healed condition

BUT IT ALL STARTS WITH THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD!

And the truth about God is not merely facts it is coming to know God personally which requires we reason and think and be fully persuaded in our own minds!

WEDNESDAY

Read the second paragraph, "King Solomon is singled…" Do you consider Solomon wise? Yet somehow he became very foolish, how did that happen?

Consider this historic quote:

> **The mind of a man or woman does not come down in a moment from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time** to transform the human to the divine, or to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. **By beholding we become changed**. [Why? The law of worship—this is a design law upon how we are created. It is unavoidable. We are constantly being changed either into the image of God by worshipping Him, by fixing our eyes upon Jesus, or into the Satanic by embracing some false standard, some false god even though we claim to be Christian] Though formed in the image of his Maker, man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him. [Does education mean only scholastics? Does public education work to restore the image of God in people? Does Christian education which misrepresents God restore the image of God in people? Or religious education that indoctrinates and does not teach people how to reason and think?] **As he ceases to watch and pray, he ceases to guard the citadel, the heart,** and engages in sin and crime. The mind is debased, **and it is impossible to elevate it from corruption while it is being educated to enslave the moral and intellectual powers and bring them in subjection to grosser passions**. Constant war against the carnal mind must be maintained; and we must be aided by the refining influence of the grace of God, which will attract the mind upward and habituate it to meditate upon pure and holy things.12 AH 330.2

It is impossible to elevate our minds and characters *while* they are being educated to enslave the moral and intellectual powers to the grosser passions—i.e. to selfishness. Why? Design law, how reality works. It is like saying, it is impossible to restore health while one continues to violate the laws of health.

And this is the problem with the penal/legal fraud within Christianity—it teaches that sin is a legal problem and the solution is a legal one by claiming a blood payment to the god that will kill you if you don't, but if you do then all your sins, past, present and future, are legally paid for and you are under grace and no matter what future sins you commit they are covered by the blood and you are saved. So, in this model:

- The wrong god is being worshipped and by beholding we are changed
- The wrong understanding of law is being taught and by practice of punishment and coercion of either ourselves or others we are being changed
- The wrong understanding of sin and its solution results in continued practice of sin and via the law of exertion we are being changed

This is the wine of Babylon; this is the corruption of the Dark Ages false Christianity; this is what we are to call people out of!

What did Solomon do that brought down his character to the point that he sacrificed one of his own children to a pagan god?

He practices polygamy—God's design for marriage was corrupted and this resulted in what? In taking foreign wives, and this resulted in what? In Solomon allowing them religious freedom and they brought in their pagan worship practices and began teaching and seducing Solomon into their falsehoods.

And what happened to Solomon?

Is there a lesson for us?

- Violating God's design is **always** damaging no matter the motive
- Allowing feelings, compassion, or desire to overrule one's judgment is always damaging
- Failure to set healthy boundaries results in injury
- Surrendering judgment to others, allowing oneself to be influenced by those who are not loyal to God is dangerous and destructive
- True wisdom is found only in harmony with God and His designs and methods

Was Solomon wrong for granting religious liberty to his wives? Why or why not?

Was Solomon wrong for keeping them as wives or should he have divorced all who insisted on worshipping false gods? Why or why not?

- Once in a marriage relationship each spouse has responsibilities to the other that necessarily restricts the liberty that one had as a single person. Such as, not free within the bounds of marriage, to date other people. Not free, within the bounds of marriage, to take actions that knowingly betray the other or injure the spouse? Love binds us with loyalty and devotion to consider the welfare of our spouse, the impact that our actions will have on the other in a way we did not have to consider with a non-spouse.
- Marriage is a commitment to love the other more than the self and thus one as a duty to fulfill that responsibility.
- When marriage is practiced in godly love the individual grows in godliness. This is by design—we grow to ever increasing heights of love and joy in a godly marriage. But this means that certain freedoms are relinquished for the good of the other—but it is done by the self because we freely choose to give up those privileges for the other.

So, what if a spouse continues to act for self and not put their partners welfare as a priority? What if a spouse does continue to betray their loyalty by undermining the integrity, reputation, or health of their partner? Is it injuring only the one who is being betrayed, or is it injuring the betrayer? What does love do from both sides of this situation?

The lesson points out that we learn wisdom from others, from our parents or teachers. But, can we teach something we don't ourselves know? So, would a parent or teacher need to have wisdom in order to teach wisdom?

Can one have wisdom if they don't know God?

Can one have wisdom if they know God, but know Him as a child knows their parent level 1-4 moral development? Can one have wisdom if they know God but still don't know God's law is design law, they think it is imposed rules?

Consider Paul's admonition to the Corinthians:

> **For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:
>
> > "**I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;**
> > the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."
>
> **Where is the wise man**? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world**? **For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness** of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and **Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles**, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. For **the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom**, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. **Not many of you were wise by human standards**; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise**; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 1Corinthians 1:18-27 NIV84).

What does this mean?

This is from *The Remedy:*

> **For the truth about God–his character of absolute love, as revealed by Christ at the cross–makes no sense whatsoever to those who are dying through practicing the world's method of survival-of-the-fittest**; but to those of us who are being healed and restored, it is the true power of God, the secret of eternal life. For the Scriptures reveal that **God's method of self-sacrificing love will destroy the world's wisdom of promoting self first**, but the **apparent logic of working for self-exaltation**, fame, personal advancement or financial wealth–**rather than bringing healing and restoration, will be shown to actually accelerate the damage to one's mind and character**. So then, **what value is there in the wisdom of the selfish person**? Or the agnostic professor? Or the atheistic scientist? Or the psychologist of the New Age? **God has shown that all "wisdom" based on the principles of this world is in reality foolishness**, silliness, nonsense! For after those who value the methods of the world rejected God and denied his existence, **God joyfully revealed his wisdom by actually healing**

> **and transforming all those who trust him on the basis of the simple message of God's selfless love revealed by Jesus.** The Jews, and many like them, demand supernatural signs and wonders, which (they fail to realize) can be counterfeited; and the Greeks look only for intellectual explanations, but **we preach God's self-sacrificing character of love** revealed by Christ crucified. It's a roadblock to the egocentric Jews, and utter nonsense to the self-seeking Gentiles, but to all those who respond to God's call — whether Jew or Gentile — **Christ is the embodiment of the character, wisdom and power of God**! For **the simple love of God is wiser than all humankind's self-centered scheming**: God's love literally heals and restores. **And this love of God, which appears weak to the world, is stronger than all the strength of selfish humanity**.
>
> Brothers and sisters, remember where you were, and what you were like before you responded to God's call. From the world's perspective, not many of you were successful or wise, or powerful, or high on the social scale. But God has purposely chosen what appears to be the worst cases–the ignorant and foolish–to reveal the tremendous transforming **power of his Remedy and thus expose the futility of the world's wisdom**. God has purposely chosen what the selfish world considers weak to reveal how impotent the world's power really is.

Do you see God's kingdom does not operate like this selfish world does? Everything this world promotes, wars against the kingdom of love and truth.

THURSDAY

The second paragraph states, "While the Holy Spirit is not identified as an educator, the work of the Spirit certainly is educational, particularly as it pertains to seeking and finding truth."

So true—the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and leads us into all truth and without truth there is no education into the things of God.

Let's be clear though, education is the process of teaching and learning and people can be educated into all kinds of lies and falsehoods such as:

- godless evolutionism
- penal substitution theology
- eternal torment in hell

and many more false ideas that indoctrinate and enslave minds.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to free people's minds from lies and restore them to godliness.

Consider this quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

> The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth." His work is to define and **maintain the truth**. **He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth**, and thus He becomes the Comforter. **There is**

> **comfort and peace in the truth,** but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through f**alse theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind**. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. **It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself**. DA 671.1

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

November SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available.

- *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life*

BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

If you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the Remedy App, just go to the App store and update.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 9
The Church and Education

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The Church and Education—what does this title bring to mind?

Does it bring to mind being taught the right facts, learning the appropriate creed, memorizing a catechism, learning the 28 fundamental beliefs? Does the idea of church education make you think of being taught how to think or being taught what to think?

Is there a difference between indoctrination and education?

What is more important—being taught the right truths, or being taught how to think, to critically reason so one can differentiate the difference between truth and error?

I love this quote from the book education, has this been what you have experienced at church or church school?

> **Every human being**, created in the image of God, is endowed with a **power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do**. The men in whom **this power is developed** are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. [What does it mean—individuality, the power to think and to do? And what does it mean to have this power developed? If we have this power inherently, given by God, then do we have to develop it? What happens if we don't?] It is the work of **true education to develop this power**, **to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought**. [So education is not merely to teach facts, or right doctrines or truths. If this is all we do we fail to educate. True eduation is to teach how to think—this is what Come and Reason Ministries is designed to do, to teach people who to critically reason and think for themselves. Thus, when we present ideas or truths we also present the reasons why so people can see for themselves and we base this upon the integration of Scripture, science/nature and experience—how reality works, not mere quotations. What is the difference in being a thinker versus a reflector of other people's thoughts? We are to be lights in the world, is there a difference between a light and a reflector? What does a reflector do and what does a light do? So what does a thinker do that a reflector of others thoughts does not do? What kind of education leads people to develop this power to think and do?] Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students **be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation**. [What happens if we restrict our study to Scripture divorced from nature and life experience? Is this one of the problems in Christian education, in the church the idea of Scripture alone not harmonized with nature and experience? Yes—this is what leads to all kinds of irrational and superstitious

teachings that don't make sense, that require one to stop thinking in order to continue to believe the church dogma.] Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. **Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act**, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. Ed 17.2 [Educated weaklings—wow—how many do we have like this today in society? Millions with college degrees who can't discern the most simple facts of reality because they have been educated not to think, not to critically reason, indoctrinated into false systems of reality whether those false systems are godless evolution or religiosity of a dictator god whose laws work like human laws.]

Such an education provides more than mental discipline; it provides more than physical training. It strengthens the character, so that truth and uprightness are not sacrificed to selfish desire or worldly ambition. [Wow—how much of education today is focused on getting ahead in this world, on getting the best paying job, or the most power? But true education is about developing Christlike character, which comes when we develop the ability to discern the true from the false and embrace the true.] It fortifies the mind against evil. Instead of some master passion becoming a power to destroy, every motive and desire are brought into conformity to **the great principles of right**. As the **perfection of His character is dwelt upon, the mind is renewed, and the soul is re-created in the image of God**. Ed 18.1

What education can be higher than this? What can equal it in value? Ed 18.2 [What law is this? It is the law of worship, by beholding we are changed. And what impact will it have on character if we educate our children in public schools in which they are taught godless evolution and they are taught it is foolish to believe in God? What will happen to society as millions of children grow up to believe there is no God? What is the law that gets written on their hearts? The law of sin and death, which is survival of the fittest—which is the law that the strong survive, the strong dominate the weak, and anything is fair as long as they win. And this is what we are seeing in society today the complete erosion of any sense of integrity and morality and its root is in the corruption of the education of our children. And Christians, are you supporting organizations or parties that are antagonistic to God, that promote godlessness as a way of life? Why? What is more important to you than bringing people to the knowledge of God, than educating our children with a knowledge of God?]

The lesson points out that the church is a place where serious discussion should take place but that some people are afraid to ask questions. Why? What would cause people to fear asking questions?

- Fear of looking foolish
- Fear of being laughed at
- Fear of being accused of being a hypocrite or reprobate
- Fear of being rejected
- Fear of argument or conflict
- Fear of not having faith—the lie often told that if one has faith then they just believe and don't ask questions

- That the pastor or teacher or elder is God's representative and they are to be believed and it is irreverent to question them

But as the lesson points out with true education there are no dumb questions.

Any question, if asked with a true desire to learn and not with irreverence, not with a desire to mock, or cause confusion, is worthy of asking. So the issue is never about asking questions it is always about why one is asking questions.

In your upbringing what was your experience at church—did you find that it was a safe place to ask questions, that you were invited to ask questions and even if you didn't get all the answers you wanted, did your church teach you to be a question asker? Or, was your experience that questions were not always appreciated, that asking questions was irreverent and one shouldn't question, that the pastor or teacher or the Bible and one should just believe?

We at Come and Reason want to inspire you to ask questions—we may not have all the answers, but we want to instill in you the freedom to humbly ask any question and then to pursue the answer. Some answers might come very quickly, others may take years, others may not be obtained until Jesus comes. But keep asking. So, we like to say, Blessed are the Whys!

In my life there have been questions I have asked that took me years to come to answers that made sense. Thousands and thousands of hours of prayer, study, research, contemplation, working through the possibilities. And that is part of the journey of development.

The greatest growth comes when we discover the answers through study and application, not merely being told the answers. Someone can show us how they derived the answer, but we must then work it out for ourselves. Consider mathematics—a teach can show us how to work problems, but if we want to be able to do math, to understand why the answer is correct, we must work the problem for ourselves.

Thus every person is to develop their power to think and do, to reason for themselves and problem solve for themselves, not merely memorize the right answers.

We never want to lose our curiosity, never want to stop asking questions.

SUNDAY

Read fifth paragraph, "As Seventh-day Adventists, we have…"

- And what is the purpose of having correct doctrine? If we have a human law construct, then security is found in knowing the right doctrines. We must have the right definitions because it is all about being legally right and therefore we must have the right rules, the right rituals and

the doctrines become part of that because it is all legal and to legal people it is all about the right legal language or definition of things.

- You see this in every form of doctrinal and sectarian discrimination—where people are looked down upon for not having the right doctrine—say calling a county a dark county if there are no SDAs in that region. This is Pharisaism, how the Pharisees had the right doctrines and looked down upon the Samaritans, the Publicans and anyone who wasn't Jewish. It didn't matter what their character was like, it didn't matter whether they loved God and others, what mattered was the rules, the doctrines, and the keeping of those rules, which required believing the right things.
- This is the falsehood that comes from understanding doctrine through the false legal lens.
- But what is the purpose of right doctrine through the design law lens? To inform us about reality, about God, about God's designs, methods and purposes so we can grow to know God better and choose to agree with Him, grow like Him, and intelligently choose to cooperate with Him and live in harmony with Him and His designs—because it makes sense and we freely want to, not because a rule by someone in charge says we have to!
- Doctrines that are disconnected from God's character and God's design law are not helpful—they become rules and litmus tests of fellowship that actually cause division and we end up fracturing into various sects and denominations based on differences in doctrine.

- What doctrines are not listed in the lesson that are essential to understand these correctly?
- The truth about God's law being design law and thus the truth about God's character.I guess the great controversy could be an umbrella statement that covers everything—but what does the great controversy mean to those who accept the lie that God's law functions like human law?

Read bottom pink section, "What prejudices does your culture and society teach, either subtly or openly, that as a Christian, you must rise above?"

Do you believe it is righteous or unrighteous to seek to destroy another people's culture?

And let's define what I mean by culture—I am not talking about a culture of microorganisms in a lab, nor am I talking about manners or politeness, I am talking about: **a particular form or stage of civilization, as that of a certain nation or period**—the African culture, the American Indian culture, the Greek culture etc.

So, with that in mind, is it righteous or unrighteous to seek to destroy another people's culture?

In our society today would progressivism, leftism, want to destroy other cultures, or would progressivism want to validate all cultures and not eradicate other cultures?

When Jesus said to His followers,

> All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you** Matthew 28:18-20 NIV84

was He instructing them to go out and eradicate paganism and all cultures based on false views about Him, to eradicate cultures based on the principles of this world, to establish a culture based on love for God and love for others, on truth, love and liberty?

So if we follow Jesus' command will we seek to convert people to Christ? And will converting people to Christ simultaneously be destroying the following cultures?

- voodoo culture
- witchcraft culture—which is nature and earth worship culture
- Native American animistic spirit worship culture
- Hindu culture
- Islamic culture
- Buddhist culture
- godless culture—communism, evolutionism, humanism

So, can Christianity, if it fulfills the gospel commission to make people disciples of Jesus really support the idea of protecting other culture?

Do you see why progressivism, leftism, which believes all cultures are equal and should be protected, works to obstruct via laws, via social pressure etc. the sharing of the gospel. It becomes illegal to try to convert people to Christ. Books like the *Great Controversy* which exposes the abuses of the Roman church through history are labelled as hate speech.

The principles of God are truth presented love and leave others free. If you have truth on your side you have nothing to fear by open speech, ideas being investigated, evidence being presented. But, if you have lies then once your lies have been accepted you don't want people investigating, you want to silence any voices that bring truth because the truth will expose the lies.

So, do we agree that presenting the truth about Jesus, will destroy the cultures based on Satan's lies (2Cor 10:3-5)?

And we agree that doing so by converting people is a good thing?

What about destroying other cultures through military might, by killing those who won't join us—is this a good or bad thing for the world?

As Christians, we cannot advocate the methods of might and killing to advance our cause, but does that set us up to draw false conclusions about the results of those who do or have done so in the past?

For instance, there is an idea being propagated in our society today that America is evil because it was founded by war against the Native Americans and essentially wiped them out and destroyed their culture and this is bad. What do you think?

Would the world be better off if Cortez and the Spanish did not go to war with the Aztecs and destroy the Aztec culture? Would the world be better off if the Aztec culture continued in Mexico and we have ongoing human sacrifice and cannibalism practiced south of the US border?

Or are the people who have lived since the Aztec culture was destroyed better off without human sacrifice and cannibalism?

So, is the idea being pushed today that all culture is equally valuable, healthy, good and all culture should be respected and protected true? No, it is a lie and Christians should have the ability to discern the truth from lies and not buy into the leftism and collude with those who want to stop the gospel from going forward.

So, back to the question in the lesson what prejudices does our culture or society teach that we must rise above?

Would it be movements that oppose Christianity—any movements that promote godlessness, would that include evolutionism? Humanism? Secularism? Leftism?

MONDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "Everywhere we look…" What does darkness mean in this context?

What does it mean to be a light in the world?

Is darkness only the lies or falsehoods told, or would darkness include practices that interfere with the truth being brought out that would expose the lie?

So would darkness include ideas or practices like:

- We have faith we don't need evidence?
- So and so teaches heresy don't listen to what they have to say?
- Believing allegations, claims or proclamations without evidence?
- Taking someone's words and editing them to make it appear they are saying something they are not?
- Censoring information?
- Obstructing free speech?
- We as a people have believed this doctrine for hundreds of years and this new idea is heresy?

Consider this quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and **truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation**. CW 35.2
>
> **We are living in perilous times, and it does not become us to accept everything claimed to be truth without examining it thoroughly**; neither can we afford to reject anything that bears the fruits of the Spirit of God; **but we should be teachable**, meek and lowly of heart. **There are those who oppose everything that is not in accordance with their own ideas**, and by so doing they endanger their eternal interest as verily as did the Jewish nation in their rejection of Christ. *Counsels to Writers and Editors* 35.3

So whether in church or in society when we see practices that suggest we don't need to examine evidence, that we should just believe because someone in a position of authority makes a claim, we should recognize that action as an obstruction of truth.

If it were alleged that a computer was found with emails and documents revealing corruption, the innocent person would demand that the computer be brought out and that its contents be examined so that the evidence would reveal it to be a lie. But the guilty would rely on claims and proclamations that the computer is a fake, no need to look, it is a conspiracy.

What is the difference between Christians advancing the gospel—the truth which will destroy ungodly culture—and politics?

Christianity is about people—about healing hearts and minds, about freeing people from sin, from guilt, shame, and practices that violate God's design laws and cause only pain, suffering and eventually death. Christianity is about freedom—freedom from sin, guilt, shame and the burden of sin. If the Son sets you free you are free indeed! So Christianity is about writing God's law upon the heart and mind of people so they are transformed from fear and selfishness to love for God and others. Christianity leads to society becoming more peaceful *as the people become more trustworthy* and engage in more activities to help their neighbors.

Politics is about power—pure and simple! Politics is always about getting power over people. It may be framed in the rhetoric of advancing the human condition, of eliminating inequalities, of promoting the welfare of others, but make no mistake politics does not transforms hearts to become more like Jesus, politics always divides, always incites hostility, and is *intended* to stir up strong feelings and create factions that will ultimately give power to those who lead those factions. And this is true whether it is church politics or national politics.

The lesson points out that Jesus lived under Roman occupation and that Roman society was militarized, and there was much social injustice in the Roman society:

- slavery
- wars for the purpose of enriching and advancing Rome not defending Rome
- gladiators—fighting to the death for sport
- crucifixions
- discrimination, prejudice, bias

How did Jesus confront the social injustices of the Roman and Jewish governments?

- What politicians did Jesus support?
- What legislation did Jesus seek to get passed?
- What political parties did Jesus join?

What about the Apostles did they engage in politics?

Why didn't Paul tell all Christian slaves to run away?

- In that society if the slaves would have run away what kind of life would they have had?
- Would they have less stress or more?
- Would they be able to have a home of their own, get a good job, establish a family and live in peace and security or would they live in fear of getting caught and crucified for the rest of their lives, always looking over their shoulder, always on the run?
- What does this kind of never-ending fear do to a person? Does it enhance love or destroy it? What happens in their character?

Why didn't Paul tell all Christians who owned slaves to set them free?

- If the Christian slave owners set the slave free would that mean the newly freed slave had Roman citizenship?
- Then what could happen to them? Could they become a slave again to someone else?
- But what if the Christian slave owner began practicing the principles of Christ and what Paul recommended they do and they treated their slaves like family? Would the slaves within that home, while technically still being slaves, also have more freedom, more security, and be protected in the Roman society from others who would exploit them because they were under the protection of the Christian who was their owner?

Does the fact that Paul didn't condemn slavery mean that slavery is good or that Christianity supports slavery? Absolutely not!

The situation in the United States during the 19th century is quite different from Rome during Paul's time. In the US there was a strong abolitionist movement with many states and leaders opposing slavery. In Rome there was no support from any society leaders to end slavery. In the US runaway slaves could find safety in the northern state, protected by those state governments and leaders so they could get a job, establish a family and live in relative security without the fear of being sent back into slavery or being executed for running away. In Rome there was nowhere for a runaway slave to go and be protected by government.

Have you ever wondered why the New Testament didn't come out against slavery? Does this help? We could add to it the additional corruption to the church if the church focused on politics rather than healing hearts and minds, Christianity would have been destroyed in its infancy.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that our lives must keep Jesus at the center of all we do. How do we do this?

How does keeping Jesus at the center of our lives impact our interactions with those around us?

Do we restrict with whom we associate if Jesus is at the center?

The Pharisees in Christ's day were very restrictive, but Jesus socialized with prostitutes, tax collectors, Publicans, Samaritans…where do we draw the line on who we socialize with and who we don't?

Jesus told His disciples: "If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." Luke 9:5 NIV84

Would the attitude of people toward us and toward the message of truth we bring be a factor in determining with whom we associate?

So what if a person welcomes us as long as we participate in their activities—we are not invited, as Jesus was, to be the guest of honor and share the gospel, but we are invited to party with them, what about that?

One way to tell if you should socialize or not would be to ask yourself the question: *If I were to share the gospel of Jesus with them, would they be open to listen or would they condemn, ridicule, throw me out?"*

Of course, the setting matters, the above question would be for a personal visit. That question would not be applicable if you were attending someone else's public lecture—say a medical education lecture, or someone's wedding or funeral and it wasn't a Christian event etc.

The second to the last paragraph reads, "And, as disciples of Jesus, we not only have respect for all people, but will work to provide the kind of place where all people can grow and develop."

I think this is a great idea, a powerful truth—question for you—what kind of actions, practices, principles will create a place where people can grow and develop and what kind of actions obstruct growth and development?

- Can people grow and develop without applying themselves—without exerting their abilities? The law of exertion if you want something to get stronger you must exercise. So growth and development require application and exercise of one's abilities.
    - What kind of practices obstruct this?

- Give a man a fish feed him for a day, teach a man to fish feed him for a lifetime. Does this old proverb have any insight into the development of abilities? What about social programs that give people things but don't give opportunity to achieve for oneself?
- Why would people purposely take actions that interfere with other people's growth?
- Consider Helen Keller—before Annie Sullivan came along what kind of development of ability was happening for Helen? None, she was nearly a wild animal. Why? Did her mother not love her? Or, did her mother love her very much? Why did her mother not do what Annie did? A combination of factors—over-empathy and ignorance. Helen's mother saw her terrible disability and had huge compassion, deep sadness, great empathy for Helen, and didn't want to add any more burdens to this poor child who had already suffered so much. Her empathy fueled her ignorance that disciplining Helen, pushing her to learn in a way that caused the child to suffer, to be uncomfortable, to cry and protest distressed the mother who felt this would be harmful to do to a child with so many disadvantages. The mother's love and over empathy along with ignorance of how reality works interfered with doing what was best for Helen. Annie however, wanted Helen to grow and develop to the greatest level possible for her. So she removed her from her mother's presence and began to teach with firm boundaries. And when Helen slapped Annie, Annie slapped her back. What would happen in society today if we had a cell phone video of a social worker slapping a deaf, dumb, and blind child? What if that child was black and the social worker was white? But was Annie abusing Helen? What was the outcome of Annie's actions with Helen? Helen learned sign language, brail and eventually became college educated. Who practiced greater love in action for Helen, her mother or Annie?
- One of the great lies in society today is the over-empathizing lie combined with ignorance of how reality works that sees people who come from real-life situations of disadvantage and concludes it would be wrong to stress them, to burden them, to require them to exercise their abilities, that it is more compassionate and loving to give them sustenance because they already have such burdens upon them.

The Christian approach is to understand truth, understand reality, understand God's design law for life, and love our neighbors, our fellow human beings with actions that create opportunity for all people to develop their abilities to the highest extent possible for the restoration of the image of God in each one of us.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Albert Einstein…" I love this and agree completely. God is infinite and we are finite and those who love the truth will never stop growing and advancing in our knowledge of the truth. And as we grow in truth we come closer and closer to God the source of all truth and this is an eternal journey for we never become God.

Consider this historic quote, what do you think of it?

> We should consider that **it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to earth**; [What? Do we appreciate the cosmic nature of the war between Christ and Satan, of the forces behind the scenes, of the angels and other intelligences throughout the universe that are involved?] it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might **regard the law of God as it should be regarded**; [How should it be regarded? As design law, immutable, the protocols of love upon which life is built and not as imposed rules like we make up that require infliction of punishment] but it was to **demonstrate to all the worlds** that **God's law is unchangeable, and that the wages of sin is death.** [Why is God's law unchangeable? Because it emanates from His character and is the protocol upon which life exists. To change it would be to destroy the universe as we know it and God would not be the God Jesus revealed Him to be. And this explains why the wages of sin is death—because sin transgresses the law, the law is what life exists upon, so to transgress it means to take one out of harmony with life, which results in death. Example, the law of respiration—if one transgresses it ties a plastic bag over their head, the wages of that is death.] RH March 9, 1886, par. 23
>
> There is a great deal more to this subject than we can take in at a glance. Oh that all might see the importance of carefully studying the Scriptures! Many seem to have the idea that this world and the heavenly mansions constitute the universe of God. Not so. **The redeemed throng will range from world to world, and much of their time will be employed in searching out the mysteries of redemption. And throughout the whole stretch of eternity, this subject will be continually opening to their minds.** The privileges of those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony are beyond comprehension. RH March 9, 1886, par. 24

The lesson points out that we are able to think and states, "as human beings, we are able to think about what has been called 'the big questions' about life and our existence in general. And, of course, here is where Scripture plays the central role. Who are we? Why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die? Why is there evil and suffering?"

- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- How should we live?
- What happens when we die?
- Why is there evil and suffering?

THURSDAY

The lesson points out the importance of sharing our lives with others of community. Why is connection with others so important?

What do we learn from the metaphor in Scripture of the body—many different parts but one body?

Is there something beyond the fact we have different abilities? Does the metaphor of the body say something about harmony, cooperation, unity?

Does it go beyond this world to the kingdom of God?

When the blood cells circulate in the body and the arteries divide do the blood cells argue with each other about which ones go to the brain and which ones go to the intestines? Is there a lesson in this for us?

Jesus prayed:

> I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that **all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you**. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20-21 NIV84

Is this more than metaphor? Is something actual being described? Is there something more than coming into agreement of ideas or beliefs? Is there something physical involved?

Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in **love**. Make every effort to keep **the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. There is **one body and one Spirit**— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—**one Lord**, one faith, one baptism; **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all**. (4:2-6 NIV84)

Is this more than metaphor, more than attitude of the heart? Is something physical in God's universe being described? In this unity of love, of faith, there is one God who is over all and through all and in all—is this describing some aspect of reality that goes beyond just what we believe?

Is there a connection of all things in God's universe, a harmony, a chord of energy that, when we are in harmony with God we have connection with Him and others in God's kingdom? And does sin sever this connection, cutting us off from God and from life? Is Jesus not merely a revealer of the truth about God, but the one who literally reconnects humanity back to God and His life giving energy?

Consider these historic quote:

> In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3. But after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the **unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him**. The sinner could not be happy in God's presence; he would shrink from the companionship of holy beings. Could he be permitted to enter heaven, it would have no joy for

> him. **The spirit of unselfish love that reigns there—every heart responding to the heart of Infinite Love—would touch no answering *chord* in his soul**. His thoughts, his interests, his motives, would be alien to those that actuate the sinless dwellers there. **He would be a discordant note in the melody of heaven**. Heaven would be to him a place of torture; he would long to be hidden from Him who is its light, and the center of its joy. **It is no arbitrary decree** on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; **they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire.** They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. SC 17.2

Is this more than a metaphorical way to describe the dissonance that exists in the hearts and minds of those who reject God and His methods of love? Is there some aspect of this that is literal, physical?

In your own experience do you experience physical differences when you are in a moment of love and when you are in a moment of selfishness and fear?

Do our choices to embrace lies, fear and selfishness actually change us? Do they cause not just changes in our characters, but in our very physiology? The answer is yes! Our brains fire differently when we love than when we choose selfishness, our neural paths change, our electrical signaling is different, our electron configuration in the dendrites alter, we get different harmonics and different resonance patterns—we are literally changed.

Consider this quotation:

> Christ is represented by the Holy Spirit; and when this Spirit is appreciated, when those controlled by the **Spirit communicate to others the energy with which they are imbued, an invisible chord is touched which electrifies the whole**. Would that we could all understand how boundless are the divine resources. FLB 57.7

Is this more than just concepts and ideas that are shared—is there actually energy that flows from Jesus via the Holy Spirit into the believers and through the believers to others who also choose to trust God and value His methods?

Have you ever experienced the joy, the harmony that comes from being with people who love God and embrace His methods? Have you experienced the "energy" of their presence? Can you tell a difference from that energy and the energy of being in the presence of those who embrace and practice selfishness?

Consider this historic quote:

> It is God's plan that every part of his government shall depend on every other part, the whole as a wheel within a wheel, working with entire harmony. **He moves upon human forces, causing his Spirit to touch invisible chords, and the vibration rings to the extremity of the universe**. *Evangelism* 93

Is this just metaphor, or is there some reality being described? That God is the source of all life. He is the Creator and as Creator all creation exists because He not only made it but He continually sustains it. Do we understand that trusting God and opening our hearts to Christ results in the Spirit literally changing us, not just the ideas we believe, but the very fabric of our being. We are brought back into unity with Him! Sin causes division, separates us from God and causes division and disharmony. Truth and love brings us back into harmony with God and heaven!

> **For by him all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, **visible and invisible**, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**. Colossians 1:16-17 NIV84

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "Christ disappointed…" What is false education? How much to we see in the world today? Should Christians join groups or parties that promote false education? What about political parties that promote godless evolution?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

SHARING campaign. November *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

If you watch online, please go to Pineknoll and request your free copy of their new book, ***Conversations about God*** by Graham Maxwell, with Louis Venden and edited by Jon Paulien and they will ship it to you at no cost, **anywhere in the world**!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 10
Education in Arts and Science

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "Education includes…" What does it mean to teach arts and sciences from a biblical perspective?

I would ask, as a psychiatrist, what does it mean to practice psychiatry from a biblical perspective?

What I have found from many Christian mental health providers is that it means the practitioner doesn't oppose the patient's Christian beliefs, or the Christian mental health provider uses Bible verses or Christian books to support certain concepts. When I have asked various Christian practitioners how they integrate their Christianity into their practice of psychiatry or psychology, most haven't. They are just supportive of their patients who want to believe in Christ, but their practice of psychiatry is the humanistic practices they learned in their school.

The lesson points out that it is insufficient to teach various subjects disconnected from the reality of God as Creator and how all life and reality has its origins and its sustenance in God. So, we must learn how to integrate our understanding of various subjects, including science and the arts, into our understanding of God's reality.

For me it all starts with diagnosis—if the diagnosis is wrong, then the treatment is wrong. And diagnosis of what is wrong requires we know what healthy looks like. Thus, the Bible informs us of God's original design for humankind. We must know God's design laws for life—the law of love, liberty, worship, truth, exertion, and the physical laws of gravity and physics etc. As we know these then we can see where sin severs God's design laws and causes damage. Then we can work to bring healing by intervening to restore people back into harmony with God's design.

So the best approach for me is the integrative evidence based approach in which we harmonize Scripture, science/nature and life experiences coming to conclusions that are supported by all three threads, when we have evidence from all three threads.

During my residency for every hour I spent studying the psychiatric theorists, Freud, Jung, Adler and others, I spent 2 hours studying the Bible and other Christian sources to discover the truths that were supported by Scripture and developed my own understanding of the faculties of the mind that is still the most comprehensive of any model out there. Eventually, I wrote the book *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind* which is a model for our minds—which is analogous to a computer's software.

I have continued developing this integrated approach and later wrote *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life* in which I document how our minds choose our beliefs but our beliefs, including the God we worship, changes our brains which change our health. And only a God of love, and the methods of truth, love, freedom are healing to us.

Sin is always in some way breaking God's designs for life, which is always damaging to us and others and will result in death unless remedied by our Creator.

What about the arts—what are included in the arts?

According to Wikipedia the arts include:

- visual arts (including architecture, ceramics, drawing, filmmaking, painting, photography, and sculpting)
- literary arts (including fiction, drama, poetry, and prose)
- performing arts (including dance, music, and theatre)
- culinary arts (including cooking, chocolate making and winemaking)

And none of those falls into my area of expertise—so class, what would it mean to teach these from a Biblical perspective?

In the second paragraph the lesson states, "we need God's Word to inform the teaching of every discipline, from humanities to molecular biology."
I agree that without God's Word studying any subject will ultimately lead to false conclusions—but what happens if we study God's Word without the balance of the other domains—science/nature and life experiences? Then we can misread the Scripture and draw all kinds of conclusions that are erroneous, like the earth being the center of the universe, or the earth being flat, etc.

What happens if we read the Scripture through the human imposed law lens? Then we can make all kinds of superstitious conclusions that are not in harmony with reality, like the food one eats can make one morally clean or unclean, or the way one washes their hands can make one morally clean or unclean.

SUNDAY

The first paragraph states, "There is evidence of the living God in all of His creation."

What evidence of the living God from creation have you found to be most conclusive?

- the complexity of life itself?
- the circle of love in all living systems and organism?
- the coded information in the DNA/RNA of all living organism?
- the failure of science to provide any testable and reproducible evidence that life comes from non-living matter, but we have life coming from living matter every day all around us?

Read the second paragraph, "Take the human gestation period…" Do you find this compelling evidence? Would sharing this paragraph with someone who doesn't believe in God be strong evidence to persuade them? Or might they laugh at it—why might they laugh at this paragraph? Because this is almost superstitious in making associations and meanings that are not objective, but subjective.

- Is nine months of gestation strong evidence for God versus 7 months or 10 months?
- Is human fertilization from one egg versus elephant or whale fertilization from one egg strong evidence for God? Is fertilization from one egg better evidence for God than a cat or dog that has fertilization from more than one egg? Wouldn't fertilization from more than one egg show more love for more children and greater diversity of offspring and wouldn't that be more evidence of God?
- Does the fact that the uterus grows under the heart indicate God's love? Is the pump in the chest the organ of our being that loves? No, we love with our minds as we interpret and choose to love and our brains respond by firing appropriate circuits, which activate various pathways including the vagal nerve that innervates our internal organs we feel that love throughout our bodies. But the love doesn't originate or even get experienced the chest, it originates in the mind and is processed in the brain, which transmits it to our bodies. We use the terminology with "all my heart" but in the Bible the heart refers to the mind where we think. "Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, 'Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?'" Luke 5:22 NIV84
- What about the idea that the abdomen extends outward so the mother can see and be aware of the growing fetus, is this strong evidence of God's awareness of us? If the human mother is obese and doesn't see her abdomen grow does that mean she will be less aware of her pregnancy? If an obese woman did get pregnant and was unaware of it until she went into labor, should she conclude from this that God must not be aware of her?

I find this entire paragraph extremely poor evidence, that is poorly thought out, with weak associations that project in meaning that is nearly superstitious in nature. It creates associations and attaches meaning not inherent in the objects themselves.

For instance, a critic could say:

- sometimes a fertilized egg ends in miscarriage and death, therefore God is the author of death
- sometimes a fertilized egg results in a molar pregnancy which is a mass of hair, teeth, bone all mashed together without any person so God is the author of chaos
- some women are impregnated by rape so God is the author of rape

No, the much better evidence for me is in understanding God's design, that it does take two individuals, who when operating as God designed, join themselves together in love and literally give of themselves to pro-create a new being in their image. This is much more objective evidence that confirms Scripture in many ways:

- It does take two individuals—male and female to procreate
- It requires them to actually give something of themselves for this new individual to be created

- As God designed, it is an act of love and is filled with pleasure and joy which bonds the two in closer union
- The Bible account of Eve being created from Adam but then all other humans being born of women who is impregnated by a man is biologically accurate. Adam, with an X and Y chromosome possessed the genetic material for a woman to be created. A women does not need two X chromosomes, only one; every cell of a woman's body actually turns off one of the X chromosomes. So, Adam's body could be used to create Eve. But Eve could not be used to create Adam. This is quite profound that an ancient writer, without any molecular science, would write the Bible to have a woman coming from a man. All observable human history has every man being born of a woman and in fact, almost all fertility cults make woman the mother of creation, worship the feminine and we even call nature "mother" nature. But, in reality, a woman could never procreate, or be the mother of anything without a man and Eve did not have the genetic information to create a man. So, again the Bible is quite accurate and this is compelling evidence for confidence in the Bible record. Ask the critic to explain it—they can't and are quite taken aback when it is presented to them in this way.
- The coded information in our genetic material and the epigenetic changes we experience through life choices and how these changes are passed along to our children affirm what the Bible says that we create beings in our image and our sins do pass down 3-4 generations through epigenetic alterations that we inflict upon ourselves. No naturalistic explanation exists for how the DNA coded information came about, it requires an intelligence to code information. Further, Darwin's theory of mutations over millions of years has been proven false and the Bible's view of our actions changing us and passing down the generations has been proven true.
- The love and bonding a mother experiences with her child after the child is born and how a loving father will sacrifice for the protection and welfare of his wife and child, which perfectly reveals the Triune love of the Godhead each member selflessly lifting up the others.

So, if we are going to use examples from nature, we need to make them objective and not mystical and superstitious that read in associations that are almost magical in their presentation.

The lessons asks us to read Romans 1:18-20:

> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

And then the lesson states, "Paul…says that those who reject God will be 'without excuse' on Judgment Day because enough about Him can be learned from what He has made. In other words, they won't be able to plead ignorance!"

If we keep reading in Romans Paul goes onto to say that they gave up the knowledge of God and preferred images made with their own hands, and that their minds became darkened, depraved, and

futile. What is being described? What law? Why do their minds become darkened like this? Because of the law of worship—by beholding we are changed! We do change, characterologically and biologically based on what we admire and worship. It is how reality works and is testable and reproducible. Only a God of love as Jesus revealed is healing to us, all other god-concepts are damaging.

Understanding this reality, then what is the "judgment"? Is it a legal judgment or is it the accurate diagnosis of what happens when we violate God's design laws?

But the question of judgment is confusing because in the Bible there are at least four judgments:

The First Judgment:

- "Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when **You are judged**.'" Romans 3:4 NKJV
- Satan lied about God.
- Jesus reveals the truth about God.
- **We must judge: Is God like Satan says—or is God like Jesus revealed?** (Elijah Carmel)
- This judgment of ours determines whether we choose to trust God and open our hearts or not.
- "I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment** has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.'" Revelation 14:6, 7

The Second Judgment:

- "'Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. '**So I will come near to you for judgment**.'" Malachi 3:1–5

- This is the Judgment of the Great Physician, diagnosing what is wrong and determining the best therapeutic intervention.
    - God bringing "judgments" upon rebellious people throughout history to alert, to convict, to redeem, to protect, to redirect, and to keep open the avenue for Messiah (Flood, Sodom, captivity).
- Jesus' work in the heavenly sanctuary to determine (judge):
    1. Who has trusted Him and given Him access to their hearts and
    2. What residual elements of sin remain to be removed in order to perfect them for the resurrection and second coming

Third Judgment:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge**. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Revelation 20:4–6
- "Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?" 1 Corinthians 6:3
- During the 1,000 years, the saints review the history of what transpired and the lives of the lost and of angels, and judge God's actions in saving who is saved and not saving who is not saved, which confirms that every lost person is lost because they actually don't want to be in heaven, so that no doubt is left in any mind as to why the unrepentant are not in heaven.

Fourth Judgment

- "I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books." Revelation 20:11, 12
- And what is recorded in the books of heaven?
- The names are written there, and in the Bible what does name represent? Character! And what determines our character? Who we have chosen to trust—either opening our heart to Jesus and allowing Him in or clinging to fear and selfishness.
- "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned**." Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84
- What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what actually is.
- The end of the 1,000 years:
    - New Jerusalem is on earth and the gates are open and no one comes in.
    - The wicked acknowledge they were wrong and God was right—but they attack the city anyway.
    - They then experience the fire of unveiled truth and love and cry for the mountains to fall upon them, reaping what they have sown: eternal non-existence.
    - And all the saved judge that God could have done nothing more to save them.
    - There is no human law court determining guilt or innocence and imposing punishments—that is Satan's lie.

So what judgment was the lesson referring to? The fourth or final judgment.

And what is the wrath of God? It is what Paul describes in verses 24,26,28, "therefore God gave them up" and what happens when the Life Giver gives them up? What happens when God stops intervening to hold at bay the results of rebellion?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What happens if a parent is holding a rebellious child by the hand who has jumped off the edge of a tall building, and the child is screaming and fighting and kicking and every time the parent pulls the child to the roof the child jumps again and again and again, what happens if the parent finally lets the child go?

Why will the child die in that circumstance—is the parent using power to inflict death on the child, or is death the unavoidable result of violating the design for life—for jumping off a building?

The following is from the book *Hard Saying of the Bible*, by Intervarsity Press, which is a well-done Bible commentary. We are reading their comments on this passage of Romans:

> In some sense, God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause or own disintegration. P 542
>
> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the *inevitability of human debasement* which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). P 543
>
> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves. P 543
>
> In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. P 543
>
> Kaiser, W., et al., *Hard Saying of the Bible*, Intervarsity Press, 1996

Read the last paragraph, "Especially in the day and age in which…" I did not like the use of the phrase "from the assumption that God is the Creator…" because I do not believe it is an assumption. I believe the evidence is overwhelming, testable, reproducible, compelling and that we do not assume that God exists and created all things, we can know it to be true because the evidence reveals it.

The evidence includes the examples we have already given above, but every testable element in life is consistent with the biblical worldview and every testable element disproves the godless worldview:

- complexity coming from chaos without intelligent input; or complexity coming from chaos with intelligent input, which does science prove to be true?
- life coming from non-living matter or life coming from other living organisms, which does science prove to be true?
- things adapt and change from over millions of years through mutation to the DNA code or things adapt and change from generation to generation via epigenetics and there are no mutations to the DNA that advance the species? Again science confirms the Biblical model.

Further problems with the godless view of origins are well described in Nancy Pearcy's book *Finding Truth* (I want to thank Marilyn Holm an online listener for gifting me this book) writes:

> The origin of the universe has given rise to a puzzle known as the fine-tuning problem. The fundamental physical constants of the universe are exquisitely balanced, as though on a knife's edge, to sustain life. Things like the force of gravity, the strong nuclear force, the weak nuclear force, the electromagnetic force, the ratio of the mass of the proton and the electron, and many other factors have just the right value needed to make life possible. If any of these critical numbers were changed even slightly, the universe could not sustain any form of life. For example, if the strength of gravity were smaller or larger than its current value by only one part in 10^{60} (1 followed by 60 zeroes), the universe would be uninhabitable. (page 25)

Thus, as people who believes in God and creation we stand on solid evidence. We must reject the lies that to believe in God is blind faith, assumption, non-scientific, unreasonable and start speaking the truth that those who reject God and cling to a godless theory of origins are the ones who deny reality, reject evidence, and hold to beliefs based on faith without evidence.

MONDAY

The Beauty of Holiness—what is that? What is holiness?

I want to suggest holiness is perfect harmony with God, ultimately in every domain of existence—thus holiness is healthiness. Anything that violates God's design laws for life is unholy and damages and destroys. God, through His agencies, is working to restore us to holiness, which restores us to harmony with God and results in eternal life.

Here are some historic quotes, what do you think?

> Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love. AA 51.2

Would this description be living in harmony with God and His design laws for life? Would it be the new covenant of having the law written on the heart and mind?

Consider this quote:

> At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments,—"Christ our righteousness." [What is this describing? The same author states elsewhere that "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." COL311] There are clear, decided distinctions to be restored and exemplified to the world in holding aloft the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. **The beauty of holiness is to appear in its native luster in contrast with the deformity and darkness of the disloyal**, **those who have revolted from the law of God.** Thus we acknowledge God, **and recognize His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and throughout His earthly dominions**. [What does this mean? What is this law? What kind of law? Is related to the final message of mercy, to worshipping Him who made the heavens, earth, sea? Is it connected to holiness? Is it beautiful to be restored to God's perfect design for life? Can one be perfect, sinless, flawless, without any defect or deformity while violating God's law? Is any defect, deformity or flaw beautiful? So, what is the beauty of holiness? Restoration to God's design, harmony with God's law, healing!] His authority should be kept distinct and plain before the world; and **no laws are to be acknowledged that come in collision with the laws of Jehovah**. [What does this mean? Does it mean a specific commandment change or does it mean the entire concept of law, that we are not to embrace and teach God's law as functioning like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed punishments? Do you think it is beautiful to imagine a god that would use power to torture and kill his creatures? But isn't this what all of Christianity teaches that a holy God must do to unrepentant sinners? Why because they have accepted the lie about God's law. When we return to worshipping the Creator and present the 3 Angel's message as we were called to do, then we will glorify God and call people out of that fallen system of confusion.].... CET 207.2

What about laws of man that restrict religious liberty, that restrict church attendance where we share the gospel of Jesus Christ—would they be in conflict with the laws of God, the law of love and bringing people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ so they can experience eternal life?

What if those laws of man that restrict religious liberty, that restrict church attendance are done to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect human life—are they in harmony with God's law or breaking it?

What is more important to the Christian, more temporal life, or eternal life? What if we exchange eternal life for more temporal life? What if we value our temporal life more than the eternal life of our neighbor? What if we prioritize earthly health over sharing the gospel and allow the government to close our churches to protect earthly life, but we fail to share the gospel with people who never come to a saving relationship with Jesus and thus are lost eternally?

Back to the question of holiness, consider this historic quote:

> **True holiness is wholeness in the service of God. This is the condition of true Christian living**. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. **Self is not to be cherished**. He who lives to himself is not a Christian.—Christ's Object Lessons, 48, 49. ChS 235.3

Would this include being so afraid of contracting a disease we isolate ourselves away and stop our ministry for God? Would it include shunning lepers or isolating and closing our churches during COVID-19?

What is holiness? Restoration of the law of love into the heart and mind of the individual such that we love like God loves, Jesus said:

> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven**. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [Notice in the context of love Jesus uses the example of design law in nature] If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5:43-6:1 NIV84).

What does it mean to love your enemies?

As events unfold and we approach the end of time we will face temptations like Jesus face, persecution, ridicule, imprisonment, perhaps even death—did you hear about more beheadings of Christians by Islamic extremists in the last couple of weeks?

And when we face such outrageous injustice, what is the issue? We are being tempted to fight back, to hate, to be selfish—but it is in the face of these very unjust actions that tempt us, that we who surrender our lives to Jesus, who trust our souls to our Savior will be cleansed from sin and restored to perfect righteousness through the indwelling Spirit—it is then we love like Jesus loves and are children of our Father in heaven.

Read from GSB Chapter 15, p. 205:

> October 2, 2006 started out like so many other days in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: up early, complete morning chores, a hearty breakfast, and then off to school. Thirteen-year-old Marian Fisher and her eleven-year-old sister, Barbie, had no idea what would transpire that day. So off they went, to their one-room school house in Nickel Mines Village, Pennsylvania.

> At 10:25 a.m., Charles Carl Roberts IV, a 32-year-old milk truck driver, entered the school carrying a 9mm pistol. He then ordered the boys he found to carry lumber, a shotgun, a stun-gun, wires, chains, nails, tools and other items into the school. Next, he sent out fifteen boys, a pregnant woman, and two women with infants, then nailed two-by-fours and two-by-sixes across the entrance.
>
> He used strips of plastic and lengths of wire to tie the ankles and wrists of the ten remaining elementary-school students, all girls. It is unclear what his true intentions were, but when the police arrived, he became angry, desperate and increasingly agitated. At 11:07 a.m., when it became obvious he was intent on killing the girls, love stepped in.
>
> Thirteen-year-old Marian Fisher stood up and asked to be shot first. Offering her life in the hope her sister and friends would be set free, she was heard by the survivors to say, "Shoot me and leave the other ones loose." The gunman shot and killed Marian. No sooner had her lifeless body crumpled to the floor than her eleven-year-old sister, Barbie, stood up and said, "Shoot me next," hoping to save the other girls. The gunman then shot Barbie. She was wounded in the hand, leg, and shoulder but survived.

Do you see the beauty of holiness contrasted with the ugliness of sinfulness in this story? Do you see love for our enemies in this story? Do you see the righteousness of God in this story?

What about in the world today? What is being promoted as the way to advance, the way to succeed, the way to get ahead?

Read the bottom paragraph, "As with everything…" What is considered beautiful by the world's standard?

The lesson asks, "What are some 'beautiful' things that are not necessarily holy and good?"

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read 1Timothy 6:9,10 and asks what pursuits does Paul warn us to avoid?

> People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. NIV84

What do you hear in this text?

What is the problem with love for money?

If we love money what do we not love?

What kinds of griefs do people experience who love money?

Read second paragraph, "Notice in 1 Timothy…" What kinds of errors are people experts in today?

- godless evolutionism—think of all the experts in the world who teach this lie with such assurance—and then all the lies that stem from this…
- mental health programs and treatments and theories that are from a godless perspective
- human sexuality from a godless perspective—marriage, commitment, fidelity, binary sexuality is just a religious construct and offers no benefit
- pagan views of God, the god that imposes law and must use power to inflict punishment upon sinners and requires legal payment not to—there are many experts in this error
- others?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible draws…" What is the basis of all wisdom? God and the knowledge of God, which means His character, His design laws, His methods, purposes, protocols—how reality works and why.

What are some examples of the wisdom of God is seen as foolishness to the world and how the world is truly foolish?

> The more you give the more you receive—understanding God's design law and how love works this is wise. The more love you give the more love you receive. The more breath you give away the more air you take in. But the world it doesn't make sense, the more you hoard, take, pile up the more you receive, the more you give away the less you have. Thus, the world promotes selfishness, which ultimately isolates and cuts people off from others, and the source of life resulting in death.

Now that the election is over I can point out some foolishness that I saw from many Christians who were claiming to be wise without people accusing me of being political because this information can no longer be used for voting as the election is over. But this information can be used to learn to discern, to become wise and not be taken in by the foolishness of this world's ways even when it is couched in Christian dogma.

One of the principles of God's kingdom is that man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. This means we cannot truly judge another person's character or heart, only God can. But more than this, we cannot know a person through the media, we cannot know someone by reports of others, we cannot know someone without actually knowing someone.

In the recent election there were many Christians conducting lectures and writing articles about the character of the various candidates, but as far as I know, not one Christian doing this personally knew

the candidates. This means they were making their conclusions based on a public persona filtered through various media outlets with imperfect and partial information often distorted by the biases of the reporters.

We cannot know a person's character from the media—even when we see that person speak themselves, it is still a public persona, acted and presented for effect. We still don't know the heart.

- Consider the way some take God's actions in the Old Testament and God's own thunderings and threatenings to create a false picture of God—why? Because they don't actually know God. When we know God we see all those same stories in a different light that confirm God's character of love.
- Consider Bill Cosby before his conviction—what would most people have thought of his character? But all of that was a public persona that the evidence presented at his trial exposed as false.

Taking facts of confirmed sin from history as evidence of character—i.e. confirmed visits with a prostitute as evidence of character.

Hmmm…is this wisdom applied or foolishness of the world to think we can use that to know someone's character today based on their sins of the past?

So, if we had confirmed historical facts that someone was a murderer, then we can take that as evidence of bad character and we should not follow them as a leader? Moses, for instance, when he came to lead the people out of Israel—if we were wise we would oppose Moses as having bad character because he was a known murderer? Or David, after Bathsheba and Uriah? When was David's character the most godly, the most mature, before or after Bathsheba and Uriah incident? It was after! That incident brought him to the point of true repentance and he became a man after God's own heart.

So, the Christian that looks to past mistakes, without asking the question of whether there is evidence of Christian repentance and maturing in character is being foolish.

Drawing conclusion based on interpersonal style to determine character—in other words someone who is blunt, direct, doesn't seem to have a lot of empathy, says things that are often hurtful, comes across as rude, must mean that the person has bad character right? Not necessarily—if you don't know them personally, you don't know. What if the person has Asperger's syndrome? I have many patients with this disorder and they all are good-hearted people who really have high morals, want to do the best job they can, but have brains that don't see interpersonal cues, don't empathize like others do, they are direct, and so are experienced by others as blunt, rude, uncaring, mean, when they are not being so—and the higher their intelligence the worse their interpersonal style—even when they are seeking to help people because they care about people.

Did you ever see the program Bones, Temperance Brennan was the anthropologist who was very compassionate and caring but was depicted as someone with Asperger's and even though she had a

tender heart she came across as rude and offensive all the time because of how she said things so inappropriately.

So, again, to judge someone's character without actually knowing someone personally is foolish—yet many Christians get caught up in doing this all the time and thus are manipulated by the media and others.

A better approach is to assess the person's ability for the position one is being considered for based on the evidence of effectiveness of their actions for that role. For instance, I have a patient with Asperger's who is a pharmacist and is extremely efficient at their job—accurate, rarely if ever makes an error, has caught multiple errors from other pharmacists and technicians, preventing injury and even death, is able to process prescriptions quickly, more quickly than most other pharmacists—but despite this skill has lost multiple jobs because comes across as rude and uncaring when answering questions because is direct and blunt. Whereas, other pharmacists without Asperger's and with great interpersonal skills, but without as good attention to details have made errors that have injured people yet keep their jobs and people prefer the one that injures them because that pharmacist makes them feel better.

What is exposed in this story? The foolishness of valuing feelings over facts, and how we can be led astray by our feelings into ignoring facts and making false conclusions—thus the Bible teaches that we are tempted by our feelings, but truth sets us free.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Many teach that matters possesses…" I agree with this completely, God is the source of all life and He is the sustainer of all life. God is not bound by the laws of nature as they emanate from Him and are sustained by Him. To the degree it works to advance His kingdom God manages the outworking of His laws, but that management is via means and mechanisms of God that interface and connect throughout all reality in ways we cannot fully comprehend and thus are never breaking of His laws or even changing of them, but managing them.

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SHARING campaign: November *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the *Come and Reason Australia* Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the Remedy App, just go to the App store and update.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month. There are now more than 30 blogs translated into Polish as well as *Could It Be This Simple?* all available on our website—thank you Mirra Huber!

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

Please go to **Pineknoll.org** and request your free copy of ***Conversations about God*** by Graham Maxwell, with Louis Venden and edited by Jon Paulien, and they will ship it to you at no cost, **anywhere in the world**!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 11
The Christian and Work

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The first paragraph points out that God gave Adam and Eve work to do in Eden before sin—why?

Human beings are created in God's image, and God is the Creator. In the likeness of God, we have a built-in desire to be industrious, to engage in meaningful activity, and to use our energy, creativity, and ingenuity to build, construct, devise, make, or otherwise produce something of value, consequence, or purpose.

Such creativity is built into our being, and when we do engage in meaningful activity, whether it be work for the sake of making money to provide for one's family, or gardening, because one loves flower, or drawing, painting, writing, playing music, caring for animals, being a homemaker, or any of a myriad of other industrious activities, we experience growth and a greater sense of wellbeing, meaning, and purpose as human beings. Our sense of wellbeing, of usefulness, of confidence, and even joy all increase.

Is work, doing, active engagement in meaningful activity a means of education?

Did God want Adam and Eve to learn through their tending of Eden?

Consider this description from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> The holy pair [Adam and Eve] were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels. The mysteries of the visible universe—"the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16)—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. **The laws and operations of nature**, which have engaged men's study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. **They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life**. With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that plays among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds," the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were open to the study of our first parents. **On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God's name was written**. The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power. They were

> ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude. PP 50.3
>
> **So long as they remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase**. They would be constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unfailing love of God. PP 51.1

Was tending the garden a means of education? Would their tending of the garden require them to learn about all the various forms of life and discover more things as that life grew and interacted with other life around it?

Did you hear something we have to look forward to in an earth made new? Never ending discovery and learning!

Read second paragraph, "In this 'in-between time'…" In this world of sin, does work have additional benefits that were not needed or seen in Eden?

Regular work has multiple benefits:

- **Improved self-esteem**, from actual accomplishment and achievement
- **Better physical health**, from increased physical activity and the reduced firing stress pathways as we experience satisfaction with completing tasks, or fulfilling our life goals, aspirations, and dreams. Additionally, physical activity produces factors in the brain that causes the neurons to stay healthy, improves the ability of neurons to make new connections, thus improving learning and reducing the risk of dementia as we age.
- **Development of our brain circuits** that control physical movement, which in turn improves our thinking and reasoning. When we engage in physical activity, the striatal pathways in our brain, that initiate motor movement, develop, but these pathways not only initiate physical movement, they also initiate thinking, so as we develop and use these pathways, we improve our ability to initiate thoughts. The cerebellum, which is involved in making our physical movements smooth and coordinated, also helps smooth and coordinate our thoughts. Thus, when we stay physically active, we ultimately improve our thinking processes.
- **Blesses and benefits those around us.** As we engage in useful activity, it results in blessings in our environment, whether we are creating works of art or music to brighten the heart, or are mopping, vacuuming, and picking up trash to create clean environments, or growing food, all useful activity blesses those around us.
- **Reduces burdens on others.** By staying active, we reduce the likelihood of our own disability and the need for others to care for us.
- **Harmonizes with the law of love,** which is the principle of giving. The more we give, the more we receive. In every living system, the various parts are active in giving support to the other parts. The lungs actively work to give oxygen to the blood, which the heart sends through the body, but the heart benefits from the oxygen provided by the lungs. The digestive organs fill the blood with nutrients, but receive oxygen from the lungs and circulation sent by the heart. In a community, active people are constantly blessing those around them, while

simultaneously being blessed from others. We receive benefits of electricity, clean air, water, emergency services, road crews that keep the roads clear, and so much more from people we will most likely never meet.

- **Reduces the opportunity for temptation.** This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of useful work. Any time spent in usefulness not only produces all the blessings above, but is time unavailable for engagement in destructive and harmful activities. When we are not engaged in useful activities, we are more vulnerable to temptations that result in harm to ourselves and others.

When we are active, industrious, and engaged in meaningful employment (not necessarily for pay), we are healthier, happier, and experience greater peace.

Conversely, idleness, a failure to engage one's abilities in development or meaningful application, is damaging to one's wellbeing. It undermines a person's dignity, while increasing feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame, and worthlessness, which leads to pleasure-seeking and other acting-out behaviors in an attempt to alleviate the sense of inadequacy. As the old saying goes*, idle hands are the devil's workshop*.

Doing nothing, refusing to engage in constructive activity, and not investing one's energies and abilities into meaningful employment (when one is capable), degrades the human being. Understanding this, what action could people take if they wanted to demoralize others — to destroy other people's dignity and undermine their God-given individuality? Take away something God designed for their health and development:

- Take away their freedom—which stifles development and creates shadow people
- Take away nutritious food—which undermines physical health, impairs development and reduces autonomy
- Take away social connections—which undermines both mental and physical health and reduces development and growth
- Take away usefulness, meaningful employment and create programs or systems that free the capable from useful labor. They could promote public policies designed to give money, food, clothing, housing, cell phones, cars, and a variety of other resources to otherwise capable people who choose not to work—which undermines mental, physical and spiritual health and development.

I want to be clear: I am not concerned about politics; I am concerned about people — about their health, wellbeing, and integrity.

Throughout time, many others have recognized what I'm saying here:

- "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." — The apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:10

- "Working moms, and increasingly working dads, don't want a government handout, but they do need a hand up." — Madeleine Kunin, Democrat, Governor of Vermont and U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland

- "If we take the route of the permanent handout, the American character will itself be impoverished." — Richard Nixon, Republican, 37th President of the USA

- "The desperately poor may accept handouts, because they feel they have to. For those who consider themselves at least middle class, however, anything that smacks of a handout is not desired. Instead, they want their economic power back." — Robert Shiller, Nobel Laureate in Economics and Sterling Professor of Economics at Yale

- "At Year Up, our students — low income 18- to 24-year-olds — come to us having already faced substantial obstacles in life. They are not in search of a handout; what they want most of all is the ability to take ownership of their own futures." — Gerald Chertavian, founder and CEO of Year Up; has worked with urban youth for more than 25 years.

I have seen the destruction of wellbeing, the demoralization that occurs when people are given things that they could otherwise earn — whether it be from well-meaning parents, family, friends, church members, or society.

When we receive handouts that we don't believe we merit, we experience guilt, loss of esteem, a falling sense of worth, and often feel guilt and inadequacy. This leads to an unconscious need to alleviate the guilt with justification for the handout, contributing to either a sense of entitlement and identifying oneself as being downtrodden, mistreated, or wronged in the past and, thus, the handout is simply compensation and is deserved, or by experiencing physical or mental symptoms of illness that justifies the handout.

Let me be clear here as well: I am not saying that there are no people suffering from real physical and mental illness; there are, and they need our compassion and help. What I am saying is that when handouts are received by those who could otherwise provide for themselves, it causes in them a need to justify the handout, and this can take a variety of forms — either by seeing oneself as deserving, because of some perceived social injustice, or by experiencing some physical or mental problem.

When we divert our energy, our mind, and abilities away from useful work—activities that may or may not generate income, but are beneficial (housework, lawn care, gardening, sewing, painting, sculpting, building, writing, playing musical instruments, drawing, developing systems or programs of education, parenting, coaching, and so many more)—and instead use the majority of our energies on entertainments, diversions, and indulgences (video games, TV, amusement parks, playing games), we undermine our physical and mental well-being. We become internally restless, lose our sense of peace, and often look for actions to change our feeling state, too frequently in alcohol or other substances, or more entertainment and avoidance of real-life responsibilities.

So I think the Jews understood this and that to fail to teach our children a useful trade, to fail to educate them properly is to raise a criminal and this is what we have seen with failing school systems in America.

This also gives insight into what happened to the Antediluvians that so quickly degraded themselves into thugs and violent selfish exploiters of others, so hardened against God and love that there were only 8 people willing to get on the ark. And it gives insight into why God changed the climate so dramatically at the time of the flood—to make living on earth harder, meaning to survive it required more useful work to provide shelter, food, clothing, which reduced time for self-indulgence and thus reduced the corruption of human character.

Useful work is a huge blessing to us and, as we engage in it, we are not only healthier and happier, but we also grow and expand our abilities, while coming closer to the image of our Creator God!

The real trick is to find useful work that you enjoy, that fulfills your passions, desires, dreams, and aspirations—again, whether it results in monetary income or not. The happiest people are those who are productive people, so find your work and live life to its fullest!

Do you see again how a design law view of things brings reality into focus and makes things understandable and demonstrates God's ways are always reasonable and healthy?

SUNDAY

The Many Sides of Work: What is work?

According to the dictionary this word, work can be a noun, adjective or verb and has multiple meanings:

Noun:

- exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something; labor; toil.
- employment, as in some form of industry, especially as a means of earning one's livelihood: to look for work.
- one's place of employment: Don't phone him at work.
- something on which exertion or labor is expended; a task or undertaking: The students finished their work in class.
- materials, things, etc., on which one is working or is to work.
- a product of exertion, labor, or activity: musical works.
- works,
  (used with a singular or plural verb) a place or establishment for manufacturing (often used in combination): ironworks.
  the working parts of a machine: the works of a watch.
  Theology: righteous deeds.

- Physics. force times the distance through which it acts; specifically, the transference of energy equal to the product of the component of a force that acts in the direction of the motion of the point of application of the force and the distance through which the point of application moves.

Adjective:

- of, for, or concerning work: work clothes.
- working (def. 18).

Verb:

- to do work; labor.
- to be employed, especially as a means of earning one's livelihood: He hasn't worked for six weeks.
- to act or operate effectively: We all agree that this plan works.
- to attain a specified condition, as by repeated movement: The nails worked loose.

What is work to you?

Studies have found that there are three types of workers and only one type of worker is happy—the other two are not.

The three types of workers are:

- Work is a job—these people work for the paycheck, working for the weekend, looking for the days off and do only what they have to do because they need the employment. And these type of workers are not happy. To them work is a drudgery and toil
- Work is a career—these people are working for the advancement, their ego is caught up in the work and they feel good when they get a raise, a bonus, a company car, vacation package, corner office, promotion to vice-president or front parking slot. These persons are generally not happy because no matter the advancement there is always another that they immediately set their sights on.
- Work is a calling—for these individuals work is what they were called to do and they feel they are fulfilling their purpose in life and these are the happiest workers

And studies have found that there are these three types of workers in every job: professionals like doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers that are just working a job or on a career path and are unhappy, while there are janitors that feel called to their profession and are content and happy.

But what if your calling isn't able to actually meet the objective needs of your life and family? Say, you are called to do art or write music, but you can't make enough money to support yourself or your family doing this? What then?

Then, I recommend several strategies:

- Careers with approximations or associations with the calling, such as an artist being a graphic designer, or interior designer, or fashion designer, or advertising designer etc. A musician, if can't directly get employment as a musician then pursue music therapy, or music education, or sound engineering or work in the music industry in some other fashion.
- If strategies like this don't suffice, then another strategy would be to find a job that serves to fuel (provide time and resources to pursue your calling) such as a job where you work 2-3 days a week for income and have the other days off to pursue your calling. Jobs such as nursing, paramedic, or other jobs in which you have organized your living situation to be able to do so. Then the income producing job isn't drudgery it is valued because it gives you the ability to pursue your calling.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Proverbs 21:25-26:

> The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing. NIV84

What do you hear in this passage?

What death is being described—is it primarily the first death or is the second death being described—or both?

Is there any wisdom here? Is it based on God's law? What law?

Should this wisdom be built into our public policies—i.e. work and achievement, receiving advancement, award, success based on one's application and investment of their energies in accomplishment?

Do you realize this is a conservative principle and a principle which is ridiculed and attacked by those on the left with policies and attitudes that suggest we should give every child a participation award because we don't want anyone getting their feelings hurt, or we shouldn't praise the A student's paper or the excellent musical performance in front of the other students because it might make those who are struggle feel bad? Or we pass to the next grade or graduate students who are not able to pass the classes because we don't want them to feel bad.

Such practices are corrosive and corrupting to everyone involved as they create lies. While all of us are equal in moral worth, we are not all equal in ability and therefore cannot all achieve the same levels of performance or succeed in the same line of activity. To suggest we can by giving everyone the same award, grade, or passing to the next level creates false expectations, undermines the drive to excellence and corrupts society.

This is not about politics—it is about godly principles and godly principles do not change by popular vote, nor by desire, nor by legislation. They are constants that don't' change based on politics, they just are.

This is also part of a culture war we talked about a couple of weeks ago—how the Christian, who believes in the Bible and follows the gospel commission seeks to bring God's truth to bear which will destroy all lies and therefore cultures built upon lies by changing the hearts of people back into harmony with God's designs and methods.

I have written several blogs recently describing God's principles and how when they are applied to the lives of people or nations those people or nations experience greater health and success, but when God's principles are violated injury and damage always occurs. That is how design law works.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote about the USA:

> And he had two horns like a lamb." The lamblike horns indicate youth, innocence, and gentleness, fitly representing the character of the United States when presented to the prophet as "coming up" in 1798. Among the Christian exiles who first fled to America and sought an asylum from royal oppression and priestly intolerance were many who determined to establish a government upon the broad foundation of civil and religious liberty. Their views found place in the Declaration of Independence, which sets forth the **great truth that "all men are created equal" and endowed with the inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**." [this is describing equality of moral worth as human beings, not equality in ability, or equality in achievement or success in any endeavor.] And the Constitution guarantees to the people the right of self-government, providing that representatives elected by the popular vote shall enact and administer the laws. Freedom of religious faith was also granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. **Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity.** The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth (The Great Controversy, p. 441).

This author goes on to describe how these principles will be undermined from the political right when legislators will conform to pressure from a realignment between Protestants and Papal powers to restrict liberty. But, is that the only way for civil and religious liberty to be taken away? Do we get locked into one means of undermining liberty and fail to see other means of doing the same thing, or do we value the principles and methods of God such that we recognize violations of God's law from any direction?

Are these principles of Republicanism and Protestantism, which are conservative principles of civil and religious liberty, being attacked in America today?

And are the principles of hard work and individual application and achievement being attacked today?

A chart published this year at the Smithsonian Institute entitled:

"**Aspects & Assumption of Whiteness and White Culture in the United States**"

criticized several aspects of American culture as being racist and therefore something to be opposed. Here are bullets from that chart, that the chart labelled as whitism and racist and thus needs to be opposed in our society:

> **"Protestant Work Ethic**
> - Hard work is the key to success
> - Work before play
> - 'If you didn't meet your goals you didn't work hard enough.'"
>
> The list is credited to a diversity consultant named Judith H. Katz**,** who has written about race for many years. In the late 1970s, she wrote *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training.* She later wrote *Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity.* (In the 1990s, the Boston Herald called her a "diversity doyenne.") Today, the company where she is a top executive, Kaleel Jamison Consulting, counts among its clients FedEx, Merck, Toyota, and several others." https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/byron-yorks-daily-memo-whiteness-and-the-national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture

The principle of work is a Protestant principle—no doubt about that—but the question is: Is the principle of work a racist philosophy, is it white supremacy?

No—it is the design law of God built into reality. So, what is going on today that some people are labeling work as racist and therefore undermining the principle of hard work? A culture war in which Christianity and God's principles for health are being attacked and undermined in order for Satan to gain greater control of people's minds through his multiple lies and falsehoods.

What is the consequence to people when they are taught that hard work is racist? Will it uplift people to believe that lie?

Do you see how the God's kingdom, His methods and principles for life and health are being attacked and undermined by the systems of this world, which run on Satan's methods?

If we present the gospel will we present God's design laws for life? And will that be popular message or will forces align that try and silence the voices that bring forth truth, including by ridicule and false allegations of being racist, or that the gospel of Jesus is hate speech, or that Christianity is intolerant, or that believing in God is for the ignorant and uneducated etc.?

But we cannot stop advancing the kingdom of God, which is built upon design laws, which means we will continually expose the fallacy of everything that violates God's design and methods, whether in the church or in society.

Read second paragraph, "God has given…" This is well said, and the reason? Because it is the law of exertion, if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it. Because if you don't use it you lose it.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "The attention to detail…" What do you think about the last sentence, "With God, sloppy work is not accepted!"?

What is meant by "sloppy" work? What determines whether the work done is sloppy or not?

Is the primary measure the product itself?

Do we balance this idea of sloppy work with:

> The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1Samuel 16:7 NIV84

When we consider sloppy work, would the motive of the heart matter, or is it only about the quality of the work product?

I have many patients who grew up in Christian homes and there was a real emphasis on the work product, on performance, behavior, and perfection and these individuals really struggle with feeling inadequate, with feeling they not good enough. They struggle with recognizing a truth that no matter how good they perform a task that there is always room to do it better, and thus they always fall short and feel like a failure.

What would you say to such individuals and how do we bring address this idea that God doesn't accept sloppiness?

Is God's focus primarily about the work product or the motive of the heart—doing one's best with one's:

- abilities
- skill level
- education
- level of maturity
- level of experience
- time
- energy

Do we factor in what is actually desired or needed in the circumstance or do we lose the focus on the true goal for the perfection of the task? For instance, if we need to mail a letter to pay a bill, do we delay putting the letter in the mail because we are not satisfied with the quality of our handwriting addressing the envelope? We realize some of the letters are bigger than others, the lines run at a slant instead of being perfectly horizontal etc.? Do we take hours to readdress the letter over and over again in order to be sure that it is not sloppy or do we take the attitude that as long as it is readable and will be delivered properly it is good enough?

This is a metaphor for many tasks in life—do we recognize when it is good enough and move on or ruminate over improving the task itself?

What about making mistakes? Is it okay to make mistakes or are mistakes evil and therefore are to be avoided?

This is one of the lies that Satan slips into people's minds, the lie that mistakes are evil. No, mistakes are an inevitable part of finite beings learning, growth, development and education. But many people who have grown up in religious systems that are legal in nature have this lie in their mind. Afterall, in a legal view, if you are going 50 in a 30 zone it doesn't matter whether you meant to or not, whether you saw the speed limit sign or not, whether it was purposeful or not, it is still a crime and if caught you will be punished. This false legal view of God's government has led millions into a terrible behavioral-focused approach to life where they are burdened under all kinds of works and feelings of insecurity, guilt and a sense of imperfection and constantly try to be perfect but knowing they can't be.

But the truth is that mistakes are not sin, mistakes are not evil. Is there a difference between making a math error in your check registry and accidently over-drafting a check and purposely writing fraudulent checks?

Everyone make mistakes, the question isn't about the mistake it is about learning and growth.

If you take decide to learn to play any instrument, say the piano and take lessons, will you hit some wrong notes? Is that evil? No! And with practice will you hit fewer wrong notes? Yes! This is life, whether piano, learning math, or learning anything.

Life is about learning, and we will make mistakes as we advance into anything new. But people who have come to believe that mistakes are evil then in addition to living under chronic false guilt and inadequacy end up:

- restricting new activities for fear of making mistakes, fear of failure, fear of not being good enough
- surrendering their thinking to others, someone in charge, some leader to tell them the answer, to get permission or direction from, so if it turns out to be wrong it won't be their fault as they were doing what the authority said was okay
- by rejecting authority and standards and becoming completely profligate and lawless, do what feels good it doesn't matter anyway

What is the solution? The truth, which is understood from the design law view, that we are finite and life is about growth, learning, developing, advancing in the truth, and God doesn't look primarily at the task performance, but at the attitude of the heart while carrying out the task. Is the heart motivated by love, a desire to honor God, to be a blessing to others, or is it motivated by a desire to advance self?

Consider a father who is out gardening and weeding in a tomato patch, and his two-year-old son comes up behind him and with a big smile, pulls up a tomato plant saying, "help daddy!" Compare that to the 14-year-old son sent out to weed the tomato patch and only pulls weeds but the entire time curses the father for not being able to play his computer game. Which child is the father most happy with? Is God primarily concerned with task performance?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on being Spirit led in all aspects of life including in our work. What does this mean to you? How do you apply this?

Would being Spirit led mean:

- We don't choose to act (get a job) until the Spirit comes with some sign or miracle to tell us which job to apply for?
- That we don't work for companies that participate in activities that we view as being against the kingdom of God?
    - What about working for a company that makes alcohol?
    - What about working for a company that sells alcohol—supermarkets, restaurants?
    - What about working for a company that distributes or delivers alcohol—trucking companies, UPS, FedEx?
    - What about companies that supply electricity or water to companies that make alcohol?
    - What about vineyards that grow grapes they sell to wineries?
    - What about fertilizer companies that sell fertilizer to companies that grow grapes they sell to wineries?
    - What about investment companies that buy stocks in companies that produce, sell, distribute alcohol?
- That we conduct ourselves in harmony with God's principles of honesty, integrity, kindness, fulfilling our responsibilities, but we don't take responsibility for what the company does if we are not setting company policy?
- What if a company's primary agenda is evil—say a casino? Is working for them in keeping with being Spirit led? What if you worked as a janitor improving sanitation and reducing disease? What if you worked as a nurse in their onsite clinic?

What is the point? We can't know where the Spirit will lead another person to work and we are not responsible for their calling. We are responsible for following where the Spirit is calling us!

What does it mean to you to be Spirit filled in the work place?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> There are men who are **careless in regard to the spirit** which they carry with them in their business. **They hide their light under a bushel. They say, Religion is religion, business is business. But all our work in this world, even in a business line, is God's work, and should be done with a heart full of his love, and of heavenly enlightenment**. But if we need the heavenly enlightenment in business employments in the world, how much more do we need his grace and help in the business especially connected with his precious cause. There must be no coldness, no formality, no deadness in his work. The hardness of heart that is manifest in business lines among us as a people, is an offense to God. RH January 24, 1893, par. 8

What do you hear? Does being Spirit led in business, in our employment, mean that we are to evangelize people in the workplace?

Where is the line between living for God and proselytizing?

What should mental health counselors do: treat their patients with respect and respect the patient's attitude about spiritual things and work within that framework, or use the professional office setting to evangelize and preach?

Is there a difference between "letting your light shine" in practicing godly principles in governance of self, in loving others, in being positive, cheerful, honest, concerned, and preaching?

What of a Christian baker who has a gay couple come in and ask for a wedding cake for their gay wedding what should he do if he wants to let his Christian light shine?

Should the Christian baker's primary concern be with:

- himself and his salvation?
- witnessing to this couple and ensuring they know they are living in sin?
- running his business and selling to people an honest cake for an honest wage?
- determining how his baking products are used once they are sold and only selling products to customers who will use them in ways he approves?
- honoring God and revealing God's character of love?
- What honors God in that situation? Is it the specific action or the motive in the heart? Would the maturity of the baker determine what he concludes God would have him do? Would the baker's understanding of God's law have anything to do with his response? Would the baker's love for the couple impact his decision? What if the baker thought that baking the cake and showing real interest in the couple could build a relationship with them, and over time he could introduce them to Jesus and they would one day give their hearts to Jesus and Jesus would lead them to wherever Jesus would have them be—so he bakes the cake for them?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "When asked to comment…" And the lesson lists other resources such as money, time, energy, talent and others, which could include land, water and waterways, food, other materials.

So, what does it mean to be a good steward?

What about a steward of the earth in general? Is there a difference between being a good steward of the earth and being an Earth worshipper?

The best stewards are those who have Jesus in their hearts and understand God's design for life and health and His purposes and realize we are here to care for those with less ability than we have, including the animals.

But if we have to decide, which is valued more, human beings or animals?

What is the problem to humans if we fail to value and protect animals?

> "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Proverbs 12:10**. Few realize as they should the sinfulness of abusing animals or leaving them to suffer from neglect. The animals were created to serve man, but he has no right to cause them pain by harsh treatment**. *From Eternity Past* 313.2
>
> **He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant**. Many do not realize that their cruelty will ever be known, because the poor dumb animals cannot reveal it. But could the eyes of these men be opened, they would see an angel of God standing as a witness to testify against them in the courts above. **A day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures**. EP 313.3

And what is that judgment referenced above? What happens in the hearts, minds, characters of those who abuse animals? And thus the judgment is the diagnosis that they are without love and out of harmony with heaven.

But is there a difference between cruelty to animals and eating animals?

Was Jesus being cruel and abusing animals when He participated in Passover while here on earth or when He fixed fish for His disciples after His resurrection, or when He ate fish in the upper room?

What about using animals in medical research to develop cures for human disease?

What is the balance between being good stewards and using the resources of earth for the welfare of humanity?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph and discuss

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

"Healing the Mind in a Broken World" Seminar is now available on our website! This one-day event, held in Chattanooga on October 3 includes HD videos, mp3 podcasts, and presenters slides (power points and PDF formats)

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 12
Sabbath: Experiencing and Living the Character of God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title?

What does the Sabbath tell you about the character of God?

Does the law lens one has as one considers the Sabbath have any impact on how one understands God's character?

Did the Pharisees in Christ's day have the wrong day of the week as the Sabbath? Did they recognize Jesus as God? Why not if they had the Sabbath?

What are the lessons we must learn from their history?

- Having the right Sabbath doesn't mean one has the right God
- If one has the right Sabbath but the wrong understanding of law one has the wrong god
- God's laws are design laws and via the law of worship—by beholding we are changed—if one has the human imposed law construct, believes God's laws function as imposed rules and justice is God keeping records of sins, and punishing sinners, then one will become like that God and will ultimately reject the Lord of the Sabbath

So, back to the question—what does the Sabbath tell us about God's character and how does it help us grow to be more like God in our character?

It first starts with design law understanding, which is always rooted in God's character of love—the three big principles or laws are: love, truth and freedom.

So, what does the Sabbath have to say or reveal about God's love?

- The Sabbath is a gift to humankind given for our blessing—and gifts are evidence of love.
  - But what kind of a gift is it?
  - Is it a law we have to keep, a rule we have to obey, a restriction of freedom one day in seven? Can love be commanded? Then if the Sabbath reveals God's love is it some rule we are required to obey? What kind of gift would that be? Do you see that if we try and present the Sabbath through the lens of imposed law we immediately misrepresent the character of God!
  - So, how is it a gift to us? It is some aspect of reality that God built into time, into our very existence, that is intended to benefit us—how?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- A memorial of Creation—which is an evidence of God's design laws and the design laws all evidence love—the law of love itself, which is the law of giving that life is built upon and all the others.
- A memorial to Christ's sacrifice on the cross: Jesus after giving the most supreme evidence of God's character of love rested in the tomb over Sabbath. Thus the Sabbath reminds us of the truth about God's character of love, not just the law of love, but God Himself sacrifices Himself for His creatures—just the opposite of Satan.
- **It is a tool, an aide, a resource, a TIME**, for us to exercise our power of choice to participate with God in trust, based on all the evidence the Sabbath represents, for the healing of our characters.

What does the Sabbath have to do with truth or what truth does the Sabbath reveal?

- It is a memorial to creation thus reminds us of the truth God is the Creator and His laws are design laws
- Given at the end of creation week its existence is evidence of God's methods of rulership—truth was presented in love while leaving His intelligent beings free to think. If God were the kind of being Satan alleges the Sabbath wouldn't exist—its existence is proof Satan lied.
- A memorial of God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt—which reminds us of the truth that God is the one who delivers us from slavery to sin.
- A memorial of Christ's sacrifice to provide the remedy to sin and give us eternal life
- An evidence of the freedom we have in God's kingdom operating under God's design laws

What does the Sabbath have to do with liberty or freedom?

- The Sabbath was created at the end of creation week of this planet and Satan's war against God was already under way in heaven. And what did God do on that first Sabbath? He stopped using power! All week long God, as Creator, had been using immense power to create a new planet, life of all kinds, then Adam and Eve. But on the Sabbath God rested—not ceased the expenditure of any energy that sustains the life and operations of the entire universe, but God rested from creating and **made the Sabbath**. Why? In the face of Satan's allegations that God abuses His power, that God runs His universe on imposed rules and forces people into line with threats and punishment, God created Earth and then said, "Universe, you have heard the allegations, you have seen the evidence given, now take 24 hours aside and think for yourself, no pressure, come to your own conclusion. I rest my case!" What does it say about God that instead of using power to force every knee to bend to Him, He instead created a day for freedom to think?
- When we experience restoration to holiness as God designs, we are set free from sin, free from fear, free from condemnation and guilt and shame. And the Sabbath is a gift, a sign, an evidence and a weekly promise and opportunity from God that when we trust Him He will set us free from all of the damage of sin and restore us to eternal life.

Do you see why Satan hates the weekly Sabbath? And thus he attacks it in various ways:

- He alleges there is no God, therefore there is no Sabbath

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- He makes the Sabbath the biggest party day of the week so even if people do believe in God they forget the Sabbath and all the truth it reveals, and therefore don't accept this gift from God nor use it for their healing as God designed
- He teaches that the Sabbath was changed to a different day, thus again the purpose of the Sabbath, what it reveals about God is lost and the lie about God's law infects Christianity.
- He gets people to accept the imposed law lie and thus even if they believe the truth about which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath, they still teach it through the false law lens as an arbitrary test of obedience from an arbitrary and punishing god. Thus rather than being a gift that we experience in our sanctification, the Sabbath is perverted and is used to harden hearts against God, just like the Pharisees in Christ's day.
- Through the imposed law lie the penal/legal theologians argue over which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath and lose site of the fact it is NOT about the day of the day of the week but about the **Lord** of the Sabbath. Thus, Satan wins by having both sides of the "day" argument worshipping an imperial dictator who will punish you in fire for not keeping the "right day."
- Through the imposed law lie the Sabbath is taught in ways that perverts God's character and rather than teaching love, truth, and liberty it now teaches that:
    - God is no longer love, but a schizophrenic god who is "not only loving but just" and will use his power to torture and kill those who don't obey the right day
    - God is the source of death rather than life as God must kill the Sabbath breakers
    - We don't really have freedom as God uses power to force and coerce by inflicting death on those who won't obey
    - God's law is arbitrary just a test of obedience and thus God is arbitrary

So, if one has the right day of the week but teaches the Sabbath through the imposed law lie, then one will pervert everything about the Sabbath and the Sabbath becomes a tool for Satan to harden hearts and corrupt character.

What is the point? **That the Sabbath is only a blessing and only teaches the truth about God when we first recover the truth about God's design law and understand His character of love.** Then the Sabbath is a blessing to us. Otherwise, it becomes a day of enslavement and rule-keeping just like the Jews in Christ's day.

Read the story in Sabbath's lesson starting in first paragraph, "Jodie was the only Seventh-day Adventist…"

Thoughts? Did you like this story? Did it have the ring of truth to it, or did some part of you go, "Wait a minute, something isn't quite right here?"

Did it feel like they took puzzle pieces and forced them together in ways that don't quite fit? In other words, the pieces by themselves are fine, but the connections they are making don't quite fit. Does it seem like they are trying to make a point that isn't quite true?

Consider this, if Jodie had been off every Wednesday night and had been asked by her coworker, whose husband was out of town for six weeks, to come over on Wednesday evening and they had dinner together, studied the Bible, shared their Christian experience, and grew closer as friends, what might have happened on the fifth week when Gayle was out shopping on *Wednesday* afternoon and looked down at her watch and realized it was almost time for Jodie to come over? Might she have said to herself, "Oh, good, Jodie will be coming over soon!"

Why did Gayle have such a positive experience with those four Friday evenings? Was it something magical about those hours, minutes, seconds, or was it the love and friendship and truth she experienced with Jodie as they studied God's Word together?

Let's be clear, I am not undermining the weekly Sabbath, its sacredness, its purpose as a gift from God. What I have a problem with is making connection that are not inherent. We see this all through the lesson and almost every time people present the Sabbath and such arguments actually undermine our case to people who realize we are forcing connections that are not inherent. Our goal is to present the Sabbath in its true light and promote the principles and facts that set it apart from other days.

SUNDAY

Sunday's lesson is entitled "Time to Be Astonished" and it certainly is true that the Sabbath, as the authors say, "was a God-created time for them to focus on their Creator and the created." I agree this is true—but are humans restricted from focusing on God and creation the other six days of the week? Are we only astonished by God as our Creator or by creation on the Sabbath day?

Are the truths we experience about God as our Creator or some aspect of creation limited to the Sabbath?

Another example—God spent the first Sabbath with them and spends time with us on Sabbath and this is a reason that make the Sabbath special. It is, if course true that God did spend time with them that first Sabbath and does spend time with us on Sabbath via His Holy Spirit. But does that mean God did not spend time with Adam and Eve in the cool of every day, and that He does not spend time with us on any other day? So is it a good argument for Sabbath holiness to say it is holy because God will spend time with us on this day?

Do you see how truths can create a false narrative, or a false idea? And these types of arguments in favor of the Sabbath—the ones that are *not* unique to the Sabbath end up undermining the value, significance, importance of the Sabbath and will reduce its sense of holiness in people's minds because they will come to think that we view it as magical or superstitious attributing to it value it wasn't intended to possess.

How we might view someone who believes a certain objects are holy, crucifixes, pictures, images, or a set of bricks or stones and only certain people can approach them and then only if they take off their shoes or bow or cover their head?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So if you were to talk with someone who doesn't appreciate the gift of the Sabbath, what might you tell them that would differentiate the Sabbath from any other day of the week? What makes it unique, special, a blessing?

> The Sabbath was created as a gift for humanity, to be a blessing for human beings. Human beings were not created as a gift for the Sabbath. Understand this clearly, the Son of Man doesn't serve the Sabbath, it serves him." Mark 2:27,28, from *The Remedy*

What does it mean the Sabbath was made for man? How is the Sabbath a gift for man?

The Commandment says to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Genesis and Exodus tell us the Sabbath is holy – which day of the week has more "worldly" activity, partying, etc.? Could it be the Sabbath—Friday night and Saturday? Does all the wickedness done by humans make the Sabbath less holy?

Can anything we do make the Sabbath less holy? Can we do anything to make the Sabbath more holy? Then what does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? Are we keeping the Sabbath holy, or are we keeping ourselves holy?

And, can you keep yourself holy only one day a week, or, to be holy one must be holy every day of the week?

Read first paragraph **Friday's** lesson:

> No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God**. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ**. DA 283

Can those who have a legal religion, who claim the blood of Jesus as a legal payment to pay for their sins, the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover over their corrupt character so the Father can't see it, and yet they haven't been renewed in heart, but they keep the Sabbath, have many rules and are very fastidious about it—are they actually keeping the Sabbath holy?

In other words, is the Sabbath about the Sabbath or about the Lord of the Sabbath and His relationship with His people to restore in them His righteousness?

So, then what is the purpose of the Sabbath and what does it mean to "keep it holy"?

What does it mean to be holy and we talked about this a few weeks ago?

Here are a couple of historic quotes:

> It is not enough for us to know and respect the words of the Scriptures. We must enter into the **understanding of them**, studying them earnestly. . . . Christians will reveal the degree to which they do this by the **healthiness of their spiritual character**. We must know the **practical application of the Word to our own individual character-building**. **We are to be holy temples, in which God can live and walk and work**. {LHU 105.5}
>
> **Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God**; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; **it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial**, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; **it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love**. {AA 51.2}
>
> **True holiness is wholeness in the service of God.** This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. **He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength**. [Why does Christ demand this? Because it is His right? Because He has paid the price? Because He is Creator? Because He is Sovereign? No, He demands this because He is the source of life, health, happiness, and only in a surrendered relationship with Him can we have life and health and happiness. It is for our good, not His need. Anything else and we cut ourselves off from life.] Self is not to be cherished. **He who lives to himself is not a Christian.** {COL 48.4}
>
> **Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation…** {COL 49.1}
>
> This is the religion of Christ. Anything short of it is a deception. **No mere theory of truth or profession of discipleship will save any soul.** [no mere legal accounting or worshipping on the right day of the week to be sure one is legally compliant will work.] We do not belong to Christ unless we are His wholly. It is by halfheartedness in the Christian life that men become feeble in purpose and changeable in desire. The effort to serve both self and Christ makes one a stony-ground hearer, and he will not endure when the test comes upon him. {COL 50.1}

Here is another historic quote:

> **In presenting the binding claims of the law, many have failed to portray the infinite love of Christ**. [Why would this be? Because they present the law through imposed law lens as rules the rule-giver must enforce with punishments and not as design law. When the law is presented as design law one cannot help but present the infinite love of Christ, it is inherent and we understand how the law has binding claims—like the law of respiration.]

Those who have so great truths, so weighty reforms to present to the people, have not had a realization of the value of the **atoning Sacrifice as an expression of God's great love to man**. **Love for Jesus, and Jesus' love for sinners**, have been dropped out of the religious experience of those who have been commissioned to preach the gospel, and self has been exalted instead of the Redeemer of mankind. The **law** is to be presented to its transgressors, **not as something apart from God, but rather as an exponent of His mind and character**. **As the sunlight cannot be separated from the sun, so God's law cannot be rightly presented to man apart from the divine Author**. [Which is closer to the sun/sunlight analogy, Imposed law – God making up rules, or Design law, God creating reality to operate in harmony with Him and He is the constant source of life energy that sustains it all? So when we present imposed law constructs we separate the law from God's character of love.] The messenger should be able to say, "**In the law is God's will**; come, see for yourselves that the law is what Paul declared it to be--'holy, and just, and good.' "It reproves sin, it condemns the sinner, but it shows him his need of Christ, with whom is plenteous mercy and goodness and truth. **Though the law cannot remit the penalty for sin**, **but charges the sinner with all his debt**, Christ has promised abundant pardon to all who repent, and believe in His mercy. [Why can the law not remit the penalty of sin? Why can the law of health not remit the penalty of drinking poison? What can remit the penalty of drinking poison? What does "charge the sinner with all his debt" mean? It means diagnosis him accurately with all his defectiveness and deviations from God's design—a terminal condition. And the abundant pardon, what does it mean? It is to those who repent, they receive transformation and renewal to be restored to God's design, thus the cancer of sin remits, the character remits back to God's original intent.] The love of God is extended in abundance to the repenting, believing soul. **The brand of sin upon the soul can be effaced only through the blood of the atoning Sacrifice**. [What does this mean? What is a brand? It is a scar, a mark, a searing—sin is fear and selfishness and our hearts, minds, characters, souls have been seared with fear and selfishness and choices to act selfishly. The blood is a metaphor for what? What does the Bible say is in the blood? The life, and in this case the blood represents whose life? Jesus' and thus it is the life of Jesus that effaces the brand of sin upon the soul. Sin marred or branded our characters to look like Satan, selfish and fearful. Jesus, as a human being, was tempted in every way just like we are but without sin, and in His humanity He destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and perfectly restored God's character into the human species, thus only through Christ's life, of which we are privileged to partake by trust, do we experience rebirth, with new heart motives of love and trust—the brand of sin is effaced or erased or replaced with the character of Christ!] **No less an offering was required than the sacrifice of Him who was equal with the Father**. [And to whom is this offering given? To whom did Jesus given His life? "For God so loved the world that" what? He gave His only begotten Son to Himself? No, He gave His only begotten Son to us and to the onlooking universe! Jesus was given to humanity as our Savior, to be the stairway, the connecting link, the way back, the cure, the remedy to fix and heal the sin condition give us eternal life! And this evidence, the truth about God and how God saves us is what angels long to look into. Why was an offer of one equal with the Father necessary? Why couldn't an angel's life suffice? Because the lies of Satan was not about angels, the lies were about God Himself. Our trust

> is not to be placed in angels, our trust is to be placed in God. Our Creator is not an angel, our Creator is God Himself. Thus, only One equal with God could be our Savior, reveal the truth to dispel the lies and eradicate the infection of sin from humanity.] **The work of Christ--His life, humiliation, death, and intercession for lost man--magnifies the law, and makes it honorable**. [How? By showing that the law of love is the law of life, once it was restored perfectly into His humanity what was the result? Life—He rose again as the inevitable result of His perfect life. This is how Jesus could tell His disciples repeatedly that He would die and rise again, yet EGW could write that He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Jesus didn't tell His disciples that He would rise again because He was given a vision of the future or saw the future in prophetic dream. No, He was able to tell them this because He understood God's law and what He was sent here to accomplish and that was to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light!] {1SM 371.1}

What binds us to God? Love, and the law rightly understood is an expression of God's love, and is the protocol upon which all life is built

MONDAY

The title is "Time for Rediscovery" again, this is true, we can rediscover God, truths that God has revealed during the Sabbath hours—but are we restricted to discovering truth during the Sabbath? Will people who attend prayer meeting on Wednesday nights be unable to rediscover truth? If they do rediscover truth on Wednesday should they then conclude, "I rediscovered truth on Wednesday, Wednesday is holy!"

So—what makes the Sabbath holy? Is it an arbitrary decree or inherent?

How did Sabbath come into existence? It was created as a day of rest! After God revealed truth in love, creating a world operating upon the law of love, ecosystems in which everything is like a wheel within a wheel all interdependent giving for the benefit of another, God rested! God didn't use power to force His way.

Thus the Sabbath was created as a day invested with God's character—truth, presented in love, leaving others free. It was built, created, made, formed, designed *as a day to rest, reflect, examine truth*, grow closer to God. It is holy inherently. Thus, the Sabbath was created as a Time-Flag, a Signal, a Sign, a Pennant, which God in His infinite wisdom built into the weekly cycle like a recurring flare or a shooting star that we can experience every seven days.

Every seven days since this world was created the Sabbath has occurred and every living being passes through these hours. They are given opportunity after opportunity to see the Time-Flag to consider its importance, to appreciate the Creator God who is love and never coerces and participate in the freedoms our God of love provides.

Sunday as a day of rest and worship, however, – was legislated, declared to be holy by an act of arbitrary power of human beings – thus Sunday represents how created beings rule, by imposed law. It becomes a **mark** or evidence of imperialism and coercion and is exactly how the Dark Ages Church operated.

So, understand, the final battle is not about two days of worship, but two systems of governing—design law—truth, love freedom, versus imposed law—lies, selfishness, coercion.

The final conflict is between our Creator, who is a Ruler who sacrificed Himself to give and build up His creatures, and Satan, who uses power to rise up and rule over all others exploiting for his own advancement.

And notice the contrast of the two kingdoms of which the two days are signs:

- In God's kingdom the powerful use their power to uplift the weak, the first are those who go last, the greatest are those who are the servants of the least.
- In Satan's kingdom the powerful form governments in which the elite dominate the weak, the first ensure they stay first and keep the last, last; and the greatest are those who have the most power to enrich themselves by exploiting and taking from others.

Understanding all this, the Sabbath itself exists as a weekly evidence of God's kingdom of love but **the Sabbath is not the kingdom of love**. These days, Sabbath and Sunday are merely markers, signs, pennants—they are like flags. The US flag signifies the US government, but it is not the US government and neither is a day of the week the government of God.

A person can wear, wave, fly a US flag and be an enemy of the US government and so too can a person worship on the weekly Sabbath and crucify the Lord of the Sabbath.

Sabbath is a gift to humankind a day of liberty, a sign of freedom and an evidence of God's kingdom of love. Sunday is a day of legislation, a day which represents coercion, which takes away liberty and an evidence of the power systems of this world—Satan's kingdom.

We must mature beyond the day to the love and worship the Lord of the day and live in harmony with His methods such that we are holy beings as He is holy and only then we will keep the Sabbath holy all week long. Because all week long we will Remember the Sabbath and what it signifies and practice the methods of God in our character all week long!

TUESDAY

The title: Time for Learning Priorities

Again, learning priorities is not restricted to the Sabbath, however the Sabbath is an evidence that stands unique and rightly understood there are lessons that the Sabbath teaches, not just cognitively, but experientially, that are not fully learned until the Sabbath truth and practice is embraced.

Given what we have said today, what are some of those truths that help one prioritize?

Trusting God with one's heart, values, riches, success, the outcome of one's life, resting from work, such as working to get ahead, and trusting God to provide the way forward. In other words, God and His kingdom is a priority over our own success, over our earthly life.

Would this include prioritizing advancing God's kingdom over human government restrictions? Even COVID restrictions?

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph, "Jesus respected and upheld the law of God…" Have you ever struggled with where to draw the line on law keeping? On Sabbath activities?

Where is the balance between adding rules and regulations and God's law?

For instance:

- animal sacrifices—original law of God or added?
- circumcision—original law of God or added?
- sanctuary services and their regulations—original law of God or added?
- 10 Commandments—original law of God or added?

Consider this quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, **there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision**. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have **kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses**. PP 364.2

Paul writing to the Galatians said that the law was added, what law, ceremonial or moral law of 10 Commandments or both?

One of the founders of the SDA church was asked this question and she wrote:

> I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments**. 1SM 233.1

Why were the 10 Commandments added? Because of sin, because of our sickness, and for what purpose? As a diagnostic instrument and protective hedge, just like parents add all kinds of rules for their children until the children grow up.

Even the lesson points out in the third paragraph, that the Sabbath "was 'made' (created) as a unique opportunity for people to learn of the character of God who made the Sabbath, and to learn experientially by valuing His creation." If the Sabbath was made or created for man, then it wasn't always in existence, which is true. Then the 10 Commandments, which contain the Sabbath Commandment didn't exist in eternity past either. This is obvious as sin didn't exist in eternity past and the Commandments describe how sin pass down from one generation to another.

But what did exist in eternity past is God's design laws upon which life was created to operate, the core being truth, love and freedom.

So what is the balance between God's design laws and the added rules and regulations?

Was the rule or regulation that the showbread was only to be eaten by the priests in the Holy Place in the presence of the High Priest on Sabbath part of God's original law in heaven, or in Eden, or was it added sometime later? It was added.

Why wasn't David punished for breaking this law? Because the law he broke was part of the theater, the learning lesson and he broke it in a way that was in harmony with the truths the theater was designed to teach.

Symbolically, the showbread represents Jesus, the Bread of Life, of which the priesthood of believers, as sinners on earth, are to partake. It is in partaking of Jesus that sinners are healed (saved) from sin and death and receive righteousness and life. And the priests are to take the bread of life to others and bring them into the church. So David represents people finding Jesus and partaking of Him and this brings life.

THURSDAY

A Time for Community—again, while the Sabbath can be a great time for community, do we have community only on the Sabbath? Can we have community on other days of the week?

Does our concept of community and how we interact and socialize change based upon the way we understand the Sabbath—either through design or imposed law? How?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts, and slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign: December - *The Remedy New Testament*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2020 4Q Education: Lesson 13
Heaven, Education, and Eternal Learning

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Don't you love the title?

Read memory text: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." NKJV

What does this text mean to you?

The lesson points out in the second paragraph that, "education—regardless of the field of study—should be preparing us for the 'hereafter.'"

How do we prepare for the hereafter?

What is the most important thing to learn to prepare for the hereafter?

The third paragraph states, "After all, any school can pass on a lot of good information, a lot of good practical and helpful knowledge. But what good does it do if a person were to gain all that knowledge and yet lose eternal life?"

What is the most important thing to learn to prepare for the hereafter?

> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 NIV84

What is the most important knowledge to have? The knowledge of God—but what kind of knowledge is this?

Some think the devil's know God—I would counter that they recognize God when He or Jesus are around, but they don't know Him. They have corrupted their minds; they have corrupted their knowledge of God with their own distortions, their own selfishness, their own fears, and thus what they think they know about God is not true.

> You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! James 2:19 NKJV

Why do they tremble? Is God against them? Many Christians think of course God is against Satan and his demons, they might even read this Bible account:

> When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "**What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"** Mark 5:1-7 NIV84

Did this demon need to fear Jesus? Is Jesus the source of pain, suffering and death? Is Jesus the kind of person who will torture His enemies, or did Jesus say to love our enemies and pray for those who would spitefully use us?

Then why is this demon afraid of Jesus? He recognizes who Jesus is, but does this demon know Jesus?

No, this demon, like all those who reject truth, damage their own minds, they lose the ability to know reality and in this case they no longer know God. They see God through their own false ideas. The demons are the ones who teach that God is a punisher, God is an inflictor of pain and torment, that God makes up laws that are like human laws and then punishes rule breakers.

They deny and distort the true cause of their suffering, which is sin in them and project it out blaming it on God. We see this in all sinners who are not responding to the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth. When one is responding to the Spirit of truth, one is convicted of sin, and one humbles themselves and acknowledges their sin and asks God for healing. But when one rejects the Spirit of truth, one denies they were wrong and blames others.

I see this all the time in addicts who have been arrested, not just for using their drugs, but for the crimes to pay for their drugs like check fraud, shoplifting, auto theft, breaking and entering etc. And they will complain about how they were mistreated. They will focus on some point of contention—it isn't fair, I couldn't afford a lawyer and they state appointed one and they weren't very good. And when I asked if they did it or not, because I am not interested in their historic legal difficulties, I am interested in healing their minds/hearts and that cannot happen if they won't be truthful with themselves, so when I ask if they did it or not they acknowledge the crime, yes, but blame the system for the negative outcome. Their going to jail wasn't because they committed some crime, it was because the system is rigged.

As people commit more sin and refuse to repent they damage the faculties of the mind that respond to the Holy Spirit—they sear the conscience as the Bible says. Healing cannot occur outside the laws of health, outside the truth, so people get worse and worse and in order to avoid the guilt that comes from the truth, what will such people attempt to do to others? Convince others that they are the victims, that the system is unfair, that it isn't their fault.

The demons are even more damaged in mind and filled with more hatred and take less responsibility and thus distort and blame things on God. They know about God, recognize it is Him, but they don't know Him. And if we don't know God, we are afraid of God.

Let's read God's encounter with the people at Sinai from Exodus 20:18-20:

> When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, **they trembled with fear**. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." **Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid.** God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

Why was Moses not afraid but the people were? Moses knew God, personally, intimately, as a friend. Moses knew God's character, God's heart, God's methods and knew God was not their enemy. Moses knew God's love and that God wanted to heal and protect the people from the damage they would do to themselves if they chose to violate His design laws for life.

But the people didn't know God, they knew *about* God. They knew God was real. They knew God was powerful. But they didn't know God's heart, God's character, God's love thus they had all kinds of misconceptions about God, including their misunderstanding of God's law.

Satan is the originator of the lies about God, which are centered in God's law. Satan is the one who made up the lie that God's law functions like human law and God, therefore, in order to be just, must punish sin.

This is from the book, *The Desire of Ages:*

> **In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed**, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, **it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761.4

Satan's view is the common view taught around the world in essentially every system of government and religion, including Christianity—and **IT IS A LIE!**

God, at this time in human history, is calling for His friends, those who know Him, to give Him glory by revealing the truth about His character. We are called to enlighten the world with the glorious truth of God's character of love, that there is no need to be afraid of God—He is our Creator and Savior and source of life. We need to fear sin which damages us, distorts our thinking, obstructs our ability to know God, and severs our connection with God.

It is time in human history to make a right judgment about God and trust Him, and ask Him to examine us and diagnose us and heal our hearts and minds.

But until we reject the penal/legal lies we will never truly know God—we may believe in God, but our knowledge of Him is warped, our intimacy is obstructed, our effectiveness for Him is undermined.

Understand that the knowledge we want is experiential knowledge, not mere fact knowledge. The facts of history that God has revealed through Christ are sufficient to dispel the lies about God so that we can reach out in trust and open our hearts to Him. When we do His Spirit indwells our hearts and minds and we begin an intimate personal experience with Him. We know Him personally; we spend time with Him, sharing, talking, rejoicing, admiring, consulting, with Him and by beholding the beauty of His character as revealed in Jesus, in Scripture, in nature we become more and more like Him as we choose to align ourselves with Him saying yes to Him and His methods and no to the lies and the methods of this world.

Understanding the difference between recognizing the person of God and knowing Him, we can understand how Jesus said to Nicodemus ""I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3 NIV84) and how Jesus also said to those who crucified Him, "'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'" (Mark 14:61-62 NRSV) And the Bible teaches, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him…" (Revelation 1:7 NIV84)

These people see with their eyes the power, the person of Jesus coming in glory, but they do not see the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is not a kingdom of power that causes fear and intimidates others to cower or causes people to be coerced. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of love where the king left all power behind to sacrifice Himself to lift up and save His creatures.

The kingdom of heaven is NOT the kingdoms of this world which operate upon Satan's methods of power over others, with a few ruling elites dominating and exploiting the masses.

The most important knowledge to have to prepare for heaven is the knowledge of God, His character and methods of love, which requires we reject the imposed law lie, with its false penal substitution theology that makes God out to be the dispenser of pain, the inflictor of punishment, the source of death.

SUNDAY

The lesson points us to the question about the fate of the dead—what would you say to someone who asks what happens when people die?

"Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Humans are tripartite: **body, soul,** and **spirit—**just like a computer.

- **Body** > *Soma* > Hardware
- **Soul** > *Psyche* > Software/Mind/Individuality
- **Spirit** > *Pneuma* > Energy/Breath of Life

To be operational requires all three components.

When Our Computers Run Out of Power, Into What State Do They Go?

They "sleep." And How does the Bible describe those who "die"?

They "sleep," but as Jesus said, those who believe in Him will never die.

Martin Luther wrote:

> "It is enough for us to know that souls do not leave their bodies to be threatened by the torments and punishments of hell, but enter a prepared bedchamber in which they sleep in peace." (Weimarer Ausgabe, 43, 360, 21–23 (to Genesis 25:7–10); also Exegetica opera latina, Vol 5, 6 1833 p. 120 and the English translation: Luther's Works, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: CPH), 4:313.)

When a computer runs out of power into what state does it go?

- When your computer "sleeps," it is not destroyed.
- What happens if your computer is backed up on the "cloud" and then someone destroys your machine?
- Don't be afraid of those who can kill the body (hardware) but cannot kill the soul (Psyche/Software). Matthew 10:28

So what happens when we die?

- The **Body** (*soma*)—hardware—disintegrates to dust.
  Genesis 3:19; Psalm 44:25; Ecclesiastes 3:20
- The **Spirit** (*pneuma*)—life energy—returns to God.
  Ecclesiastes 12:7
- The **Soul** (*psyche*)—software/individuality—is safe with Christ in heaven, stored in the Lamb's book of life; the heavenly "servers." 2 Corinthians 5:6–8; Revelation 3:5, 21:7
- The person "sleeps," waiting to be "downloaded" into new hardware, a new body.

This is so much better than the Eastern Philosophies which have merged life energy and individuality, (energy and software) and teach that because energy is neither created nor destroyed but conserved, reused, that when a person dies, the energy returns in some other form, so the person who used that energy returns and they teach reincarnation.

However, the Bible is much more accurate to reality, because it was inspired by the God who built reality. And the Bible teaches that life energy (spirit—breath of life) and individuality (soul—

software) are separate and distinct. Thus, when a person dies the energy may be reused, but the individuality, the software, is stored on the heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life.

Note Paul's description of the resurrection:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him**. The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the **dead in Christ will rise first.** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

What is the difference between first death and second death?

The Bible uses the actual term "second death" only in the book of Revelation in 2:11, 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8. The first two times the term is used the Bible tells us that the second death has no power over the righteous, the victorious in Christ, those who arise in the first resurrection. It is in the last two uses that the Bible gives us some definition of what the second death actually is:

Rev 20:14 "The lake of fire is the second death"

Rev 21:8 "their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

According to Revelation the second death occurs in the lake of fire or dying in the lake of fire is the second death

Many commentators note that another difference between the first and second death is the first death is the death from which a resurrection occurs but the second death is the death from which there is no resurrection. There is sound Biblical evidence for this conclusion (1Cor 15:12-21, 42-49, 1Thes 4:16, Rev 2:11, 20:5,6,14, 21:8).

Christ makes a distinction between two types of death in Matthew 10:28 where He notes that the first death can destroy the body, but not the soul. It is the death that destroys the soul that is the one the righteous avoid.

And, as we have seen, the Greek word translated "soul" is "psyche" which means "mind, identity, individuality."

So, the second death is the death where a person's individuality is destroyed, not just the body, it is a death from which there is no resurrection.

Has anyone yet died this second, eternal death, in which their individuality was destroyed and from which there is no resurrection?

Jesus Christ "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light" 2 Timothy 1:9,10. Jesus was not destroyed by death; His death was the means of actually destroying death!

So, what is the fate of the dead?

Every person, righteous or wicked, that has died throughout history thus far, died the first death—the death of sleep and all will rise again, either to the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation.

But why raise the wicked? If they are lost, why not just leave them dead?

- Because God is love and every person is given true freedom to determine their own eternal destiny.
- They are raised to finish their lives.
- And in so doing, they reveal that God's actions in putting people in sleep mode in no way determined their destiny.

At the beginning of the 1000 years Jesus returns as described by Paul in 1Thes above and the righteous dead are raised, the righteous living are transformed and join Jesus in the air. The wicked dead stay asleep and the wicked living are put into sleep-mode.

At the end of the 1000 years

- Jesus, the saints, the New Jerusalem, and the holy angels come to earth.
- The unrepentant are raised to life (souls downloaded from heavenly servers into imperfect bodies) with the same characters and train of thoughts as when they were put into sleep mode—just as a computer is turned on after years in sleep mode. Revelation 20:5

- An unspecified period of time goes by while the unrepentant prepare for war and march on the New Jerusalem. Revelation 20:7–9
- The New Jerusalem is on earth, with Christ and the saints inside, **and the city gates are open** the entire time! Revelation 21:25

- Yet no one comes in! Why? And what does it reveal?
- All the unrepentant stay out because they are so settled into Satan's lies about God that they don't want to go in.
- They all stay out by their own choices. Thus, it is shown that God's action to power-down people into sleep mode in no way determined their destinies.
- Even with the evidence of the New Jerusalem on earth, they won't be convinced.
- Each person finishes their own life by their own choice—consistent with the laws of love and liberty; i.e., no coercion ever!

One of the founders of the SDA church described the events at the end of the 1000 years this way:

> "At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on,—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war

> began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision, the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the city of God. **By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed,** and the armies of Satan surround the city, and make ready for the onset. Now Christ again appears to the view of his enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around him are the subjects of his kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding his Son. **The brightness of his presence fills the city of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance**." GC 664

What is being described? What is the brightness of his presence? Heb 12:29, our God is a consuming fire. Daniel 7 tells us that rivers of fire come out from the throne of God and billions stand it this fire. This is the fire of infinite love and infinite truth coming out of an infinite God. And what happens in the hearts and minds of people who have hardened themselves in fear and selfishness when they are exposed to infinite love and truth?

Consider this quote from the book *The Great Controversy:*

> Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to Heaven, and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love; every countenance beaming with joy; enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb; and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—**could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb?—No, no;** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for Heaven; but **they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of Heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for Heaven**. **Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them**; **the glory of God would be a consuming fire**. **They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction**, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from Heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God**. GC88 542.3

Do you see how this is all reality, design law, God granting each person complete freedom to choose their own destiny. No one is kept out of heaven by God, they are kept out by themselves. God doesn't determine the fate of the wicked, they determine their own fate.

Assume that you are saved and in heaven and you have a loved one that is lost. Does it make a difference to you, your ability to love and trust God, the joy and peace you will experience if your loved ones are lost because God keeps them out because they didn't claim the proper legal payment to pay for their sins and therefore God then uses His power to torture and kill them, OR God wants them

in but they hate everything about God and God's kingdom of love and choose to die eternally rather than be with God and the saved?

Would it make a difference to see this with your own eyes rather than have God say, "Trust me, they just didn't want to be here"?

After all see with their own eyes, that every lost person chose to die rather than to be with God and the saved, will there be any doubt as to why they are lost? Will this close the door to any intelligent being doubting God again? But what if God didn't raise them, and instead just told us the truth and asked us to trust Him, will that erase all doubt as effectively?

The lesson states in the fourth paragraph, "A million years, even a billion years, might not possess enough good moments to make up for the bad. Eternity alone can balance all things out, and then some."

What do you think about this? Something about it just doesn't sound right to me. The part I like is that no matter what we suffer here it will fade into insignificance when we are finally in heaven.

EGW wrote:

> When sinful man can discern the inexpressible love of God in giving His Son to die upon the cross, we shall better understand that it is infinite gain to overcome as Christ overcame. And we shall understand that it is eternal loss if we gain the whole world, with all its pleasure and glory, and yet lose the soul. **Heaven is cheap enough at any cost.** Confrontation 78

Do you agree? Well it is truly hard for us to fully know this reality until we are there, but can we have faith that this will be our attitude, no matter what we have suffered, in heaven we will rejoice and say that heaven and life as God designed it, is worth it?

But, what of this idea of balancing things out, making up for the bad?

Is there "making up" for the bad?

Does this imply that God needs to make it up to us? Does it imply that some wrong has been done to us and that it will take God all of eternity to make it up to us?

This is the kind of thinking one gets with imposed law. A child who gets molested didn't do anything wrong to deserve such horrible treatment—they are innocent, it isn't their fault, so God will make it up to them…hmmm…

Or, Christ's followers, go about doing good, blessing others, helping the needy and get imprisoned, persecuted, tortured, martyred—they didn't do anything to deserve what happened, and God will spend eternity making it up to them…

What do you think about this? Does this sound right or wrong to you?

What is a more accurate understanding of all this in light of reality, in light of God's design laws?

Does God have any debt He owes us that He needs to clear, any balance sheet He needs to settle with any human being? Why not?

But what about the innocent child who is exploited and abused—it isn't their fault, why doesn't God have a debt to settle with that child?

Let me ask the question this way: Are you and I individually worse off because Adam sinned, than WE would have been had Adam and Eve never sinned?

Let us be clear—Adam and Eve's sin was sin, it was wrong, there is no justification for it. Humanity the species would be infinitely better off had Adam and Eve not sinned—all suffer and death on earth would have been avoided had they stayed loyal. Yet, would you and I be better off had they never sinned?

We must not allow the fact that Adam and Eve's sin was evil to cause us to accept a new lie—that we, as their descendants, are worse off because of their sin than WE would have been. Why not? Because WE would not exist had Adam and Eve not sinned—other sinless humans would have been born, but we can say that not one of us would have been born, because we were all born in sin conceived in iniquity. While Adam and Eve's sin is inexcusable, we are here today because our individual family trees formed as a result of all kinds of sins and conflicts.

Consider the following: Was King David, better off or worse off because of the slaughter of Jericho and the rescue of Rahab? If Jericho had not been conquered, which included killing men, women, and children, Rahab would not have joined with Israel and would not have become the wife of Salmon, the mother of Boaz and the great-great-grandmother of King David. In other words, if these events hadn't happened David would not have been born. Was David better or worse off because of what happened to Jericho?

So, how does this apply to the question of God clearing some balance sheet to people who have suffered on this Earth?

Once Adam and Eve sinned what would have happened to them had God NOT intervened? They would have died—and what would then have been the result for the human race? No human would exist.

Once they changed themselves from loyal beings to sinners, what is the only kind of beings that they could produce from themselves? Sinners, thus every human is born in sin, conceived in iniquity—but this is not a legal status, it is a condition of being out of harmony with God. We are born with a terminal condition that God has been working through Jesus to cure.

What is the only way God can cure the hearts and minds of people? By winning them to love and trust. God cannot use power to save sinners by force because to do so would be to make them robots; it would destroy their individuality and thus God works via the power of truth, love, freedom to bring us to choose to align ourselves with Him.

So, the entire history of sin on Earth is occurring because of God's grace, because of Jesus the Lamb who committed Himself to be slain from the foundation of the world. God doesn't owe us anything or have any balance sheets to settle, we owe Him everything!

MONDAY

The lesson quotes Revelation 21:3,4: "God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

What does this text mean to you?

What does this text say about the idea that the sins get erased from the records and the memories of people so that we won't know what sins have been committed?

Will we know? And will we have wounds that need healing?

Will we have losses that need grieving? But once we have healed, once we have grieved, then there will never again be any sorrow, injury, pain, because all the old sinful things are eternally gone from the universe.

What of the idea there will be no more death—is that just human death or also animal death? Animals also, so will there be slaughterhouses? Will we eat animals in an Earth made new?

What about plants will they die?

Here is one Bible commentary sharing insights into Adam and Eve's perspective after sin, is this just metaphor, analogy, rhetoric to communicate the pain of loss or is there literal things being described?

> As they witnessed in **drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay,** Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead. When the **goodly trees cast off their leaves**, the scene brought to mind the stern fact that death is the portion of every living thing. *From Eternity Past* 30

Does this imply that prior to sin plants didn't die?

Consider this description of what a new earth may be like, from one of the founders of the SDA church, is this to be taken literally, or verbal imagery to inspire us to consider things beyond our imagination?

> And I saw another field **full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out, well they will never fade**. Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green, and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts—the lion, the lamb, the leopard and the wolf, altogether in perfect union; [Isaiah 11:6-9.] we passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here, no, no; but light, and all over glorious; the branches of the trees waved to and fro, and we all cried out, "we will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in this woods." [Ezekiel 34:25.] We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion. As we were travelling along, we met a company who were also gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were? He said they were martyrs that had been slain for him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they had a hem of red on their garments also. [Jeremiah 31:15-17. Matthew 2:18.] Mount Zion was just before us, and on the Mount sat a glorious temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on **which grew roses and lilies, [2 Esdras 2:19.] and I saw the little ones climb, or if they chose, use their little wings and fly to the top of the mountains, and pluck the never fading flowers**. There were all kinds of trees around the temple to beautify the place; the box, the pine, the fir. the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and the fig tree bowed down with the weight of its timely figs, that made the place look all over glorious… [Isaiah 60:13. Isaiah 41:19.] *A Word to the Little Flock* 17.

Is this literal or just beautiful word image to inspire us to imagine the wonders of an Earth made new?

Read first paragraph, "A Christian was talking…" What would you say to someone who had this attitude about eternal life?

On the one hand, it is exactly the mindset of the lost—they actually don't want to continue living, that is why they are lost. They voluntarily give up their lives to God because they would rather not exist than live in a universe as God designed and built it, a universe of love and truth.

TUESDAY

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." (1Corinthians 13:12 NIV84)

What does this text mean to you?

Why do you think so much is hidden to us?

When we get to heaven what are the first three things you want to discover the answers to?

What do you think of this description?

> All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, **they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar,—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe, and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings.** They share the treasures of knowledge and understanding gained through ages upon ages in contemplation of God's handiwork. With undimmed vision they gaze upon the glory of creation,—suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity. Upon all things, from the least to the greatest, the Creator's name is written, and in all are the riches of his power displayed. GC88 677.3

WEDNESDAY

In the hereafter, will we learn? Will our learning include making mistakes? Or do we have the idea that no mistakes will ever be made in the hereafter?

What brings you more joy—the joy of discovering something for yourself, of study, research, hypothesis, and the epiphany, of someone telling you all the answers?

If Albert Einstein is in heaven do you think he might continue studying astrophysics and how God built the universe to operate? Might he work complex math equations to describe these operations? Will he know all the answers instantly, or might he struggle to advance in his understanding? And could we see him asking Jesus about his latest equation and Jesus comes over and makes one little adjustment in the math and says, “Try it now.”

Do we allow for this type of mistake making or do we have some idea that mistake making is sin?

THURSDAY

Jesus the Great Teacher—what kind of teacher to you understand Jesus to be?

What teaching methods does He use?

- Parables
- Object lessons
- Examples from nature
- Evidence
- Reason

- Logic
- Intrigue—drawing in the student to be curious
- Making complex things simple, but still with depths of complexity

In heaven, what are the first three questions you want to ask Jesus?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 1
Crisis of Identity

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

INTRODUCTION

- 930 BC Israel split into northern and southern kingdoms
- 722 BC the northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria
- 598-582 BC Judah fell captive to Babylon

Isaiah was son of Amoz and related to the royal family. He started his ministry toward the close of the reign of Uzziah (Azariah, 790–739 B.C.), during the coregency of Jotham (PK 305) sometime around 745 to 739 B.C. His term of ministry continued for at least 60 years (PK 310), spanning the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Read the second to the last paragraph of the Introduction, "Isaiah counseled kings…" This highlights the central theme of the entire Old Testament—the coming Messiah! After the fall of Adam, all humans would be eternally lost if not for Jesus, and the Savior was promised right there in Eden. The entire OT is the story of the battle between the forces of Satan working to stop God's plan of salvation by stopping the arrival of Jesus and God working to keep open the avenue for the Messiah.

Initially, when the world had only one language, when people lived centuries, and the specific family tree had not been identified Satan worked to corrupt and harden every human being and almost succeeded, but God intervened in mercy with a flood to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. Shortly thereafter, God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that it would be through their descendants the promised Messiah would come. From that point onward Satan's primary focus was on destroying the descendants of Jacob as they were the ones through whom the Messiah would come. That is why the Bible focuses on their family and not the rest of the world.

This gives great insight into everything occurring in the OT, why God sometimes acted to put people to sleep in the grave—He was NOT punishing sin as the punishment for sin is eternal death and also comes after the judgment not before. No, God was working to keep open the avenue for Messiah.

The story of the Assyrians attacking, Isaiah's prophecy, Hezekiah's faith gives us another lesson—that is trusting God with outcomes, not just our personal issues but trusting God with movements of nations, that when it appears things are going against God's people, God has a plan and is working toward that plan. In Isaiah's day it was keeping open the avenue for the Messiah—what is God working toward today and how is Satan working to counter God's plan?

God, in Isaiah's day, was working toward the first advent of Jesus, and is now working toward the second advent.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What would activities from God that would be preparing the world to meet Jesus look like?

- Sharing the true gospel of God's kingdom of love, which reveals God's character of love, and His design law methods and the free gift of salvation offered through Jesus
- The principles of God being lived out in His people—truth, love, freedom—thus we give God glory by revealing His character in our lives
- Greater love among God's people for God and others, including our enemies, those who would mistreat us, misrepresent us, and persecute us
- All of this exposes, draws a contrast, between the truth about our Creator God of love and the false Christianity of the Dark Ages with its imposed law lie and dictator punishing god. Thus we call people out of Babylon the confused system of legal ritualistic religions into God's reality—His kingdom of love, truth and freedom.

What would activities from Satan that obstruct people getting ready to meet Jesus look like?

- False religion—lies about God, denial of God, evolutionism, secularism, there is no God
- Any process that instills fear—the roar of the lion—because fear incites more selfishness, undermines love and divides society—do we see this today?

Like Hezekiah we will face overwhelming threats from sources we do not have the power to defeat—we must use the weapons of God—the shield of trust and the sword of truth.

SABBATH

What do you think of the title? *A Crisis of Identity*

The lesson points out that cows know the way home and a lost child recognizes its own mother, but the Judeans had forgotten that they belonged to God. What about Christians today? Do we know our identity, or have we also forgotten our Creator God and have instead identified with the Roman imperial dictator god who must punish sin?

How do we show that we know who we are and are children of the true God, the Creator God of heaven?

- By calling ourselves Christians? If that is so, then does that mean everyone who calls themselves Christian are children of God? Does it mean that there are no children of God who call themselves something else? So, does calling ourselves Christian differentiate the children of God from those who are not?
- Keeping the Sabbath? It is to be a sign that we are God's people right? So if we keep the Sabbath does that show that we are God's children? Does that mean that everyone who keeps the Sabbath are children of God and not His enemy? What about those who crucified Christ, they were Sabbath-keepers and Jesus said they were sons of their father the devil? So, does Sabbath keeping differentiate the children of God from the children of the enemy?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So how do we show that we know who we are and that we are children of the true God?

Jesus said, ""A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35 NIV84)

What does this love look like? Genuine love is more than compassionate and sympathetic feelings, genuine love is an intelligent love, it is a truth-based love, it is a love that works in harmony with God and God's principles for life. Thus, God's love motivates to action, to living lives that harmonize with God and will reveal truth that bring God's methods to bear that are redemptive and healing. The truth of God that heals is like a sword, or scalpel, that cuts away lies, falsehood, and practices that are out of harmony with God's design for life. Just like a surgeon cuts away gangrenous flesh.

Thus, sometimes, love severs relationships because some of the people in our lives are toxic, destructive, hardened against God and working to destroy us. But for those who are working with God there is a continual advancement in the methods of God and we constantly grow closer to those who are also following God in their lives.

Consider this quote from the book *Acts of the Apostles:*

> The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was **organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world**. [What is the purpose of the church? Service, which means to love others, and the mission is what? Carry the gospel to the world, which is what? The good news about God and His kingdom of love—which requires people come to worship the Creator, which requires they understand God's laws are design laws. As long as we teach God's laws are rules like humans make we take the false Roman god to the world.] From the beginning it has been **God's plan that through His church** shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He **has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory**. [What darkness? The darkness about Him and His kingdom of love. What light? The light that Jesus revealed—He is the light that lightens all people, about what? "If you have seen me you have seen the Father." Jesus' primary revelation was the truth about God that has been misrepresented by Satan's lies about God's law. And we are to show Him glory how? By having His law of love written in our hearts such that we practice His methods in how we treat others. We must also become lovers of the truth, people who love to grow in truth as it is revealed.] The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," **the final and full display of the love of God.** Ephesians 3:10. AA 9.1 [What is the final and full display of the love of God? When did Jesus give the greatest display of the love of God? At the cross—how is this the greatest display? When do we give the greatest display? Is it when things are going well, or when things are difficult? Is the greatest display of love when we love those who love us, or when we love our enemies? Do we have opportunity today to show God's love?]

Consider this quote by one of the founders of the SDA church, again focusing on our identity, how the true children of God are differentiated from those who are not:

> **Satan is always seeking to cause dissension, for well he knows that by this means he can most effectually counteract the work of God**. [Satan is a divider, his methods, actions, movements stir up conflict, hostility, hatred, division. Satan uses deceit to stir up two big emotions, fear and a sense of being wronged—"it's not fair." These two emotions, then cause people to view others as threats to them and groups divide. Have we seen movements in the world recently that have caused greater division? Have we seen messaging bombarding society that increases fear and a sense of unfairness? But notice that what counters these movements of Satan effectively is love—when we actually love others we are not divided. When your grandchild doesn't wear a mask and comes running up to you to give you a hug, you are not angry, you don't yell, you don't want them punished. But if the child is not yours and you see them running around a store do you have the same smile, the same compassion, or does fear take over and you feel incensed, irritated, do you want to find a manager and have their parent educated? Fear makes us concerned with self and protecting self. When we love we value others more than self.] **We should not give place to his devices.** Christ's prayer for His disciples was, "That **they all may be one**; as You, Father, art in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me." John 17:21. **All true laborers for God will work in harmony with this prayer**. In their efforts to advance the work, all will manifest that oneness of sentiment and practice which reveals that they are God's witnesses, that **they love one another**. **To a world that is broken up by discord and strife, their love and unity will testify to their connection with heaven. It is the convincing evidence of the divine character of their mission**.—Testimonies for the Church 7:156, 157 (1902).

I would like to suggest that the evidence that we are true members of God's kingdom is that we love one another as God loves us. That we are not controlled by fear and envy but by love and truth, and that we live out God's methods trusting God with outcomes that we cannot control.

SUNDAY

Let's read Isaiah 1:2-20 and consider what might happen if at your church someone gave this message—not merely reading Isaiah as a historic Scripture given to people over 2500 years ago, but consider it as if this message was spoken to your church today as an original message—I have edited it to be applicable to the church today:

2 Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth!
For the LORD has spoken:
"I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
3 The ox knows his master,
the donkey his owner's manger,

but [Christians do] not know,
my people do not understand."

4 Ah, sinful [church],
a people loaded with guilt,
a brood of evildoers,
children given to corruption!
[You] have forsaken the LORD;
[You] have spurned the Holy One of Israel
and turned [your] backs on him.

5 Why should you be beaten anymore?
Why do you persist in rebellion?
Your whole head is injured,
your whole heart afflicted.
6 From the [bottom] of your foot to the top of your head
[nothing is healthy]—
only wounds and welts
and open sores
[that are not cleaned and] bandaged
or soothed with [ointment].

7 Your countries are [decaying],
your cities [are burned with fire and looted];
[your business are being ruined]
right before you,
laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.
8 The [Bride of Christ] is left
like a [open store in a riot],
like a [unlocked car during a crime spree],
like a city under siege.
9 Unless the LORD Almighty
had left us some survivors,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you [church-leaders] of Sodom;
listen to the law of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!
11 "The multitude of your [rituals]—
what are they to me?" says the LORD.
"I have more than enough [baptisms],
[ordinations] and [foot washing services];
I have no pleasure

in [your praise bands or communion services].
12 When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?
13 Stop [preaching] meaningless [sermons]!
Your [prayers] are detestable to me.
[Sundays], Sabbaths and [camp-meetings]—
I cannot bear your evil assemblies.
14 Your [Christian concerts] and your [worship services]
my soul hates.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
15 When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even if you offer many prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood;
16 wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds
out of my sight!
Stop doing wrong,
17 learn to do right!
Seek justice,
encourage the oppressed.
Defend the cause of the fatherless,
plead the case of the widow.

18 "Come now, let us reason together,"
says the LORD.
"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the best from the land;
20 but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword."
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (NIV84)

If this were spoken to you and your church, what would be the likely response?

Is this message appropriate for the church today, or does it only apply to ancient Judah?

Why did the religious services of Israel become a burden to God? Why did He get tired of them? Because they were meaningless, done by rote. Because the people no longer understood that all the various rituals were teaching tools, so they were no longer learning, instead all the rituals became an end unto themselves and thus darkened rather than enlightened the mind.

The issue in salvation is the actual condition of the heart and mind. God is working to free our minds from lies and the infection of selfishness. This requires that we engage, we think, we reason and when we reason with God we grow in the truth and we are transformed in the process. But when we don't reason, when we instead accept either lies, or merely accept rituals as having some benefit toward salvation, then we close ourselves off from God and become more corrupt.

This is what was happening in Israel, and sadly what happened to the church of the Dark Ages, the Reformation brought light, got people thinking, examining evidence, resulting in rejection of many errors, falsehoods and gradual growth in the church—however, today the church is again, to a great degree, in darkness, deceived by lies about God's law as they have rejected the advancing light.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "The same hands…" What does the lesson mean by, "By mistreating other members of the covenant community, they were showing contempt for the Protector of all Israelites"?

Why didn't they say by mistreating other people? Was it okay to mistreat people who were not Israelites?

Didn't God call Israel to be a priesthood to all people and nations?

Is it less damaging to a person to cheat, murder, or steal from a non-Israelite than an Israelite?

Would the Israelites become more godly if they banded together to rape, murder and pillage the non-Israelites—acting like the raiding Viking hordes?

Why is sinning against people sinning against the Lord? Why did Jesus say,

> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' (Matthew 25:44-45 NIV84).

Is this just metaphorical—or is it actual, literal in some way we don't fully comprehend?

Consider these texts in regard to doing to others is doing to God, do they shed any light?

- **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** (1 Co 12:27 NIV84).

- speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the **Head, that is, Christ**. From him the **whole body, joined and held together** by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph 4:15–16).

What is the reality that this metaphor of a body is trying to teach us? Remember, metaphor is only metaphor if it is connected to some reality—if there is no reality, then it is fantasy. So, this idea of a body and many parts all connected as one, is pointing us to some larger reality—what is it?

Are we actually connected to God in some way beyond our current comprehension?

Remember this quotation from EGW:

> It is God's plan that every part of His government shall depend on every other part, the whole as a wheel within a wheel, working with entire harmony. **He moves upon human forces, causing His Spirit to touch invisible chords, and the vibration rings to the extremity of the universe**.—Manuscript 22, 1897. Ev 93.1

Does the fact that the chords are invisible mean that they are not real? Are radio not real because they are invisible?

Is there some aspect of God's universe, that we cannot fully comprehend, that connects God to everything, including us?

If we consider the metaphor of the body—is every cell of your body part of you? Yes, but is every cell you? We are part of God, but we are not God.

If someone were to take a knife and cut off your big toe, would you be hurt, injured, feel pain and loss? Does God feel pain and loss when His children are cut off from Him by sin and He loses them eternally?

Is there an aspect of how sin not only injures us, but also actually hurts God? If we consider this to be real, then do we see why Satan seeks to destroy every child of God because he hates God and in this way he can hurt God and cause Him pain?

Read second paragraph, "Of course, God Himself…" What was the purpose of the rituals? To educate and teach! Was there ever any salvation benefit in the rituals themselves?

Again the lesson emphasizes repenting from unjust actions toward other members of the covenant community—did they not need to repent from unjust actions toward people who were not part of Israel?

When are rituals beneficial and when are the obstacles?

Can you think of any examples that are beneficial today or are obstacles today?

I have an entire chapter in my book *The God-Shaped Heart* in which I explore ritual and metaphor, but here is a small section from that chapter:

> *When symbolism is clung to in minds that remain infected with imposed-law constructs, not only is healing impaired but also division and fragmentation are incited. Imagine that during the Dark Ages, when the Black Death was ravaging millions, we had a cure (e.g., penicillin, an antibiotic that cures bacterial infections) and wanted to teach people how to identify symptoms of the disease so they could take the medicine if the symptoms appeared. But because the masses could not read, the use of books, magazines, or flyers would do no good. Therefore, we devise a play, a little drama to act out what to do in case the sickness arises.*
>
> *We have actors come on stage with red circles drawn on their skin; they act feverous and weak. Another actor playing the role of healer, perhaps in a white robe, sees the symptoms and pulls out a red jelly bean (symbolic of the penicillin in its red capsule) and gives it to the sick ones. Then the red marks are washed off, and those who were formerly sick jump up and dance with joy. A simple play to illustrate a simple lesson: if you get these symptoms, take the remedy and you will get well.*
>
> *As the years go by and the play is enacted from town to town, one group runs out of red jellybeans, so instead they use blue ones. But this is met with stern opposition from members of the original acting troupe who have always used red jelly beans. They insist that only red jelly beans are to be used because the penicillin capsules are red and red more closely represents the reality. Soon the two groups split forming separate acting companies, each claiming that only their play rightly teaches how to be saved from the plague. Does it really matter if the jellybean is red or blue so long as the people take the actual antibiotic when the disease occurs? Or worse, what if people forgot reality and believed that there was some potency or power in the ritual, so they religiously—prayerfully—ingest jelly beans but fail to ever take the antibiotic? They would have a form of godliness but no power. This is exactly the state of Christianity today—stuck in forms of religion but devoid of the actual healing power of God!* pages 164-165.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "God has provided…" What is the core problem with this paragraph, the lie that is imbedding in the wording?

That God's law functions like human law and therefore sin is a legal problem and people are criminals deserving of execution and are on death row.

This lie is Satan's lie from the beginning and corrupts the gospel and our understanding of reality.

Human beings are not criminals on death row waiting execution by the heavenly government.

We are children of God infected with a terminal condition that without remedy will result in our death. Thus, as the Bible says, we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity. We are born terminal, not guilty.

Until we reject the imposed law lie and embrace the truth about God's law as design law, we will continue to misrepresent God and fail to take the final message of mercy to the world.

Read second paragraph, "The Lord says to them…" I like the focus on God offering to change them, but then the lesson becomes less clear, even confusing by using the language of forgiveness without explaining what it means, right after the criminal language in the paragraph before.

What do you think of this idea that God is offering to forgive His people? Is God offering to forgive OR has God forgiven His people and is offering to heal/save them from sin if they will trust Him and let Him?

The penal/legal lie, based on the lie about God's law, sees sin as a legal problem and salvation as legal adjustment. Thus the penal/legal fraud sees the core issue in salvation as *securing God's legal pardon or forgiveness*. This is another lie. God's forgiveness has never been lacking or at issue. God forgave instantly when Adam sinned, but **what was lacking was our trust in God and a remedy that would cure the sin condition.**

Thus, God so loved the world that He not only forgave us from His heart of love, but sent His Son to dispel the lies, reveal the truth, win us to trust, and procure the remedy that we could receive by faith that cures us—giving us a new heart and right spirit restoring us to unity with God.

So, yes we are forgiven by God and in our guilt, in our shame, in our misunderstanding of God we are filled with fear and falsely believe God is angry at us, is against us, is seeking to punish us, so it is important to hear the words like the woman caught in adultery, "neither do I condemn you." We need to hear that God does forgive us—but as we grow in our relationship and knowledge with God, we will learn just as a small child learns about their loving parent, that the God was never against us. God is for us and if God is for us who can be against us!

We must reject these lies that make the sin problem out to be a legal problem with God and salvation a legal adjustment that secures divine forgiveness.

Why does God connect reasoning with Him and cleansing from sin?

Why do so many religious teachers undermine the importance of reasoning?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph, "Notice the logical…" Is this promise to every human being, that if you do good you will get health and wealth, but if you disobey God you will get sick and poor, OR, is this a promise specifically to Judah at a place in time in regard to fulfilling a specific purpose?

I think it is a promise to Judah regarding fulfilling their mission to be the avenue for the Messiah. If you stay loyal and follow me, I will protect you and keep you here, healthy as a nation, for the arrival of my Son, but if you don't, then you will go into captivity so I can keep a remnant for the arrival of my Son.

Why should we not think this applies to all people of all time?

Consider the book of Job, was his suffering because he failed God?

Consider the man born blind that the disciples asked Jesus about, or the poor woman with her two mites compared to the rich man who gave a big offering. Does health and wealth, in this world, reliably indicate who is right with God?

Read last paragraph, "Scholars…" Is the covenant with God a legal transaction? When we enter a covenant with God do we bind Him to some legal requirements in some way?

Consider a marriage covenant, while in our society today marriage does contain societal legal elements, next of kin rights, not testify in court etc. these are all added in our society. In God's original design was the marriage covenant a legal transaction?

What about the New Covenant—it says that God writes His laws on our hearts and minds—is that a legal transaction?

What is the problem if we construe of the New Covenant as a binding legal transaction?

What would happen in your marriage if at the ceremony it focused on the legal requirements—instead of a pastor, the event was led by a lawyer who had a contract like we have at a mortgage closing. The lawyer, rather than speaking about love, trust, devotion, instead reads all the legal requirements of both parties:

> "This contract of marriage is between Mr. Jones, henceforth known as party A, and Ms. Smith, henceforth known party B, is made effective today, December 19, 2020. As of the effective date of this contract all properties of party A and party B will be merged into a new corporate entity, henceforth known as corporate C. Both party A and party B will have equal rights and ownership of all assets contained within corporate C and neither party A nor party B may remove assets from corporate C without prior written consent from the other party."

What would a marriage covenant be like, if it was a legal contract?

Is our covenant with God a legal contract?

Why did God use the format or language of a legal transaction if it is actually not a legal transaction? It was merely grace, love, mercy using language and format to help alleviate the fear and doubt that sin instills in the heart of sinners. It was to help us understand how committed God is to us and that we never need to fear God betraying us! In other words, we doubt God would do what He says simply because He says it, so we want a legal constraint placed upon God that requires Him to do what He said.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "God explains…" Is God's love for the Hebrews only or for the entire world, for every descendant of Adam and Eve?

What was the role of Jacob's descendants? To be God's helpers in taking the truth about God to the world, the truth about the condition of humankind because of Adam's fall, the promise of the Messiah to save humankind, be the avenue for the Messiah, and prepare the world for the first Advent—but the plan of salvation is for all humankind, not just Jews.

What determines whether we stay in favor with God and thus experience His blessings in our lives, or whether we are out of favor and experience cursings?

What are the cursings? From where does pain and suffering of sin originate?

Is there a difference in a thief using a knife and cutting a person while attempting to rob them, and a surgeon using a scalpel to cut someone attempting to heal them?

In both instances a person uses a sharp instrument to cut on someone else—but are these actions the same?

Do we ever find God using power to take action that can be experienced as painful? But does that mean God is the source of inflicted harm, suffering, death?

Read last paragraph, "If we persistently…" What causes this to occur?

Who hardened Pharaoh's heart?

- "The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. **But I will harden his heart** so that he will not let the people go." Exodus 4:21

- "Yet **Pharaoh's heart became** hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said." Ex 7:13

- "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said." Exodus 8:15

So, who hardened Pharaoh's heart? What is God's role, what is Pharaoh's role? Was Pharaoh a puppet, was he free?

What causes a heart to harden?

When the Bible describes Jesus standing at the door to the heart knocking, what is that representing? With what does Jesus knock upon the door to our hearts? Truth and love—what happens to a heart when truth and love are rejected?

If a person never rejects truth or love do they harden as much?

So what happened to Pharaoh? God provided evidence after evidence, truth after truth that the gods of Egypt were false and He was the true Creator, and Pharaoh was convicted, but later rejected the truth. And what is the result to any heart that rejects truth—it hardens.

God's role in Egypt was to present the truth to which Pharaoh had to decide how he would respond. If no truth had been presented to Pharaoh his heart would not have hardened against God as it was, but when truth is presented, and we reject it, the rejection of truth results in hardening of the heart.

So why did God present truth to Pharaoh when He, in His foreknowledge, knew Pharaoh would reject it and experience a hardened heart?

Even though Pharaoh was going to reject the truth, God knew it is only by the presentation of truth that sinners can be set free (John 8:32). God would not deny Pharaoh the opportunity to be freed from sin. God would not deny Pharaoh the opportunity to be saved. Therefore God presented truth to Pharaoh in order to reach his heart and save him.

God did not force Pharaoh's will. Pharaoh freely chose to reject the truth and when Pharaoh hardened his heart, God used Pharaoh as a powerful demonstration of the futility of worshipping false gods. The lessons of Egypt were publicized throughout the ancient world and awareness of the true God spread.

Therefore, God presents truth, which sets free all those who accept it, but God does not force the will of individuals to either accept or reject the truth. When we reject the truth our hearts harden in proportion to the truth rebuffed. The Bible record of all three descriptions of this event is accurate. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by presenting truth in such a way that Pharaoh was forced to make a decision upon it. But it was Pharaoh who hardened his own heart by rejecting the truth and refusing to repent.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World, videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign: The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available. Be sure to use our website store to place your order—don't send an email.

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the Remedy App, just go to the App store and update.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month. There are now more than 30 blogs translated into Polish as well as *Could It Be This Simple?* all available on our website—thank you Mirra Huber!

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 2
Crisis of Leadership

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read fifth paragraph, "People do, indeed, want strong trustworthy leadership." What does strong trustworthy leadership look like to you?

When I was in the military strong leadership was emphasized—a good commander did certain things:

- Never asked his soldiers to do what he was unwilling to do if in that position
- Share the soldier's experience—i.e. do PT with your soldiers, go into the field and do field exercises with your soldiers, maintain the same fitness for duty—physically, but weapons qualification or any other certification for your unit.
- Always ensure the troops eat and rest before you do, at chow time, eat last.
- Inspect the troops and require they maintain their gear, personal fitness, cleanliness, order
- Ensure your troops have the resources they need to fulfill their mission
- Ensure they are taking care of themselves, adequate hydration, food, rest, inspect their feet on road marches etc.
- Discipline those troops who need it

These are just some of the actions a good leader in the military takes. What was the purpose of the commander taking such actions? To let the troops know:

- He cared about their welfare
- He understood them, their struggles, what they had to do and was willing to share their burdens
- He wanted them to be the best they could be

A good commander wants his troops to trust him and following his orders.

Do you see Jesus doing many of these things? He:

- Became one of us
- Took our burden of sin and has been tempted in every way just like we are
- We know He knows our struggles
- He doesn't ask us to do anything He wouldn't do
- He puts us first, ultimately sacrificing Himself for us
- He disciplines us to develop us to our max
- He provides us with all we need to fulfill our mission for Him
- He inspects us to see what we need, where we need pruning and strengthening

Has Jesus earned our trust and are we willing to following Him?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

As you think about leadership, what are the qualities that you want in a leader?

I did a lot of reading preparing for this lesson, explored articles on what makes great leaders. Let's explore this idea of what makes a good leader and then ask which do you value in a leader?

- Honesty
- Integrity (own mistakes, puts safety/quality over profits/does what's right/moral/ethical)
- Sincerity/enthusiasm
- Ability to listen to others and hear what is said
- Decisive—can assimilate information, integrate it, and make decisions
- Visionary—has a vision to where they want to go or goal to achieve
- Confident—but humble
- Great Communicator
- Competent
- Loyal to subordinates and/or the organization
- Delegates and empowers others and rejoices in their successes
- Problem solver
- Self-disciplined/motivated/self-starter
- Empathic/emotional intelligence
- High energy and resilient
- High intelligence
- Loves—other-centered, puts others or mission first
- Just and fair
- Kind
- Sensible or reasonable
- Discerning
- Lover of truth—lifelong learner
- Follower of God's will
- Can forgive—doesn't hold grudges

Was there anything on this list you didn't agree with?

But let's go back though and ask—is there anything missing? Is there something vital that we don't have on the list that even if we seek to use this list we may still end up with bad leaders?

For instance:

- Honesty
    - If honesty is what most people want in leaders, why do so many politicians have histories of dishonesty and why do they get re-elected?
    - Can a person be honest yet misguided, confused, or simply wrong?
- Integrity (own mistakes, puts safety/quality over profits/does what's right/moral/ethical)
    - If integrity is what most people want in leaders, why do so many politicians have histories of a lack of integrity and why do they keep getting re-elected?

    - Can a person have integrity but not understand the situation or what to do?
- Sincerity/enthusiasm—someone who can inspire others
    - Does it matter what the person is sincere about? If we have a charismatic, sincere, enthusiastic leader who inspires people does that mean they know where they are going? If someone is sincerely wrong are we wise to follow them?

What about qualities like:

- Loves, is other-centered, puts others or the mission first
    - Would this make someone safe to follow?
    - Can a person love others and put the mission first, but have no idea what they are doing, where they are going, how to fulfill the mission?
    - Can a person be completely self-centered, but present themselves as interested in others, compassionate, and concerned? In other words, can we know the heart motives or only the public demeanor of someone we don't have intimate knowledge of?
- Just and fair
    - How can you determine if someone is just and fair?
    - By the reports of people?
    - If you don't know all the variables, all the secret details of the various cases or issues, can you truly know whether the person is just or fair?
        - Psychiatrists have strict confidentiality responsibilities—not even disclosing if a person is their patient. If a disgruntled patient goes online and writes a scathing review or goes throughout their church and speaks cruelly about the psychiatrist, the psychiatrist cannot respond, must remain silent. The psychiatrist cannot disclose the person was selling controlled prescriptions, or overusing them and refused to get into rehab, but must allow the false reports to circulate without comment. Can you tell if the psychiatrist is just and fair by the gossip or online reviews?
- Kind
    - What determines what is kind and what is cruel?
    - Can you always tell by the action itself? Do the circumstances matter?
    - Can people tell whether another person is kind or cruel based on how it feels—it felt unkind?
        - Is it kind to relieve someone's pain? How about it means doing their physical therapy for them? Or preventing them from feeling pain when they touch a hot stove, or removing their guilt and shame for sin before they repent?
- Sensible or reasonable
    - What determines whether something is sensible or reasonable? Would a person's intelligence, understanding, wisdom, perspective impact our understanding?
        - When Jesus refused to go to Passover and publicly declare Himself as His brothers encouraged Him to do, did His brothers think Jesus was being sensible?
        - When Jesus went to Jerusalem crucifixion weekend, did His loyal disciples think He was being sensible or reasonable?
        - How many turned away from Jesus after He said they must eat His flesh and drink His blood? Why? Did they think Jesus was being unreasonable?

    - Do our own biases, prejudices, beliefs impact our ability to understand? Do we accept as reasonable things that are unreasonable because we are immature? What determines whether something is reasonable or not? Would harmony with God's design for life, what is actually healthy, in harmony with reality be a factor? Does rule-enforcement or rule-keeping sometimes work contrary to reality and end up being unreasonable?
- Discerning
    - How can we tell whether a leader has discernment or not?
    - Would we need to have discernment ourselves?
- Follower of God's will
    - Is this the litmus test—the one that can tell us who we can trust as our leader?
    - Certainly we don't want leaders who refuse to follow God's will, but how can we tell if someone is following God's will?
    - When false Messiahs come, as Jesus said they would, who will they claim they are following?
    - Can someone actually be following God's will, yet we are still not to follow them?
        - For instance, can someone be called by God to an action, yet God has called us to a different action?
    - So even if someone is a follower of God, does that always mean we are to follow them?
- What if someone has genuine gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of prophecy, surely we could follow anyone who has confirmed genuine gifts of the Spirt, right?
    - If that is so, then we would follow the Apostle Peter when he refused to associate with certain people? Or would we have some way to realize this leader of God's church should not be followed but corrected, as Paul did (Galatians 2:11-13)?

What are we missing? Is there any element you can think of that would be required to help us differentiate a leader from God from an imposter?

What about leaders who:

- Understand Design Law and God's methods and principles—meaning they actually speak and promote integrated truth applying the integrative evidence-based approach that harmonizes Scripture, Science and Experience. They demonstrate a knowledge of how reality works and their explanations make sense and are testable, reproducible and reasonable. They practice the principles of truth, love and liberty, meaning they don't coerce people who won't agree or follow, but leave them free and show respect for them as people.
- Understand the Great Controversy over God's character and methods
- Demonstrate the ability to make evidence-based, not feelings-based, decisions—a leader who can be aware of feelings, but isn't governed or swayed by feelings—in other words they follow the truth
- Have maturity, they possess the ability to discern at a minimum of level 6 of moral development, but even better would be level 7
- Have a record of outcomes people can review to evaluate whether their rhetoric comports with reality

If someone doesn't actually know God, God's methods, God's design laws upon which reality is built, the issues in the Great Controversy then they may be:

- Honest yet lead by wrong methods, wrong principles and false ideas
- Sincere/enthusiastic but lead in wrong directions
- Decisive but their decisions may frequently be harmful
- Visionary but their vision will likely be warped
- Confident but their confidence will be misplaced
- Seek to be just and fair but their justice may be punitive, worldly, warped, like the justice of the Pharisees who wanted to stone Jesus, and who did stone Stephen etc.
- Claim to reasonable but may actually be unreasonable as they apply the world's methods of rule enforcement instead of God's principles for life and health

The principles of good leadership are very difficult to determine in people with whom we don't have a personal relationship. So, the best approach is for each of us to develop our ability to reason and discern, meaning:

- we have our own personal relationship with God
- we understand God's character, design laws, principles, and purposes
- we have a working knowledge of Scripture, meaning we use the integrative evidence-based approach to knowing truth
- and then we examine the evidence of a person's achievement—the outcomes along with the stated mission, purpose, platform, goals of a proposed leader and decide if they are someone who we could support for the role they are pursuing because we share their goals, support their vision or mission, and have evidence of their achievements.

We are in the last days of human history, now more than ever the people of God need discernment, need to be able to tell who are on God's team and who are not, where God leading and where the enemy of God is leading.

Consider this quotation from the book *The Great Controversy*, in which this author describes the final deception coming upon the world:

> Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. **The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived.**
>
> I want to pause here and consider this. When you hear spirits of devils what do you hear? Does this mean simply attitudes of devils? Does it mean fallen angels in the room bringing evil emotions, ideas, influences? Does it mean ghosts or apparitions appearing? Any or all of this? Could it mean humans with Satan's worldview, Satan's values, Satan's methods going to world leaders to influence them? Could it mean fallen angels presenting themselves in the form of human beings? We have accounts of God's angels in the Bible presenting themselves as human

beings, can Satan's angels present themselves as humans to humans to deceive? Could it mean that devils will go forth to the kings of the earth as human counselors to deceive?

Consider these quotes from the same author who wrote *The Great Controversy:*

> Satan will use every opportunity to seduce men from their allegiance to God. **He and the angels who fell with him will appear on the earth as men, seeking to deceive**. God's angels also will appear as men, and will use every means in their power to defeat the purposes of the enemy.—Manuscript Releases 8:399 (1903). LDE 160.2

Who will they seek to deceive? Just the kings of the earth? Consider this quote:

> **Evil angels in the form of men will talk with those who know the truth. They will misinterpret and misconstrue the statements of the messengers of God**.....—Selected Messages 3:411 (1903). LDE 160.3

> Notice that the devils go to the leaders of the world **seeking to deceive**, but the devils go to those who know the truth and talk with and **then go out and misrepresent them**…interesting. I don't know whether it was devils doing this, but I have had several people over the years speak to me and then turn around immediately misrepresent and misconstrue what I have said, as have others who support our ministry.

> So, devils will go to the leaders of the world to deceive them and enlist them to unite with Satan in the final struggle against heaven. What methods will the devil use and will that final struggle be over?

> Earlier in *The Great Controversy:*

> **Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in Heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow.** [In the final deception Satan will move upon world leaders to seek to save the planet, save the earth, to make things better, but will implement policies and practices that actually destroy it. This is so obvious to those who understand God's design law. I see this happening right now, today, here in America, and around the world, I write about it, speak about it. Yet people write me defending the deception, failing to see the lie, believing the practices or policies or movements are good because they **claim** to be for good.] **And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish, he charged upon the loyal angels**. [If you haven't seen this practiced in the last four years then I don't know what to say. Leaders doing various forms of corruption, while immediately blaming the corruption on the other side.] **The same policy of deception has marked the history of the Romish Church. It has professed to act as the vicegerent of Heaven, while seeking to exalt itself above God, and to change his law.** [What is the core principle of Rome? Imperialism, imposed law that can be changed, not design law. And with imposed law comes authoritarianism, hierarchical

> government, top down control, a few ruling elites dominate and exploit the masses. This was ancient Rome, it is Papal Rome and it is the form of every earthly government, that is why they are beastly. It is the kingdom of Satan. They make up their rules, contrary to God's design laws and then enforce them under penalty of the state. Those who don't comply are accused of being law breakers and fined, have their businesses closed, imprisoned, all under the guise of saving lives, of creating a better and safer government or nation. They always end up with a few ruling elites dominating the masses. God's government is the opposite the greater resources one has the more they give to help others, God the greatest is constantly giving of Himself for the welfare of His creation.] Under the rule of Rome, those who suffered death for their **fidelity to the gospel were denounced as evil-doers; they were declared to be in league with Satan**; and every possible means was employed to cover them with reproach, to cause them to appear, in the eyes of the people, and even to themselves, as the vilest of criminals. **So it will be now.** While Satan seeks to destroy those who honor God's **law he will cause them to be accused as law-breakers, as men who are dishonoring God, and bringing judgments upon the world**. GC88 591.2

What are Satan's methods? How does he deceive the leaders of the world to do his bidding? By getting them to believe that imposed laws, imperialism, rules enforced by threat is righteous and that by more laws, more control over the people the world can be saved, a better world can be our future. Yet, this method violates God's design, destroys love, incites division and rebellion, and results in God's Spirit being withdrawn as hearts and minds harden. Satan gains more control over nature, more natural disasters, pestilences and violence occurs. These are alleged to be due to those who won't comply with the new world order and their laws, and billions are deceived because they want to be safe and they turn on those who seek to honor God.

Going back to our original quote about devils going to kings to deceive them and get them to join his ranks…

> **Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself**, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They **will perform wonderful miracles of healing** and will profess to have revelations from heaven **contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures**. GC 624.1 [Again will all of these persons be human, or may some be fallen angels in the form of humans? Imagine the power of such a deception of this occurred today and people dying of COVID in the ICU were miraculously healed by the thousands? How many would be deceived? What testimony of Scripture do you think they will contradict? Won't it be the truth about God's character and government—design law? Won't it be that they claim that disobedience to God's law is causing the problem and that people must return to faithfulness to God and obey His law, but His law will be presented as imposed and they will say that if people don't obey, then justice will require punishment. How many will go along? How many are going along now with the COVID rules that almost all are done without due process of law and in many cases actually violate the law?]
>
> **As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ.** [After other false Christ's performing miracles have come, so the Bible can be fulfilled that

false Christ's come first, then Satan impersonating Christ appears. How many will embrace him as their leader?] The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will **make it appear that Christ has come**. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as **a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation.** Revelation 1:13-15. **The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld.** [What method is the devil using here? Signs, wonders, miracles, charisma, charm, which plays on the emotions, thrills the heart, but does not bring enlightenment, it shuts down inquiry, blunts reason.] The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: "Christ has come! Christ has come!" The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him**, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them**, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. **His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered**; [What leadership qualities will Satan present? He will appear honest, sincere, humble, kind, gentle, compassionate, gracious, presenting the SAME truths Jesus spoke as recorded in the Bible., should we follow him? How will we know not to? He does more,] **he heals the diseases of the people**, [He heals, this is love, this is service, another leadership quality we value. Why not follow him, how will we know? Next the author describes one action that would expose him what is it?] and then, in his assumed character of Christ, **he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed…** [What is the action here described? The specific is action described by this author is changing the day from Sabbath to Sunday, but what is the true issue at stake? Claiming that God's law is arbitrary, imposed, functions like human law and is subject to amending or changing and therefore, since it is not design law, requires external enforcement through imposed punishment. This is the real deception, hidden behind the change in the day. This means, that the evil one could potentially do the same thing with another specific, as long as God's law is viewed as imposed, and God as the punisher of law breakers.] Acts 8:10. GC 624.2

Do we have a crisis in leadership in the world today? Are we prepared to discern leadership that is from God, from leadership that is from God's enemy? Can anyone do this for you? Then what is required of you?

SUNDAY

Read number 1 & 2, "Although Uzziah's reign…" Why did God strike Uzziah with leprosy? Was it because Uzziah broke a rule and tried to do what only priests could do?

If so, why didn't David get struck with leprosy when he ate the showbread and gave it to his men, which only the priest were authorized to do?

Is there anything of saving value in the rituals of the sanctuary? Were any of the rituals required to be performed in order for someone to be saved? If so, how was anyone saved during the 70 captivity when no temple services were being performed?

No, nothing of that system was required for salvation, people were saved without it. Then what was it for? It was object lesson, it was a teaching tool—it was theater.

The Temple was a grand stage, with great props and costumes and a very intricate script—we call Scripture. But the service was to teach the larger reality, the service was not the reality.

- In service the priests in their white robes represented what? The priesthood of believers who possess the righteousness of Christ, have Christlike character pure and holy.
- The showbread represents what? Jesus, there were 12 loaves which represent Jesus being sufficient to feed the 12 tribes, and the 12 tribes symbolically represents all the peoples of the world. Jesus is the bread of heaven, the Word made flesh, and we are to ingest Him into our hearts and minds.
- It was every Sabbath, that the priests would join with the High Priest in the Holy Place and eat the showbread. What does this represent or teach?
    - The High Priest represents Jesus.
    - The Holy Place represents the church with the lamp that represents the Word of God both living and written, and the believers united with Christ who are light unto the world.
    - So, every Sabbath the believers of God are to come together in worship, joined by Jesus they partake the Word of God, ingesting into our hearts and minds the truth, love, and character of Christ.
    - This is what David symbolically did when he took the bread, he nurtured himself and his men and partaking of Christ which heals and brings life. So David and his men were fine.

Why then did Uzziah get leprosy for seeking to light incense?

- What does the golden altar represent? The converted heart of the believer filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit.
- What does the incense represent? The prayers of the righteous, sweet and perfumed because they come from hearts renewed by the life of Christ.
- What did Uzziah's action represent?
    - A person renewed in godly love humbly seeking to lift up prayers to God OR a prideful arrogant unconverted person seeking to displace God's holy ones (as represented by the priests in their white robes) with his own selfish self?
    - And what is the Bible symbol for selfishness or sin? Leprosy, so since Uzziah insisted on going into the theater and stepping on stage, and taking a role that wasn't his, God respected his choice to act a part that wasn't his and gave him leprosy to appropriately teach the truth—sinfulness, selfishness numbs the heart, deadens the conscience and is a deadly disease.

So, when Uzziah went into the temple was he actually seeking holiness? No, he was seeking power and self-exaltation, thus the leprosy.

MONDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "Notice what was happening…" A change in leadership triggered fear….questions of who is in control? Do we ever face situations like this today where a change in leadership instills fear and questions of who is in control?

Well, who is in control? In order to answer one must ask—of what?

God controls what God controls and we control what we control—the question is what does God control?

And the key question to answering this is—how do we understand God's law?

If one views God's law functioning like the laws that humans make up — imposed rules requiring the ruling authority to impose punishments — then what do people think God controls? Imposed law views have imperial gods that make everything happen. This leads to bad theology like tragedies or suffering are God's will or come from God, or natural disasters are God punishing evil.

The truth is realized when we accept that God is Creator and His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, such as the laws of physics, law of love, truth, worship, liberty, exertion, laws of health, the moral laws, and so many more. It is how reality works.

Thus, God is in control of what God controls — **and God controls Himself and all His laws.** He sustains reality; He keeps the universe running upon the protocols and laws He established. And one of those laws is the law of liberty, which grants real freedom to sentient beings. Why? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

Does God control people or angels?

Does God control nations?

So what does it mean to be controlled by the Spirit of God? Do we become puppets? When we surrender to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit heals us and gives us the fruits of the Spirit. What is the last fruit listed? Self-control! When we are "controlled" by the Holy Spirit we are restored to beings operating upon God's design laws and are set free to exercise authority over ourselves.

Consider this quote from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> In the work of redemption **there is no compulsion**. **No external force is employed**. Under the influence of **the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve**. In the change

> that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, **there is the highest sense of freedom**. DA 466.4

Read last paragraph, "The transcendent holiness…" What do you think of this idea that God demands holiness from His people?

What does it mean?

What is holiness?

Consider these quote—what is holiness and why does God demand it?

> **Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God**; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; **it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial**, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; **it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love**. {AA 51.2}

> **True holiness is wholeness in the service of God.** This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. **He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength**. [Why does Christ demand this? Because it is His right? Because He has paid the price? Because He is Creator? Because He is Sovereign? No, He demands this because He is the source of life, health, happiness, and only in a surrendered relationship with Him can we have life and health and happiness. It is for our good, not His need. Anything else and we cut ourselves off from life.] Self is not to be cherished. **He who lives to himself is not a Christian.** {COL 48.4}

> **Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation…** {COL 49.1}

What is holiness? Restoration to God's perfect design for life, having God's law restored in us so that we live in perfect accord with it because it is the protocol life is built upon. Holiness then is perfect harmony with God.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about Isaiah having an angel take a coal from the golden altar and touch his lips. What does this represent?

The coals represent the fire that purifies, which is the same fire that fell at Pentecost, it is the fire of God, the fire of the Holy Spirit, the fire of truth and love that purges lies, fear, selfishness, and enlightens and ennobles. It is the fire that is to live in the hearts of all the believers.

Why touch it to Isaiah's lips?

From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, Jesus said. The mouth represents the expression of the heart, Isaiah is being empowered to express, communicate, speak the truth about God, His kingdom of love, character of love, and the fulfillment of the promise given to Adam of the coming Messiah.

WEDNESDAY

Why did this happen to Isaiah?

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8 NIV84

Why was Isaiah equipped for God's service? Because Isaiah was willing!

What about us?

God equips and empowers all who surrender to Him to fulfill roles and engage in service for God's kingdom in various avenues that God knows that person will be most useful in.

However, will God empower people to take a false gospel to the world? So God's equipping isn't just skills like ability to speak in public, God's equipping is enlightening with truth—Isaiah was enlightened to see reality of the condition of Israel, of God's methods, of the contrast between legalism and healing hearts and minds, of bringing God's principles to bear. Isaiah also saw the larger Great Controversy reality and the coming Messiah to cure the sin condition, not use the methods of power and might.

So, equipping by God will always be equipping into God's design laws and methods.

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "God does not…" This has some really good insights, the more we resist truth, the harder we become.

Read last paragraph, "Clearly Pharaoh…" This also has good insights in the process…how do we understand the process of hearts being hardened?

- The Lord said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. **But I will harden his heart** so that he will not let the people go." Exodus 4:21

- "Yet **Pharaoh’s heart became** hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said." Ex 7:13

- "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said." Exodus 8:15

So, who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? What is God’s role, what is Pharaoh’s role? Was Pharaoh a puppet, was he free?

What causes a heart to harden?

When the Bible describes Jesus standing at the door to the heart knocking, what is that representing? With what does Jesus knock upon the door to our hearts? Truth and love—what happens to a heart when truth and love are rejected?

If a person never rejects truth or love do they harden as much?

So what happened to Pharaoh? God provided evidence after evidence, truth after truth that the gods of Egypt were false and He was the true Creator, and Pharaoh was convicted, but later rejected the truth. And what is the result to any heart that rejects truth—it hardens.

God’s role in Egypt was to present the truth to which Pharaoh had to decide how he would respond. If no truth had been presented to Pharaoh his heart would not have hardened against God as it was, but when truth is presented, and we reject it, the rejection of truth results in hardening of the heart.

So why did God present truth to Pharaoh when He, in His foreknowledge, knew Pharaoh would reject it and experience a hardened heart?

Even though Pharaoh was going to reject the truth, God knew it is only by the presentation of truth that sinners can be set free (John 8:32). God would not deny Pharaoh the opportunity to be freed from sin. God would not deny Pharaoh the opportunity to be saved. Therefore God presented truth to Pharaoh in order to reach his heart and save him.

God did not force Pharaoh’s will. Pharaoh freely chose to reject the truth and when Pharaoh hardened his heart, God used Pharaoh as a powerful demonstration of the futility of worshipping false gods. The lessons of Egypt were publicized throughout the ancient world and awareness of the true God spread.

Therefore, God presents truth, which sets free all those who accept it, but God does not force the will of individuals to either accept or reject the truth. When we reject the truth our hearts harden in proportion to the truth rebuffed. The Bible record of all three descriptions of this event is accurate.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart by presenting truth in such a way that Pharaoh was forced to make a decision upon it. But it was Pharaoh who hardened his own heart by rejecting the truth and refusing to repent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World, videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

The Book of Genesis has now been added to our website Remedy and is NOW available on the Remedy App, just go to the App store and update.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month. There are now more than 30 blogs translated into Polish as well as *Could It Be This Simple?* all available on our website—thank you Mirra Huber!

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 3
When Your World Is Falling Apart

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title? In what ways can someone's world fall apart?

Could it be the loss of various resources and supports that a person depends upon to provide for their safety, sustenance and nurturance?

Could the description of one's world falling apart be used by those:

- Whose community is destroyed by natural disaster?
- Who have lost people of importance?
- Who have lost their financial support and are homeless?
- Who have had the infrastructure of their country destabilized?
- Who are living in a war zone?
- Who have been kidnapped?
- Who have been falsely imprisoned?
- Who lose their health or abilities?

While most of us have faced loss of loved ones, and some of us have experienced loss of resources such as a home destroyed by fire, or job loss or bankruptcy, most of us have still had other supports (people who care) to assist us in times of stress or difficulty and very few have experienced multiple such events at the same time.

Consider Job, I can't imagine what it would be like to simultaneously lose one's financial support (not just excess wealth, but all the resources to live on), have all 10 children die, have multiple employees/servants that he knew for years killed, and lose his health and suffer in terrible pain. Then to have those who would be supportive verbally turn on him and accuse him of being a sinner and bringing this on himself and his wife telling him to just give up and die for God had forsaken him. Do you think Job's world fell apart?

Why do you think Job didn't lose it? What enabled Job to hold himself together and not become suicidal, or despondent, or hopeless in the face of his world falling apart?

Because he had one support, one connection, one lifeline that remained and that was his connection, knowledge, trust and love for God.

- Did Job know why the tragedies were happening to him?
    - But did he know God?
- Did Job deserve what was happening to him?

Suffering and pain in this world sometimes happens because of:

- Our sinful choices—i.e. gambling and having financial problems, or doing drugs and having health problems
- Our misunderstanding or ignorance—eating unhealthy foods and having health problems
- Accidents, like motor vehicle accidents
- God disciplining us because we need it

Were any of these the reason Job was suffering? No!

In Job's case it was because of evil forces, both human and demonic—this is why Job suffered.

But why would God allow this to happen? If God is all powerful, if Job is obedient to God, living in harmony with God's plan, purposes, design laws, why would God not protect him?

- First, how does love function? Can love exist without freedom? Would you protect your children from their own selves by injecting them with nanochips and programming them to do as you want? Why not? All of humans the righteous and wicked are God's children. And God loves all of them. He won't make them robots.
- What would it say about God if He were to use such methods? Would the mistrust of God be eliminated in the minds of the onlooking universe if God did use methods that violated freedom?
- But, is there another reason—a reason beyond just the innocent sufferer like Job, and beyond the onlooking universe?
    - Are we in a war zone? And what type of war? A war for hearts and minds over love and trust versus fear and selfishness. How does love and trust win?
    - Can love and trust win by threats, by intimidation, by force, by violence?
    - Does God love every person on earth? Does God want to reach all people?
    - Will He need people to reveal His character of love to those who don't know His character? Is that revelation only didactic? Or, is that revelation to be lived out?
    - Do we see a lesson in the story of Saul of Tarsus and Stephen? Was Stephen's stoning because Stephen deserved it? Did God reach Saul through the witness of Stephen?
    - Are there stories of others being reached for God's kingdom through the witness of martyrs?

Is there a lesson here for us?

I want to suggest that God is waiting for a people, the sealed of God, who are so settled into the truth about Him that they cannot be moved. He is waiting for a people who will love their enemies, pray for those who spitefully use them, who will turn the other cheek, who will defeat the methods of Satan with the methods of God, who will defeat:

- lies with truth
- selfishness with love
- injustice with forgiveness

- violence with gentleness and peace
- cruelty with kindness

people who will:

- turn to God and not the state for deliverance
- trust God and not themselves
- align with the kingdom of God and not the kingdoms of this world
- use the methods of God and not the methods of this world

We are in the final days of this world's history. Events are going to progress more rapidly and things are going to get worse. As people become more frightened, they become more controlling because they want to feel safe. As they get more controlling liberties are undermined—as liberty is taken away love is damaged, individuality is eroded, fear increases, survival drives become stronger, and others, particularly those who don't agree with us, are seen as threats to be avoided or eliminated, love grows cold, society fragments. Someone or some group needs to be blamed and those who trust God and follow Him will be blamed. Even our constitutionally protected freedoms will be taken away.

This past week in Arizona two churches were fined $10,000 for holding a Christmas Eve service. The governor called such services selfish.

Think about this:

- The US Constitution protects freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech. There is nothing in the law that gives the states the right to restrict religious practice in this way. Yet it is happening.
- The Christmas Eve services were not mandatory, no one was pressured or forced to attend. The churches left their members completely free to stay at home if they felt that was best for them, yet the state issued fines and restricts the liberty of those who want to attend.
- Then, the governor calls a service celebrating the birth of Jesus an act of selfishness. Hmmm….who calls God selfish?

Some of you may think that this is about COVID—it is not, it is about the great controversy between God and Satan. It is about the erosion of liberty. It is about the forming of the beastly system of Revelation—globalism, a global coalition of forces (governments, religions, corporations) that organize together to advance Satan's kingdom of force and coercion.

If we were to go back in time to the fall of 2019 and I asked you all, what do you think Satan could do to get Americans, including Christians, many SDAs to support governmental shutdown of churches—would you have said, "Christians and certainly, SDA's won't support governmental restriction on religious liberty"? Yet many are supportive of the restrictions imposed by government and fail to see the beastly methods involved.

How do we war against this? By truth, love and freedom. We are to witnesses in word, but also in deed.

- We will not use methods of violence
- We will not use deceit
- We will not use coercion
- We will not be marked in our minds with the beastly methods because we won't accept them and
- We won't be marked in our hands with the beastly methods because we won't practice them.
- We will be sealed of God with truth, love and freedom.

Let's talk about resilience. The ability to face crisis, trauma, major stressors, losses and overcome, bounce back, make it through is known as resilience. Much research has been done on resilience and what enables some people to have much more resilience than others. What are those factors?

Some people start out life with more resilience than others, they have advantage because of what they inherited from their parents, biologically. This includes:

- The genes one inherits
    - A variety of genes have been identified that have single gene polymorphisms. This means one letter is difference in the gene coding alters the outgoing product. Consider the word "love" if we substitute and "i" for and "o" we have "live" which is still a readable word, but it has different meaning than the original. In our genes single letters can be changed like this altering the various gene products. These genetic differences can confer greater sensitivity to the environment. So if someone experiences childhood adversity—trauma, severe poverty, neglect—the genes one has will make one either more sensitive or more resilient to the abuse.
    - However, if one has a nurturing environment then the genes that enhance sensitivity causes positive brain changes and results in greater resilience to stressors down the road than the genes that protected from early childhood traumas.
- The epigenetic markers that one inherits
    - We pass along not only the gene sequences but the markers that tell the genes how to express themselves. People who have experienced trauma, or who have abused illegal drugs etc. will alter their gene expression and pass on epigenetic markers that reduce resilience in their offspring.
- The biological changes that happen in utero
    - Multiple studies show that the fetal brain and resilience is impacted by what happens during gestation.
    - If the mother is highly stressed her stress hormones will cross the placenta and alter gene expression through epigenetic modification causing a more sensitive fear circuitry and the child will be born more anxious, irritable and socially impaired
    - Foods choices will also alter the developing brain either positively or negatively depending on whether the choices are healthy or not
    - Alcohol and drugs are damaging to the developing brain

So resilience is either enhanced or undermined before we are even born.

EGW, one of the founders of the SDA church, wrote the following over 100 years ago, before DNA was even discovered:

> What the parents are, that to a great extent the children will be.
> The physical conditions of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are to a greater or less degree reproduced in their children.--MH 371 (1905). {1MCP 138.5}
>
> **The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children**. In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations....
>
> Through the indulgence of appetite and passion their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations. **Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil**.
>
> Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, **imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character**.--MH 371, 372 (1905). {1MCP 139}

But, this is a starting point at our birth, and after birth, early childhood experiences further alter gene expression and brain development conferring either benefit or greater harm, enhancing resilience or undermining it.

- Loving, emotionally responsive, consistent and reliable childhood experiences foster resilience—
    - because they positively impact brain development, alter gene expression in ways that are adaptive, grow brain circuits capable of calming fear circuits. It fosters learning, adaptation, expectation of hope and the development of skills and abilities to problem solve, calm oneself, self-sooth, form new and secure attachments, sustain and maintain friendships, form a realistic sense of self and self mastery and self-confidence, and ability to overcome life's challenges
    - But when childhood caregiving is stressful, neglectful, abusive, chaotic, overdevelopment of fear circuitry in the brain occurs, underdevelopment of prefrontal circuits occurs, problem solving is impaired, ability to connect with others is undermined, gene expression is altered in ways that increase inflammation, diminish neuroplasticity and undermine learning, all reducing resilience and increasing likelihood of collapse under stress.
    - Do you see why Jesus said "if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." (Matthew 18:6 NIV84)

- Research shows that social rejection, isolation, and loneliness activate the brain's stress pathways that increase inflammatory responses, decrease immune responses, makes people more vulnerable to viral infections, cancer and also less resilient to life stressors.
    - In contrast positive social supports and connection calms amygdala, reduces inflammatory cascades, alters gene expression improving immune system reducing viral infections and cancers and increases resilience.
    - Positive social support and connectivity increases oxytocin, which enhances social cognition, including facial recognition, understanding of social cues, perception of trustworthiness and ability to bond. Further, social connectedness with increased oxytocin reduces anxiety, fear and stress. All of this has a protective effect when dealing with life stressors.
    - Conversely, social isolation increases both physical and mental health problems and undermines resilience, increases all causes of death in a similar to obesity or smoking.
- Other factors that can increase individual resilience include all variables that improve physical health, such as healthy diet, physical exercise, education, cognitive training, adequate sleep, spiritual development, reframing of events or perception and perspective. (Southwick, S., et al., Why are some individuals more resilient than others: the role of social support World Psychiatry. 2016 Feb; 15(1): 77–79.)

How healthy spirituality confers resilience:

- Develops the prefrontal cortex which calms the fear circuits reducing inflammatory cascades improving health
- Better self-care, e.g., take care of spirit temple so less substances of abuse, better diet, more likely to get adequate sleep and exercise all of which confer resilience
- More likely to forgive and not hold grudges, which calms fear circuits and reduces inflammatory cascades
- More likely to engage in altruism, which calms fear circuits
- Greater perspective on reality, higher purpose, meaning for life and often have a meaning or purpose for the trials
- Connection with God to trust Him with outcomes rather than all on self
- Hope of deliverance

In crisis, under stress, people seek relief from the stress—there are adaptive and maladaptive ways to deal with stress.

Adaptive ways include:

- Being truthful, dealing with reality, confronting, problems solving, seeking help from others when needed
- Prayer and seeking God's wisdom and guidance and trusting God without outcomes
- Maintaining healthy routines, diet, exercise, sleep, meditation and rest
- Music, humor, reframing
- Finding meaning or purpose

Maladaptive ways of coping include:

- Fleeing or escaping or avoiding through
  - denial, distortion, externalization
  - substances—alcohol drugs prescription medications
  - excessive sleep
  - entertainment
  - physically running away
- Attacking or accusing or blaming others
- Seeking to control others or make others feel your pain or suffering
- Becoming helpless, disengagement, surrender, giving up
- Yelling, screaming, self-harm

As we consider the methods and principles of God versus the methods and principles of Satan, how would you describe the difference and what impact do they make on our ability to cope or on how we cope?

Does our understanding of reality make a difference?

Does our understanding of God's law make a difference? For instance, if we have an imposed law view, when we get stressed, struggle with trials, what might we do? Might we examine our lives to find something we did wrong, some rule we broke and be tempted to believe we are being punished?

If it is larger than just us, say something happening to the entire region or nation, might we conclude that the hurricane came because of sin in the city and God was punishing the city? Might we want to protect the nation by stopping the evil that we think is the cause of the punishment?

Read first two paragraphs in Sabbath's lesson, "One Sabbath Connie…" Did the duck have a wrong understanding? How many people are like this duck…seeing though they do not see?

I saw a Gunsmoke episode in which an old man was choking to death and the doctor tried to do a tracheotomy (whether that was actually known medical science back then or not I don't know, but the TV show had him doing it) and several family members came in and saw him cutting on the man's throat and the man died anyway. They arrested the doctor for murder because he cut the man's throat.

How many people misconstrue and misunderstand what they see because of their immaturity, ignorance, indoctrination, lack of insight, too narrow a view?

This happens all the time and is so sad, people, rather than trying to understand what others are actually saying or what they actually mean, all too often assume they know and end up drawing false conclusions and get upset, make accusations and attack, verbally or sometimes physically.

In our world today those who want to manipulate others for their own power and agenda utilize this weakness of jumping to conclusions all the time. This is how propaganda works, people hear allegations, accusations, reports, pieces of data and are led to certain conclusions without

investigation, without evidence and are rallied to causes they might never support if the full facts were known.

For instance, in the aftermath of this most recent presidential election there have been allegations of fraud. Texas filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court regarding the changes to the way the election was conducted in Pennsylvania, alleging it was unconstitutional because those changes did not go through the PA legislature, which the constitution requires. The Supreme Court rejected the lawsuit based on lack of standing to bring it, saying that TX had no say in how another state conducted its internal business.

But when some in the news media reported this their headlines were written to suggest a certain meaning that wasn't the case: "Supreme Court rejects Texas fraud claim" and many people falsely believed that the Supreme Court found there was no fraud. That is not what happened. Whether there was fraud or not was never evaluated, no court that I know of has yet had an evidentiary hearing, all the rulings that I know about have been procedural rulings, whether a person or group has a right to bring a case, or filed before a deadline etc., not whether there was actual fraud or not.

The methods of God are the methods of truth, love, freedom—truth doesn't fear inquiry, truth doesn't fear investigation, truth doesn't obstruct pursuit of facts. I haven't seen the evidence, but I don't fear it one way or the other. I don't care who won the election, but I do care about honesty, integrity and the ability of people to discern, to see what is actually happening and recognize when they are being misled.

But worse than the propaganda is forming an opinion and then being unwilling to hear facts or evidences that would refute the perspective being held. In other words, not loving truth!

When your world is falling apart, will you maximize the likelihood of having a good outcome by denying facts, truths, evidences?

No, one of God's principles is truth, those who will be saved in the end are those who love truth, those who are lost are those who do not love truth, they love their ideas, beliefs, religions, politics or power, but not truth.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "While Ahaz was weighing…" What do you think of this idea that God had allowed the trouble to come on him to discipline him and bring him to his senses?

Will God do this and for what purpose?

What does God want for each of us? Isn't it victory over sin? Isn't that we receive new hearts and right spirits, that we are restored to righteousness?

Can God do this in us without our participation? No, why not? Because it would destroy our individuality for God to use power to force a change in our hearts and minds. This means we must choose the right and reject the wrong. While we don't have the power to free ourselves, we must choose to be free and then we receive the power to follow through.

Therefore, God will bring a person over the same ground again and again until they either gain the victory or have destroyed within themselves the very faculties that respond to truth and love and are beyond healing.

Consider this quote:

> There are those here upon whom great light in warnings and reproofs has shone. Whenever reproofs are given, the enemy seeks to create in those reproved a desire for human sympathy. Therefore I would warn you to beware lest in appealing to the sympathy of others, and going back over your past trials, you again err on the same points in seeking to build yourselves up. **The Lord brings his erring children over the same ground again and again; but if they continually fail to heed the admonitions of his Spirit, if they fail to reform on every point where they have erred, he will finally leave them to their own weakness**. HS 137.4
>
> **God's work of refining and purifying must go on until** His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory… **God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ** and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves. 4T 86.2

Read second paragraph, "Ahaz would be startled…" What method does God use with Ahaz? Why doesn't God use force?

Why do so many people think it is right and just to use force to coerce others to comply?

TUESDAY

Read Isaiah 7:11-17:

> Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, 11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."
>
> 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."
>
> 13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. 15 He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right.

> 16 But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. 17 The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria." NIV84

First part, dealt with in TUESDAY's lesson is about the invitation to ask the Lord for a sign.

Read second paragraph, "At first glance…" Why didn't Ahaz take the Lord up on His invitation and ask for a sign, such as having 7 cows float over the palace for 20 minutes or something?

Why do you think Ahaz didn't do it? Was it because:

- he didn't believe in God—was an evolutionist and it would be foolish or silly?
- he thought God would answer and He didn't want the answer from God?
- he didn't trust God and was afraid of what God would do when He made the request?

What about the idea that his view of God was the view of any unconverted person who believes that God exists or who is religious but unconverted—they believe in a distorted god, a being who is like them, power over others, selfish, coercive, severe, unforgiving and Ahaz didn't want to get near such a terrifying untrustworthy dangerous god.

So, Ahaz doesn't trust God, has a deeply flawed view of God and based on many distortions and lies he sees God functioning like Satan alleges, and won't even engage with God to give God the opportunity to refute the lies and win him to trust.

How many people are just like this? See how the Pharisees in Christ's day were just like this. I see people like this all the time, unwilling to engage and discuss because their own false views will be exposed.

Read last paragraph, "Isaiah pointed out that…" Ahaz chose the god of fear, of intimidation, of coercion and rejected the God of truth, love and freedom and thus cut himself off from God's blessing. God merely acknowledge the choice.

The lesson asks "In the end, even if God had given Ahaz any sign that he had wanted, do you think Ahaz would have believed?"

Is there evidence that signs won't change minds? What about Pharaoh, what about when Jesus restored Malchus' ear?

Why did God offer to give a sign to Ahaz if God knows the future and that Ahaz would not accept the offer and act as he did?

What is the only chance Ahaz had for salvation? To engage with God, to reason with God, to connect with God, and while God knows what Ahaz will do, God still provides Ahaz every opportunity to be

saved, to connect with Him. God always does what is right, the loss is by Ahaz's choice, not God failing to give him opportunity.

WEDNESDAY

Wednesday's lesson asks who is the woman and the child in the prophecy of Isaiah 7 and gives several possibilities.

Read numbers 1 though 4, "Because…" So, what is your understanding of the young woman in Isaiah 7 and the child?

If this is referring only to Jesus how would that be helpful to Ahaz as a sign that the two armies threatening him would leave?

If it referring only to Isaiah's son how would that child fulfill the meaning of Immanuel?

So, what is the solution?

This prophecy refers to two children, that is why the Hebrew for young woman can be a virgin or not, because the first child was specifically for Ahaz's benefit. This is the child who will still be too young to tell right from wrong when the armies leave. But there will be a second woman and a second child who will be God with us. This second woman will be a virgin as confirmed by the New Testament writers, and this second child will be Immanuel and will be further described in Isaiah 9.

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "Like the name…" What is the connotation of "God *is* with us"?

- God is with us in heart
- God is with us in substance, human, like us
- God is with us in struggle, pain, suffering
- God is with us in overcoming
- God is with us to comfort and encourage

Who is "us"? Is it Israel? Is it all humanity? Is it only those who believe?

What is the difference between God is with us and God is for us?

What do you say to those who suffer and call out to God, when they ask, "where is God? I thought He would be with us."

Many Jews after the Holocaust stopped believing in God because of this idea, because He didn't deliver them. What would you say to them?

Read the last paragraph, "Even when the Lord…" What are they trying to say? He wasn't going to take that sitting down?

Standing up indicates one is taking action—is that what Stephen saw, Jesus taking action, is that what the author means? What action? It is a sign of respect, was Jesus paying Stephen respect? Was it shock, Jesus was stunned and stood up on shock? What is the implication?

FRIDAY

Read question 3, "Russian author …" I read a book that had this philosophy in it for the heroes, "Journey before destination; life before death." This meant, in the book, that the way one travels, how one gets to where one is going matters, that the way one lives is more important than whether one dies for all eventually die, all eventually end up at the same destination—the grave, but the journey, how one lives, the life one has had, that is what makes the difference.

SUNDAY

The lesson examines the decisions of King Ahaz, who when threated with invasion from Ephraim and Aram, rather than going to God for deliverance, went to Assyria and asked for help.

Is there a lesson for us?

When we see problems coming do we go to God or to the world? Do we use the methods of God or do we use the methods of the world? What is the difference?

When is it appropriate to seek help from others? What is the difference between seeking help from others and seeking help from the world? It is about motive and methods. God's kingdom is the kingdom of love and love serves, it is relational. So it is absolutely righteous for us to help each other. It is false that the righteous only pray and seek to handle life's problems by themselves, alone, with only God. No, we pray, seek wisdom, but often will obtain the help in from or through others that God is using to minister and serve.

But we will not pursue relief of our problems by the methods and principles of the world any examples?

- If in debt we won't embezzle, steal, or commit fraud to deal with our debt. We won't borrow intending to not pay back.
- If we are attacked we don't attack back. We speak truth, when appropriate, but we don't enter into conflict, battles, wars.

- If we have health problems we ask for God's healing, but we also diagnose the problem, identify the cause, remove contributing factors, brings remedies or therapies to bear, seek medical professionals to help, and trust God with the outcome, but we don't merely pray and fail to practice what we know is health. We don't hurt others to advance ourselves, such buying a kidney on the black market.

What caused King Ahaz to seek help from Assyria? A threat, which caused what emotion? Fear, and why didn't Ahaz go to God for help?

What about today? Is there messaging bombarding us that incites fear? And what are we being told we need to do? Where are people going for help? Are most people turning to God and seeking to follow His will, methods and principles, or are they turning to man, to the government and using the methods of this world?

And when the methods of this world are used do we experience greater unity, harmony, and peace, or greater conflict, division and erosion of love? Do the methods of the world actually work?

Every system of the world that seeks to impose its way always causes some level of harm, even when it's goal is to help. The methods of the world while helping one group will harm another. This is Satan's domain. He is the divider.

Consider:

- Is there any injustice in the legal justice systems of this world? Is there any legal justice system in this world that gets every case right, that applies the laws fairly to all people all the time? Is there any human system in which innocents never get convicted or the guilty never get away with it?
- Social reforms—if we seek to help one group, say make rules that give easier admission to university to some, do we make it harder for others? If we want to help people who are struggling in poverty can we harm others if we take their resources and give it to those in need? What about if use the government to make all kinds of rules to prevent the spread of a virus, could this benefit some by protecting them from getting the virus, but injure others whose business fail and they end up homeless, or because of the increased stress they become depressed and commit suicide?

The point I am making is not arguing for the righteousness of any of these good goals, but demonstrating human governments are Satan's domain and their methods are beastly, so even when they seek to do good they simultaneously cause harm, injure and divide. That is the fallacy of the imposed law methodology, that someone we can get righteousness by more imposed laws, rules and rule-enforcement. It is a lie!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign for January: *The God Shaped Heart and From Fear to Friends (God and Your Church) DVD.* **Use our website store to place your order — don't send an email.**

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month. There are now more than 30 blogs translated into Polish as well as *Could It Be This Simple?* all available on our website—thank you Mirra Huber!

PODCASTS: You can now get our weekly *Bible Study Class* and *Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings* podcasts on **Spotify**.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 4
The Hard Way

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory Text: "And I will wait on the LORD, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him." (Is 8:17 NKJV).

What does it mean the Lord is hiding his face?

Story of a blind girl who needed to jump from a building but wouldn't until she heard her father's voice and then she listened.

How can we know the voice of God?

Why Did God speak to Enoch, Moses, Abraham, but not others?

I love this quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

> "As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. **The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength.** Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised. Whatever was given to Christ--the "all things" to supply the need of fallen men--was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And "whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 1 John 3:22. {DA 668.4}

Read last paragraph, "In the same way, God…" Do we have examples in Scripture of God's preferred method of communicating? If you had to lay out the progression of God dealing with us what would it be?

- Approach us gently
  - Adam in Eden
  - The Bible for us to read
  - The Holy Spirit moves upon our hearts and minds
- Speak louder and even threaten

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

    - God at Sinai and other places in the OT
- Discipline in various ways
    - Miriam and Aaron struck with leprosy
    - No rain for 3.5 years during Ahab's reign
- Send envoys, spokespersons—human or angelic
    - All the Bible prophets
    - Angels going to Lot
    - All of God's friends through history sharing the gospel
- Sent Jesus to become human
    - Reveals the truth about God
    - Exposes the lies of Satan
    - Proves God is trustworthy
    - Provides the Remedy to our sin condition
- Sends the Holy Spirit
    - Convicts of sin
    - Convicts of duty
    - Enlightens
    - Empowers
    - Transforms and regenerates
- Loosen His protection and allow us to reap what we sow
    - Scorpions and snakes in the desert
    - Babylonian captivity
    - Many circumstances in all of our lives when we rebel
    - What we see happening in the world today as hearts harden He respects their choice and withdraws
- Let us go completely
    - King Saul
    - Judas
    - The wicked in the end

What is God's goal? What does God want to accomplish? Our restoration to perfection, freeing us from sin and restoring us to unity with Him, which results in life, health, happiness—eternally.

Why does God let anyone go if He loves them?

What would the experience of a person who hates God, who hates love, who is hardened in selfishness, who gets pleasure out of torturing others be if they were to find themselves in God's presence?

If God does love them at least as much as you love your own child, would God use power to miraculously keep them alive in order for them to suffer? What is the reason for their suffering and torture? What is the only act of love God can do for those who insist on rebellion from Him?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

If God does let them go, sever all connection from Him with them, and God is the source of life, what happens?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "In Isaiah 7:14-16…" Let's go back to last week's lesson and read Wednesday starting with the third paragraph and read the end of the lesson, "Nowhere does the Old Testament…"

So, what is your understanding of the young woman in Isaiah 7 and the child?

If this is referring only to Jesus how would that be helpful to Ahaz as a sign that the two armies threatening him would leave?

If it referring only to Isaiah's son how would that child fulfill the meaning of Immanuel?

So, what is the solution?

This prophecy refers to two children, that is why the Hebrew for young woman can be a virgin or not, because the first child was specifically for Ahaz's benefit. This is the child who will still be too young to tell right from wrong when the armies leave. But there will be a second woman and a second child who will be God with us. This second woman will be a virgin as confirmed by the New Testament writers, and this second child will be Immanuel and will be further described in Isaiah 9.

What is curds? It is something made from milk—it could be cottage cheese, butter, yogurt, buttermilk and various translations render it differently, but it is a milk-based product.

What is the significance of mentioning this?

When the Hebrews left Egypt and were going into Canaan how was the land described? A land flowing with "milk and honey" Exodus 3:17, which is a way of saying a land of plenty, a land with abundance, with rich resources. So, in the face of the desolation caused by the invasion in which food was scarce, the promise of God is that before this promised child is old enough to know right from wrong, left from right, there will be enough food for all who trust God.

Is there a lesson for us today?

Israel was facing invasion and God sends a message that those who are faithful will be provided for—is this relevant for the people at the end of time?

Read the bottom green section, "Think, if you were living…" Four years ago in the USA many people experienced a crisis when President Trump was elected, currently there are many on the other side experiencing a crisis as Biden and the democrats are declared to be the winners.

What does all of this mean for the Christian?

Have people on the political left voiced concerns about injustice happening over the last four years?

Have people on the political right voiced concerns about injustice happening in this election?

When you believe you have been treated unfairly, when you are convinced an injustice has occurred—wrongly convicted of a crime, punished for something you did not do, defrauded of your property and no court will give you a hearing…when injustice happens what does it do to you?

Does it stir up more, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" Galatians 5:22-23

The kingdoms of this world are whose? Satan's—all of them.

And upon what type of law do they operate? Imposed, arbitrary rules, open to manipulation and abuse.

If we place our faith in human governments, human courts, human legal/justice what will be the outcome—always, in every government in the entire world through all history? Injustice, abuse, exploitation, unfairness.

The human systems given the illusion of justice—but they are unjust—all of them. To the degree that the legislators, judges, administrators, and staffers are more godly, more kind, loving, compassionate, truthful, honest, then their actions will also be more just and the injustice of arbitrary laws and Satan's system will be mitigated by the righteous motives of the godly people holding the various levers of government. But injustice will still happen because the system itself is arbitrary, not everyone is righteous, human biases abound, ignorance, limited knowledge, and outright selfishness that manipulates the system still occurs.

But human governments become even more unjust as the people become more godless. And when your faith is in the law, in the government, in the system being fair, and you find that it isn't, what is the reaction? Outrage, hurt, anger, disillusionment, disappointment, discouragement, violence. We see a wrong and we must make it right. This is depicted in movies all the time with the many vigilante justice stories—when the system is corrupt we all long for a hero to come in and do whatever it takes to make it right. But such actions are not in keeping with God's kingdom of love and they are not godly justice.

As hearts turn away from God and harden against Him and the Holy Spirit is withdrawn will we see more love or less? Will human governments give us more justice or more injustice?

And what contributes to hearts turning away from God? Would teaching godless evolutionism, secularism, humanism, communism have any impact on whether people were searching for God or turning away from Him?

Do we see the war—the spiritual war—the war over the knowledge of God raging? We like Ahaz have to make a decision, when we see our world being attacked by those who are against God, the evolutionist, the secularist, the humanist, the communist—will we, like Ahaz, turn to another human agency to deliver us, or will we turn to God?

The Bible tells us that people, including many who claim to be Christian, will turn to human systems, forming a beastly coalition to promote what they believe to be right. They will work to try and save themselves, their countries, the earth itself but what method will they use? Imposed laws with coercion.

God is permitting events to transpire as they are to help us realize there is no justice in human governments. God's kingdom is not of this world. We must break away from loyalty to these human systems. We must give our hearts and our affections to God and be loyal to Him, and then we will see every human being as His child, our brothers and sisters, whether they are democrat or republican, white or black, rich or poor, Christian or agnostic, we see people either in harmony with God and getting healthier, or out of harmony and getting sicker. And when we see someone getting spiritually sicker, more selfish, more exploitive, more spiteful, more violent and we love them we grieve, but we don't embrace the methods of the world and try and force them to comply with what we think is right.

MONDAY

Read 2Kings 16:10-18:

> Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. 11 So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. 12 When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. 13 He offered up his burnt offering and grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his fellowship offerings on the altar. 14 The bronze altar that stood before the LORD he brought from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the temple of the LORD—and put it on the north side of the new altar. 15 King Ahaz then gave these orders to Uriah the priest: "On the large new altar, offer the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and his grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering. Sprinkle on the altar all the blood of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. But I will use the bronze altar for seeking guidance." 16 And Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had ordered. 17 King Ahaz took away the side panels and removed the basins from the movable stands. He removed the Sea from the bronze bulls that supported it and set it on a stone base. 18 He took away the Sabbath canopy that had been built at the temple and removed the royal entryway outside the temple of the LORD, in deference to the king of Assyria. (NIV84)

What are the lessons in this for us today?

Here is what is happening:

- Ahaz was king of Judah
- Judah is being threatened with invasion
- Ahaz doesn't turn to the Lord but goes to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria
- The Assyrian king requires that Judah submit to his authority
- Ahaz erects an altar to the Assyrian god and instructs that the sacrifices to Yahweh be made now to the god of Assyria on this new altar
- The priests build the altar and sacrifice on it and Ahaz also officiates as a priest sacrificing at this new altar

What is the lesson for us today?

When we are threatened do we turn to the God of heaven or to the gods of this world? Do our church leaders resist the call to align with the gods of this world, or do they willingly go along with what the world wants?

Ahaz didn't tear down the temple; he introduced into the temple system a foreign element, a foreign altar to a foreign god and moved the brazen altar from its place and introduced practices that were not in keeping with God's instructions.

Do we find in Christianity that unchristian ideas have entered? Has God's law be replaced with imposed human law? Has God's justice of healing hearts and minds and purging sin from characters been replaced with legal recording of sins and infliction of torture for the unrepentant? Has the priesthood of believers, rather than promoting the truth that God is like Jesus in character, instead advanced a false god of imposed rules who tortures people in hell?

Do we see movements happening in the world today that are motivating people to embrace more of the methods of the world in their religious beliefs and in their community and governmental practices?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Can you imagine…" The message is that turning away from God to get security, wealth, protection, spoils, will only result in one being plundered, ruined, overrun, exploited, destroyed.

Satan is the deceiver. He cannot directly destroy someone's soul. He must get them to choose to destroy their own soul, so he tricks people by getting them to use his methods in their pursuit of justice or righteousness.

It is just and right to seek to avoid getting raped, murdered, exploited, cheated, dominated, beaten—it is wrong for such violence to occur. Seeking to prevent war is just and right, but what method do we use to stop evil—this is the question.

Satan's grand strategy, which he uses over and over again, is to do injustice of various kinds, incite outrage in those who are wronged or who observe the wrong and then get them to embrace his methods to seek to right the wrong, which only wrongs and hurts others and the cycle of violence, exploitation, injury, hurt continues on and on.

What is Jesus' method for dealing with those who wrong us?

> You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. **If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also**. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, **let him have your cloak as well**. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.** He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** (Matthew 5:38-48 NIV84)

This is the final culmination of events we are heading into—the beastly systems of this world are gaining more and more power. The four angels of Revelation are loosening their hold and Satan's agencies are gaining more power, which means more injustice, more coercion, more exploitation, more fear and more fear leads to more control and less liberty, which means less love—except in the hearts of those who have severed their hearts from the world and have been sealed into the kingdom of God.

We will see injustice, fraud, deceit, exploitation—what will we do? Seek to punish, to dominate, to force or to love, forgive, and trust God with our very lives?
In preparing for the lesson this week, I came across this quote from one of the founders of the SDA church in the book *Early Writings* it describes the strategy of Satan in deceiving Adam and Eve. Consider, do you see this same strategy being employed today?

> When Satan became fully conscious that there was no possibility of his being brought again into favor with God, his malice and hatred began to be manifest. He consulted with his angels, and a plan was laid to still work against God's government. When Adam and Eve were placed in the beautiful garden, Satan was laying plans to destroy them. **In no way could this happy couple be deprived of their happiness if they obeyed God**. [Satan cannot corrupt any human soul. He can tempt and in this world of sin he can cause suffering, but he cannot corrupt any soul. We must choose to corrupt our own souls by believing his lies, preferring, embracing and

> practicing his methods which always violate God's design and damage us.] Satan could not exercise his power upon them unless they should first disobey God and forfeit His favor. Some plan must therefore be devised to lead them to disobedience that they might incur God's frown and be brought under the more direct influence of Satan and his angels. **It was decided that Satan should assume another form and manifest an interest for man**. [Is this strategy used today? Are there evil agencies masquerading as agents of good, representatives of powers to improve one's life, one's circumstance, to lift up out of suffering, but are in reality leading people to violate God's design and damage their own souls?] **He must insinuate against God's truthfulness and create doubt whether God did mean just what He said**; [Do we see millions deceived about God's law, His design protocols for life, who have accepted arbitrary rules and believe justice can be achieved by power over, by force, by more legislation?] next, he must excite their curiosity, and lead them to pry into the unsearchable plans of God-- the very sin of which Satan had been guilty--and reason as to the cause of His restrictions in regard to the tree of knowledge." {EW 146.2}

What do you understand the judgments of God to be?

- Do you see judgments through the human law lens as legal rulings and handing down of punishment?
- Do you see judgments through design law to be accurate diagnosis and the judgment as to the most righteous action to take in any given circumstance?

Consider this historic quote, what do you think?

> "How great is the long – suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** [Why would God remove His protective hand? What would be the result if He didn't? What would they come to believe about their sinfulness if God continued to protect them? What would happen to their hearts and minds? And in OT times what would have happened to the avenue for the Messiah?] They refused to listen to the voice of God in His **created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word**, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." [What were His judgments? Removing His protecting hand and allowing them to reap what occurs when one is out of harmony with God. And what is the blessing to people in experiencing this?] - PP 587.4

What about today as people become more godless, what will God do? What are we seeing in the world today? What will happen as time unfolds? Revelation speaks of pouring out vials of wrath or judgments, what do we think causes this? Is it God inflicting or is it God letting go, the four angels no longer holding back the winds of strife?

Here is another historic quote:

"**I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way**; **They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, **then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. **He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained**; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3

I want to tell you another thing. **The vials of God's wrath** and the sprinkling of them, are already coming. **What is the matter that we do not discern it?** It is because the light of truth does not affect the heart. The Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the world.

You hear of calamities by land and by sea, and they are constantly increasing. What is the matter? The Spirit of God is taken away from those who have the lives of men in their hands, and Satan is coming in to control them, **because they give themselves to his contro**l. Those who profess to be the children of God do not place themselves under the guardianship of the heavenly angels, and **as Satan is a destroyer, he works through those men** and they make mistakes, and they will get drunk, and because of intemperance, many times bring these terrible calamities upon us.

And see the storms and tempests! Satan is working in the atmosphere; he is poisoning the atmosphere, and here we are dependent upon God for our lives—our present and eternal life. And being in the position that we are, **we need to be wide-awake**, wholly devoted, wholly converted, wholly consecrated to God. **But we seem to sit as though we were paralyzed. God of heaven, wake us up**! Sermons and Talks Volume 2, p. 69.3; Manuscript 1, 1890; SM book 2, p. 52

Do we see today, just as in Ahaz's day, that when the people turn away from God, harden their hearts, go after the gods of this world, the gods of imperialism, power over, force, coercion, that God sets them free to reap what they choose. And as millions harden against God His Spirit is withdrawn and satanic agencies gain more power over the earth and the people not sealed by the Holy Spirit and evil continues to rise. Are we awake to see it?

WEDNESDAY

Nothing to Fear When We Fear God Himself—what do you think of this title?

Does it sound contradictory? Are they making a word play, purposely trying to contrast the word fear to mean two different things, are they intending fear to mean the same thing both times it is used?

Read second paragraph, "God warned Isaiah…" What does it mean to fear God and give glory to Him?

The lesson asks a great question, What does it mean to fear God in light of the command for us to love Him?

Read third paragraph, "True fear of God as holy…" Does this sound like fear of a different nature or the same type, the fear of terror, anxiety, distress—watch out God is most powerful and God can get you no matter what!

In the last paragraph the lesson tries to mitigate this ugly view, let's read the last paragraph, "There are different kinds of fear…" thoughts?

From where does fear originate? Does fear come from God, godliness, God's law, God's design, holiness, righteousness, love or any fruits of the Spirit? There is no fear in love the Bible says—so where does fear originate?

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid. Fear originates in sin, it is the natural result of being out of harmony with God's law, God's design for life.

What is the experience of people when an angel from God appears to them or they are in the presence of someone from heaven, like the apostles at the Mount of Transfiguration? Isn't it fear? And what do the angels say to God's prophets every time—almost always the first words? "Fear not" or "Don't be afraid."

Why do we initially experience fear when God when we come into His presence or when one of God's angels or representatives appear to us? Because the holiness, truth, love of heaven exposes the corruption, sin-sickness in us and sin causes fear.

But as we trust God, as we spend time in His presence, as we embrace His truth, experience His love, practice His methods the lies are expelled, our characters are transformed and the fear is eradicated. We become friends of God who know there is no need to fear God for God is for us.

The bottom green section asks, "are there things the world fears that we as Christians shouldn't fear? If so, what are they, and why shouldn't we fear them? At the same time, what things does the world not fear that we Christians should?"

What things are we not to fear that the world does?

- Financial ruin?
- Public humiliation or embarrassment?
- Being labeled a racist, sexist, bigot—(not actually being one, just being labeled one)?

- Rejection—be blocked on social media?
- Global warming and climate change?
- COVID-19?
- Death?
    - "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Heb 2:14-15 NIV84)
- What about truth? Does the world fear truth?

What things are we to fear that the world doesn't fear?

- Sin itself, deviating from God's design laws? The world doesn't fear rebellion against God, denying His existence, deviating from His design laws, embracing deceit, selfishness, coercion.
- How many Christians have been deceived to be more afraid of God who is working to save them than the sin in their lives which is destroying them?

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that Ahaz was deeply involved in paganism sacrificing to false gods and Isaiah had a message for him about this:

Read Isaiah 8:19-20:

> And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (NKJV)

What does this mean?

- The law refers to the Torah or Old Testament Scripture, God's revelation of truth to us. If it isn't in harmony with God's revealed truth then we shouldn't believe it.
- The testimony is the testimony about God given by God's spokespersons through time, the truth of God's character, design law, methods, the issues in the great controversy. If a message contracts all of this then we are not to believe it.
- Light refers to the light of truth and those who consult the dead are going to the source of lies and falsehood and there is no truth there, there is no light, only darkness.

What is spiritualism? It is the pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason—

- Saul talking to the witch of Endor—wanted knowledge of the future
- Tarot cards
- Palm reading

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- Astrology
- Tea leaves or chicken bones
- Seances
- Ouija boards
- Automatic writing

What is wrong with pursuing the occult or using these methods?
What happens to people who utilize these practices?

FRIDAY

In the quotation from the book *The Great Controversy* it states, "But the 'familiar spirits,' as these visitants from other worlds were called are declared by the Bible to be 'the spirits of devils.'"

Could spiritualism take on the form of communication or visitation from aliens from other planets?

What would happen in the world today if we started receiving communications from listening stations purported to come from some other star system or galaxy?

read and discuss questions

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 5
Noble Prince of Peace

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text but let's read Isaiah 9:6 and verse 7:

> For unto us a Child is born,
> Unto us a Son is given;
> And the government will be upon His shoulder.
> And His name will be called
> Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
> Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
> 7 Of the increase of His government and peace
> There will be no end,
> Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
> To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
> From that time forward, even forever.
> The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (NKJV)

What does this verse mean to you?

What does this verse say about the divinity of Jesus?

- Who is the Counselor? The Holy Spirit
- Who is the Everlasting Father?
- Who is the Prince of Peace?
- How can all three be said of Jesus?

Does this mean there is only one individuality and Jesus is that one individuality, or rather that the three individualities are so united in perfection of Their character of love that when you see Jesus you see the Father and the Spirit?

What does the idea of "Prince of Peace" and "His government and peace" mean to you?

In this world today do we need more peace? Do we need the kingdom of the Prince of Peace?

How does one achieve peace? Can we achieve peace through war? Yet the Bible says "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back." (Rev 12:7 NIV84)

How do we understand this? How is that we cannot achieve peace by prosecuting war, yet Michael and His angels warred against the devil and Jesus is the Prince of Peace?

What law lens are we understanding this through?

If we understand law and government to be like human governments then law is imposed, injustice must be punished, and war is won through conquest, through force and might, through power over, through killing one's enemies and forcing submission.

But if we understand design law then we understand that peace is achieved by destroying the elements that cause division and hostility. We destroy lies, fear, selfishness out the hearts of intelligent beings. Thus the Bible says:

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Co 10:3–5 NIV84).

What kind of weapons do we use? Those that demolish lies about God and win hearts to love and trust—can you win hearts by force and violence?

This all fits perfectly as the word in Revelation 12 translated "war" "there was war in heaven…" is:

> **πόλεμος** [*polemos* /**pol**·em·os/] n m. From *pelomai* (to bustle); TDNT 6:502; TDNTA 904; GK 4483; 18 occurrences; AV translates as "war" 12 times, "battle" five times, and "fight" once. **1** a war. **2** a fight, a battle. **3** a dispute, strife, quarrel.[1]

In English we get the word *polemic* which means:

> "a controversial argument, as one against some opinion, doctrine, etc."

God fights the war with the weapons of truth, love, freedom, evidence, revelation—Satan fights with lies, deception, flattery, coercion, manipulation, propaganda, and violence.

We can never get peace using Satan's methods—never!

---

n **n**: noun or neuter
m **m**: masculine
TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TDNTA Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume
GK Goodrick-Kohlenberger
AV Authorized Version
[1] Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

Do any other Bible texts come to mind when we consider the Prince of Peace forming a government that built on peace and never end?

Does Psalms 119:165 have any bearing? If so what?

> Great peace have they who love your law,
> and nothing can make them stumble. (NIV84)

Why do those who love God's law have great peace?

Do we create greater peace through more legislation? By greater authoritarianism—rules over and enforcement of rules? By getting the right judges or politicians in office?

Does this text in Isaiah about the government being on Jesus' shoulders mean that He takes over a human government and reigns over earthly kingdoms?

Far too many Christians read this text through the lens of human law and think that Jesus will come and set up a kingdom that runs just like earthly kingdoms, with power over and infliction of punishment for disobedience? Who is going to come and give them such a kingdom?

This is Satan's grand strategy, infect minds with the lie that God's law works like human law, rules over that require legal action and external enforcement. That idea corrupts everything:

- The cross is corrupted into God legally executing His Son and Jesus dying to pay a legal penalty to a god who is the inflictor and source of death
- The wicked are tortured and killed by God and God is feared rather than loved
- Theologies are taught that are designed to hide us or protect us from God (covered by robe of righteousness, intercessor pleads to the punishing god not to punish etc.) because we don't trust Him—we don't have faith in God we have faith in the legal payment of Jesus!
- Holiness is perverted to rule-keeping, performance, obedience to law
- Churches fracture as they fight over the right definition, of terms or understanding of texts, or the right mechanics for worship or the right rituals
- Justice is distorted into accurate record keeping and "just" infliction of punishments
- People are deceived into believing justice can be achieved through human governments if only we get the right laws passed or officials in office
- The beastly system of Revelation will not arise seeking injustice. It will not arise by claiming to promote evil. It will arise pursuing justice—the specific justice doesn't matter—it might be racial justice, economic justice, gender justice, environmental justice, justice for the unborn—but whatever justice is pursued it will be advanced by using human governments to pass laws that will be enforced by fines, sanctions, revocation of business licenses, restrictions of freedom such as travel, assembly, speech, canceling of memberships, imprisonment and eventual death penalty. All of this in the pursuit of justice, of doing what is right to save the planet, to save lives, to protect the innocent, the down trodden, the oppressed. But all through

> Satan's kingdoms, methods and principles. This is all Satan's deception to infect hearts and minds with his methods and it deceives if it were possible the very elect.

We can never achieve God's goals through Satan's methods. We can never have justice via Satan's kingdom and every kingdom, government of this world is Satan's.

Remember, Jesus said His kingdom was *not* of this world, the kingdom of God is within you. God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love and freedom. Think about these three elements and the use of force and power—the methods of the world:

- Can you get people to believe and accept the truth by force—by threatening them with punishment if they don't believe? "A person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still." This is why the Bible says "every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind." (Romans 14:5). Truth cannot win hearts by threatening to kill those who won't accept the truth. We cannot advance truth with Satan's methods.
- Can you get people to love you or others by threatening them with punishment if they don't love you or others?
- Can you get more freedom by imprisoning people and punishing people who don't value freedom?

Understand the great trap of Satan than millions of Christians have fallen into—that God's law functions like human law and justice can be achieved by right human laws, justices, politicians or legislation—it is a lie.

Consider this historic quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> **In these days it is Satan's determined purpose to intensify sin by making it legal** in the children of disobedience. **He is to reveal to the world and to heaven what is the order and result of a government carried on according to his ideas of administration and law**. He is working with secret yet with intense zeal in **both Church and State**, to cause men to throw off **all the restraints of God's law**, and take a decided stand with him in the ranks of rebellion; but when his work is accomplished, the Lord will interpose, and vindicate his honor as the supreme Ruler of the universe. ST April 28, 1890, par. 8

Do you see the trap? We only have a government of peace from the Prince of Peace by restoring God's law into hearts and minds of people so that they love others more than self and every citizen in God's kingdom is completely trustworthy!

But some object: are you saying we should not care about social injustice or doing social justice? Should we just ignore abuse to our fellow human beings, should Christians have just ignored slavery?

And slavery is a great example of the difference in God's methods of advancing justice—and the world's method.

Those who see the world through the lens of human imposed law look at the New Testament and don't find a statement condemning slavery. They don't find instructions from Jesus or the Apostles directing for slaves to run away, in fact what is found are directions for slaves to return to their owners and to stay with their masters. We don't find in the New Testament any calls for new laws to do away with slavery, or any advocacy for abolitionist senators or governors in Rome—and thus those who read the Bible through human law find the Bible unjust, they falsely think the Bible was not attacking slavery. But it did and continues to attack all injustice—how? Through God's law, through God's methods, through the only means that actually ends human suffering, including slavery, and brings genuine peace—through changing hearts and minds by writing God's law upon the hearts and minds of people.

What happens to slavery and every other human abuse, if EVERY person loves you and others as much as they love their own spouse or children or self? Slavery is eradicated! God was absolutely working to eliminate slavery, but not through human governments because all human governments are part of Satan's kingdom and operate on Satan's methods and when we embrace those methods and use those avenues our hearts get corrupted—we open a door to our hearts for Satan's laws and methods to be written into our characters. And no matter how righteous our intentions, when we write laws and enforce them injustice to some people will occur.

Understand there is a difference in being a Protestant—a person who stands up to the injustices in the world and speaks the truth in love and those who get seduced into pursuing righteousness through legislation. Protestants in the truest sense advance God's kingdom by promoting the truth in love while leaving others free. Their primary focus is changing hearts and minds away from the methods of Satan to the principles and methods of God. As the people change the community and society changes. So we have a responsibility, which is what we are doing in Come and Reason Ministries to Protest all human injustice, but via the methods of God, truth, love and freedom, focused on healing hearts and minds.

So, what do we understand the government of Peace to be and how is it that those who love God's law have great peace?

SUNDAY

Read Isaiah 8:19-22:

> When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. 21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. 22 Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness. NIV84

What is happening in this text? What is spiritualism? It is the pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason—

- Saul talking to the witch of Endor—wanted knowledge of the future
- Tarot cards
- Palm reading
- Astrology
- Tea leaves or chicken bones
- Seances
- Ouija boards
- Automatic writing

What is wrong with pursuing the occult or using these methods?
What happens to people who utilize these practices?

Why do people who turn to the occult end up in darkness? Because there is no light there, it is simply how reality works. It doesn't matter their intention—if a person with good intention seeks to get healthy by drinking poison, thinking, hoping, praying that the poison will cure them, will they get healthier? If a person puts on a blindfold attempting to see more clearly will they?

Rejecting truth and embracing lies NEVER enlightens, it only darkens. The occult is the domain of the father of lies and his minions and will only darken, confuse, pervert, damage and destroy.

As I was thinking about this moral darkness that covers the minds of the people, I was reminded of an article in the *Signs of the Times* January 20, 1890 entitled *God Made Manifest in Christ* by E.G. White.

Before we read some of this—what kind of war are we in? What are the weapons do we use? They are to demolish what? As we approach the second advent, consider this description of the situation at the first advent of Christ:

> At the first advent of Christ, **darkness,** covered the earth, and **gross darkness** the people. [Darkness about what? Did darkness cover only the non-Jewish people, or were the Jews in darkness? Does this have any parallels for us today?] **Light** and **truth** seemed to have departed from among men, and Satan appeared to reign in undisputed power. [How was Satan reigning? Was he on a physical throne or was he reigning in the hearts and minds of people through his lies, his methods and principles—which are imposed rules which increases injustice after injustice though legal means. Remember slavery was legal. All the abuses of the Pharisees were legal. They hated Jesus because He broke their laws.] **Rival sects existed**, and among those who professed to be the servants of God were displayed **love of preeminence and strife for power and position**. [Do we see rival sects in society today, or could we say rival political parties? Do we see those rival sects claiming to be promoting the "good of the people" but in reality they love preeminence and fight for power and position over others?] Souls who were desirous of **light** were filled with perplexity and sorrow. [Are many people today desperate for light, searching for what is right?] Many were sighing, "**What is truth**?" [How many today are

saying "What is truth, there is no truth, your truth is your truth my truth is my truth"?] **Ignorance** prevailed, but many were looking for something better, looking for **light** that would illuminate the moral **darkness** of the world. [Does ignorance about God and God's design law for life prevail today? And many are looking for something better, for light that will illuminate the moral darkness of this world! But where will they find it when the churches are infected with the imposed law lie and collude with governments practicing imperial methods of coercion—just like the Pharisees 2000 years ago.] They were thirsting for a **knowledge of the living God**, for some assurance of a life beyond the tomb… [What was the darkness over? What was the light the people were desperate for? What about today? This same author describes the darkness enshrouding the world today in COL 415:

> "It is the **darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world**. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a **message from God is to be proclaimed**, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world** is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love**."

Just as at the time of the first advent so now at the time of the second advent. People are hungering for the knowledge of the living God and God is calling for a people to tell this end-time message, which is the truth of His character of love, rejecting imposed law and returning to worshipping the Creator whose laws are design laws!] {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 1}

Christ came just as prophecy had foretold. He was the "way, the **truth**, and the life," and the beams of the Sun of Righteousness dispelled the moral **darkness** so that the honest in heart might see the **truth**… [And Christ will come a second time just as prophecy has foretold:

> "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the **sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings**" (Mal 4:1-2 NIV84).

And consider if you were in a dark cave and were brought out at noon on a sunny day, versus you came out before dawn and watched the sun rise. The Sun of Righteousness rises with healing in His rays or beams or wings, those who love truth, love light, and are embracing the truth and assimilating it into their hearts are being healed, transformed, renewed, so that when He appears in all His glory we live in His fiery life-giving glory. But those who have rejected the ever-increasing truth and light, remain in darkness and when He appears in glory the beg for the mountains to fall them and hide them from Him. But for those of us who love the truth, embrace the light, **we become the lights of God** in the world of darkness. We are the ones who are God's final witnesses—the ones who reveal God's love and truth are contrary to the methods of this world!] {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 3}

The Saviour of the world proposed that no attraction of an earthly character should call men to his side. **The light and beauty of celestial truth alone should be the drawing power**. [And so today God cannot win hearts and minds to love and trust by might, power, intimidation, great signs and wonders or miracles. Only by truth presented in love and leaving people free can He win this war, why? Because His goal is to heal hearts and minds and that requires our participation. We must think, reason, weigh out the evidences and decide. If God were to use might over us, it would intimidate us and we would lose our individuality. Thus, God uses the power of love and truth to win His case!] The outward glory, the worldly honor, which attracts the attention of men, he would not assume. He made himself accessible to all, teaching **the pure, exalted principle of truth as that which was only worthy of their notice**…[But the methods of Satan, the ways of this world are not truth, they are lies, deception, pomp, wealth, intimidation, power over, coercion. Do we find this is still true today?] {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 4}

Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world **that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed.** [What is the central issue in this war? The truth about God's character of love! This is why an angel could not come as our Savior because the lies of Satan were not about angels, they are about God. And only God can fully reveal the truth about God.] We could not behold the glory of God unveiled in Christ and live; [Why? Is this a rule or is it a function of reality? And if those who Christ came to save couldn't behold God's unveiled glory and live, what happens to the wicked in the end when His glory is unveiled? Is this an infliction by God or a result of unremedied sin in their hearts and minds—of how reality works? What kind of law is this?] but as he came in the garb of humanity, we may draw nigh to our Redeemer. We are called upon to behold the Lord our Father in the person of his Son…{ST, January 20, 1890 par. 5}

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; [And how did Satan attack Christ? 1st, by deception and lies pretending to be an angel from heaven; 2nd, by false theology misusing Scripture—himself and then his human agents doing this multiple times as recorded in the Gospels. 3rd, by bribes and inducements offering the rewards of this world; 4th, by coercion, threat, abuse, and ultimately torture and death through the application of human laws that were easily manipulated to bring about the execution of Jesus. Notice the methods of Satan—these are the methods of earthly governments—they lie and deceive, they financially incentivize and bribe with tax incentives, with power, position, privilege, they ultimately coerce with imprisonment and even execution and the laws are easily manipulated by those in power to destroy the righteous.] for the enemy knew that when **divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him**. [What divine strength and power? What are the divine weapons? Break away from the captivity that binds us—what does this mean? What keeps us captive? Lies bind us—so truth destroys lies and sets us free. And fear/selfishness, the carnal nature with its me-first survival drives, enslave us, so love destroys fear and selfishness and sets us free. As we embrace the

truth about God's character, design laws, methods, as revealed and fulfilled in Jesus we are won to trust, then, in trust, we open the heart and the Spirit brings God's love and pours it into our hearts which casts out fear. We are set free to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us. Jesus came to give us His power of truth and love so we could break free. But notice what the author writes next in Satan's warfare] **Satan sought to intercept every ray of light** from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, **that men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth**. [Is this also the situation today? Has God been forgotten? Is it considered reasonable by the world to still believe in God or do only the uneducated, the foolish still believe in God? And what about those who do believe in God, are the churches presenting God's true character or are they presenting Satan's view of an imperial dictator—a legal religion that is the shadow of Satan's kingdom and character, just like the Jews did 2000 years ago? Do you see why God needs an end-time people to call people back to Creator worship and reveal the truth of His character and design law methods!] He had caused **truth** of vital importance to be so mingled with **error** that it had lost its significance. [What might that truth be? What is the error that is mixed in? Hear what comes next!] **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions**, [What was the error? The design law of God was burdened with needless exactions and traditions—how? By accepting the lie that God's law is imposed rules. Design law has no needless exactions or tradition, it is human law, made up rules that multiply and multiply and become ever more burdensome. Just look at all our societies and governments and the myriad of laws and regulations we have and how legislators continue to pass more and more all the time and what is the result? Continuing the quote:] and **God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** [Why? Because when God's law is pictured as rules made up, then He necessarily must be the one who enforce those rules, which are arbitrary, and therefore God is viewed as the arbitrary, revengeful, severe—the punisher of rule-breakers.] He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God.** [How did Satan achieve this? By getting people to believe the lie that God's law is imposed law. Once we accept that lie then we present God as functioning like Satan. When we embrace the lie that we can get justice in society through human governments and pursue this we open our hearts to be stamped with Satan's stamp, Satan's character and we become like the evil one. We become marked either in our forehead or hand.] **Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth.** Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes**. [What is another way to say setting and keeping right? Justification and sanctification The **only** way to do this was to reveal the truth about God which wins us to trust. Notice, this author didn't say one of the ways, or, in addition to the necessary legal payment to pay for your sins to set men right... No! The ONLY way to set and keep men right is through revealing the truth about God, why? Because of reality—what is being set right? Not records, not legal accounts, but hearts and minds of people. And that is the reality of justification—a heart that is at enmity or distrusting God can only be set right with God by truth and love! There is nothing legal about it.] **That men might have salvation he came directly to man,**

and became a partaker of his nature… [In order to reveal the truth and procure the remedy!] {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be… [How does Satan represent God to be? A rule-maker and legal enforcer whose law and government operate like this sinful world. Jesus revealed something completely different. What is happening in the world today? Is the Christian world presenting God as Jesus revealed, or is the Christian world presenting the false god of imposed rules who is the inflictor of pain and suffering and thus the Christian world seeks to achieve its goals through human governments?] **The men of his own nation, the leaders of the people, were so ensnared by the deceptions of Satan that the plan of redemption for a fallen race seemed to their minds indistinct and unexplainable…** [What about today? Is the plan of salvation indistinct and unexplainable to the leaders of the world? What about the leaders of the church? When they explain it as Jesus paying a penalty to the Father so the Father won't be legally required to kill us, are they demonstrating a knowledge of the truth or showing that they are confused and don't understand?] {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 7}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of **the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,--to set men right through the revelation of God.** [Set us right, justify us, through a revelation of God, not through a legal payment, why? Because the problem is not legal, the problem is not a problem with God's law or God's attitude, or God's forgiveness, or God's government, but the problem is a problem with our hearts and minds—We believe lies about God and don't trust Him and are infected with fear and selfishness. Thus, the way we are set right with God is to dispel the lies, the darkness with the light of truth that wins us to trust and then when we trust He infuses us with His presence and His love overcomes our fear and we are renewed to be like Him in character.] **In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father.** In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; **I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." When the object of his mission was attained,--the revelation of God to the world,--the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.**

Do we see the very same issues going on in the war today as when Christ first came? Do we see that our Prince of Peace restores peace in us as we love His law, which is design law, which is an expression of His character, which destroys the lies of the enemy and restores us to trust, which takes away our fear and brings us peace?

MONDAY

In the fifth paragraph it states, "He [Jesus] received all authority in heaven and on earth, and He is with us always (Matt. 28:18-20). While retaining His divinity He also has become human for all time, ever able to sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb 4:15)…"

He is with us always—for how long has Jesus become human? Realize this sacrifice of Jesus to become incarnate, to become human is an infinite sacrifice something we will never fully appreciate. Jesus, prior to His incarnation, lived as an infinite being—a being of infinity. He could enter and leave infinity. He could manifest in physical form, but He wasn't restricted to physical form. He was still an infinite being who lived in all points of time and all places simultaneously. But when He became incarnate, He surrendered His infinite powers and became one with us—for all eternity future. This wasn't just for 33 years, but for all time He remains human—He no longer is in all places at all times simultaneously—that is why the Holy Spirit is His representative now. This is why Jesus told His disciples He would send the Comforter. This is why Jesus said the Comforter would not speak on His own but only what He hears. The Comforter communicates to each of us the pleas of Jesus calling us to come home, to let Him heal us, to let Him take away our fear, our pain, our heartaches, to let Him come in and sup with us!

But what about this idea of Jesus sympathizing with us? Could an infinite God not sympathize with us without becoming human?

> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. (Heb 4:15 NIV84)

My view is this is about our infinite God demonstrating to us His infinite love by becoming one with us, by surrendering infinite power, by becoming human, by becoming a helpless infant, by becoming powerless and being abused and tortured and killed—to reveal to us the truth that was always true about His character—that He truly does know all of our weaknesses, struggles, infirmities, temptations and is able to provide everything we need for victory. It isn't so much He learned in the sense of being enlightened, but that He achieved **as a human** what none of us could achieve and simultaneously revealed to us the truth about God.

And we are tempted from both outside ourselves and by our own humanity, fear and selfishness. Jesus was tempted outside Himself, but the humanity He assumed also tempted Him with fatigue, pain, and then with fear of death and the desire to save self and not die—as seen in Gethsemane, but He overcame all temptation by perfect love and perfect trust in His Father.

TUESDAY

What do you think of the title for today's lesson: The Rod of God's Anger?

Is this the same rod that David wrote about in Psalms 23, that "your rod and staff they comfort me" or is this a different rod?

Does God get angry? At what and about what? What is the focus of His anger?

What is the difference between righteous anger and sinful anger?

What law lens do we understand this through?

- Design law understands that righteous anger is always motivated by love for people and focuses on destroying the disease of sin in order to heal and save people. Like a doctor's anger at disease which destroys but not at the sick patient who is dying. So the doctor's anger is taken out on the virus, the cancer, the sickness, not on the patient.
- Imposed law promotes sinful anger which is motivated by selfishness and the desire to retaliate and focuses on punishing, hurting, or destroying people, while perpetuating sin and selfishness. It is the anger of not getting our way, or being hurt, injured, treated unfairly and instead of seeking to destroy the sin through truth and love, we want to destroy the sinner through inflicted punishment.

Thus the rod of God's anger through imposed law is the rod of punishment, of God inflicting, God making people suffer or God killing to punish sin which is Satan's lie.

Under design law the rod of God's anger is God's agencies, work, power interfering with sin in order to eradicate sin and save people. Thus for the righteous the rod and staff comfort because they destroy the disease of sin and restore us to godly spiritual health.

But for the unrighteous, who remain in a false worldview and believe lies about reality, they misconstrue the rod as an instrument of punishment that God wields to inflict pain. They fail to realize that their suffering actually comes from their refusal to let God do surgery on their hearts and cut out the fear, selfishness and evil habits.

WEDNESDAY

The description of Jesus as the shoot or sprout that comes out of the stump of Jesse. What does this mean?

The line of David was to be a great tree of righteousness, but it became corrupted and that tree was cut down but a remnant remained from which Jesus was born, a small sprout to shoot. And Jesus grew and became the King of kings and Lord of lords.

How is Jesus both the Root and the Branch of David? Because Jesus is the Father/Creator of Adam, and Adam is the father of all humans, so the father of David, yet Jesus became incarnate and took His genetic humanity from the family line of David. So Jesus is both the Root and Branch of David.

The lesson asks in what way will Jesus, the new Davidic Ruler reverse all the evil effects of sin and apostasy?

The lesson answers with this: "He thinks and acts in harmony with the Lord, judges fairly, punishes the wicked, and brings peace."

Do you agree or disagree? Why is this incorrect? Because this is Satan's lie about justice—that justice is based on the right laws, the right judges and the right punishments being inflicted. This idea corrupts all who embrace it and it undermines God's ability to heal hearts and minds because it incites distrust of God and keeps people from trusting Him. Further, it causes people to embrace, under the umbrella of godliness, the methods and practices of Satan so that people pursue justice through legal means, either by rule-keeping, legal pardon, lists of sins being confessed, claiming legal payments of a substitute, or through law keeping, legal behavior, right beliefs and doctrines, or through human governments to bring about the right laws to bring about social reforms. But all of this legal activity corrupts the hearts of people who seek righteousness through them.

Read bottom green question, "What did Jesus accomplish at the First Coming that gives us such assurance about the Second Coming?"

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph, "Not only does the Lord…" What do you think of these elements?

- Bestow salvation but is our salvation? What do you understand this distinction to be? The human species was saved in the person of Jesus Christ. He singly and alone overcame the infection of sin, confronted and defeated the temptations of Satan, lived out and produced a perfect sinless human character, revealed the truth about God, exposed Satan as a liar, and restored God's design law for life into the humanity He assumed. As a human, using only human abilities Jesus did all of this. Thus in Jesus the species is perfected, but Jesus also procured the remedy, truth and a new character that He offers to give to all who trust Him. Truth restores trust and a new heart and right spirit to all who accept them.
- God is with us—how?
    - God is with us in heart
    - God is with us in substance, human, like us
    - God is with us in struggle, pain, suffering
    - God is with us in overcoming
    - God is with us to comfort and encourage
    - Who is "us"? Is it Israel? Is it all humanity? Is it only those who believe?
    - What is the difference between God is with us and God is for us?
- What is the distinction between bearing our sins and become sin for us?

The bottom green section says that "Only the works that Christ did, which He credits to us by faith, can bring redemption."

What does this mean?

Through what law lens to you hear these words?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

If you have the human law model then this becomes legal accounting in ledgers—God whiting out the sins and writing in Jesus' historic victory to your legal account.

It is a fraud—based on the lie that God's law works like human law, it is also contrary to the Greek, as that is not what the Greek means for accounted or accounting in Romans.

The word actually deals with reality—you cannot account something that isn't first so. You don't account that you have $50 in your bank unless you actually have $50, the account only records what is.

So, Jesus' setting us right or justifying is by faith happens in us by removing distrusting and restoring us to trust, removing selfishness and writing in us His law of love and the records of heaven merely register that reality, or not.

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, "Christ was the one…" what does this mean? What does the language offering for sin mean?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World, videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign. BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month. There are now more than 30 blogs translated into Polish as well as *Could It Be This Simple?* all available on our website—thank you Mirra Huber!

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 6
Playing God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

We don't often get humor in our lessons, but today we do, let's read the first three paragraphs, "After a minister…"

SUNDAY

The lesson will focus our attention on Babylon—why? What does Babylon represent?

Babylon in Scripture represents Satan's kingdom—it wars against Jerusalem—which represents God's plan of salvation.

Remember the focus of Scripture—after Adam sins, in Genesis 3, God promises the Messiah, our Savior. The rest of the OT is focused on this battle between God's agencies working to bring the Messiah and Satan's agencies working to stop it.

This is why Babylon, and the other kingdoms we see in Scripture are highlighted, because they are used by Satan to try and destroy the people through whom God will bring Jesus.

And how is Babylon described in Bible prophecy?

MYSTERY
BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Rev 17:5 NIV84)

Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!
She has become a home for demons
and a haunt for every evil spirit,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.
3 For all the nations have drunk
the maddening wine of her adulteries.
The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

> "Come out of her, my people,
> so that you will not share in her sins,
> so that you will not receive any of her plagues; (Rev 18:2-4 NIV84)

Why is Babylon a symbol of this detestable system? We see in history other nations that warred against Israel:

- Hittites
- Philistines
- Assyrians

Why are none of these the nation the Bible uses to depict as the mother of harlots, the representative of Satan's kingdom—why Babylon?

There is another nation which comes up in Bible symbolism as representing Satan's power also and that is Egypt (Rev 11:8). What does Egypt represent? How is Egypt different from Babylon and why was Babylon chosen over Egypt to represent the mother of harlots?

What is a harlot in Bible symbolism? An unfaithful person who defiles themselves or corrupts themselves spiritually with other lovers. Think of what is represented by what the harlot does (I am not trying to be too graphic, but consider the metaphor and what it represents). The harlot is intimate with people not her spouse, she lets others, not her husband enter her and deposit their seed. The harlot represents those people who are intimate with gods other than Jesus—they let the other gods into their heart and plant their weed-seeds, their lies, their falsehoods, into their hearts.

Understanding the symbolism of the harlot, why isn't Egypt the mother of harlots—why Babylon?

What is the wine of Babylon that all the nations drink and get intoxicated upon? What does wine do? It confuses the thinking, impairs the judgment, while making people feel good. So Babylon has something that people ingest that confuses their thinking, impairs their judgment, and makes them feel good. Something different comes from Egypt, which makes Babylon the mother of harlots and the distributor of an intoxicating brew of lies.

If we focus on the nation of Israel as the agency through which Messiah and salvation come—what is the difference between Egypt and Babylon?

Didn't both nations hold God's people as slaves? So what is the difference?

Egypt was led by Pharaoh who denied God's existence—"who is God that I should know Him."

Babylon was led by Nebuchadnezzar who initially denied God but later accepted Him.

Now consider the sin of adultery—can you commit adultery against someone you have never known? For instance, can you cheat on your wife if you have never married? So, Egypt doesn't represent a harlot because Egypt represents those who never knew God, those who deny God. Egypt represents evolutionism, secularism, communism.

But Babylon represents those who accept God—but they betray Him. How?

- What else is unique about Babylon compared to other nations of the world who attacked Israel?
- What would make Babylon the mother of all the harlots and what is the wine that intoxicates the world getting the nations to commit adultery with her?
- And how are the people of God are caught up in this so much that God gives a special call for them to come out of Babylon?

Of the various nations that war against Israel, **Babylon is the first to create a legal code,** the Code of Hammurabi. In other words, **Babylon is the first of these abusing nations to most accurately represent Satan's law and Satan's government** and Satan's methods and to create the imposed law system as a form of righteousness or justice that every nation of the world drinks. This imposed law worldview as a means of justice is the wine that intoxicates the world. And the code of Hammurabi was law enacted at the behest or with the authority of their god—in other words the idea that this is how God operates and it is by God's will and through His power it is enforced. In God we trust! And when Nebuchadnezzar was converted he immediately passed imposed laws in regard to worshipping the God of Daniel.

So Babylon represents those who claim to worship God, but betray the Creator God and instead give their love, affection and hearts to an imperial dictator who makes up rules like humans do, and must use power to inflict punishment for sin, requiring legal payments to pay for sin. This false view will ultimately lead to the formation of the beast of Revelation that will seek social justice through human governments.

Recently, I received in the mail the book *The Subversion of Christianity* by Jacques Ellul. It was sent without any note so I don't know who sent it. I want to thank whomever sent it. I am finding it quite insightful. If any of you want a very deep and insightful book, this is a great book. But be warned, it is written for the academic, it is not an easy read.

He describes the process of how Christianity became subverted and points out several keys to the subversion. As immorality began to rise in society and the Christian populace, the church responded with more rules and law.

Ellul writes:

> "The popes use laws to fight the corruption of the clergy. The church uses organization in its fight for unity…the church's reaction to the encounter with immorality, its immense attempt to enforce law and morality, and its reply to loose conduct in the ethical fields is closely connected with the error of confusing the church and society… The perversion, then, was that of making the gospel into law…the mistake was dealing with these on the moral and legal

plane instead of following the example of Paul, who always works through the moral question to the spiritual question, gets back to the essence of the revelation in Christ, and from this derives some models of conduct that are consistent with faith and love. The church did not do this. It thus set itself on the same level as the world and treated moral matters on the moral plane." p. 88-89.

"Catholic Christianity becomes the state religion and an exchange takes place: the church is invested with political power, and it invests the emperor with religious power...We have to say very forcefully that we see here the perversion of revelation by participation in politics, by the seeking of power. The church lets itself be seduced, invaded, dominated by the ease with which it can now spread the gospel by force (*another* force than that of God) and use its influence to make the state, *too,* Christian. It is great acquiescence to the temptation Jesus himself resisted, for when Satan offers to give him all the kingdoms of earth, Jesus refuses, but the church accepts, not realizing from whom it is receiving the kingdoms…Christianity became the state religion…It is frightening to see how easily the church accepts all this. Hardly had it emerged from persecution before it itself began to persecute…The church is a political power but it is always at the service of the political power that is either in place or in the course of being installed…

"It will be republican under a republic as it is monarchist under a monarchy. Irrefutable theological arguments are always found. A monarchical regime reflects the monarchical unity of God. A republic reflects the people that God elects for himself on earth. Democracy shows that God associates himself with the will of the peoples. The tradition was already well established when in the sixth century the idea was formulated that the acts of God in history were performed through the Franks. The church could then become National Socialists (the German Christians) when Hitler came to power. IT could become communist (with notorious figures like Berecski and Hromadka) in communist countries. Each time it develops a theological argument to show that the power that has been set up is good…Once the church is read to associate with instituted power it is obliged to associate with all and sundry forms of the state…When the church becomes socialist in the support of a socialist regime, it may stress the theological themes of poverty and justice…

"The church's fault is to be found in the process of justify political *power* and *action.*" p.124-126 we read:

Do you see the historical progression away from design law, the truth, love, freedom of God restored in the heart through trust in God, to a system of imposed law with rules and morality codes enforced externally? This is Satan's world, Satan's system of imposed law and the church embraces it, and all the world now embraces this method and commits adultery with her.

Egypt represents the other system—the system of godlessness. So in Bible symbolism Babylon represents religious imperialism, the false god-construct of imposed law, and Egypt represents godlessness, evolutionism, secularism, communism etc. Both are Satan's kingdom.

In Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 the Bible describes Lucifer's rebellion in heaven and his desire to rise above and take the throne of God.

Consider that—how is it that God is above humans and angels? It is by reality—by His nature that being God, Creator, an infinite being—He is in reality above all others.

How did Satan seek to rise above—is it by his nature or is it by fiat, declaration, proclamation, imposition, legislation?

Notice not only the reality differences of their nature, but also the difference in their methods. Satan, who is not in nature above others, seeks to elevate himself above others, but reading from Philippians 2:

Christ Jesus:
6 Who, **being in very nature God**,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name…(Philippians 2:6-9 NIV84)

God, whose nature is infinite, runs His universe by giving of Himself, sacrificing Himself to uplift those beneath Him—this is the kingdom of love. Satan, who is not by nature above others, seeks to elevate himself above others.

All kingdoms of this sinful world are built on Satan's system, a few ruling elites elevate themselves above others and take from the masses to elevate themselves. Whereas God gives of Himself to elevate the masses.

Look at the history of the world:

- Pharaoh's of Egypt
- Emperor's of China and Japan
- Kings of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome
- Kings and Queens of the nations of Europe

Every kingdom of the world has elites ruling over the masses, not by nature, not because they are inherently higher or greater but by rules, imposed laws, they take from the masses, the pass laws to tax, to restrict land or business ownership, or privilege, even one's freedom as a human being enslaving some throughout history—all through imposed laws.

This power over others system is Satan's world and Satan's kingdom and Babylon is the mother of all these harlots who prostitute themselves with the merchants of the world, selling their virtue for riches—those who believe in God but embrace Satan's methods. Egypt is also Satan's kingdom and represents all those nations who deny God, like China, North Korea—but who also set up a few ruling elites to exploit the masses. And Satan pits these two systems against each other and wars them back and forth with God's people in the middle—but who primarily get caught up in Babylon because Babylon professes a belief in God.

God's people are called to come out of Babylon to leave the systems of imposed laws and imposed penalties, to stop seeking to achieve social justice through more laws, more rules and more punishments. To seek justice by loving every person as God loves us, to give glory to God because the hour in human history has come for people to see God for who He really is, the Creator who made the heavens and earth and sea and whose laws are design laws, not imposed Babylonian rules.

Sunday's lesson asks us to read Isaiah 13, I hope you have done this as we don't have time to read it today. This chapter describes threatenings, wrath, and consequence such as war, Babylon and the Medes conquering and the killing and suffering that happens.

In the bottom green section the lesson asks a series of questions, let's examine them:

- "Why does a loving God do these things, or allow these things to happen? Certainly some innocent people will suffer, as well, wouldn't they? How do we understand this action by God?"
    - What law lens are we thinking through? If imposed law lens what does innocent mean? Not having personally done any wrong, so infants are innocent. If thinking through design law lens what does innocent mean—not infected with sin—no carnal nature, no fear and selfishness. In other words, not dying from a terminal sin condition. Which is more accurate infants are innocent of sin, or infants are born in sin, conceived in iniquity and have a terminal sin condition—albeit not by their choosing?
    - And if infants have this terminal sin condition and God doesn't do anything what happens to them and every other human being in history? They die—what death the sleep death and are resurrected to eternal life, or eternal death? So, if we have design law lens do we understand there is something more going on here than just temporal life and death?
    - Why then does a loving God threaten? Why do loving parents threaten their children who play in the street? In a child's mind what is wrong with playing in the street? Mommy will spank! The loving parent steps between the child and the real problem, violations of the laws of health/physics when the child's body is hit by a car, and allows the child to think the problem is the inflicted punishment from the parent—until the child grows up and understands the problem was never the parent. This is the OT, God steps between His immature children and reality and allows Himself to be viewed as the inflictor of punishment to protect them from the real consequences of violating His design laws for life. So God threatens in love to protect until we grow up and know like Moses, there is no need to be afraid of God.

  - Why does God allow the wars and injustice to occur? Because of His design law. He is love and love only exists in freedom.
- "What should these texts, and all the texts in the Bible that talk about God's anger and wrath against sin and evil, tell us about the egregious nature of sin and evil?"
  - I like how they said "and all the texts in the Bible" and if we include the Bible as a whole what does it teach about God's wrath toward sin? God actively works to eradicate sin. He hates sin because sin damages and destroys that which He loves. And what action did God actively do to combat sin, to unleash His wrath to destroy sin? God sent His Son to become sin so that through Jesus He might take away the sin of the world and make us the righteousness of God.
  - If God's wrath toward sin is Jesus actively working to destroy sin, truth eradicating lies, love overcoming fear and selfishness, then what is God's wrath toward unrepentant sinners?
    - If one accepts Babylon's view of imposed law then one teaches God's wrath is God inflicting torment, pain, suffering and death to punish sinners.
    - But we are called out of Babylon, we have a message to return to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws. And in that view, God wrath is exactly what the Bible teaches and described so effectively by Paul in Romans 1:18-30—it is letting them go to reap what they have chosen—because that is how design law works. Only imposed law, Satan's kingdom, requires the infliction of punishment. Even at the Cross when Jesus experienced God's wrath, what did the Father do to the Son? Let Him go, gave Him up. So the evidence is clear. Any ideas of God's wrath being God using power to inflict pain and suffering is a lie of Satan.
  - Is there a difference between sin and evil?
    - Sin is a condition of being out of harmony with God and God's design law for life. We are born in sin and conceived in iniquity, but we are not born evil.
    - Evil is the embracing and choosing of the methods of sin, of the methods of fear and selfishness and the pursuit of those methods in the treatment of others. In other words, evil is putting sin into practice and exploiting, hurting, and harming others.
    - Does God hate sin and evil? Absolutely, does He hate sinful and evil people? No—He loves them.
- "Isn't the mere fact that a God of love would respond this way enough evidence to show us just how bad sin is?"
  - No—the evidence of how bad sin is, is in what sin does
  - God's response is evidence of God's love, but the destruction and harm that sin causes reveals how bad sin is.
- "We have to remember that this is Jesus speaking these warnings through Isaiah, the same Jesus who forgave, healed, pleaded with, and admonished sinners to repent. In your own mind, how have you come to understand this aspect of a loving God's character? Ask yourself this question, as well: Could not this wrath actually stem from His love? If so, how so? Or, look at it from another perspective, that of the Cross, where Jesus Himself, bearing the sins of the world, suffered worse than anyone else ever has suffered, even those 'innocents' who suffered

because of the sins of the nations. How does the suffering of Christ on the cross help answer these difficult questions?"

- Does God's wrath stem from His love? Absolutely, what is the only act that love can take and still be love if some insists on leaving you? Let them go! Even if it results in their death. This is God's wrath, letting go those whom He loves because they insist on severing their connection with Him. And when the life-giver lets go, what happens?
- What does it mean that Christ bore "the sins of the world"? What law model do you view it through? When we accept Satan's lie of imposed law, then sins are bad deeds and Jesus "bearing" them means every act of sin was placed on Christ and had to be punished. So Jesus gets punished by God for all our sins.
    - Remember this quote from *The Desire of Ages: "*In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice." DA 761.4
- It is Satan's view that our sins were punished in Jesus, because once you accept the view God's law functions like human law then justice requires infliction of punishment. So false theologies come forward in which people teach that ever sin of every person through all time were placed on Jesus and God punished Him for every sin using power to make the Son suffer and then legally executing Him in our place.
- This is all a lie and a perversion, which makes God out to be cruel, unjust as He is willing to punish an innocent and let the guilty off, and makes God out to be the source of pain and death. All of which leads to distrust of God and obstructs the true plan of salvation which requires we trust God and open the heart to Him.
- Through design law lens we realize that Christ took upon Himself the sinfulness of the world, the sin-infected condition that Adam brought upon the world. Jesus came as the second Adam to remedy or fix the damage which Adam did to the species. Thus He was tempted in all ways like us but chose with His human abilities to reject all temptation, live sinlessly and develop a perfect character. He became sin though He knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. At the cross He experienced the pain and suffering that sin brings, but not that God inflicts. In fact, it was God working cooperatively with Jesus for them to fulfill their joint purpose in eradicating sin and saving humanity.
- We believe that Jesus did suffer more than any other person in history, but how? Certainly not physically, there are many examples of people being tortured much longer and more severely than Jesus. How did Jesus suffer more than any other?
    - What was the cause of the greatest suffering, the physical or the mental/emotional? The mental emotional—and what caused that suffering to be the greatest? The loss of the connection with His Father. Think about it this way—if you were told you could never see or speak to Vladimir Putin again how distressing would that be for you? If you were told that you would never be able to see or speak with your spouse or child again how painful would that be for you? What is the point? The greater the love connection the greater the pain

when it is severed. God and Jesus had a connection of love and intimacy that was infinite—beyond our ability to understand and process and on the Cross Jesus had that connection severed in order to save us? Why? Under the false imposed legal model we are told because God had to punish Him. But in reality, under design law model, it was not for punishment sake it was for healing, redeeming, for fixing the sin problem, for eradicating the cause of death and restoring life into the species human. Jesus could not complete His mission to save humanity without eradicating the infection of fear and selfishness. This means He had to face death, the temptation to save self, and had to choose to surrender His life voluntarily and not choose to act to save self. In so doing the law of love was restored fully into the humanity He assumed and the infection of fear and selfishness was purged. Thus He destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. This was only possible if the Father who is the source of life, let Him go. Thus the Father was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself. It was their joint purpose, carried out through the Son and they acted cooperatively to achieve it.

- So Christ's sufferings on the Cross reveal God's infinite sacrifice to eradicate sin and bring remedy so all can be saved, even those who suffer in this world from no fault of their own

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks why does Babylon later refer to Rome? Imperialism, Babylon the first system that that interacted with Israel, professed a belief in God and had an imperial legal code, including for worship. Rome is the other major system that arose which interacted with Israel, then accepted a belief in Christ but infected Christianity with Babylon's wine of imperial law, that God's law works like human law and that justice is punishing sin.

Read second paragraph, "Like literal Babylon…" The lesson also reminds us of Jacob's dream where he sees Jesus standing at the top of the ladder at Bethel which means the house of God and the house of God is the gate of heaven—and the real house or temple of God is???? Jesus who said, "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again."

The temple at Jerusalem was an object lesson for Jesus and then for us who are built together into a house for God. Thus, the two systems, Babylon which is built on imposed law and seeks to lift up self over others, and Jesus who humbles self to lift us up and we become like Him in character and also seek to serve others not lord over them.

THURSDAY

read last paragraph, "Look at Isaiah…" Is this a pointless argument or the central point in the entire argument?

Does it make a difference to God's character if sin kills or if God kills?

Would it make a difference in your ability to trust your parent or your doctor if you believed that if you disobeyed your mother or doctor's instruction not to smoke that they would kill you rather than you would die of cancer?

Does it make a difference?

Why does it come when it comes? This argues that God decides when and how and whom, is that right?

Who decides whether someone is saved or lost, God or that person?

Does God's judgment of that person determine their salvation or merely diagnoses accurately the condition of their heart—healed or hardened? What determines whether a heart is healed or hardened? Who decides that?

And what determines when the final events take place? Why does God wait? God has the power to come today, why doesn't He? Because He want all to be saved and who decides? What determines the condition of hearts? Their choices, not God's…so is the delay evidence of God forcing His way or God operating in harmony with the principles of freedom?

What about the manner of their death? What causes the suffering? An infliction by God or the natural result of unremedied sin when God grants them their choice?

Remember this quote from

> Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power **are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? **Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish**. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? GC 542.1
>
> **Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven** and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—**could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no;** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but

> they have never trained the mind to love purity; **they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction**, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. **Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves**, and just and merciful on the part of God. GC 542.2
>
> **Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable**. GC 543.1

Why are the wicked tortured? Is it because God inflicts it, or God merely sets them free to reap what they have sown, that God stops shielding them from reality and they have full exposure to sin in their beings?

Why are they out of heaven? Voluntarily! Who determines their unfitness for heaven? Why do they suffer in unveiled truth and love?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

February 13 we will do two lessons: Lesson 9 at 9:25 a.m. and Lesson 10 at 10:35 a.m. and will not meet on February 20.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 7
Defeat of the Assyrians

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

This week we are examining the story of the defeat of the Assyrians when they attacked Judah at the time of Hezekiah.

If you lived in Judah at that time, with an army of 185,000 pressing down upon the city, an army that has just defeated every other major power in the region, what would you think and feel?

Why are these events recorded in Scripture?

> "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." (1Corinthians 10:6 NIV84)

What is the example for us today?

Do we live in times when enemies surround us? Are all of our enemies military powers or enemies that use physical force? Could we be surrounded by spiritual enemies?

In fact, in the OT we not only have the record of real historical events, but the events themselves serve as object lessons for the larger spiritual realities. Jerusalem represents God's kingdom; the Assyrians represents the powers of the world or of Satan's kingdom.

The Assyrians will use a variety of tactics to try and conquer Judah. Did Judah win this battle by fighting with their own power? Is there a spiritual lesson for us when we are being attacked by spiritual forces?

What are the weapons the devil uses to attack?

He is the Father of lies—deception, falsehood originated with Satan, and lies believed breaks the circle of love and trust and results in fear and selfishness—the me-first survival drives.

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid.

This fear driven me-first survival instinct is the playground of the enemy and his various weapons or powers are used to increase fear and inflame selfishness which gives him greater control over people ultimately destroying love and the fruits of the Spirit out of the hearts of people who embrace the fear.

The Bible identifies at least six powers that Satan uses:

- First power is the power of lies—so deception—and the title of **MONDAY's** lesson is PROPAGANDA

What is propaganda?

- information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.
- the deliberate spreading of such information, rumors, etc.

Propaganda is information with a specific agenda—to influence people or groups in specific ways. In other words, propaganda is information designed to get people to join sides, causes, take action or refuse to take action.

Is propaganda honest and truthful information? No—because propaganda is shaped information; it is spin; it is crafted, it will purposely highlight some facts and ignore other facts to present the information in such a way as to lead to the conclusions those who make the propaganda intend. Further, propaganda agents will not present the whole truth or full truth and will purposely obstruct or exclude or silence voices that would present evidence which undermines the propaganda.

In Hezekiah's day we see this in chapter 36 when the Assyrian king sent a representative to propagandize Judah notice what he says, in verses 4-7:

> On what are you basing this confidence of yours? 5 You say you have strategy and military strength—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? 6 Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. 7 And if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar"? (NIV84)

What is the propaganda?

- We have a strong army and Egypt is weak, you can't rely on them to protect you
- You can't depend on your God, why? Because Hezekiah has removed the altars—do you see the propaganda? Hezekiah did go about removing the altars in the high places—all the altars except at the Temple in Jerusalem. They take this fact and spin it to say Hezekiah was offending God, Hezekiah was resisting God, Hezekiah was being unfaithful to God. Therefore God won't protect you—so be afraid of us, don't resist, surrender.

Consider this description by Ellen White of what someone did with her writings:

> I have been made very sad in reading the pamphlet that has been issued by Brother Stanton and by those associated with him in the work he has been doing. **Without my consent, they have made selections from the Testimonies, and have inserted them in the pamphlet they have**

> **published, to make it appear that my writings sustain and approve the position they advocate. In doing this they have done that which is not justice or righteousness. Through taking unwarrantable liberties they have presented to the people a theory that is of a character to deceive and destroy**. In times past many others have done this same thing, and have **made it appear that the Testimonies sustained positions that were untenable and false**. RH August 22, 1893, par. 1

What is it they were doing? Propagandizing—taking quotes and misapplying them to make it appear that Mrs. White said or supported a position she didn't actually support.

Do we see any examples of propaganda being used today? Do you see how the media has made an artform out of lies, falsehoods, distortions, manipulation of information all designed to get people afraid and get them to draw conclusions that the propagandizer wants? If you haven't read my blog this week about a listener concerned that I have been foolish, I would encourage you to do so. It examines the concerns, but while I don't use the word propaganda in my blog, you will see that the listener has accepted a lot of propaganda. In fact, most of the critical emails I receive are from people who have not separated facts from spin, from interpretations of the media that craft the stories in such a way to create a certain picture.

Here is an example, the propaganda around hydroxychloroquine and whether it is a safe medication or a dangerous one?

First the facts:

- hydroxychloroquine has been around on used for more than 65 years and was approved by the FDA for use in the US in 1955
- It is on the WHO's list of essential medicines
- billions of doses have been given
- it is so safe it is given to babies, the elderly, pregnant women and is routinely done so around the world
- it is an over the counter medicine in many countries of the world including France
- In many countries the citizens take a dose once a week to prevent malaria

Now the propaganda:

- In 2020 the US propaganda machine decided it needed to make people believe this is a dangerous medication, unsafe, deadly, and that taking it could kill you.
- Two articles were published in two of the world's most respected medical journals *The Lancet* and *NEJM* in 2020 both claiming that hydroxychloroquine is dangerous. The *Lancet* study claimed to have over 90,000 people from multiple countries. These articles were used by the media to blanket the country with story after story of how dangerous this medicine is and allege that the president is foolish for suggesting it could be used. Yet, when conscientious doctors began to investigate the veracity of these two articles it was discovered that they were fabricated, made up, false, a fraud and the both the *Lancet and NEJM* retracted the articles. Yet, the media did not report this, there was no media storm calling out the fraud and the

danger to the health of millions of Americans caused by these false articles. Instead, the media suppressed the retraction so the fear of this medication would remain. That is propaganda. Influencing the population to be terrified of a medicine with a long track record of safety—why? Just look at outcomes, impacts, consequences, what has happened in the past year with the propaganda machine in American promoting its fear messaging—are we seeing more unity or more division? Are we seeing more freedom or erosion of freedoms? Are we seeing more or less governmental power and control and coercion? Whose system is this?

Understand, there are facts and then there are interpretations of facts. Propaganda machines will take facts, like Hezekiah destroyed the altars in the high places, and then spin them or interpret them to say something false, like Hezekiah is disloyal to God or has offended God.

I could give you a long list of facts that have been propagandized in this country this past year, but I won't because inevitably some will accuse me of being political, when I am merely trying to free your minds from spin and get you to differentiate facts from interpretation of facts. I will leave it with you. In fact, I would give you this suggestion—make a list of five stories in the headlines and then separate the facts from the spin, the interpretation, and propaganda. This will be a very helpful exercise to train your mind to think for yourself.

- So Satan's first weapon is lies
- The Bible refers Mammon or money as one of Satan's powers, but it is not merely money or currency, **but human economics** that is part of Satan's kingdom. The kingdoms of the world are Satan's and they operate upon imposed law, which is made up rules, and they also operate upon economic practices that are made up and exactly opposite of God's kingdom.
    - What is the core reality, belief, foundational fact that all human economies operate upon?
    - The law of buying and selling and owning—nothing is free in this life we must pay for it; we must own it, we must purchase it with money, or labor, or trade, but there is nothing free. And the more we own the safer, more secure we are.
    - Is this how God's economy works? Or does God's economy work on free giving, everything that lives gives, gives freely without expectation of payment?
    - Mammon—the system of human economics is the system built where nothing is free, everything is bought and sold, and we are owners, we earn our way. The prices are also all arbitrary—money is an arbitrary construct. Property ownership is arbitrary—who can own, do you have mineral rights, can you drill or frack etc. all made up rules. This is opposite or unlike God's system where the CO2 we give to the plants is exactly what we produce based on the metabolism of our bodies. It is determined by design laws of physiology that govern those processes. But human economics are not natural, are not free giving, they are artificial and arbitrary just like human laws.
        - And this has corrupted the gospel of grace. We teach that Jesus came to pay our penalty that grace is not free it must be purchased. Protestants argue that we have nothing with which to pay for our salvation so Jesus paid with His sinless blood. Catholics argue it is a combination of Jesus' sacrifice and our good

works that pay or buy our salvation. As always Satan sets up two false systems and gets people to pick one and neither is true.
    - Interestingly Marxism identifies this evil of ownership of property as evil, and proposes a solution—that no one can own anything except the state. In that system, which is supposed to solve the problem of worldly selfishness and ownership, the property is all owned by the state and the state is supreme over everything including the individual and the individual is only useful as long as they serve the state. People become the property of the state instead of people owning property. It is even a grosser perversion of God's economy than typical human economics. But again Satan sets up two false systems and plays them off each other.
- God's economy is the kingdom of love and giving and grace and it is all free and no one pays for it. The metaphors of payment are not economic, they are objective achievement. If you donate a kidney to save your child you "pay a high price" but it isn't an economic price it is the giving of love, of self-sacrifice that reality requires to save and heal. God and Jesus did pay a price, but it wasn't economic, it was what love does to save, what the reality of our condition required be done in order to heal our hearts and minds and restore us to eternal life.
- It is fear and selfishness that causes people to want more money or more stuff to make them feel secure. It is fear that causes people to want to own or possess property because in so doing it makes them feel secure. It is fear that causes jealousy when we see others with more stuff than we have. It is fear that drives selfishness and the actions to get more for self.
- And the Assyrians used economics to try and tempt Judah:
    - "This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern…" (Is 36:16 NIV84)
- Satan exploits us with the fear of poverty—and this fear leads us to embrace his kingdom and methods to either avoid poverty or to remedy poverty in our society—his methods of taking through imposed laws rather than giving out of love, or by jealousy of not having as much as others, which leads to Marxism where people actually surrender themselves up to the control of the state so that they can take the possessions and liberties of others.

Consider this Bible text:

> Give freely and become more wealthy;
> be stingy and lose everything.
> The generous will prosper;
> those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. (Pr 11:24-25 NLT)

Do you see a law in this? What type of law?

Consider this historic quote from *Counsels on Stewardship*:

He who gives to the needy blesses others, **and is blessed himself** in a still greater degree… CS 13.4 [Why is it magic? Is it God divinely acting to miraculously give a blessing? Or is it how reality works? If you exercise you get stronger, if you act in love you experience greater love in your own character and more peace and joy?]

That man might not lose the blessed results of benevolence, our Redeemer formed the plan of enlisting him as His coworker… By a chain of circumstances which would call forth his charities, He bestows upon man **the best means of cultivating benevolence**, and **keeps him habitually giving to help the poor and to advance His cause**. By its necessities a ruined world is **drawing forth from us talents of means** and of **influence**, to present to men and women the **truth**, of which they are in perishing need. And **as we heed these calls, by labor and by acts of benevolence, we are assimilated to the image of Him** who for our sakes became poor. In **bestowing, we bless others, and thus accumulate true riches**. CS 13.5 [What did you hear in this paragraph? Did you hear any design laws at work? The law of love, the law of exertion, the law of sowing and reaping. What is God's goal for human beings? Restoration to His perfect design for life, a life of truth, love and liberty. What is Satan's goal for human beings? Destruction, to incite fear and selfishness and destroy the image of God in us, to cause division, hostility, and ultimately prevent our healing and salvation.

If God enlists human beings to be His agents to minister to others, to give, to share what we have whether it is food, clothing, money, or truth or healthy living practices, so that we not only bless others, but we ourselves are being transformed back into God's ideal as God's methods are assimilated into our hearts by practice, then what would Satan want to do? He would want to interfere with this economy, with this arrangement, with how God's design laws work. How?

What about taking the goal of helping the poor and instead of pursuing that goal through God's design laws where we practice love in benevolent giving, we instead pursue the goal through Satan's kingdom of human governments and human laws—we pass laws to tax people and take from people what they do not want to give and then we send checks out in the mail or deposit into accounts of the poor from the government.

What is the consequence? Temporal needs may be met, but do those who are taxed experience the growth in godliness of character, of practicing love and benevolence by being taxed? Do those who receive the government check experience the love of God being ministered to them by people of God who love them and care enough to help them? Are relationships formed between those in need and the people of God in Satan's system? Consider all the people Jesus healed or fed during His ministry on earth. If instead of people meeting Jesus personally, touching His robe, being touched by Him, if instead all these people received a government insurance card and went to a clinic and received a prescription would they have had the same life experience? Notice the contrast in the two economic systems—one gives freely, the other takes and seeks to control and the results on people are different.

We cannot achieve God's goals through Satan's kingdom or practicing Satan's methods. Social justice through human governments is a trap of Satan. Does that mean governments should not be benevolent, or should not have social programs—not at all. It is a false argument to suggest such a thing. We need to recognize the difference between the church and state, between grace and law, between giving and taxing. We are to live God's law in our lives and come out of Babylon.]

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There **God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love** with which He regarded them. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. CS 14.1

The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. Christ's self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. That man might be saved, He gave all that He had, and then gave Himself. The cross of Christ appeals to the benevolence of every follower of the blessed Saviour. [But not if we misrepresent the law of God as imposed and that Jesus died to pay a penalty to a punishing God to buy our legal freedom. Then the gospel is perverted] **The principle there illustrated is to give, give.** This, carried out in actual benevolence and good works, is the true fruit of the Christian life. **The principle of worldlings is to get, get, and thus they expect to secure happiness; but, carried out in all its bearings, the fruit is misery and death.** CS 14.2 [Do we see this in the world? Do we see that we cannot get life, health, happiness through seeking to get more? The wisdom of God is foolishness to the world. The world's systems do not understand this. Socialism is a perversion of God's system taking the goals of sharing, of beneficence and running it through Satan's imposed law system, which in every case results in exploitation, abuse and never resolves poverty or brings economic equality. It is a grand fraud that appeals to the heart of compassionate people, but believing the lie that God's law works like human law and that justice is found in the right legislation, Satan carries millions off as his captives as they supposedly seek to improve society.]

The light of the gospel shining from the cross of Christ rebukes selfishness, and encourages liberality and benevolence. It should not be a lamented fact that there are increasing calls to give. God in His providence is calling His people out from their limited sphere of action, to enter upon greater enterprises. **Unlimited effort is demanded at this time when moral darkness is covering the world**. **Many of God's people are in danger of being ensnared by worldliness and covetousness. They should understand that it is His mercy that multiplies the demands for their means. Objects that call benevolence into action must be placed before them, or they cannot pattern after the character of the great Exemplar**. CS 14.3

- Satan is the father of lies and the world's economy of buying, selling and owning.
- Satan is also the prince of this world—so worldly powers which is law, coercion and might

  - Assyria used this power against Judah marching their army to Jerusalem intending to destroy it.
  - And this is the beast of Revelation, Babylon and all the little harlots who claim to believe in God but rather than promoting God's kingdom of love which is built on design law, accept Satan's kingdom of imposed law and advance justice through law and power over others.
  - It is also the theologies of imposed law and imposed penalties such as penal substitution theology—this is part of the wine of Babylon and the system the remnant are to leave.
  - It is fear that drives people to make up rules and use power to force others to comply with their rules—whether they are through actual governments or just the rules of the hood, it is the same dynamic, fear driving people to make rules to have power over others in order to make one feel powerful and safe.
  - Satan exploits us with the fear of pain, torture, punishment, imprisonment, legal trouble and the righteous are tricked into embracing the methods of Satan and seeking justice through more law and more inflicted punishment and control
- Satan is also the accuser, so he uses accusation, allegation both internal (in our own minds) and external
  - Assyria used this power against Judah accusing Hezekiah of being unfaithful to God, accusing God of being powerless to help them
  - Satan uses accusation against us and gets us to embrace his method when we make accusations against ourselves and others
  - It is fear and insecurity in regard to our own weakness and sinfulness that causes us to project it out of ourselves and find fault with others.
  - Fear causes us to see others as threats to see the sin in others and ridicule it and attack others whether verbally or physically
  - Satan exploits us through fear of humiliation, shame, fear of ruined reputation, fear of not being loved
- He is also the devil, the tempter, the one who leads us to sin, to break God's law of love, which always injures others and results in division. So he is the author of division and hostility
  - Hezekiah was fighting against various divisions in his society, religious divisions that worshipped false gods.
  - Fear divides us economically with some getting richer by exploiting and taking from those not in power
  - Fear divides us into social classes, into political classes, into religious groups
  - Fear exploits cultural and racial differences as points of disdain where love sees cultural and racial differences as elements that enrich us and are to be celebrated
  - Satan exploits us with fear of rejection, broken relationships, abandonment, isolation, loneliness
- Satan also attacks us with the power of death—and thus Satan is the destroyer
  - Assyria threatened Judah and Hezekiah with death
  - Ultimately Satan exploits us with the fear of death both temporal and eternal—so fear of loss of health, fear of death of loved ones, fear of our own temporal death and fear of eternal condemnation, fear of hell

Do you see the object lesson of Assyria and Judah, how it is real history but it also exposes a larger reality? Do you see how today Satan surrounds us, the people of God, and attacks us on all sides with:

- lies about God, God's law and the idea we can pursue social justice through imposed law and human governmental enforcement
- worldly economics, that we can get more security, more safety by taking, hoarding, owning, buying and selling or we can make the state supreme and the owner of all—but it is still all arbitrary and imposed driven by fear
- worldly power—we can be secure with the right laws, judges, politicians or by might, coercion, force, the pressure of the state to fine, restricted liberty, imprisonment or sanction those that don't do it our way
- Accusations of all kinds but specifically accusations that God's people, those who don't embrace the propaganda, who don't embrace and promote the economics of the world, who reject the pursuit of justice through human governments will be accused of being rebels, insurrectionists, the cause of our troubles, and in order to "save lives" or "save the planet" those troublemakers must be eliminated
- Division—do we struggle with divisions in society and in the church?
- Fear of death—whether magnifying this fear through the threat from a virus, or lying about a medicine that could save lives, or falsehoods about hell and sin and the plan of salvation, it's all about inciting greater fear of death

Do you see how Satan surrounds God's people today and is attacking on all sides with his powers, just like he did with Assyria against Judah?

Was Judah able to fight Assyria with its own strength? Can we fight this battle on our own?

So, what lessons do we learn from Hezekiah?

SUNDAY

Read the last paragraph, "Just as important as military…" What is the lesson from Hezekiah for us today in battling Satan?

What are Satan's powers?

- Lies which result in fear and selfishness
- Human economics—love of money and need to own "it's mine"
- Worldly powers—human law and coercive control of others
- Accusations
- Temptation and Division
- Death and destruction

The Bible says about Jesus:

- And having **disarmed the powers** and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2:15 NIV84).

- No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, **nor any powers**, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be **able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** (Romans 8:37-39 NIV84)

First point, most critical point, the central point—what is it that all of Satan's powers exploit or magnify? Fear, and what is it that casts our all fear? Love! It is God's love in our hearts that is the key, being loved and loving others. Satan wants to separate us from God's love and truth—but if we remain in God's love we are more than conquerors. But without love, real love, we will be destroyed by fear and all of Satan's methods to try and cope with fear.

How does Jesus give us victory over each of these?

- Lies which result in fear and selfishness
  - truth destroys lies wins us to trust and in trust we open the heart and receive God's love, His indwelling presence and love casts out fear, then we begin to practice that love in how we treat others
  - The ultimate truth is about God and God's law being design law
- Human economics—love of money and need to own "it's mine"
  - We reject from our hearts the value system of the world and we seek to give to others without seeking to get
  - We surrender our sense of ownership to God and anything that the world recognizes as our property we recognize as God's property and we are His stewards managing it for Him
- Worldly powers—human law and coercive control of others
  - We reject worldly powers as godly, we recognize they are all part of Satan's kingdom, using Satan's imposed law and Satan's methods of force and coercion and thus we do not seek social justice through human governments or law
  - We also reject the worldly system in our theology and reject the false penal legal theories of salvation and instead worship the Creator whose laws are design laws and intelligently cooperate with Him to practice His methods in how we deal with others
- Accusations
  - We do not accuse others but recognize accusations are what the enemy uses to incite conflict, discourage and divide.
  - We see other people, including those we think are evil, as children of God, as sin-sick, but sinners whom Jesus loves and died for, "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

  - So we don't accuse, but we also don't deny truth, we diagnose accurately, we understand with whom we are dealing and if we are dealing with God's enemy we don't accuse, but we also don't trust them.
- Temptation and Division
  - "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1Cor 10:13 NIV84)
  - Rejecting the lies, rejecting fear, rejecting selfishness and instead applying God's principles of truth, love, freedom we are peacemakers, we have unity with all those who also love God's methods—but we will not have unity with the selfish world
  - We reject the divisions of the world, racial, economic, social, cultural and we see every human being as a descendant of Adam, part of the human family, with worth and value invested by God as a child of God and all dying of the same terminal condition and in need of the same free Remedy offered in Jesus
  - So we seek to separate ourselves from the false value system of the world and have fear and selfishness cut out of our hearts
- Death and destruction
  - We trust God with our lives, health, and future—both temporal and eternal.
  - "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Heb 2:14–15 NIV84).

In this warfare we are fighting today, as we enter into the final days of earth's history, as Satan's end-time forces advance their cause increasing the pressure, working to incite fear—what lessons can we learn from Hezekiah, and what is the balance between what we actively do and when we trust God?

Consider this historic quote

> Our faith requires us to elevate the standard of reform, and take advance steps. **The condition of our acceptance with God is a practical separation from the world.** The Lord calls upon us as a people, "**Come out from among them, and be ye separate,**" "and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The world may despise you because you do not meet **their standard**, engage in their dissipating amusements, and follow their pernicious ways; but the God of heaven promises to receive you, and to be a Father unto you. "Ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18. {Counsels on Health 51.1}

What does it mean to come out from the world and be separate? In Revelation we are called out of Babylon—is that a call out of a geographic region or something else?

It is severing our minds and hearts from the systems, methods, practices, beliefs, views and actions of the world. We come out of the world by coming out of the pursuit of justice through human governments, by rejecting penal substitution theology, by rejecting the views of God as imperial dictator and source of inflicted pain and death, by having God's law of love written into our hearts and

minds so that we live God's economy, we live to give and bless others, we speak truth in love and leave others free.

The beastly system is going to advance its agenda through some claim of justice but it will do it through human governments, laws, and coercion. We are to separate from all such actions in pursuing justice.

TUESDAY

If you read all of Isaiah 36 you will hear how the representative of Assyria not only spoke of the power of Assyria and the futility of trusting Egypt and God, but turned to the people and undermined Hezekiah's leadership. He said to the people:

> Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you! 15 Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'
> 16 "Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, 17 until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.
> 18 "Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? (Isaiah 36:14-18 NIV84)

If you were Hezekiah, how would you have responded?

What did Hezekiah do?

Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, went to the temple and sent his agents to the prophet Isaiah asking him to implore the Lord in their behalf.

Is there a lesson for us when we see the forces of evil marching to destroy us?

We are to humble ourselves before God and ask for His cleansing of our hearts and minds, the cleansing of the Spirit temple.

God sent a message to Hezekiah:

> "Isaiah said to them, "Tell your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen! I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.' " (37:6-7 NIV84)

What does it mean to blaspheme the name of God?

What would that look like today?

- Where is God?
- There is no God?
- God is a God of supreme justice and will punish lawbreakers?
- Justice requires we pass the right laws, get the right officials and advance God's cause through human governments?

Is there a lesson for the end time people of God in this?

Consider this description of the beast of Revelation 13:5-10:

> And he was given a mouth speaking great things and **blasphemies**, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in **blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name**, **His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven**. [What is God's name? His character—which is love. What is blasphemy? To lie about, mispresent, and how does this occur? By taking the name of God and misrepresenting God to function in character like Satan. How? By infecting the minds of people with the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules. Thus God is construed to be an imperial dictator, inflictor of pain and suffering, and death, someone whom we need to pay in order not to kill us.] 7 It was granted to him to **make war with the saints and to overcome them**. [What kind of war? 2Cor 10:3-5. And according to Daniel this power is winning the war until the Ancient of Days does something—gives judgment or discernment to the saints. In other words, the war is the war of ideas, Satan the father of lies infects the minds of people with lies about God and is winning until the saints recover the truth about God and His design laws and begin to worship Him as Creator and they are equipped with judgment to judge the lies about God for what they are. They are able to give Him glory by revealing the truth about Him because the hour of His judgment has come.] And **authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation**. [Authority in other versions is translated as "power," power was given the beast over all the people of the world, how? By accepting imperial law as the means to pursue justice. All the world believes this to be true. All the world will unite together in passing laws and enforcing those laws for the betterment of the planet and the world, but those laws are arbitrary rules and will require coercive enforcement. There will be erosion of liberty, there will be propaganda against those who stand up for truth, there will be economic sanctions, and the righteous who won't comply with the world's laws will be labelled as troublemakers, super spreaders, and neighbor will snitch on neighbor and people will be punished] 8 All who dwell on the **earth will worship him**, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. [They worship by adoring, believing, embracing, and practicing the methods of the beast, the methods of imperialism and coercion] 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 **He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword**. (Revelation 13:5-10 NKJV) [Those who insist on holding others captive, using coercion will remain captive to sin and fear and selfishness, those

who are willing to use the sword, the power of the state to force their way will die from unremedied sin when the sword of truth is fully wielded and their own guilt and shame destroys them]

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph, "By rejecting signs offered by God…" So Judah is surrounded by enemies and doesn't have power in itself to defeat its enemies and God provides a sign.

What is the purpose of this sign? The sign is to provide Hezekiah with evidence of God's existence, God's ability, God's faithfulness, God's promise, God's active participation in resolving the crisis—in other words the sign is to help strengthen Hezekiah's faith in the face of threat—yes or no?

These stories are for us—real history but object lessons. We have examined how we are being surrounded by Satan's powers, as we go to God like Hezekiah, humbly, realizing our inability to defeat these worldly powers, God gives us a sign also, have you seen it, do you recognize it, a sign given us to strengthen our faith and confidence that we will be victorious?

Consider this passage in light of this idea about God giving signs:

> Also I gave them my Sabbaths **as a sign** between us, so they would know **that I the LORD made them holy**. (Ezekiel 20:12 NIV84)

What is the Sabbath here? A sign—of what? What is the purpose of this sign? Why is it given? It is a sign that God will heal us, make us holy, deliver us from fear and selfishness and restore us to righteousness.

Do we better understand Jesus' words? "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27 NIV84).

Do we recognize the weekly Sabbath as a sign, an evidence that:

- God exists and is real
- God governs reality including time
- God is Creator and Recreator—meaning healer
- God's laws are design laws
- God is faithful
- God keeps His promises
- God is active in healing us, in making us holy

Understand the weekly Sabbath is evidence a sign of all of this—how and why? The 7-day weekly cycle exists only because of God's construction of time. All our other markers of time are astronomic:

- Years marked by Earth rotating around the Sun
- 24-hour days marked by Earth's rotation
- months marked by the Moon's orbit in relation to the Earth
- seasons marked by the Earth's axis tilt in its orbit to the Sun
- But the 7-day week exists only because God created it and every culture in the world has it—no naturalistic godless explanation exists for it.
- And what does the Sabbath day itself signify in this weekly cycle that reveals our Creator?
- It is a sign that God is Creator; His laws are design laws, the supreme law being love; that truth is revealed by God with evidence of action and history—God created; that God's economy is the economy of giving, love built into nature; that God's government is built upon truth, love and liberty, God gave evidence during creation week of His power revealing truth, but on day seven God rested from using power and created a time for intelligent beings to think freely without coercion—historic evidence or truth revealed in action. The Sabbath was constructed, created, built as a day to remember and see truth, as a sign of God's methods, principles and character.
- the Sabbath is also the memorial of Christ's victory over sin and death so we know that those who trust Him are freed from our fear of death.
- We are to remember the Sabbath as a sign that our Creator God is real, powerful, but equally gracious whose character is love and whose laws are love, who gives us real freedom and who will defeat all our enemies if we resist the fear, embrace the truth, open our hearts to Him and surrender or lives, fortunes, and eternal existence to Him! Remember the Sabbath as a sign that God will heal us and make us holy!

Do you see the weekly Sabbath as a sign that God has given to humanity of His promise to heal us, save us, make us holy? Or do you see it as an obligation, a rule you must keep in order to be holy? And if you see it as a rule you must keep what system are you part of?

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph, "In response to Hezekiah's…" Do you think God was boiling with molten fury? What do you think God's attitude toward the Assyrians was?

Who was Naaman? He was a Syrian general who got leprosy and whom God healed and became a worshipper of God—how? Wouldn't God hate Naaman and have boiling fury against him?

Does God love the Assyrians less than the Hebrews?

Do we find in the record of the Old Testament that the people of Israel and Judah were more righteous in how they lived than the pagans around them?

Or is the history that the descendants of Jacob were just as wicked as the nations around them?

Then why did God intervene to protect Judah?

Read the last paragraph, "The God of the Hebrews…" this is the key—the entire OT is focused on the coming Messiah—God working to fulfill His promise to have Jesus come and Satan working through his kingdoms to destroy the avenue for Messiah.

The Assyrians were being used here by Satan to try and destroy the final branch of the family tree through whom Jesus would come. Notice, God did not stop the Assyrians from assimilating and dissipating the 10 tribes to the north, because Jesus wasn't coming through one of those. It was only when the last branch was threatened that God acted to protect that family line so the entire world could be saved.

How do we understand God using power to kill in this story? Is God the source of death? No! God does not kill—yet we find God doing so here—or do we?

Does it make a difference to remember the difference between first and second death? This is sleep in the grave, not eternal annihilation, and God doesn't call first death, death, He calls it sleep, just like your computer going into sleep mode. It isn't operating, but it also isn't destroyed or dead. So too all humans who have died have died the death of sleep and will arise again. Thus God has killed no one for sin, that death happens after the 1000 years and after judgment.

Consider you had a 19 y/o son who was high on drugs and in that state had your other 5 younger children cornered and poured gasoline over them and was about to light them on fire. You have a tranquilizer gun and can shoot your 19 y/o with a strong tranquilizer and put them to sleep or you could do nothing and stand by and watch 5 of your children burn to death what do you do?

This is a metaphor to what God did in OT times. He at times put some of His children to sleep for the purpose of saving all those who will let Him.

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

February 13 we will do two lessons: Lesson 9 at 9:25 a.m. and Lesson 10 at 10:35 a.m. and will not meet on February 20.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World, videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 8
Comfort My People

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Consider the Title for this week *Comfort My People*

What does this mean? How does God comfort?

- If you were dying from cancer, would compassionate friends be a comfort?
  - Would pain medicine, nausea medicine, competent medical care be a comfort?
  - But what would bring you the most comfort?—healing!

- If you were a prisoner of war would a kind guard be a comfort?
  - Would good food, clean accommodations and clothing, packages and letters from home be a comfort?
  - But what would bring you the most comfort? –would it be freedom and going home?

In this world of sin how does God comfort?

- Does God comfort with:
  - loving family and friends
  - food, clothing, shelter, financial resources
  - healthcare or healing
- But does God's plan to comfort, go far beyond this and if carried to completion result in eternal healing, and freedom from sin?

But what does it mean to be freed from sin? Is it a molecule, is it a bacteria, is it made out of matter? Sin is rooted in lies, in falsehood which breaks God's design protocols for life resulting in a state of being that is out of harmony with God's design and results in suffering, misery, pain; in other words, being in sin is not comfortable.

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness—this internal state of fear and selfishness is a painful state, there is no peace here, no comfort, no joy, and this state leads to
- all the acts of sin as people seek to comfort themselves with various human coping strategies that make the condition worse
- damages mind, body, character, relationships—this is a terminal condition

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

And there is no comfort or peace in this condition—but God comforts us. If we have diagnosed the problem correctly that sin is a condition of being out of harmony with God, filled with fear and selfishness, then we should be able to see God's plan to comfort—to remove sinfulness and heal us?

How does God remove sin? How does God remove fear and selfishness from our hearts and minds and restore His law in our hearts thereby comforting us?

Jesus is key, without Jesus this could not happen—but what does Jesus provide that comforts us?

Jesus is the Word made flesh and as such Jesus is the truth made flesh—we see in Jesus the truth about God and what does truth do to lies? Truth destroys lies and sets us free.

So the first thing Jesus provides us is the truth. But if we accept the truth that Jesus reveals and reject the lies of Satan and are won back to trust in God—is that sufficient to remedy the sin problem? Or did Jesus need to provide us something more than truth in order to cure the sin problem and free us from fear and selfishness? So what more is needed to fulfill God's plan to comfort in addition to bring us the truth and win us to trust? What else do we need? A new heart and right spirit, a new nature, sinless human character—can any of us work hard and develop this?

I love this description in the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> **The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character**; [Why? For the same reason the law of respiration requires we breath. It is how life is built by God to operate, only in harmony with the law of love do we find comfort.] and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. <u>These</u> He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** [Jesus, as a human being, was tempted in every way like us, felt the pull of the survival drives, felt fear, but instead chose to love perfectly thus destroying the infection of sin in humanity and became our Savior. Heb 5:8,9. He gives us the gift of a holy life and perfect character.] His life stands for the life of men. [He becomes the second Adam. The new head of humanity. Our King—the living vine to whom we connect and receive life] Thus they have **remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.** [We have remission of sins through forbearance, or grace, not through legal payment. Think of it as a child with sickness who gets the remedy to their condition, the past symptoms are of no account once they are well. Our past acts of sin are irrelevant once we are cured, healed, set right, no longer out of harmony with God, once His law is written upon our hearts and minds.] **More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty**. [Who builds up the sinner's character? God build it up taking the life of Christ and reproducing it in those who embrace the truth and surrender their lives to Him in trust and cooperate with Him.] Thus the very **righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ**. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

But if this is so, if it is sin that destroys our peace, creates a sickness in heart, mind, character, relationships that brings pain and suffering, if Jesus is God's means to heal us, to set us free, then why is the Holy Spirit called the Comforter?

Also from *The Desire of Ages:*

> **The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth**." His work is to define and maintain the truth. **He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood**. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. **By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character**.[Oh do we see this happening in society today? Do you see false standards being proclaimed and accepted and do you see people becoming more Christlike or more debased, abusive, unloving, violent, fearful, selfish and controlling?] Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. **It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself**. … DA 671.1
>
> The Spirit was to be given as **a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.** [Wait, what? Do you believe this or not? What does this mean? Without the Spirit the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. This is only true in design law, in how reality works. Jesus revealed truth that when accepted wins to trust and procured the remedy that heals our hearts—but that remedy needs application in our hearts, which is what the Spirit does. But if we accept Satan's lie about God's law that it is imposed, and then teach the lie that sin is a legal problem rather than a condition of being, and then teach the lie that Jesus died to pay our legal debt, and then teach the lie that salvation is getting a legal declaration of that payment made in the courts of heaven or in our legal record book—then all that could be made without the regenerating agency of the Spirit. The penal legal view is the wine of Babylon that intoxicates the world, it misrepresents God and keeps people's minds and judgments impaired while they feel good about their salvation, yet they remain terminal.] The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.** [Do you see why Satan wants to minimize the work of the Holy Spirit, to diminish or eliminate the Holy Spirit from our beliefs? Since Satan failed in stopping Jesus from coming to Earth as our Savior, and failed in his assaults on Jesus during His human life on Earth, Satan now works to stop us from receiving the Holy Spirit as the agency which applies the remedy in our hearts. He gets people to believe there is no Holy Spirit so they don't even ask for this Third Person of the Godhead to transform them.] **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. DA 671.2

So how does God bring us comfort? By healing our hearts and minds and freeing us from living under the domination of fear, selfishness, guilt and shame.

What does the healing progression look like? It starts where the sinful progression began.

- The damage started with Lies believed breaking the circle of love and trust—so the healing starts with
- Truth believed destroying lies and winning us back to trust
    - Jesus is the source of all truth—in Old Testament times Jesus is the member of the Godhead acting in human history thus giving evidence or truth
    - Jesus is our Savior, our incarnate God who was tempted in every way like we are yet, as a human overcame the temptation of Satan, overcame the carnal drives of fear and selfishness and developed a perfect sinless human character
    - The Holy Spirit is the agency that connects the dots of truth in our minds, brings together the historic activity of Jesus to win us to trust, to bring us to repentance
- In trust we open the heart and the Holy Spirit comes in and takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us so it is no longer our sinful fear-ridden selves but Christlike loving selves that live
    - Thus the Holy Spirit applies the truth to remove lies and win to trust and the Holy Spirit writes the law of God, the character of God as lived out by Jesus in our hearts as we trust Him
- We choose to follow Jesus in practicing His methods and receive the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit that enlightens, transforms and enables us to love even our enemies, and we do acts of love, kindness, benevolence, self-sacrifice and in so doing
- We grow in godliness and are lights in this world witnessing His kingdom to others and receive eternal life

Is this process of being set free from sin, being delivered from fear and selfishness fun? Or can the process be agonizing, painful, distressing before it is comforting? Why?

Because once there is brokenness of any kind, there are no pain free options.

Understand, we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity—we are not born guilty, under legal penalty, we are born terminal, with a condition we didn't choose. But, this condition, if unremedied will result in all kinds of symptoms (sins) which cause more sickness, pain, suffering and ultimately death.

God's healing plan works to free us from fear and selfishness and restore us to eternal life, righteousness, but this requires we "die to self" it is a painful experience to face our own sickness of heart, to let the truth diagnose us, to stop trying to justify ourselves, to admit we cannot save ourselves and can only accept the remedy provided by Jesus. And applying the remedy, choosing the truth, breaking the old habits can also be initially painful. There may be physical withdrawal, their may be cravings, there may be relationships that need to be severed, there may be jobs that need to be

terminated, there may be enterprises we need to withdraw from, there may be TV programs we need to stop watching.

But, as we follow God's healing plan the initial pain fades away and we grow in godliness and are freed from fear, guilt, shame, the selfish drives lose their power and we experience real peace, real comfort.

Satan tricks the world with the suffering caused by sin, the pain, and the fear of more pain. The brokenness in the heart and in relationships that sin causes incites greater fear, greater distrust of others, which inflames the fear of getting hurt again, which leads to acts of selfishness and pleasure seeking, something to take away the pain in the heart and mind. This fear driven, me first, pain avoiding selfish drive to comfort ourselves is what causes all the evils in the world:

- all addictions are caused by people seeking to comfort themselves
- all human governments with their imposed laws and people seeking social justice through imposed laws and punishments are people who have been hurt, who are afraid, and who are seeking to make themselves feel safe, to comfort themselves through Satan's kingdoms of imposed laws and imposed punishments
- all vengeance seeking is people who are hurt and afraid seeking to comfort themselves
- all totalitarianism, communism, socialism is fear driven people seeking to comfort themselves
- all abusing spouses abuse because they are afraid, insecure and seek to make themselves feel stronger in control by using power over those weaker
- all verbal attacks—the mean cutting and hurtful comments—come from those afraid who are seeking to protect themselves by taking down someone perceived as a threat
- all eating disorders are people who are filled with fear and insecurity and who are seeking to comfort themselves with food (bingers) or control (restrictors)
- all cheating, lying, stealing, embezzling, toxic waste dumping is done by people afraid, insecure and seeking more wealth, more stuff to comfort themselves and feel safe
- all violence against others is done by those afraid, insecure and seeking to comfort themselves, make themselves safe in some way

Understand the times in which we live. The four winds are being loosed and the enemy goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. A lion's roar doesn't injure, it incites fear. The enemy is filling the world with fear message after fear message, and the world is being driven into his arms as they seek to comfort themselves by applying his methods of rules, coercion, control, violence, intimidation, restriction of liberties.

At this time in human history God calls for a people to give the final message of mercy to the world—the message of the truth about His character of love. It is love that casts out fear, it is truth that destroys lies and frees minds and brings true comfort. But love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

We must reject the imposed law systems of the world, we must reject the penal/legal theologies and come back to the truth that our God is the Creator of heaven and earth whose character is love and whose laws are the design protocols for life. Our Creator God has come to earth to free us from fear, free us from selfishness and comfort us by healing us with the truth and with a new nature.

SUNDAY

Read Isaiah 40:1-2:

> "Comfort, comfort my people,"
> says your God.
> 40:2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem, and tell her
> that her time of warfare is over,
> that her punishment is completed.
> For the LORD has made her pay double for all her sins." (Is 40:1–2NET).
>
> Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"
> Says your God.
> 2 "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,
> That her warfare is ended,
> That her iniquity is pardoned;
> For she has received from the LORD's hand
> Double for all her sins." (Is 40:1–2NKJV).

Do you read both of these the same? Do they mean the same thing to you?

The lesson takes the view of punishment and that God is punishing Israel. The lesson asks, "There time of punishment has finally ended. What punishment was that?" They answer, "There are many answers to this question, There was the punishment administered by Assyria, the rod of God's anger…"

What do you think?

What questions do you have? This is another example of how one's biases before reading the Scripture—including the Hebrew—impacts one's understanding and how one translates. If we believe God's law functions like human law and justice requires inflicted punishment, then we are more likely to translate as the NET and read it as the lesson authors. But if we understand God's law as design law then we translate it differently, the NKJV is closer.

The next verse of chapter 40 reads:

> A voice of one calling:
> "In the desert prepare

the way for the LORD;
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God. (Is 40:3 NIV84)

What is this referring to? John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus—hmmm….if this is referring to the first advent of Jesus, would the verses before it, verses 1 and 2 also refer to that time?

Why do we take the first two verses to speak of literal Jerusalem and the wars going on around them, but the next verse about John the Baptist and the rest of the chapter about Jesus our Savior?

What is the ultimate comfort, when God speaks about comforting His people is the comfort He has in mind merely deliverance from foreign occupation or is God's plan to delivery from sin, of which deliverance from foreign occupation is an object lesson?

Is the message of the Old Testament primarily about God delivering Israel the nations around them, from human enemies? Or is the message of the Old Testament a record of real historical events that not only record history but reveal a larger reality and plan? What do the historical records reveal besides the lives of the people and nations recorded?

- The truth about God's character—God reveals Himself in history as an actor and His methods are revealed
- The truth about sin and what it does to people and God's creation
- The truth about Satan, who the destroyer actually is
- God's plan to save and heal

Thus the Old Testament is primarily the record of God working to fulfill His promise to bring our Messiah as a descendant of the woman to save humanity from sin and Satan battling to stop that plan.

With that in mind, what do we understand Isaiah 40:1,2 to be about?

That we will have comfort because our warfare against principalities and powers of darkness is going to end, our iniquity—the terminal condition with which we are born and which causes so much suffering and pain is going to be cured, a remedy is being provided.

Consider this description from the book *Prophets and Kings* beginning on page 722—it is the last chapter in the book:

> **In the darkest days of her long conflict with evil,** the church of God has been given revelations of the eternal purpose of Jehovah. His people have been permitted to **look beyond the trials** of the present to the triumphs of the future, when, the **warfare having been accomplished**, the redeemed will enter into possession of the promised land. These visions of future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, should be dear to His church today, when the **controversy of the ages is rapidly closing** and the promised blessings are soon to be realized in all their fullness. PK 722.1 [Do you recognize the signs in which we live? Do you see the

final events rapidly fulfilling? Are you keeping in mind the vision of the future restoration that God has given us to encourage us?]

Many were the messages of comfort given the church by the prophets of old. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people" (Isaiah 40:1), was Isaiah's commission from God; and with the commission were given wonderful visions that have been the believers' hope and joy through all the centuries that have followed…PK 722.2 [What is the ultimate comfort God gives us? It is freedom from sin in a world made new!]

Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her **final conflict**… she is to go forth into all the world, **conquering and to conquer**. PK 725.2 [What is our armor? How do we conquer? Over what are we to conquer? Are we to conquer evil through human governments? Do we gain the victory with more laws, more sanctions, more inflicted punishments?]

The darkest hour of the church's struggle with the powers of evil is that which immediately precedes the day of her final deliverance. But none who trust in God need fear; for "when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall," God will be to His church "a refuge from the storm." Isaiah 25:4. PK 725.3 [When is the darkest hour? It is upon us, we are entering into the final events. But do we need to fear? Not if we reject the systems of the world, not if we refuse to follow where fear leads and instead trust God and follow where love leads!]

In that day only the righteous are promised deliverance. [Why? Deliverance from what? Notice the text from Isaiah that this author quotes right after her statement that only the righteous are promised deliverance.] "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure…" Isaiah 33:14-16. PK 725.4 [What is being described? What is the fire? Why do the righteous live in it? Why do the wicked get consumed by it? What does truth do to a lie? What does infinite love do to selfishness? This is design law—the reality of each person's heart and minds either healed or not healed that makes the difference.]

And as the prophet beholds the Lord of glory descending from heaven with all the holy angels, to gather **the remnant church from among the nations of earth,** he hears the waiting ones unite in the exultant cry: "Lo, this is our God; We have waited for Him, And He will save us: This is the Lord; We have waited for Him, We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25:9... PK 727.3 [Oh, are you looking forward to that day?]

In the visions of the prophet, those who have triumphed over sin and the grave are now seen happy in the presence of their Maker, talking freely with Him as man talked with God in the beginning… PK 729.1

"**Speak ye comfortably** to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand **double for all her sins**." Isaiah 65:18, 19; 33:24; 35:6, 7; 55:13; 35:8; 40:2. PK 729.5 [Notice how this author applies the text, to what events, to what people? To the saved of all time, it is not about a few people at one point in time, it is about the righteous of God being delivered from sin. And are they receiving double punishment or double comfort for all their sin? Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away our sin, we not only receive freedom from guilt and shame here on earth, real comfort in our hearts and minds, we receive eternal life—we receive double comfort NOT double punishment!]

As the prophet beholds the redeemed dwelling in the City of God, free from sin and from all marks of the curse, in rapture he exclaims, "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her…" PK 729.6

There every power will be developed, every capability increased. The grandest enterprises will be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations will be reached, the highest ambitions realized. **And still there will appear new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend**, fresh objects of study to call forth the powers of body and mind and soul…PK 731.1 [For all eternity future we advance, develop, grow, expand, walk forward in the truth—what an incredible future God has for those who love Him!]

To us who are standing on the very verge of their fulfillment, [Understand, that is you and me right now today, we are on the verge of their fulfillment!] of what deep moment, what living interest, are these delineations of the things to come—events for which, since our first parents turned their steps from Eden, God's children have watched and waited, longed and prayed! PK 731.3

Fellow pilgrim, we are still amid the shadows and turmoil of earthly activities; but soon our Saviour is to appear to bring deliverance and rest. Let us by faith behold the blessed hereafter as pictured by the hand of God. He who died for the sins of the world is opening wide the gates of Paradise to all who believe on Him. **Soon the battle will have been fought, the victory won. Soon we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered**. And in His presence the trials and sufferings of this life will seem as nothingness. The former things "shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Israel shall be saved ... with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Isaiah 65:17; Hebrews 10:35-37; Isaiah 45:17. PK 731.4

Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. [Look up, fix your eyes on Christ—don't look down, don't focus on the news, the trials, the world's systems, the world's injustices, the world's methods. Look up!] Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed…. PK 732.1

The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. [The saved will not know—be intimate with, have written in their hearts—any law other than God's design law of love, truth, freedom. The saved will not be marked in their hands or foreheads with imposed law, with rule enforcement, with seeking justice through legislation, through infliction of punishment, through power over others. No! in heaven the saved will know only God's law for it will be written upon their hearts and minds!] All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving…PK 732.2

"**The Lord shall comfort Zion**: **He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord**…" Isaiah 66:23; PK 733.2

How does God comfort His people? With truth and love and restoration to righteousness—to His perfect design for life, writing His law in our hearts and minds!

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "An unnamed herald…" what is this about? What is God's glory? His character, and where in human history is God's character revealed most clearly? In Jesus—that is why the Bible says that the second temple, which was physically smaller than Solomon's, was more glorious than the Solomon's because Jesus walked there in human form.

Does this give any insight to us today living at the time of the 3 Angel's message—where we are called to give glory to God? How are we to do this? Why is it important?

What is referred to by Isaiah 40:3-4?

A voice of one calling:
"In the desert prepare
the way for the LORD;
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain. (Isaiah 4:3-4 NIV84)

What is this about? Is it about physical roads or is it a metaphor for the highway of ideas that lead into the heart and mind?

> "A voice calling in a dark and desolate land: 'Prepare your minds, untwist your hearts, and make ready for the Lord to come with his healing Remedy.'" Mt 3:3 The Remedy

And who is the one who makes the way for the Lord? For the first advent it was John the Baptist, whom Jesus said was the Elijah to come.

And we are told by Malachi that:

> See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers… (Mal 4:5-6 NIV84)

Who is this Elijah? This is referencing the final message to go to the world to prepare the hearts and minds of people on Earth to meet Jesus. This is the message of the 3 Angels—when given through design law lenses. This is the message of God's character of love, which frees our hearts from fear and selfishness and restores God's law in our hearts and minds. Because it is only God's design law of love restored in the hearts that brings true reconciliation, that brings people back together in love and trust, that truly comforts. The message of imposed law, of legal religion, of rules and rule enforcement is the message that divides and fractures, it is the message of fear, of control, of force, of snitches and the beastly system of Revelation.

God calls upon His true people who love Him to take forth this end time message to prepare the world for His return!

TUESDAY

Read Isaiah 40:9

> Go up on a high mountain, O herald Zion!
> Shout out loudly, O herald Jerusalem!
> Shout, don't be afraid!
> Say to the towns of Judah,
> "Here is your God!" (NET)

The lesson makes an interesting point that the herald in Hebrew is feminine or female in verse 40:9, but in other places in Isaiah the herald is male.

The lesson goes on to point out that God's heralds are both male and female:

- The heralds in Isaiah

- Simeon and Anna in the Temple at Jesus' birth
- Mary Magdalene was the first to announce Jesus' resurrection followed by the men

What do we understand this to mean? Is there any significance? Do we find that God subordinates women below men or that God treats them equally?

In God's design is a complete human being male or female or is a complete human being the union of male and female?

What is the significance of this? How does love function? Can love function in a singularity? Can a single person alone on an island love—or does love require an other? Is love a living principle of action?

Was humankind built by God to be the showcase, the highpoint, the repository of His living law of love? Thus, the two shall be one—just like the Godhead is not a single individuality but a plurality of oneness of love.

And in God's design was either party, male or female, (husband or wife) to rule over the other? No, Eve was taken from Adam's rib—his side, not his head to rule over, not his foot to be ruled over, from his side, to be his companion, his completion, his second self.

All subordination of women, in any fashion, to diminish them beneath the power, authority, rule of men is part of Satan's kingdom. It is a perversion of God's design.

Any subordination of men, in any fashion, to diminish them beneath the power, authority, rule of women is part of Satan's kingdom. It is a perversion of God's design.

Equality, full, free and complete, the perfect partnership of other-centered love and trust is God's design and what is experienced as God completes His healing plan in our hearts.

So, in God's plan of evangelism, of taking the gospel to the world, men and women are to share equally in the joy, privilege and responsibility of sharing the truth with the world.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points out that in Isaiah 40 Isaiah develops the themes of God's mercy and God's power—what do you understand this to be?

God is the all-powerful Creator—how can this truth be used to incite fear rather than comfort?

What if we have an all-powerful god whose laws are imposed rules, who uses his power to inflict punishment, who is the source of pain and suffering and death? Would having a god who is like Satan in character in possession of all power bring us comfort?

So, merely having all power is not sufficient to bring us comfort or to win our trust. Trustworthiness is NOT established by power. This is critical and God, who is the God of truth always provides evidence to reveal this. Often God will give a declaration of the truth, but He never stops with declaration because His laws are design laws, the protocols upon which reality works, and thus reality will reveal the truth over time.

So God does declare in Zech 4:6 "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (NIV84)

But God doesn't merely declare this, He provides historical evidence to reveal that might and power do not restore love and trust—

- The flood—followed by the tower of Babel—might and power followed by rebellion
- The 10 plagues of Egypt—followed by a golden calf orgy—might and power followed by rebellion
- Korah, Dathan, Abiram being swallowed by the earth—followed by more murmuring and rebelling from the people—might and power followed by rebellion
- Fire at mount Carmel—followed by more rebellion and idol worship—might and power followed by rebellion

No, might and power does not restore love and trust—it can only restrain rebellion.

What does restore love and trust—the Spirit of truth and love—truth destroys lies and wins to trust and love casts out fear. But this requires we each think and examine the evidence for ourselves in an atmosphere of freedom; it is the work of the "still small voice" not the work of thunder.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Idolatry destroys a…" Why did God say that we are to have no other gods before Him? Because of the law of worship—by beholding we are changed. We actually become like what we admire and worship and as the highest created beings on planet earth there is nothing we can worship other than God that advances us. Anything other than the infinite God that we worship degrades us.

God wants our highest development and only by worshipping Him, the infinite Creator God of love, can we experience perpetual growth, development, advancement and eternal life.

What about worshipping false ideas about God? Is this a problem today?

Consider this historic quote, do you agree?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal**. Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. {FLB 59.8}

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SHARING campaign. The first of every month we will be making available FREE resources for you to share in your community, with family, friends, pastors, church members. These resources will be free and shipped free to US addresses only and while supplies last. So follow us on Facebook and watch the first of each month as a new resource is made available.

- February 2021 *Domestic Violence in the Church Study Guide*

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 9
To Serve and to Save

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read the memory text: "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1 NKJV)

Who is the Servant in this text? Jesus, and Matthew applies it specifically to Jesus:

> Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:
>
> "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
> the one I love, in whom I delight;
> I will put my Spirit on him,
> and he will proclaim justice to the nations. (Mt 12:15-18 NIV84)

Do we have other New Testament passages that record Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy?

> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Mt 3:16-17 NIV84)

What else do you notice about this prophecy?

Who are the various players in this text? Who is the speaker? Who is the Servant and who is the Spirit?

> Behold! My [Father] Servant [Jesus] whom I [Father] uphold, My Elect One [Jesus] in whom My [Father] soul delights! I [Father] have put My Spirit [Holy Spirit] upon Him [Jesus]; He [Jesus] will bring forth justice to the Gentiles"

So here in the Old Testament we find the gospel prophet not only prophesies about Jesus coming, but rightly reveals the entire Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that they work cooperatively to achieve this outcome—our salvation.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Remember our class last week when we read the quote out of the book *The Desire of Ages* in which the author wrote that without the Holy Spirit the sacrifice of Christ would be of no avail because the Holy Spirit is the actualizing agent in us, it is the Holy Spirit that makes effective what Christ achieved.

And for Jesus, as a human being, He achieved the victory through the same power available to us—the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Jesus was tempted to use His own personal divine abilities (turn stone to bread) but He never used His own abilities. All He achieved as a human, whether miracles or His victory over all temptation was achieved through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Jesus not only reveals to us the truth about God, but Jesus reveals to us the secret to our own personal victory over sin. Consider this historic quote:

> Christ lived a human life that He might be man's example in all things. He endured temptation even as every human being must endure. He believed God as we must believe. He learned obedience even as we are required to learn obedience. **And He overcame as we must overcome**. His path lay through manifold temptations; therefore He knows how to succour those who are tempted. BEcho September 3, 1900, par. 13

Do you agree? Disagree?

What about the last portion of our memory text, “he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles” or “he will bring justice to the nations.” How do you understanding this, what does it mean?

What law lens do you understand justice through?

If we accept Satan’s lie that God’s law functions like human law, imposed rules and that according to Satan “every sin must meet its punishment” (DA 761) then what is justice? –under human law justice is always the infliction of punishment for disobedience—this is Satan’s lie about God from the beginning and it is the lie that is still taught in every government of the world and every religion that holds to Satan’s view about God’s law.

For those who have rejected the kingdoms of this world with their imposed law as being representative of God’s government and have returned to worship God as Creator, we realize that God’s laws are design protocols upon which reality is built to operate. Breaking these laws results in death unless the Creator heals the damage. All the laws of health demonstrate the difference between imposed laws and design laws.

The battle between Christ and Satan is a battle for our minds—Satan’s methods and principles damage our minds, God’s heals our minds.

In the Dark Ages the beast of Revelation that warred against the saints warred by getting people to believe things that didn't make sense and practice principles that were contrary to reality, to God's design for justice.

Things that didn't make sense like:
God is love but if you don't love and obey Him He will burn you in hell

- You can shorten people's suffering in purgatory with money
- You can have your sins erased by going on a crusade and killing people

During this time in history if people questioned the church and its teachings they were:

- accused of heresy called heretic
- ostracized
- had their fortunes, lands taken away
- fined
- imprisoned
- killed

Do we see these same methods being practiced today by the image to the beast of Revelation? after my recent blog where I discussed the downside of using modern day examples as some people get too emotional and I reflected that maybe it is better to use Bible examples, I received so many emails from people telling me that the modern day examples really help them learn to apply God's principles in our lives today and encouraged me to keep doing it. So, I am going to, but let me say, if you don't like the examples I am using, okay, substitute a different example of your own, but don't lose sight of the underlying principles and methods we are exploring, simply because you don't like the example that demonstrates the principles. Stay focused on the principles and methods, that is the key point.

Let's use the example currently impacting the entire world to demonstrate the fallacy of the two laws—COVID-19.

This virus, if it infects you, violates the laws of health by subverting your body's normal processes and inciting viral reproduction that damages the body leading to death if not stopped. This is true for all viral infections. Thus, violating the laws of health results in death unless the individual is put back in harmony with the laws of health by eliminating the virus. This is a metaphor for sin—which is a sickness of character that is terminal without remedy.

Many human governments have passed various made-up human laws in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus. This is like the Dark Ages church which passed many laws to try and stop the spread of sin. Now, let's examine what justice looks like when both laws are broken—design laws (laws of health) and imposed laws (made up rules).

And regardless of the good intentions (and let's give all those in government or the church who pass these made-up laws the best motives of only wanting to save lives and be helpful) but irrespective of

good intentions, the made-up human laws are not reality—they are simply made-up rules that require external enforcement and inflicted punishments and they do not guarantee protection.

If in the Dark Ages you comply with the church rules, go to mass, have your infants baptized, go to confession, say Hail Mary's, pray to the saints, go on a pilgrimage—does any of this mean you will be cleansed from sin and have eternal life?

If today you comply with an imposed law to wear a mask, shut down your business, and stand six feet apart, does this mean you will avoid getting infected with the virus and are guaranteed to live? And if you obey these laws but still get infected what happens if you appeal to the governor and say—"Hey, I wore my mask. I shut down my business. I obeyed all the laws. Can you please legally pardon me from this infection so I won't get sick and die?"

This is a great metaphor for what penal/legal theologies of have done. They have replaced the reality of sin being a spiritual condition of heart and mind that is deviant from God's design that results in death unless remedied, with a legal fiction that sin is a judicial problem that requires legal payment and pardon. They teach millions to claim legal pardon from God on the basis if the blood payment of Jesus, yet don't tell people how to experience actually renewal of heart and mind and freedom from the domination of fear and selfishness—sin.

Imagine during the Dark Ages someone lives where they are legally required to go to confession or have their infants baptized—the purpose of course is to ensure righteousness and to save their eternal life. But what if a person doesn't obey this law, yet still has a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? What is wrong with disobeying these laws? What would the church do and why?

Imagine today that your son or daughter lives in a municipality in which a law has been passed for them to close their business to reduce the risk of spreading COVID. What happens if your child opens their business and never gets exposed to COVID? What would be wrong with running their business if no exposure ever happens? But what would the state do? Why would the state need to do this? What kind of punishment is this?

Imagine you are the governor of that state and your child breaks the law and opens their business, and from that act a customer infects your child with COVID. You become aware your child is now infected as a direct result of disobeying the law that you imposed to protect them. If you do what is just, what is right:

- do you have your child executed for disobedience?
- If you do what is just or right do you seek to inflict punishment upon your child?
- Perhaps you think yes, the law must be upheld, regardless of whether it is my child or not, they need to be fined and their business license revoked—so you do that. Has that resolved your child's condition? Is your concern about enforcing the made-up laws or saving your child?
- What if as you enforce the law to fine or punish your child for breaking the law you imposed, his older brother intervened and said, "No, don't punish my brother. I love him, punish me in his place. I will pay his fine." Would that be just for you to allow? And if you allowed the innocent to be punished in place of the guilty, how does that resolve your child's infection?

- What was the purpose of the law you passed, was it to close businesses or was it to prevent infection?
- And since the infection hasn't been prevented, how does imposing a fine on your child help your child? It doesn't.
- This is the fallacy of the penal legal model, the idea that inflicting punishment to uphold the law somehow resolves the sin problem. It doesn't because the sin problem isn't a legal problem any more than being infected with COVID is a legal problem—being infected is a health problem. Likewise, sin is a spiritual health problem and eternal health problem.
- So, if you do what is just or right, in harmony with the law of love and the laws of health what action do you take for your infected child? If you had a remedy that would cure your child, say hydroxychloroquine or ivermectin with Vit D and Zinc, would you give it to your child?

This is the problem with the world today—people are more invested in seeking some form of justice through human laws, through imposed rules, through sanctions and inflicted punishments than actually doing what is right—what is healing and restorative. Just look at all the changes in the made-up laws that are occurring between the Trump and Biden administrations—some people are happy others upset, but the people of God recognize it is all artificial and none of it is the justice of God's kingdom.

Worse, what is happening during COVID is an assault on your mind. Realize there are forces at work to destroy your capacity to discern right from wrong, healthy from unhealthy, as Isaiah wrote:

> Woe to those who call evil good
> and good evil,
> who put darkness for light
> and light for darkness,
> who put bitter for sweet
> and sweet for bitter. (5:20 NIV84)

Irrational and inconsistent messaging, contradictory and false positions, destructive and irrational ideologies are being promoted, repeated in words and images, and these lies infect minds getting people to believe things that don't make sense and are opposite of truth—just like the church of the Dark Ages did. Examples:

Logitech Superbowl commercial:

> "we stand there in defiance, that's right We're the makers, the groundbreakers, we're the creators, the screamers, the dreamers, we defy expectations, perceptions and misconceptions, we defy what logic says we should look like, sound like, be like, we defy algorithms and entire industries, see we defy that little voice that says Oh no we can't with a roar back that says Oh yes we will, because to create the future we must defy the logic of the past WE MUST DEFY LOGIC." https://www.ign.com/videos/logitech-super-bowl-55-commercial-defy-logic

What is the message? Logic isn't logic, it is anything we want it to be and in fact we can't succeed unless we deny logic, and we can't go into the future successfully unless we reject the logic of the past

past and what history has to teach us. Then we can become the makers and creators of logic and reality.

Whose message is this? Who is the father of lies and must deny truth and reality because, all truth, all reality exposes him and his methods as destructive?

But for those who love truth, what is the truth on the question of logic and history?

> Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. (Dt 4:9).

What are we to teach to our children? The history of God's actions in the past! Why? What happens if we forget?

Speaking about the history in the Old Testament Paul writes:

> These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. (1 Co 10:11).

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> We have nothing to fear for the future, **except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history**. CET 204.1

Who wants us to forget history? Why? What happens to our minds when we disconnect them from reality, from facts, from history, from logic?

The Bible teaches that the mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern right from wrong. (Heb 5:14) This means that they have developed the ability to think for themselves, they understand how reality works.

But Satan and his kingdoms of this world don't want people to think, to discern, they want followers. They want people to believe on claims, proclamations, declarations; they want people who can't differentiate evidence and facts from fiction and fantasy. Then such people will follow whoever happens to tell them what they want to hear, regardless of whether it is true or not.

Our minds are under assault to accept lies as truth and lose the ability to reason, to discern. Examples, some of which have been going on for decades:

- Godless evolution, which generations are now taught in school and which all public universities adhere to and all government research centers, all research funding, and all peer review journals support. Yet this view must deny overwhelming evidence that refutes their godless worldview. And what happens to the mind? It is not simply that they believe a lie about life's origins, it is that their minds are conditioned to deny evidence, deny facts and

accept the view of the "authorities" the professors, the experts. But the experts have lost their ability to actually see reality, they are the blind leading the blind. This is exactly the same method of the Dark Ages church—deny evidence, reality, teach ideas that contradict the evidence, then ostracize, fine, and punish all who question the orthodox narrative.

- "There is no truth, your truth is your truth, my truth is my truth"—this idea is corrosive and teaches people that all views are equally valid—there is no objective reality. So, who do we follow in such a world—whoever has power and authority. It moves us away from maturing back to immature levels of functioning.
- "There is no male or female, gender is what one decides." Consider the damage to the mind this lie creates. This lie isn't actually about male and female it is about getting people to deny every-day reality, to deny objective facts. It is our modern-day example of the *Emperor's Clothes*. And this leads to things like the new President's ruling that male-to-female transgender individuals can compete in female sports. Objective reality doesn't matter and if you try to point out reality you are accused of being a bigot, intolerant, and threatened with being canceled, de-platformed, being mobbed—a modern day heretic and treated just like the Church of the Dark Ages treated heretics. But what is the truth about this?
    - Biological males get testosterone production at puberty that cause marked physical enhancement of their bodies—they grow taller, their muscles grow bigger, their bones become denser, and they get larger hearts and lungs with greater oxygen carrying capacity than women. Additionally, testosterone provides muscle memory, so that muscles remember to regrow more quickly after a period of atrophy, as they have more nuclei that don't go away when testosterone lowers. These physical benefits to athletic performance persist, even if a biological male person later identifies as a transgendered woman and artificially lowers their testosterone production.
    - But truth doesn't matter, facts don't matter—we must deny reality in order to be accepted—our minds are under assault. "Look, the Emperor's clothes are beautiful!"

Let's take another example from the Superbowl, in fact from the entire football season both college and pro; and that is the question about wearing masks. Now, let's all just assume mask wearing reduces viral transmission—it is a question still being debated, but let's for the sake of our discussion, assume that in fact mask wearing does work to reduce transmission of COVID.

What is the messaging about wearing masks?

- If you don't wear a mask you are at high risk of dying. You must wear a mask in order to be safe!
- If we assume that the masks are effective and will reduce your risk of contracting COVID-19, and you don't wear one is that the same thing as putting yourself at high risk of dying? No—if our assumptions about lowering transmission are correct, not wearing a mask merely puts one at greater risk of contracting COVID—but in order to be at high risk of dying the virus that you might catch has to not just contagious but virulent—and COVID isn't. The risk of dying from COVID is based on other factors than the virus itself. Such as the age of the person, their baseline health status, and their genetics; in other words, is the individual in a compromised or weakened health status. Also, it begs the question of therapeutics—are there interventions that can be brought to bear that can effectively treat the COVID infection and there is a large body

of research that says yes there is. So even if one contracts COVID that doesn't necessarily put them at high risk of dying. Different people have different risks.

- And then what of people like my wife, who had COVID already, recovered, and have been tested, have antibodies, and donated convalescent plasma—does they need to wear a mask? But why is there no provision for the millions like her?

And this contradiction in the messaging was revealed in the Superbowl and all season long and our minds are presented with something that doesn't fit:

- We see players, week after week, team after team, up in each other's faces breathing on each other, sweating on each other and they are not wearing masks—And they are not dying!
- But then the broadcasters show us images of the coaches along the sidelines, standing many feet away from others and they are all wearing masks or the very same players who just came off the field after breathing all over each other in the trenches sit down by themselves many feet from others and put on a mask. Hmmm…why?
- Because we must be sent the right visual optics, the right visual images that reinforce the idea that if you don't wear a mask you are at high risk of dying—that you can't function safely in society if you don't have a mask on. If you don't have a mask on you should be afraid, you could die.
- We are being conditioned to deny history, to deny reality right before our very eyes, to accept authoritarian rule even if it doesn't make sense, to take it on faith that someone in charge knows better, they know what is right, don't ask questions, just believe and do it.
- Understand, these football players are not putting their lives on the line to play in these games—all season long, both professional and college.
- Some of you may remember a player named Ryan Clark who played for the Pittsburg Steelers. He has sickle cell trait, and a few years ago when the Steelers were in the playoffs and had to play the Denver Broncos in Denver, he did not go to Denver and play in that game. Why? Because his life was really in danger. If these players lives were in real danger from not wearing a mask, they wouldn't be playing and we all know it.

Understand what is happening and this isn't about COVID. What is happening is our minds are being purposely manipulated to be less capable of thinking, more fearful, more willing to trust others to tell us the answer, more willing to accept authoritarian rules and this leads to intolerance

- Consider this, you are wearing your mask and you go into a store somewhere a patron comes in not wearing a mask. What is your response?
- Are you tempted to be irritated?
- Do you fear you are at risk?
- Do you want to report them and make them comply? But why?
- If your mask is protecting you how is it you become afraid if that person isn't wearing one?
- After all, if the mask really keeps you safe aren't you just as safe wearing yours whether they wear one or not?
- If you are wearing your seatbelt and see the person in the car next to you not wearing their seatbelt do you become afraid for your health?
- If your mask is protecting you why are you distraught that someone else isn't wearing one?

Jesus describing events leading up to His coming said:

> Mark 13:12 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 13 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." [Are we starting to see families divide? Are we conditioning people to become so fearful, so survival driven, so devoid of love that they will turn on their own church family, their own biological family and report them to the state? The first trickles are starting and it will only get worse. The mask **mandates** are part of this mental conditioning.]

Now I am speaking about misinformation and using that misinformation to impose mask MANDATES. I am not in any way criticizing VOLUNTARY mask wearing. In fact, I want to go on record supporting every person who wants to wear a mask voluntarily. Why? Because it is about you thinking, reasoning, and concluding for yourself what is best in your situation, which strengthens your reasoning ability—it is not ultimately about the mask it is about your mind! But those who want to break down your individuality, your ability to think and to act as an agent of God, **do not want *you* to decide to whether to wear a mask or not**. What they want is for you to comply, to surrender the choice to the higher authority—that is the point. Your agreement is not required, your compliance is. **That is the goal, condition you to accept lies as truth and irrational application of imposed laws by the ruling authority**. **Then when more irrational laws come down, you will be less capable of resisting them**.

How much better if we present truth and evidence to people, and then leave them free to make their own decisions?

We received this email from an online listener this week,

> *Dr. Jennings reveals truth over and over again…here is a most recent example of what I'm referring to:*
>
> *In this [week's] live class, Feb. 6th, he mentioned the enemy will come with some type of "justice" cause suited for a person's mindset; then he listed a whole list:*
> *Economic*
> *Racial*
> *Etc.....*
>
> *Well, I was amazed as I witnessed this very point being played out with some of my friends.*
>
> *The topic was the "reality czar" Tim brought up. After class I verified it, gained an understanding of what it was and shared it with some of my Christian friends. Some of them actually thought it was a good idea!!!!! Their thinking was, because of all the "misinformation," lies- someone should monitor what is put out there and it would be "just" to protect people from "misinformation"!!!!!!!!!*

I was dumbfounded, but it was an example in real-time of what Tim was talking about.

When I asked them about freedom of speech, they were willing to give up their freedom if it kept "misinformation" from being put "out there"!!! (For the good of the people!!!!!!)

Then I asked them whose reality they thought the "reality czars" would be promoting? Do you think they will dig into evidence for the truth or make declarations based on their own biases? Well, to that they stopped to ponder.

Who should decide reality for you or me? Certain people in the media have constantly held up scientists—are you willing to listen to the scientists, should we listen to the scientists, or should we examine the evidence for ourselves—whether it be on global warming or COVID or anything else?

How many remember the science articles on the safety of tobacco, or the articles that said there was no association between tobacco and cancer back in the 1960's and 70's? What did we learn from that? That science can be corrupted by money and politics to misinform us. Do we think this stopped with tobacco?

I cited two articles a few weeks ago that were published in *The Lancet* and the *NEJM* that were both fraudulent and later retracted. But there are many more articles that are published that are not good science, that are funded by interest groups to give certain results and they do.

So, as we consider the question of justice—I hope you will realize there is no justice in human systems, human imposed laws, there is only punishment biasedly applied with various interests-groups perpetually vying for power in order to advance their view of justice. This is Satan's kingdom—and it is only going to get worse until Jesus comes.

Consider this historic quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, do you agree or disagree and why?

> "Because of Satan's accusing power, **it was not the plan of God to deal with him as he deserved**. **The tempter would throw all the blame of his course upon others who were below him**. He would make it appear that if he could have moved according to his own judgment all this demonstration of rebellion would have been avoided."
>
> **"The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy**. He claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God, claims that his decisions are justice, are pure and without fault. Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat and declares that his counsels are infallible. **Here his merciless justice comes in, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God."**
> – Christ Triumphant (CTr) p. 11 and - Letter 16a, 1892

Remember a few weeks ago we went through the six powers of Satan and one of those powers is the power of accusation, another is the power of imposed law and coercive enforcement. Look at what is happening in society today—accusations without evidence and then punishment inflicted by the state.

God's methods are quite different. God's justice is always healing, restorative, and in harmony with the laws He built reality to operate upon. Thus God justly left Satan free to tell his lies and incite his rebellion, because that his how love and liberty work, while God went about revealing truth to destroy lies and win to trust. It is Satan and Satan's methods that don't leave free, that silence dissenting voices, that de-platform, that censor.

Consider this quote in light of God's versus Satan's methods:

> Satan's representations against the government of God, and his defense of those who sided with him, **were a constant accusation against God. His murmurings and complaints were groundless; and yet God allowed him to work out his theory**. [Satan is a liar and accuser. His accusations are groundless because there is no truth on his side. Yet God gives real freedom. God did not censor Satan. God did not take down his Twitter account, or block him from social media. God left Satan free. Why? If you think it is right to censor, to de-platform, to silence opposition voices—for the good of the people to save lives—whose methods are you preferring?] **God could have destroyed Satan and all his sympathizers** as easily as one can pick up a pebble and cast it to the earth. **But by so doing he would have given a precedent for the exercise of force**. [What is a precedent? An action that serves as justification for future actions. God would NOT do this. Why? What happens to love when force is used? Do you think it is right and just to use force to make people comply, to punish sin? Whose kingdom do you prefer?] **All the compelling power is found only under Satan's government**. [How much? All, why? What type of law is Satan's kingdom built upon? Made up rules, which can only be enforced by compelling power, infliction of punishment. God's kingdom is built upon design law, the protocols life operates upon—break them and you injure yourself.] **The Lord's principles are not of this order. He would not work on this line**. [God will not work by rule enforcement, only Satan does. How many Christians are eager to join the ranks of the enemy and support the state in enforcing rules upon others. But we can never win friends this way, we can never convert, we can never eliminate fear and selfishness and restore love in this manner.] **He would not give the slightest encouragement for any human being to set himself up as God over another human being, feeling at liberty to cause him physical or mental suffering. This principle is wholly of Satan's creation**. [Yet how many today in society believe it is right and just to have other humans be authority over us, and to punish us if we don't go along with the approved narrative?] RH September 7, 1897, par. 7
>
> **The principles of the character of God** were the foundation of the education constantly kept before the heavenly angels. **These principles were goodness, mercy, and love**. [How do these principles operate?] **Self-evidencing light** was to be recognized and **freely accepted by all who occupied positions of trust and power**. [What does self-evidencing light mean? How reality works, it is obvious because its what actually transpires. Like football players not dying when they don't wear their masks exposes the lie that we can only be safe when we wear one.]

They must accept God's principles, and, through the presentation of truth and righteousness, convince all who were in his service. [What method is this? Truth presented in love leaving others free. This is what we practice. We never seek to coerce, to force, to compel. We might not be persuaded by an opponents argument, but we will leave them free to have it.] **This was the only power to be used.** [What is the only power the people of God are to use? Truth, love, freedom!] **Force must never come in.** [What must never come in? But what if we need to save lives? Shouldn't we use force then? Isn't it right to force people then? When God didn't use compelling power on Satan was He not concerned with saving lives? Understand reality—force can save individual lives in the short run, but can never end violence, conflict, and save lives in the long run. The use of force only perpetuates sin and ongoing conflict and continuation of the loss of life.] **All who thought that their position gave them power to command their fellow beings, and control conscience, must be deprived of their position; for this is not God's plan**... [Wow—too bad both church and state leaders don't know this. Understand, the role of earthly governments is not to promote righteousness, it is merely to restrain chaos and anarchy. Our Constitution is written not to grant us rights—our rights are inalienable and give to us by God. The Constitution is written to restrain the government from encroaching upon the principles of God for healthy living—in other words our God-given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But many now are using government to seek to command their fellow beings and control conscience—if you don't support and defend the popular views then you need to be silenced, be punished, be sent to reeducation camps, have your business shut down, be accused of inciting an insurrection, or being racist, or sexist and what do accusations do? They intimidate people into silence, using powers to coerce and pressure people to comply to false worldviews. Consider in academia how professors will be blackballed, lose positions, lose grants, lose research opportunities, not be published if they don't support the godless theory of evolution.] RH September 7, 1897, par. 8

In the councils of heaven it was decided that principles must be acted upon that would not at once destroy Satan's power; for it was God's purpose to place things upon an eternal basis of security. [What does this mean? How can things be put on an eternal basis of security? What happens in hearts when people are threatened with punishment to comply? Are they convinced? So what would be needed to successfully destroy Satan and his power and put things on eternal basis of security? Evidence revealed over time while leaving people free. Which method do you see human governments employing? Which method do you prefer and which will you practice?] **Time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his government**. [What are they? Lies, imposed laws, inflicted punishments, coercive enforcement, accusation, human economics, division and destructions and death] The heavenly universe must see worked out the principles which Satan declared were superior to God's principles. **God's order must be contrasted with Satan's order. The corrupting principles of Satan's rule must be revealed. The principles of righteousness expressed in God's law must be demonstrated as unchangeable, perfect, eternal**… [Where is this contrast between God's government and principles and Satan's government and principles made and most clearly seen? First and foremost, in the life of Jesus. Jesus revealed the truth of God's character, methods and principles and Satan exposed himself as a murderer

by shedding the blood of Jesus. But Jesus has sent us to be lights in the dark world. The second place this contrast is made is in the lives of those who are taken out of the world, who have the laws of Satan and the kingdoms of the earth cut out of their hearts and have God's laws written in. It is we who are to give glory to God at this time in history by loving God and others, and by practicing His methods and refusing to be deceived into pursuing justice through imposed laws, human governments and inflicted punishments.] RH September 7, 1897, par. 10

The Lord allowed Satan to go on, and demonstrate his principles. God did reveal that his principles were right, and he carried the worlds unfallen and the heavenly universe with him; **but it was at a terrible cost. His only begotten Son was given up as Satan's victim. The Lord Jesus Christ revealed a character entirely opposite to that of Satan**. [Satan's method is rules over. He sought to climb up and reign over by authority and power. Jesus, who being by nature God, did not think equality was to be grasped but surrendered…] As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous, pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of a common priest, so Christ emptied himself, and **took the form of a servant, and offered the sacrifice, himself the priest, himself the victim**. RH September 7, 1897, par. 12

By causing the death of the Sovereign of heaven, Satan defeated his own purpose…He was allowed to go on until his administration was laid open before the worlds unfallen and before the heavenly universe. **By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he uprooted himself from the affections of the unfallen beings. He was seen by all to be a liar, a thief, and a murderer**. RH September 7, 1897, par. 13 [Who killed Jesus? Who is the murderer and is guilty of shedding Jesus' blood? Satan! Yet his lies have been so effective that the majority of Christians still teach that God killed Jesus at the cross to enforce justice and pay our sin debt. This is Satan's lie about law carried out in perverse theology. And we wonder why so many Christians are willing to accept the events that are happening in the world today.]

God sees that the same course of action is being pursued the world over. Men and women come to the place where the road diverges; it is either right or wrong...[And only the mature, those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from wrong know which road to take!] RH September 7, 1897, par. 14

Today Satan is working upon human minds by his crooked principles. These will be adopted and acted upon by some who claim to be loyal and true to God's government. How shall we know that they are disloyal and untrue**?—"By their fruits ye shall know them." God does not force any one. He leaves all free to choose.** [The principles of Satan are lies, imposed law, inflicted punishment, coercion. Even if you believe a lie about some topic, say COVID, you can still avoid joining Satan's team by refusing to embrace, support, or promote his methods of legal mandates, imposed punishments, judicial enforcements. In other words, God's people present the truth in love, live that truth in their lives, and leave others free. In the COVID climate, that would mean the people of God present the truth about COVID as they understanding it, practice the principles of health that they understand work best, but leave others free to believe differently and practice differently. Just like we do with eating meat or not, smoking or not, using marijuana or not etc.] But he says, "By their fruits ye shall know

them." The Lord will not write as wise those who cannot distinguish between a tree that bears thorn-berries and a tree that bears olives. RH September 7, 1897, par. 15

Individually, we are deciding our eternal destiny, deciding whether we shall enjoy the highest honor that can be given to man, even an eternal weight of glory, or be ranked with Satan by possessing his character, by dishonoring God because we profess to be Christians while misrepresenting Christ. **Those who choose to reveal the character of the arch-deceiver identify themselves** with him beyond the possibility of a change, because they choose not to see themselves as wrong. This was the course that Satan pursued. RH September 7, 1897, par. 16

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the two servants—one Jesus the ultimate suffering servant, and the other the people of God, or as the lesson suggests the nation of Israel as a servant of God.

The lesson asks in the middle of the page, "What is the role of the servant nation?"

What was Israel chosen for?

- Were Abraham's children chosen for exclusive salvation?
- Is salvation determined by genetics?

What were they chosen for?

For a mission—what mission? Consider this quote from the book, *Christ's Object Lessons:*

So God had **chosen a people** from the world to be trained and educated by Christ. The prophet says, "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant." Isa. 5:7. Upon this people God had bestowed great privileges, blessing them richly from His abundant goodness. He looked for them to honor Him by yielding fruit. **They were to reveal the principles of His kingdom. In the midst of a fallen, wicked world they were to represent the character of God**. {COL 285.1}

What was their purpose? To reveal the principles of God's kingdom and represent the character of God—for what purpose? To prepare the world for the first advent and be the branch of the human family tree through which Messiah would come.

So, the purpose of Abraham's family was to know God, be faithful to Him and reveal Him and His character and design laws in word and deed to evangelize the world and prepare the world for Jesus.

MONDAY

The lesson asks "What is the role and character of God's unnamed Servant, whom God chooses and upon whom He puts His Spirit?"

Well this is talking about Jesus—and what is Jesus' role and character?

The lesson gives 5 options and wants us to choose them all:

1. He provides justice for the nations
2. He accomplishes His goals quietly and gently, but successfully
3. He is a teacher
4. He serves as a covenant between God and the people
5. He gives light or hope by healing blindness and liberating prisoners

What do these mean to you? Do any stand out? How would you explain them? Does the law lens we use make a difference in our understanding of each?

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would be the ruler who set the Jews free to return to Jerusalem 150 years before he lived. This is a profound prophecy demonstrating God knows the future before it actually happens.

> who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd
> and will accomplish all that I please;
> he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt,"
> and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." ' (Isaiah 44:28 NIV84)

Does the fact God knows Cyrus by name and calls Cyrus "my shepherd" mean that Cyrus was alive someone in the universe before Cyrus was born? Is this speaking about Cyrus being alive or about God's foreknowledge and calling?

This is the same type of foreknowledge and meaning of

> Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
> before you were born I set you apart;
> I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5)

God foreknew Jeremiah—this text says nothing about when Jeremiah became a living being. Notice, the text says God knew Jeremiah *before* Jeremiah was formed in the womb.

Why are prophecies like these important? Turn to WEDNESDAY

Because they give us hope in the times of trial and difficult. Because of prophecies like these we know God is in charge and is working out His plan of salvation and we will be delivered.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "God calls and names Him…" Who is Israel that is called back to God? Who are those that are considered descendants of Abraham?

Who did Jesus say was the father of the genetic Jews who opposed Him, while on earth?

> You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44 NIV84)

How can this be? Is Jesus revealing a truth here?

Why was Abraham's name changed from Abram? Because he would be the father of one nation—no many nations. Who are considered part of Israel?

> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29 NIV84)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Notes Available on our website Bible Study Class > current quarter > current lesson menu for download

Thank you to all of our supporters!!! We appreciate your prayers and financial support.

Healing the Mind in a Broken World, videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign: February 2021 *Domestic Violence in the Church Study Guide*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL, EXCEPT for those in AUSTRALIA. Order by email there: australia@comeandreason.com

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 10
Doing the Unthinkable

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

This week we examine Isaiah 53, let's read starting in verse 3 from the NIV84:

"He was despised and rejected by men,…"

Why was he despised and rejected by men?

- Was does this mean?
- Was He rejected because there was something defective or wrong about Him?
- Or He was rejected because there was something wrong with those who rejected Him?
- Is there a lesson in this for us when people reject us?
- How many people live in fear of being rejected or thought ill of? But what do other people's attitudes reveal?
- When other people are bigoted, judgmental, racist, what does it reveal?
- Do we learn the lesson?
- Sin in the heart causes fear, selfishness and then hatred of all things righteous. Those in darkness don't want to come into the light lest their evil deeds be exposed. So, when we are being mistreated or rejected, it is appropriate (since we are sinners) to reflect briefly and examine the truth of ourselves and ask, if we brought this on ourselves. But **we must not let other people's actions be the measuring stick** of our peace with ourselves. **Other people's actions are a revelation of their character, not ours**—from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

  Remember Satan is the accuser and one of his powers is the power of accusation. Many people live in fear of what others think and that fear causes greater concern for self and they are easily manipulated to take actions that will prevent others from rejecting them, rather than living with their hearts singly focused on bringing glory to God. Jesus was despised and rejected—because of the sin in the hearts of people, not because of some defect in Jesus.

"…a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering…"

Why was Jesus sorrowful? What caused His sorrow and suffering? Certainly, Jesus felt the aches of sore muscles, the hunger pains after a long day, the fatigue of a tired body, and during crucifixion weekend the bodily suffering of the torture inflicted upon Him. But was His sorrow and suffering primarily about Himself?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider this quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

> "In the temptation in the wilderness, Satan had been defeated, and his rage was great. Now he determined to bring sorrow upon Christ by striking John. The One whom he could not entice to sin he would cause to suffer." DA 224.1

How did Jesus suffer? What caused it? It was His love for us and seeing our pain from sin that caused His suffering. Parents, what causes you to suffer the most, isn't it when you see your children being damaged by sin, whether their own or as victims of others?

What this the only source of His heartache and sorrow and suffering? From *The Desire of Ages:*

> "The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt." DA 753.1

"…Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not…."

Why was Jesus despised? Why didn't we esteem or value Him?

"[4] Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,…"

What does this mean? What law lens do you see this through?

He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God—what does this mean?

How did Jesus take up our infirmities? Was this a legal taking up or an actual state of being? When Jesus became incarnate what humanity did He take up—a sinless humanity like Adam in Eden or a humanity infected with fear and selfishness like ours? Is our carnal nature an infirmity? Does it weigh us down with sorrow? Did Jesus partake of humanity like Adam had or like we have?

But does that mean Jesus' had a humanity exactly like ours? No, this is another trap debate of Satan. His classic strategy is to set up two lies or false views and then get people to choose one and fight the people who have chosen the other when both are still wrong. In this case the old argument of prelapsarian versus postlapsarian—did Jesus have a humanity like Adam's before sin (prelapsarian) or like ours (postlapsarian), and the answer is neither.

Jesus was unique. Consider how Jesus became human. Adam was taken from dirt and created a living being directly by God—is that how Jesus' humanity came to be? Eve was taken from

the side of a sinless Adam, is that how Jesus' humanity came to be? Every other human in history, including you and me, are born from a sinful mother AND a sinful father—is that how Jesus' humanity came to be? No, Jesus was born of a woman under law (Gal 4:4), the law of sin and death, thus through Mary Jesus partook of our sinful or fallen nature, which connected Him to us and made His humanity part of this creation and enabled Him to be tempted in every way just like we are. But Jesus' Father was the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary and caused the pregnancy, thus Jesus is unique—a blend of our humanity and His divinity. Thus, He carried or took upon Himself our terminal condition and carried all the sorrow and pain it causes in order to cure it and save us

"…yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted…"

Isaiah prophesied that we would misunderstand the mission, we would fail to see it was for our healing, and instead would teach that His suffering would be inflicted upon Him by God, that God would actually strike His own sinless Son and afflict Him.

And this is exactly what Christianity has taught through the lie of penal substitution theology. It is taught that we are in legal trouble with God, that God placed all the bad deeds on Jesus and then God used His power to punish Jesus ultimately executing Him at the Cross. This is all fraudulent and a lie based on believing the lie that God's law functions like human law. Once we reject that lie and embrace the truth of God's law as design law we realize that we are terminal in sin and Jesus came to cure the condition and was God's agency to accomplish the goal of the Triune Godhead, eradicating sin and saving humanity

Notice how Matthew applies this text in Matt 8:16-17:

> "And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and **healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases."** (NAS)

Bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows does not mean that Christ "paid the penalty" for our sins, but instead means that he took away from us our griefs and sorrows (ie took away our sicknesses). The healing of the physical illnesses during His life on earth was a metaphor or acting out of the plan of salvation to heal us from sin completely.

"[5] But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed…"

How do you explain this?

- What crushed Him physically?

- What crushed His heart?
- Is there any evidence that His Father used power to in any way injure, harm, punish Jesus?
- Was the suffering coming out from the Father?

What did the Father do?

- He let Him go, abandoned Him, why?
- Was it that once this commodity called sin was placed on Jesus the Father was so offended, sickened, disgusted with Jesus that He couldn't stay by any more so He ran away?
- No! God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself (2Cor 5:19).

Why did God let go Jesus at the cross? It was the only way for Them (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) to complete the mission Jesus came to Earth to complete—eradicate sin from humanity and save the species. Remember why Jesus stayed away from Lazarus for three days? Because had He gone sooner Lazarus wouldn't have died that first death. Jesus could not die on the cross and complete His mission if the Father, the source of life, didn't severe His connection with His Son and let Him go. Thus, the Father letting go was not the Father being angry, upset, disgusted, or punishing, it was the Godhead in full and complete mutual cooperation achieving the purpose of why Jesus came! It is how reality works!

How did Peter use this passage? 1 Pet 2:24:

> 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, **that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed**. (NAS)

Notice Peter explicitly says that Jesus' sacrifice was to heal us, transform our hearts, remove sin from us, that we die to fear and selfishness and live to righteousness through the victory or wounds of Christ! There is nothing penal legal going on.

"6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all…"

What does this mean?

- First we are all selfish, so without the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds we all go our own way, watch out for self—
- and God has taken this terminal me-first fear ridden selfish condition and placed it upon Christ through the humanity Christ assumed when He was born of Mary.
- This is how He is tempted in every way just like we are—yet without sin.
- We are not only tempted externally, but also internally, and in Gethsemane we see that Jesus was tempted by His own humanity to act to save self. But He chose to deny that

temptation and love others perfectly, thus He died to selfishness upon the Cross and restored God's law in the humanity He assumed.

- This is why He arose on the third day and could accurately predict His resurrection even though He could not see through the portals of the tomb. His prediction was not based on a prophetic vision of the future where He saw through time to the other side of the tomb, but was the prediction of One who knows how He built life to operate, understands the design law of love and knew that when selfishness was removed, and love, God's law perfectly restored into the humanity He assumed, death would be destroyed and life and immortality brought to light. (2Tim 1:10)

"[10] Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand…"

What does this mean? What law lens do you read it through? If you believe the lie that God's law works like human law, made up rules that require imposed punishment, then this text is used to teach the lie that God used divine power to crush Jesus and cause Him to suffer. Thus many theologians teach the lie that God killed Jesus on the cross to pay our legal sin debt.

But if we embrace the truth of God's design law we understand that it was the weight of sin, the sense of guilt, separation from His Father, the fear and selfishness, the pull of the nature He assumed that crushed Him and caused Him to suffer. That God did make him a sin offering in that God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son so that any who trust Him will be saved. He offered Him up freely—for what purpose? To be our Remedy, to cure the sin condition we could never cure.

"[11] After the suffering of his soul,
He will see the result of the suffering of his soul and be satisfied *(Margin)…"*

What does this mean? Some who hold to the lie about God's law being like human law teach the satisfaction theory of atonement and teach that God was angry, wrathful and needed a sinless blood payment to assuage His wrath or satisfy His sense of justice and Jesus' blood satisfies God in this way. But this is all false.

What is the truth? If you had a child dying of cancer, what is the only thing that truly satisfies? A remedy that cures, that puts the cancer into remission. Thus, God sees the result of the suffering of Christ, which is the saving of humanity and though it was terrible, agonizing, infinitely painful, He is satisfied with the result because He has saved the children that He loves.

"… by his knowledge (or the knowledge of him) my righteous
servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities…"

What does this mean? What does justify mean? Those who embrace the lie that God's law functions like human law teach that justification is a legal process of applying Jesus' blood as a legal payment to the account of the sinner and God legally declaring them to be righteous even though they are not righteous.

Such a concept is completely contrary to the Bible. The Bible teaches "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Co 5:21 NIV84).

God justifying or setting right is God actually fixing the hearts and minds of people, putting us right with Him again. Our natural hearts distrust God and are at enmity with God. Abraham trusted God, meaning his distrusting heart was set right, put right, or justified with God and once Abraham's heart was changed from distrust to trust, THEN God accounted or recognized Abraham as justified.

God justified or set the human species right with Himself **in the person of Jesus Christ** through the victory of Jesus as the cross. Each individual is justified when they respond to what God has done through Christ and have their hearts changed from distrust to trust. I like this quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character.** These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them**. His life stands for the life of men**. Thus they have **remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty**. Thus the very **righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ**. God can "b**e just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2]

SUNDAY

In the last paragraph we read "..for some unthinkable reason He doesn't save Himself! This is so strange that people didn't believe it. At Jesus' cross, leaders mocked Him: 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!'"

Was the reason unthinkable? From the human perspective it is completely unthinkable, from the wisdom of the world it is right to save self—but from God's perspective, from Heaven's system, love seeks not her own. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." (Mt 16:25 NIV84).

So after all we just examined, why was the death of Christ on the cross necessary for our salvation?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Isaiah 51:13…." Is God's quest unthinkable?

If you had a child that you had instructed not to ever get in the medicine cabinet and you came in and found your child had just eaten an entire bottle of medicine—if you intervened to save your child would that be unthinkable?

Why do they suggest God's plan to save us is unthinkable? Isn't it quite understandable if the core motive is love?

What makes the plan of salvation so hard to understand? Isn't it because it has been perverted with the human law model that results in all kinds of contradictions? Can you think of any contradictions that have been taught in Christianity?

- God is love and only wants your love but if you don't love Him He will torture and kill you
- God is just and only does what is right, and therefore God punished the innocent Jesus so the guilty sinners can be pardoned
- You can trust God but if you don't trust Him He will torment you in hell for all eternity
- Jesus and the Father are One—if you've seen Jesus you've seen the Father—but Jesus must intercede with the Father pleading His blood to the Father to prevent the Father from killing you
- God wants to have a close relationship with us, but if God were to get too close to us He would kill us for our sin, so we must have an intercessor to protect us or shield us from God's wrath.
- God knows all things but if I accept Jesus and am covered with His righteousness, then God doesn't know how sinful I am, when He looks at me He is unaware of my sinfulness and only sees the sinlessness of Jesus

I could go on all day. The penal legal model of atonement is all a lie, it is a fraud, it is built upon Satan's lie about God's law that God's law functions like human law and it damages the minds of those who believe it.

It is only coming back to worship God as Creator, which requires we understand His laws are design laws that life is built upon those laws we free ourselves from all the contradictions and everything harmonizes and makes sense and God is always beautiful and exactly as Jesus revealed Him to be.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Compare this with…" Why did Job suffer? Why did Jesus suffer?

George Fifield and 19th century theologian wrote:

> He [Jesus] took our sorrows, our griefs, all the conflicts of our lives upon him, and was tempted in all points as we are. **He took the injustices of our lives upon him too.** It is a fact that you and I have to suffer for many things for which we are not at fault. **All my suffering is not the result of my sin. Some of it is; but just as long as sin exists, injustice exists**. As long as men sin, men will be sinned against. **Just so you and I will have to suffer for the sins of others**; and so God, to show that he knew and realized all that, **let him that was perfectly innocent, take the injustice and sin of us all**. O brethren and sisters, h**e did not bear some other grief or some other sorrow, but he bore our griefs and our sorrows.** He was pierced through by them, and **the Lord permitted it, because there was healing in it for us; not that he might appease God, or reconcile him unto us**. G.E. Fifield, God is Love, Chicago, Theodore Reese, 1897

Why did Job suffer? Because there is sin in the world and there is evil in the world and evil people do evil things. Why did Jesus suffer—to provide remedy, reveal the truth to destroy lies and win us to trust, and to provide a new nature, a sinless character that we can receive as a free gift. To heal our sinfulness and write His living law of love into our hearts.

When you have been through something terrible, and you meet someone who has suffered in the same exact way—soldiers who have been in combat together, parents who have had children die, people who have lost houses to fire or flood—when we know another person has been through what we have gone through—what does that do for us?

Do you realize Jesus has been tempted and suffered in every way just like us?

WEDNESDAY

The bottom green section reads, “The weight, the guilt, the punishment for the sins of the whole world—every sin, by every sinner—fell upon Christ at the cross, at once, as the only means to save us!”

thoughts? What do you understand this to be saying?

Let’s be very clear—our position is that no human being could be saved without the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His coming to earth as our Savior is non-negotiable for our salvation.

But, why He had to die, what He accomplished, how we understand it, that is open to a variety of interpretations and many of them within Christianity are distorted and false.

Before we try to unpack this statement and find some light in it, let’s first set some parameters that will help us avoid confusion.

What law lens are we going to understand this through? If we choose the world’s view of law, the rule of law, imposed rules that require infliction of punishment, then we will distort all Christ achieved

through Satan's lies and ultimately believe God is like Satan in character, an inflictor of pain, suffering and death in order to be just.

But, when we understand God is our Creator and His laws are design laws, then we understand all of this differently. Let's contrast this statement through the two law lenses:

- Guilt
  - Under imposed law guilt is a legal guilt, a state of legal condemnation that requires legal penalty or punishment or payment.
  - But under design law guilt is the mental and emotional experience that sin causes in the heart and mind of the sinner, the internal sense of condemnation and fear that drives people to deny, blame, rationalize and justify and separate themselves from God and others. Thus, the guilt of sin Jesus experienced, that awful sense of guilt and separation from His Father that sin causes.
- Punishment
  - Under imposed law punishment is inflicted by the ruling authority and thus God becomes the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death.
  - Under design law punishment is the punishment that sin itself brings as it damages us and separates us from God ultimately resulting in death for those who won't let God heal them.
  - Consider this historic quote: "We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.? 1SM 235.2
- Sins
  - Under imposed law sins are deeds, bad acts, and are recorded in books and every act must be tracked, recorded and punished.
  - Under design law sins, the acts are symptoms of the condition of sinfulness, the condition of fear and selfishness infecting the heart. As Jesus taught in Matthew 5.
  - Under imposed law it is fraudulently taught that all bad deeds of every person were placed on Christ and God inflicted the appropriate amount of punishment on Christ for all the trillions of sins of all the people through history. This of course is silliness and fantasy and makes God out to be completely corrupt as He inflicts punishment upon an innocent.
  - Under design law however, we understand sinfulness to be a terminal condition of being out of harmony with God and how He built life to operate. We understand that none of us could restore God's design for life back in humanity and that Jesus came and took this terminal condition upon Himself in order to cure, to overcome, to eradicate fear and selfishness and restore love within humanity. Now this makes perfect sense and is perfectly rationale.

Read next sentence in green section, "What does this tell us about how bad sin is, that such a price had to be paid in order to redeem us from it?"

How do you understand this language of payment for sin?

What is the ransom price? To whom is the ransom paid?

THURSDAY

What is atonement? What does the word actually mean? How would you explain it?

The lesson suggests some texts at the bottom to compare with the message of Isaiah 53, let's look at Psalms 32:

" Blessed is he
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered."

What does this mean? What law lens do you read it through?

- Does "forgiven" mean a legal pardon or personal attitude toward the sinner—God's graciousness, that He doesn't hold it against us?
- What does it mean to cover sin?
  - Does it mean to cover over, to hide, to erase from record books?
  - Or does it mean to cover for, to take responsibility, Jesus saying, "I've got you covered. I'll take care of it and fix it for you?"
  - So from the Remedy:

    "Happy are they
    whose wicked minds are restored to perfect purity,
    whose selfishness is eradicated."

"2 Blessed is the man
whose sin the Lord does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit…"

What does this mean? What law model do you read it through? What does it mean to count sin against him, why would the Lord not count someone's sin against them?

From the Remedy:

"Happy is the person
whose infected heart the Lord transforms to perfection,
in whose mind there is no deceit."

When we are unhealed, still dead in trespass and sin, the Lord must be truthful, must accurately diagnose us and our sin-sick condition. But when we have been reborn, when the law of God is written in our hearts and minds, then the Lord no longer counts our sin against us, i.e. no longer finds any sinfulness in us to heal as we have been healed and the past symptoms (deeds) are irrelevant for those who are healed.

"3 When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
4 For day and night
your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.
5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord"—
and you forgave
the guilt of my sin…"

What does this mean?

From the Remedy:

> When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God,
> I stressed myself and my body decayed
> because every day I screamed, "no!" denying the truth.
> 4But day and night
> your healing hand pressed firmly upon me;
> my resistance evaporated
> like water in the summer heat.
> 5Then I admitted my sin-sickness to you
> and did not hide my character-deformity.
> I said, "I will confess
> my selfishness to the Lord" —
> and you healed me
> and freed me from guilt.

Do you see how design law brings such clarity to the sin problem and God's plan of salvation, why we suffer when we sin and how God heals us?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Notes Available on our website for download

SHARING campaign: February 2021 *Domestic Violence in the Church Study Guide*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL, except IN AUSTRALIA: order at australia@comeandreason.com

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 11
Waging Love

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What did you think about the picture for the lesson this week?

- What comes to mind?
- What kind of war is depicted?
- Did you notice that the spearheads are in the shape of hearts?
- Can we win people to love by threatening to kill them if they don't love us?
- Is the war of love waged by violence, coercion, force or any compulsion to comply?

We are in a war—but what kind of war? How are we to wage it?

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Co 10:3–5 NIV84).

- What are the weapons of the world? If you haven't been reading my blogs I am in the middle of a six part blog series on the powers of Satan and how to defeat them
    - Lies—we don't lie we wield the sword of truth
    - The kingdoms of the world with their imposed law with coercive enforcement—we don't coerce we live in harmony with design law, present the truth in love and leave others free
    - Worldly economics—we don't wage economic warfare, we don't seek to punish people financially, we seek to relieve poverty
    - Accusations—we don't accuse, we present the love of God the sacrifice of Jesus, the reality of what sin does
    - Temptation and division—we don't temp and we don't divide, we are peacemakers who through the power of the gospel unite
    - Death and destruction—don't kill or destroy

Any other texts come to mind on how we wage war?

> "Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family.
>
> "Those who love parental approval more than they love me are untrustworthy of me and the Remedy I bring; and those who love the approval of their children more than me are untrustworthy of me and the Remedy I bring. Anyone who refuses to die to selfishness and follow me — loving others more than self — cannot be trusted by me to distribute the Remedy I bring. Whoever seeks to save self remains infected with selfishness and will die of their unhealed condition, but whoever surrenders self in love to me will experience healing of heart, and will find eternal life. Matthew 10:34-39 Remedy

Read first paragraph, "A Jewish cantor…" Will this work in every situation? For the heart, mind and character of the one who acts like Jewish cantor's—yes! But will all enemies respond positively? Consider Jesus and how some responded in love while others hated Him and sought to kill Him.

We are only responsible for being the lights of God's kingdom in the world, we are NOT responsible for how things turn out, for converting others, for how people respond.

SUNDAY

Read Isaiah 55:1:

> Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! (Is 55:1 NRSV).

What is the message of this verse?

Does it remind you of a verse in the New Testament?

> You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. Therefore I counsel you to **buy from me** gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. (Rev 3:17,18 NIV84).

Let's examine these two texts. What are the various elements and what do they mean and what is described?

- There is a need—thirst, nakedness, poverty, blindness, wretchedness
- There is failure to understand the situation
- Water
- Gold

- White robes
- Eye salve
- Money—which we don't have
- Instruction to buy and to eat, be rich, dressed, and see

What do the various elements represent? From the book, *The Desire of Ages:*

> As it was in the days of Christ, so it is now; the Pharisees do not know their spiritual destitution. To them comes the message, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Rev. 3:17, 18. **Faith and love are the gold tried in the fire.** But with many the gold has become dim, and the rich treasure has been lost. **The righteousness of Christ is to them as a robe unworn**, **a fountain untouched**. To them it is said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Rev. 2:4, 5. {DA 280.3}

- Water—the water of life, which is the living connection with God—that we experience through faith and love and the more we drink the water of life this life of love wells up in us to be a fountain to others. The living connection we have with God flows out in a righteous life of truth and love that quenches the soul thirst of others leading them to Jesus the fountain of life.
- Gold—faith/trust and love
- White robes—the righteousness of Christ reproduced in our characters
- Eye salve—discernment we develop as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and practice God's methods
- Money—which we don't have—and which is not needed to purchase all of this

How do we purchase faith, love, a righteous character, eternal life?

Read second paragraph, However, if you add…" thoughts?

Does this answer the question of how we buy faith, love, a living connection with God and Christlike character? Do you have a clear understanding from this paragraph?

Does God buy our salvation? From whom?

How is it God offers us forgiveness freely if He has to also buy it?

Do we buy salvation from God by offering God the blood of His Son?

How is the blood involved?

What does the blood represent?

What law lens do you use to understand these things?

If we have the human law lens—imposed rules with made up inflicted punishments, then we see things through the systems of this world. And the systems of this world are Satan's kingdom, including human economics of buying and selling. And when we try to explain God's kingdom through the lens of Satan's systems, we pervert the truth.

God seeks to break our minds out of the systems of this world, the corruption of made-up laws that require imposed punishments, the corruption of made-up economy of buying, selling, owning, by describing **that we must buy without money**.

This doesn't compute to us and that is the point, it is designed to get us to think—how can this work? And the only way it does work is to reject the lies of Satan, the systems of Satan, the falsehoods of imposed law and human economics and return to design law, how reality works. When we do this, we find our answers and all the metaphors fit reality perfectly.

The purchase price or ransom price is that which is necessary to free us from the bondage of sin. And what is it that holds us in the bondage of sin?

Through the lie that God's law functions like human law, it is taught that what holds us in bondage is the legal condemnation and the impending death sentence that a god of "justice" (human law justice) must inflict upon us to uphold his made-up human-like law. Thus, in that view—it is fraudulently taught that Jesus died to either pay God or pay God's law the legal price necessary to get legal pardon.

But if we reject human law and embrace design law then we realize that we are held in bondage by two things:

- the lies we believe about God that keep us from trusting Him, and
- our carnal natures

Then the purchase price is:

- the truth that destroys lies and wins us back to trust and
- a new, sinless, perfected, humanity that Jesus procured and freely offers to us.
    - I see this as a three-fold process
        - First, Jesus as a human in His own mind/brain lived a sinless life, was tempted in all ways like us, destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness, developed a perfect character and established a sinless perfected humanity, thus becoming the second Adam—the second head of humanity, our sinless Savior.
        - Second, we receive from Christ a new heart and right spirit, this is the gift of a new **character** that is reproduced in us through cooperation with God. We are yoked with Christ through the yoke of love and trust and the Holy Spirit brings the character traits of truth, love, peace, patience, kindness, self-control etc. to

us and inspires us with these, but we simultaneously choose them to accept and live them out. Thus we are reborn with new Christlike character that develops within us and it is "no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me." We grow and develop. It is not our work to develop this character, it is our work to receive, accept, and choose to live out what the Spirit inspires and empowers within us through trust.

- Third, at the second coming we become partakers of the divine nature fully—this mortal puts on immortality and we are fully recreated into eternal perfection.

So, God forgives all freely, but forgiveness from God was never an obstacle to salvation; our **accepting** God's forgiveness was the obstacle. God freely forgives—but God's personal pardon was not sufficient to save us from sin because God's personal pardon doesn't fix the problem of sin in us. In order for us to actually be saved we must have our hearts and minds set right, this means we must be restored to trust in God and receive the victory of Christ applied in us by the Holy Spirit.

Without the truth as revealed by Jesus we would not believe God has freely forgiven. Even with the evidence Jesus has provided billions still don't believe that God is like Jesus revealed; most Christians still teach that God was not free to forgive, that He had to pay a legal price to buy our pardon. But this isn't true—God freely forgives (as Isaiah 55 tells us) and then sent His Son to pay the price of revealing the truth to destroy the lies and also fixing what Adam did to the species human. And to whom is the truth and a new human nature provided, or paid? To you and me and this is why Jesus said, about His blood payment that:

> I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (Jn 6:53–56 NIV84).

Where is the purchased price applied? In us! This is the truth that the penal/legal lie obstructs.

What do you think of these two texts, buy without money?

Any other text come to mind, particularly related to Isaiah 55, being thirsting and in need of water?

What about the woman at the well—was she thirsty? And did Christ offer her the water of life? But did she have to buy it? Was there a transaction? Yes, there was a transaction—the water of life was freely offered by Jesus yet, she still had to purchase it with something other than money—with what? What was the transaction?

Perhaps we could say it this way, the water of life could not be consumed until the woman did something—what? Stopped lying, she had to be truthful about herself and her need and accept that she could not quench her own thirst.

What is the transaction we are to have with God? With what do we purchase all that God offers?

- We make an exchange—we let go of that which we value most—self
- We exchange our lies for the eternal truth
- We exchange blindness for discernment
- We exchange foolishness for wisdom
- We exchange fear and selfishness for love and trust
- We exchange pride for humility
- We exchange guilt and shame for peace and honor
- We exchange evil for righteousness
- We exchange the poverty of soul for the richness of Christlike character
- We exchange war for peace
- We exchange division and conflict for unity and harmony
- We exchange imposed law for design law
- We exchange human governments that coerce with God's government that leaves free
- We exchange soul-sickness for spiritual-health
- We exchange death for eternal life

MONDAY

Read Isaiah 55:7-13:

> Let the **wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts**. [What difference between being wicked or evil and being sinful? Sinfulness is the condition of being infected with fear and selfishness—this is the sin condition, the me-first survival drive, the carnal nature that tempts us. This is what all humans have because of Adam's fall. But, wickedness or evil is not merely having the sin-condition, it is choosing to embrace sin and practicing the methods of selfishness, of pursuing to advance self at the expense of others, of willfully violating God's design laws for life. Evil is exploiting others! We sinners are to forsake this me-first method of the world and pursue God's methods of truth and love. And one of Satan's biggest deceits is promoting evil—exploiting others—through human governments. In other words, passing imposed laws by governments that exploit and injure others—so people can feel righteous, i.e. law abiders, while doing evil. Think about Corban during Christ's day. About burning people at the stake in the Dark Ages, and today the rising of the beast of Revelation which will advance its pursuit of justice through exploitation others—all done through passing laws. But the immature, those who believe God's law functions like human law are deceived into participating with politics and human governments to pass the laws they believe are right rather than living God's kingdom of love.] Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our **God, for he will freely pardon**. [Is this what you were taught that God freely pardons? Or were you taught that God cannot freely pardon, that God had to send Jesus to pay the legal price of the death penalty in order to enable God to be able to pardon? Do you see how accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law corrupts the gospel? Notice, right

> after God says that He freely pardons, what He says next] "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways**," declares the LORD. [What is the way of this world when a wrong has happened? What is justice of human governments with imposed laws? It is always infliction of punishment. But God's ways are not our ways, notice what God says next] "As the heavens are higher than the earth, **so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts**. [How much higher is heaven than earth? It is infinitely higher—God's ways are supreme, higher, better than the ways of earthly governments. When will we accept this truth and stop corrupting the presentation of the kingdom of God with earthly rule of law lies? Notice what God says next to illustrate how heaven is higher than earth] **As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish**, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, [What kind of law is this? This is design law—the laws of nature. This is the law of love, giving, built into reality. It is the law of sowing and reaping, it is the law of watering, it is the law of truth. You don't get grapes from planting mustard seeds. God is the source of all life, truth, love and He sends the sunshine and the rain on the righteous and wicked. His laws do not make a distinction between people—people make a distinction in how they live in relation to God's laws] so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." (NIV84)

What is being described? God's methods being applied in hearts and minds result in healing and transformation, so that we stop producing fruits of sinfulness, the painful thorns of violating of God's design for life, but instead having had His law written on our hearts and minds we are new creatures in Christ who bring forth the fruits of the Spirit and receive eternal life.

Read the last two paragraphs,

> The theme of redemption is one that angels desire to look into; it will be **the science and the song** of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now? …
>
> The subject is inexhaustible. The study of the incarnation of Christ, His **atoning sacrifice**, and **mediatorial work** will employ the mind of the diligent student as long as time shall last; and looking to heaven with its unnumbered years, he will exclaim, "Great is the mystery of godliness." *My Life Today* 360

What does the phrase "the science and the song" mean?

What is science—something that is testable, evidence-based and reproducible. Thus, the plan of salvation is based in reality, on design laws, something that is testable and results in the same outcome every time it is applied. Salvation is scientific and will employ our intellectual study for all eternity.

And it is scientific because it is the outworking of design law being applied in living beings. The imposed law lie obscures reality and makes salvation mystical, magical, superstitious, nonsense (you must have ritual baptism done in a certain way, or a certain place, or by a person who has been ordained by the right organization or you can't be saved; you must have your body circumcised or you can't be saved; you must attend church services on the right day of the week; you must eat or not eat the right foods or wash your hands in the right way; you must believe God loves you but will torture and kill you if you don't love Him to uphold His law) and thinking people see the contradictions and reject God because of the false theories taught in world religions. We have a better message, a message that calls for people to worship the Creator and integrates Scripture with science and experience—testable, reproducible, scientific!

What is a "song"? Something that moves us, that is emotional, stirs the heart strings, that expresses passion and love. And while what God has done through Christ to save us is based on solid design laws and the construction protocols He built into the universe, so it is scientific…yet it is the most profound demonstration of love that moves the soul, stirs the heart and uplifts the spirit with the deepest appreciation and most moving song. So we will sing praise with never ending verse and developing melody through all eternity future.

Thus, our science and our song represents our entire being—our intellectual brain and our emotional brain—total and complete!

What does "atoning sacrifice" mean to you? Through what law lens to you hear this through? If human imposed law what does it mean? If design law what does it mean?

What does "mediatorial work" mean to you? Through what law lens to you hear this through?

- If human imposed law what does it mean?
    - Someone pleading or interceding with the ruling authority to show mercy and not punish. Thus Christianity has falsely represented Jesus as our Mediator standing in heaven pleading His blood to the Father to obtain mercy from a punishing and wrathful God
- If design law what does it mean?
    - Someone who intercedes between two parties to bring reconciliation, and works to fix the areas where the brokenness in the relationship has occurred. In our situation with God, where does the work need to be done, with God or in us? So Jesus mediates the truth of God to us and the love of God to us and works in us a change of character restoring us back into unity with God. This is His mediatorial work.
    - But did the unfallen angels have confusion that threatened their unity with God that needed to be removed? And who was the agent to do this for the angels?
    - One of the founders of the SDA church saw it this way, what do you think?

      "While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the

> inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is **mediating** in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his **mediatorial** work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?" {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4}

Read the bottom green section, "Look at the bad things…" What do you think of this description? Are the bad things we have done the problem or are they symptoms of the problem?

If David never committed adultery with Bathsheba or murdered Uriah would that mean he was sinless? What was David's problem that needing resolving—a legal accounting of historic deeds of bad acts, murder and adultery, or a change in heart that caused him to commit these acts?

TUESDAY

Read Isaiah 58:1-8:

"Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the house of Jacob their sins. [The lesson points out that this passage is playing on the themes of the Day of Atonement. Ten days before the Day of Atonement the trumpet would blow, calling people to prepare for the Day of Atonement. What is this voice calling people to do? What is the reality that the Day of Atonement was to teach? Cleansing an earthly building? Cleansing a heavenly building? Legal accounting and record erasure? Cleansing the Spirit Temple, hearts and minds of sinners from sin to prepare them to meet God?]
2 For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them. [What is described? What is meant by "as if"? God is making the point that what they profess to be doing is not what they are actually doing. What do they appear to be doing? Seeking God, but what are they really doing? Advancing themselves—so how is this possible? They have exchanged design law for imposed laws, rules, regulations, rituals and are religious through legal means not through God's plan to heal hearts.]
3 'Why have we fasted,' they say,
'and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?'
"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please

and exploit all your workers. [Notice the point, God exposes that they do religious ritual to get "credit" to get "gold star" from God, to get some advancement for self. But God says, that their so-called obedience or following of God's instruction is false because, He says "you do as you please" in other words they are selfish. But they are more than selfish, they are evil for the core of evil is exploiting others. And they do evil while professing to be seeking God, representing God and promoting God's kingdom. This is what happened when Jesus came, the Jewish leaders rejected and killed Him while claiming to be serving God. This is what the Dark Ages church did, and this is what Christianity does when it seeks to advance God's kingdom by using Satan's methods of law and human governments, OR when it teaches God's law functions like human law and salvation is getting a legal payment made to a god who will kill you without it. Notice what God describes next that they do while they keep their religious fasts and holy days]

4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists. [How much of Christianity is just like this? Divided and arguing, quarreling, striking each other with accusations and allegations—I don't mean merely disagreeing on concepts, I mean labeling people and attacking them personally? And Christianity, when we practice Satan's imposed law model, fractures and divides into more than 40,000 different sects arguing among ourselves. Worse, we seek to advance justice through human governments rather than via God's methods of healing hearts and minds.]
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD? [What is God calling out? Their ritual fasts, religious bowing, covering of head, wearing sackcloth and ashes—as if some merit or good comes from rituals acted out without heart change. So the Lord makes it plain to them that what He wants is a change of heart to love each other]

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, [What kind of light? Break forth where? Remember darkness covers the people and gross darkness the people—so the light of truth and love lived out shines into the hearts of people's darkened minds]
and your healing will quickly appear; [What kind of healing? Is it merely physical as we tend to the sick, or is this spiritual healing as we practice the methods of God in our lives?]

then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. (Is 58:1–8NIV84). [What is it we are to do as part of the Three Angel's Messages of Revelation 14? Give glory to God—which means what? Reveal His character in our lives by living out His design law of love. And why are we to do this? Because the hour of His judgment has come—which is a reference to what? The Day of Atonement—which Isaiah 58 is referring to. And what is the Day of Atonement primarily about? It is about reconciliation, it is about removing sin from hearts and minds, or cleansing the Spirit Temple of the righteous from sin so we are ready to meet God face to face.]

If you haven't read our pamphlet *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment For the Modern World* you can get it at our website and I encourage you to read it.

WEDNESDAY

Read Isaiah 58:12

Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (NIV84)

What is this referring to? What is it we are to repair?

Consider this quote from a book called *Prophets and Kings*:

> The spiritual restoration of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah's day **was a symbol**, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: "They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities." "They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah 61:4; 58:12. {PK 677.2}
>
> **The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the *principles* that are the foundation of the kingdom of God**. **They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law--the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection**, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard. {PK 677.3} [What are principles? Design laws—we are to restore the design laws—why do they need to be restored? Where do they need to be restored? What has caused the breach? Where is the breach?]
>
> In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of this remnant people who build the wall. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and

shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:13, 14. {PK 678.1} [If we identify the Sabbath as an arbitrary test of obedience and teach people that if they refuse to accept it they will be breaking God's law and God will be required to punish them—are we repairing the breach or doing just the opposite, make the breach bigger?]

In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. **The *breach made in the law <u>at the time</u>* the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired**. [Notice, the breach is not the change of the Sabbath, the breach was made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed—what was the breach? The concept of law changing from design law to imposed, which resulted in the change of the Sabbath. No committee votes to change the law of gravity, so the change of the Sabbath is evidence of the breach, but not the breach itself. The breach we must repair is how we understand God's law and government, which is design law, not imposed law.] God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show t**hat the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** [why? Because it is the law of life, the principles upon which life is established and operates. One cannot have health in violations of the laws of health] and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as **a memorial of creation**, **a constant reminder of the power of God**. [What do you hear when you hear this? Do you think might and power? If so, why does Zechariah say not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord? What power did God display on the 7th day of creation week? Is the Sabbath a memorial to physical power of to another power—the power of truth and love and freedom, the power of God's character, the power of the gospel, of design law. What did Paul say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." Romans 1:16 NIV84. What kind of power is the gospel? What kind of war has Satan waged? A war of ideas, words, not a war of power. Then what kind of power is necessary to defeat Satan? The power of truth and love. Do we see the Sabbath as a memorial of truth, love and freedom? Or to we misrepresent it by promoting the idea of imperialism and force?] In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. See verse 12. {PK 678.2}

What was the breach made in the law **when** the Sabbath was changed? It was not the mere change of the day of worship—the breach was the idea that God's law is imposed law—this is the breach we are to repair.

Isaiah not only prophecies that God's people will be repairers of the breach but also **raise up the foundations of many generations**. What does this mean, the foundations of many generations?

What are the foundations of God's government that Satan has torn down in the minds and hearts of people that we are to raise up?

What is the foundation of any government? It is the law upon which it is built. So, would the foundation of God's government be God's law? And what type of law would that be, design law or imposed law? And how has Satan torn down the foundation and how do we raise it up?

Consider these historic quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> **The law of love is the foundation of God's government**, and the service of love the only service acceptable to heaven. ST December 15, 1914, par. 1

> **Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government** in heaven and earth, and **it must be the foundation** of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation. COL 49.1

> **The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness**. [why? Because happiness is a by-product of healthiness in all domains, and healthiness is only possible in harmony with the laws of health—the laws upon which life is constructed to operate. So again, this statement reveals that God's law is design law, not imposed rules like humans make.] God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. **He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service**. [What kind of law forces and compels? Imposed law!] GC 493.2

What is the foundation that we are to raise up? It is the same as the repairing of the breach, which is restoring the truth about God's design laws, which are all expressions of God's character of love.

Do you see the issue in the war has always been over God's character and Satan has always attacked God's character by attacking how we conceive of law, either design law or imposed law.

So the object lesson truth is that we are to repair the breach, to raise up the foundations, which means we are to restore the truth that God's laws are design laws and are always expressions of love.

We will not repair the breach by getting every person in the world to go to church on Saturday while teaching that God's law is imposed and God in order to be just must inflict punishment upon sinners.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Isaiah 58:13,14 which is about the Sabbath, and turning away from doing one's own pleasure and calling the Sabbath a delight.

Is the Sabbath important at this time in earth's history? Why? What difference does it make?

I am going to read a quotation, used by some to make themselves feel good about their behavior, and too often used to accuse or condemn people who worship on Sunday. But let's consider this quote carefully:

- The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . . The mark of the beast is the opposite of this--the observance of the first day of the week.--8T 117 (1904). {LDE 224.3}

What do you understand this statement to mean? What law lens to you read it through?

- Is the issue in our salvation, in our preparation to meet Jesus, in our being ready to translate into heaven without seeing death as simple as which day of the week a person worships upon?
- If a person absolutely insists on worshipping on the Bible Sabbath does that guarantee they won't get the mark of the beast?
- Those who crucified Christ 2000 years ago wanted Him off the Cross by sunset why? So they could keep the Sabbath – does that mean they had the seal of God?
- Does Satan care if a group of people worships on Sabbath as long as they worship him?

Here is another quote from the same person as the previous quote, consider it in light of what we have presented:

> Be sure the Sabbath is a test question and how you treat this question places you either on God's side or Satan's side. The mark of the beast is to be presented **in some shape** to every institution and every individual.--Ms 6 1889, p. 6. (Written Nov. 4, 1889.) {3MR 189.2}

If God's law is not imposed rules but design protocols, then how is the Sabbath a test question? How is the mark of the beast to be presented in ***some shape*** to every institution…Is it merely which day of the week one attends worship, or is it the methods employed and practiced by the worshipper and is it possible that these two days symbolize two different methods of governing?

What is a mark or sign?

A symbol that stands for or signifies something else:

- The sign of the cross stands for what?
- The goat's head symbolizes what?
- What is a flag? Is the US flag a sign or symbol of the USA? Is the flag the same as the United States of America?
- Could someone wear the US Flag and be working for another government?
- If someone wears a cross are they saved because it is the sign of our crucified Savior?
- If someone has a goat ornament hanging on their Xmas tree, does that mean they are condemned because a goat's head symbolizes Satan?
- If someone worships on Sabbath are they saved because it is a sign of God?
- If someone worships on Sunday does that mean they are lost?

Question, are these two days themselves the reality, or are they symbols, signs, marks of some deeper reality, just as a cross, goat's head or flag?

Is it possible the days mentioned are signs because they symbolize something that demarcates God's government from Satan's? Could they stand as signals, signets, of the mode of governing each side uses? Could these days, **in their origin as days of worship**, contain the very elements of the two types of governing – God's vs Satan's?

Here are some more quotes:

> "Christ died to save sinners, not in their sins, but from their sins. [Imposed law constructs all teach that we are saved in our sins, from the legal penalty, but not saved from our sins, that we continue live sinfully until Christ returns. The truth is that God actually transforms us here and now and we stop living for self, and we live in love for God and others] The warning given in Revelation shows us the terrible consequence of transgression. By lips that will not lie, God's law is declared to be holy, just, and good. **Our duty to obey this law is to be the burden of the last message of mercy to the world**.[1] **God's law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known.** [Think about rules a parent has for handwashing, or exercise, or sleep etc. Those rules are not healthiness created, but healthiness made known.] **It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It presents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man.** {RH, April 27, 1911 par. 4}
>
> "'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' This command contains the principles of the first four precepts. And 'thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Upon these two great principles, the Word of God declares, hang all the law and the prophets. {RH, April 27, 1911 par. 5}
>
> "These **principles** are made known by the third angel's message, which declares that **the Creator has always required and always will require obedience to his royal law**. [Why does the Creator require obedience? Why does the Creator require we breathe? Because that is how life is built to operate. Remember the law is not holiness created but holiness made known. The commandments did not impose a law, but made the law known] But this law has been disregarded and transgressed, **and is now being ignored by the churches**. **Human enactments are placed where God's law should be.** [Imposed rules take the place of designed reality] Sunday, a child of the Papacy, has taken the place of God's holy Sabbath. As Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image, and set it up to be worshiped by all, so Sunday is

[1] It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth… The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. {COL 415}

> placed before the people to be regarded as sacred. This day bears not a vestige of sanctity, yet it is held up to be honored by all. {RH, April 27, 1911 par. 6}

Understand it is not about worshipping on Sunday—get that clear, just like there is no wrong in worshipping on Wednesday night, or Tuesday or Thursday. It is what the Sunday, within the religious system represents!

And what is the implication of changing the Bible Sabbath to Sunday? What does this act mean in regard to how God and his government are understood? How can a church vote to change the day of worship? What must first happen concerning God's law?

So what does it mean if an ecclesiastical board votes to change the Sabbath? That they believe God's law is imposed, and therefore believe God is like a Roman emperor a cosmic dictator. And accepting this change in the law is the root to the beast system.

And this lie comes out in the rest of Christian doctrines, like God is required to punish; penal substitution theology; eternal burning hell; Jesus died to pay or legal debt; etc. etc.

So let's review – what makes the Sabbath holy?

- What significance is it that the Sabbath was "made" or created?
  - It is not "legislated" any more than any other aspect of God's creation. The earth was made, the animals were made, angels were made, mankind was made, and the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
- What significance is it that the Sabbath was "made"?
  - When was the Sabbath made?
  - What was happening in the universe?
- What did God do? He RESTED – what does that mean?
  - If He RESTED what was God not doing? He was no longer prosecuting His war, His case. He wasn't pressing his agenda. He wasn't intimidating. He wasn't using his power to force his way!
- It is God's Sabbath – the day He rested, the day He revealed by action how He handles opposition, how He treats enemies, how He deals with allegations and rebellion. He gives us freedom!
- What does it reveal that God created the Sabbath in the context of an assault on his right to rule?
- The Sabbath was "made" as further evidence of God's character of love; truth presented in love leaving us free. The first six days of creation week we learn God has power, but the Sabbath reveals God does not coerce or pressure or threaten with His power, but leaves us free. The Sabbath is evidence of God's character of love, established upon the principles of truth, love and freedom.
- The Sabbath is evidence that Satan's allegations about God, that God imposes rules, that God imposes punishments, that God abuses power are all lies. This is why Satan hates the Sabbath, because rightly seen and understood it reveals Satan as a liar.

- Satan hates the Sabbath in the same way Richard Nixon hated the Watergate tapes or Clinton hated Monica's dress. Nixon would have loved to destroy the tapes, and in fact tried. Clinton would have loved to destroy the dress. And Satan tries to destroy the Sabbath, to distort and twist the evidence into something it isn't. How? By replacing it or twisting it into an imposed law test.

Therefore, the Sabbath stands symbolic, as a sign, of those who value God's law of love, and practice his methods of presenting the truth in love and leaving others free.

Then what is the mark of the beast?

> The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands**. **To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** {RH, July 13, 1897 par. 5}

What decisions did the beast make and what ideas did it advocate that are in direct opposition to the word of God?

That God's law is imposed, and as an imposed law it can be changed, amended, abrogated, altered, thus, under the imposed law construct Sabbath can be changed to Sunday. And, imposed laws require judicial proceedings, investigation, records, judgments, imposed punishments. Therefore, coercive pressure is used to punish law breakers and ensure obedience.

Thus the issue in the end, of which the two days stand as signs, is the issue of God's law of love, versus Satan's imposed law construct; God's rule of love versus Satan's rule of fear and selfishness; God's natural law versus worldly imposed laws. It comes down to the methods one practices and the two days are symbolic of two systems.

Here is another quote from the same founder who wrote the others we have read:

> In striking contrast to the wrong and oppression so universally practised were the mission and work of Christ. Earthly kingdoms are established and upheld by physical force, but this **was not** to be the foundation of the Messiah's kingdom. **In the establishment of his government no carnal weapons were to be used, no coercion practised; no attempt would be made to force the consciences of men. These are the principles used by the prince of darkness for the government of his kingdom. His agents are actively at work, seeking in their human independence to enact laws which are in direct contrast to Christ's mercy and loving-kindness.** {RH, August 18, 1896 par. 2}
>
> **Prophecy has plainly stated the nature of Christ's kingdom. He planned a government which would use *no force*; his subjects would know no oppression**. [no arrests, no detainments, no imposed punishments, no force] The symbols of earthly governments are wild

> beasts, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God. **Not as a fierce tyrant did he come, but as the Son of man; not to conquer the nations by his iron power, but "to preach good tidings unto the meek;" "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" "to comfort all that mourn." He came as the divine Restorer, bringing to oppressed and downtrodden humanity the rich and abundant grace of Heaven, that by the power of his righteousness, man, fallen and degraded though he was, might be a partaker of divinity.** [which is healing and restorative, an expression of the law of love, the law life is built to operate upon] {RH, August 18, 1896 par. 3}

Those who promote a god who acts like a Roman emperor, who imposes law, who inflicts punishment, are actively promoting the system of the beast—even if they worship on the Bible Sabbath!

Here is the problem regarding days of worship, of which Sunday is a sign:

> But when the decree shall go forth **enforcing** the counterfeit sabbath, **and** the loud cry of the third angel **shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image**, the line will be clearly drawn **between the false and the true**. **Then** those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.--Ev 234, 235 (1899). {LDE 225.4}

Notice it is not about Sunday, but the "enforcing" worship, about the use of arbitrary power to coerce, this is beastly. This is Satan's way.

And we are to repair the breach in the law by returning people to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws, of which Sabbath is a sign. And those who do this practice the methods of truth, love and liberty and will not use the governments of the world to seek justice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Notes Available for download https://comeandreason.com/1st-quarter-2021-isaiah/

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 12
Desire of Nations

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

During our recent leadership workshop my mind was triggered by Linda Ojala's comments on gratitude and I wrote a little something for fun that we posted on Facebook this week, for those who don't follow on Facebook I thought I would share it here:

> If you use your aptitude promoting platitudes, then with certitude you will have a magnitude of disquietude and turpitude.
>
> So, develop an attitude of gratitude by embracing the multitude of the Lord's beatitudes and you will have solitude and fortitude. –Tim Jennings

Read memory verse:

> The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Is 60:3 NKJV). Nations come to your light, kings to your bright light. (NET)

- Who are the Gentiles or Nations?
- Who are the ones that have the light and to which the nations are to come?
    - Is this speaking primarily of genetics or something else?
    - Israel was called of God for a purpose to enlighten the world about the truth of God and prepare the world for the Messiah. They were the avenue for the Messiah—God worked to keep them from being destroyed so Messiah could come through them. But did they fulfill their other purpose of being a light to the world as a nation, as a people?
    - The Old Testament is not only the record of real people who did real things—in other words a record of history—the historic events were selected to be recorded by God because they also are object lessons to a larger reality.
    - So, who are the ones with the light that are to attract nations today?
- What is the light that is to attract the nations?
- What would be the rising light or dawn of those who have this light?

Jump to **TUESDAY's** lesson and read the second paragraph, "In Hebrew…" What do you think—is Isaiah 60 speaking of Zion or Jerusalem in the nation of Israel today as the ultimate fulfillment or is it speaking of something else of which Zion or Jerusalem is a symbol—perhaps the New Jerusalem? And who will live in the New Jerusalem? Won't it be the righteous, the saved?

So, when you think of the feminine and then a city which is to be a light to the world to draw the people to God—what comes to mind? Are we not speaking about the church, the bride of Christ?

Read second to last paragraph, "God had a universal purpose…"

What was the blessing to the world that was to come through Abraham and his descendants? It was Jesus—the Messiah!

Back to **SABBATH's** lesson, the first paragraph is a quote from *Faith and Works* p. 36 and a sentence in the quote reads:

> "Nothing but His righteousness can **entitle** us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace."

What does this mean to you?

- What is the idea of entitle mean?
- Is this legal, based on some imposed law, like the title to a piece of land or the title to a car?
- Is it a right we have—we are entitled—when we claim the blood of Jesus we get our title to heaven, our right to be there?
- Is the title some element of reality, some aspect of design law? How might that be?
    - When we receive the righteousness of Christ do we become reborn? Do we get a new heart and right spirit? Are we transformed? Does our character change? And what is the way character is represented in Scripture? By our name and we get a new name—and what is another way of naming something? Do we give things titles—chapters or books? Do we get a new title when we partake the righteousness of Christ do we get the title Christian or the title Godlike or Christlike or family of God?

Does this quote from the same author in the book *The Desire of Ages* p. 300 help?

> "The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both **our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ**."

Both our title and our fitness are found in the righteousness of Christ—what does this mean? Is this legal or healing or both?

Consider this quote from the same author:

> By the one who had revolted in heaven the kingdoms of this world were offered Christ, to buy His homage to the principles of evil; but He would not be bought; **He had come to establish a kingdom of righteousness**,[not the kingdoms of this world, not a kingdom of imposed law, not a kingdom of buying and selling, but a kingdom of truth and love, of righteousness] and He would not abandon His purpose. **With the same temptation Satan approaches men, and here he has better success than with Christ. To men he offers the kingdom of this world on condition** that they will acknowledge his supremacy. [What are the kingdoms of this

> world? Imposed law, power over, coercion, money, control and he offers this to people today but what is required?] **He requires that they sacrifice integrity, disregard conscience, indulge selfishness**. [This is what happens to all who seek to advance God's kingdom of righteousness through human governments and imposed law] Christ bids them seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; but Satan walks by their side and says: **Whatever may be true in regard to life eternal, in order to make a success in this world you must serve me.** [But how does it say it? By making success in this world what is valued, the measuring stick, the barometer of right and wrong. Thus people pursue more power, money, fame, and control through government and they believe their success on earth is evidence of God's blessing] I hold your welfare in my hands. I can give you riches, pleasures, honor, and happiness. Hearken to my counsel. Do not allow yourselves to be carried away with whimsical notions of honesty or self-sacrifice. I will prepare the way before you. **Thus multitudes are deceived**. They consent to live for the service of self, and Satan is satisfied. **While he allures them with the hope of worldly dominion, he gains dominion over the soul**. [And what is the message of today? We must make the world right, we must do social justice, we must save the planet, we must have dominion, but all through Satan's methods of imperial rules and coercive enforcement] But he offers that which is not his to bestow, and which is soon to be wrested from him. **In return he beguiles them of their title to the inheritance of the sons of God.** DA 130.2

What is our title to heaven? We are entitled as children of God to heaven—to God's kingdom. We receive new title, or name, or character—Godlike and receive as God's children the kingdom of truth, love, freedom and all the blessings of our Creator. And what enables us to have this title? The righteousness of Christ, but consider this quote from the same author—how is it related?

> **The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven**.—The Review and Herald, June 4, 1895. MYP 35.2

What does this mean? Is imputed a legal proclamation, giving us legal title through the payment of Jesus and imparted healing make us fit for heaven? What law lens do you understand the words imputed and imparted through?

What about this quote—how does it fit?

> Christ offers a love that passes knowledge. **This love is not something kept apart from our life, but it takes hold of the entire being**. [Is this something legal happening in records, or something happening in us? Is it imputed love or imparted love?] The heaven to which the Christian is climbing will be attained only by those who have this crowning grace. **This is the new affection which pervades the soul**. [Is this legal, some declaration, some accounting in books, or actual transformation in people, where is love pervading? And what is the righteousness of Christ—is it not the perfect character of God lived out in humanity and isn't God's character love?] The old is left behind. Love is the great controlling power. When love leads, all the faculties of mind and spirit are enlisted. **Love to God and love to man will give**

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **the clear title to heaven**. 19MR 349.2 [What is our clear title to heaven? Love—which originates where? From Christ, and where is this love poured, applied, put, placed, active? In the soul, the person, the entire being and this gives us title to heaven—and our title is justification—is this imputed or imparted?]

Do you hear love for God and others differently from the righteousness of Christ?

- Can you have the love for God legally applied in an accounting way, or does love have to live in us, change us and we have to love in heart and action?
- So if our title is imputed righteousness, but our title is also the love of Christ that we have for God and others is that something we experience or something that God legally applies to books?

What is the difference between imputed and imparted righteousness?

- Impute means to attribute or ascribe something, impart means to invest or give something.

Does imputed righteousness change us or does imparted righteousness change us or do both change us?

Consider this quote:

> "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). [What law is this? This is the law of worship, it is a design law not a rule imposed. It is how reality works] Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word. We are to dig for truth as for hidden treasure. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ. [But where is modern media focusing our attention? On threats in the world which focuses on self, inciting more fear. We are to focus on Christ!] When we take Him as our personal Saviour, this gives us boldness to approach the throne of grace. **By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character.** [Is what is being described a legal process or a transformation, healing of the heart and mind?] **By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him.** The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being. {AG 96.4} [So what is going on here? Is there a difference between imputed and imparted righteousness? Is it a legal difference?]

So what changes us imputed or imparted or both and what is the difference?

Imputed righteousness is the righteousness of Christ that God pours into us through the activities of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—to bring us to repentance; and repentance is the change of heart from rebellion to trust. This treating us as still part of the heavenly family, loved, cherished, valued, esteemed, the apple of God's eye, despite our sin, our fear, our selfishness, our guilt and shame is what sets us right; this is what takes a broken branch and grafts it into the vine—Jesus, and this is also known as? Justification!

> Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Roman 2:4 NIV84)

Romans 2:4 is describing imputed righteousness—God's righteousness driving God to attribute to us righteousness we don't deserve. In other words, God so loved the world He gave His only Son. It is this righteousness working on our hearts that wins us or brings us to repentance and that is the moment of individual justification or setting right, or being grafted to the vine, or being adopted and thus we get a new name, a new title, child of God.

Once the imputed righteousness of God has set us right, reconnected us to the Vine Jesus, our hearts are no longer closed in rebellion, but open in trust and we receive the imparted righteousness or Christ that heals, matures, and sanctifies us?

So we are transformed or saved by both the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ.

I think this quote from *The Desire of Ages* agrees our conclusions:

> **The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow**. [Notice the heart must change, this is the title to heaven, the imputed righteousness changing the heart from distrust to trust which is justification, setting us right and then we receive the imparted righteousness with transforms us, heals us and makes us fit to live in God's presence] From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells… {DA 300.1}

The title is Desire of Nations—what is the Desire we all have? We have the desire to go home, to be back in loving unity with God and His heavenly family—thus Jesus is what we desire because only through Jesus do we have our title and our fitness that restores us to God's family.

SUNDAY

Read Isaiah 59:1, 2:

> Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (NIV84)

What does this mean?

Read second paragraph, "God chooses to…" Some good thoughts in this paragraph—sin does separate us from God, sin does destroy our relationship with Him. This is well said. But what about the

idea that God chooses to ignore the plea of the people because of their sin—does that sound right to you?

No, it is not right. God doesn't ignore sinners in sin—what does the Bible teach about God's response to sinners in sin?

- For God so loved the world that He sent…
- While we were yet sinners Christ died for us…
- If God is for us who can be against us…
- God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself…

No, God does not ignore sinners, this is not the message of Isaiah 59. God's provisions for our deliverance from sin are always available, He never ignores such a plea. But those who are crying out in Isaiah are ignoring God and His instructions and directions for returning to the path of life

What is the reason the lesson suggests God is ignoring their pleas? Imposed law. When we accept the lie that God's law is like human law, imposed rules, then one sees God's sovereignty in a warped way—God is in charge through His imposed will and thus if God doesn't actively intervene it is because He is choosing to ignore.

Design law realizes that God's laws are design protocols for life. The law of love is supreme and love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. Thus God is sovereign but reigns by sustaining His character, methods and designs for life, including freedom—because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. Thus God never forces or compels. Our sin, our choice to resist the Spirit of truth and love, our rejection of His presence in our lives prevents God from answering our prayers because to do so while we rebel violates our liberty. It is like this:

- a person prays for a happy marriage while they cheat on their spouse or beat their spouse—if their marriage ends in divorce was God ignoring the prayer for a happy marriage?

This is what is happening: They are praying for outcomes that depend on harmony with God and His designs for life while they continue to reject God and violate His design laws for life. So, there is nothing God can do for them. He isn't ignoring them—He is sustaining the laws of life, the laws of His universe in dealing with them. And He sent Isaiah and other prophets to try as an answer to their pleas, to enlighten and save them. But they ignored and killed God's messengers.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "To begin…" What do you think of this? They reference a Bible verse to support their conclusion that redemption must be based on forgiveness:

> No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD.

> "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:34 NIV84)

Do you think they have made their case? Do you agree? Or do you say, "wait a minute, what law lens is this being viewed through and is this a correct view of the verse?"

Is this sounding a little legal? We claim the righteousness of Jesus and we are judged as justified or just because God forgives us based on Jesus' shed blood?

That explanation is based on trying to understand the Bible through the lie that God's law works like human law, imposed rules requiring infliction of punishment.

But if we have design law then we realize that sin damages the sinner, just like we just read in Isaiah 60. We realize that God is always for us. We realize that sin is a condition of being, a terminal condition, that needs healing, restoration, recreation to righteousness and that forgiveness isn't merely God forgiving, it is about removing sin from the sinner. We must not read Jeremiah 31:34 alone, cutting God's words off in midstream, we must read the entire message starting in verse 33:

> "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:33, 34 NIV84)

Now what is the message? It is first a message of healing, transforming, renewal and restoration of the relationship with God such that we know and trust Him (this is life eternal John 17:3)—it is taking out the infection of fear and selfishness and restoring God's design law, the living law of love into the heart and THEN God doesn't need to remember our sins anymore because they are no longer in us, are not an issue, don't need addressing.

It is like a parent who is a physician with a child struggling with disease, say leukemia, and while sick the child had vomiting and diarrhea or irritability and yelled at their siblings or parent. As long as the child is sick the parent cannot forget the cancer, the symptoms cannot be ignored if the parent loves the child and wants to save them. The parent must diagnose (judge) the condition accurately and provide a remedy to put the cancer into remission; but once the child is well the parent doesn't need to remember all the symptoms of the sickness—the vomiting, diarrhea and irritable outbursts are all forgiven and forgotten.

From the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*

> **But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose**. [What is the meaning many suppose? Legal, but that is warped, narrow, and not the issue. Of course genuine forgiveness will include this, but it is so much more.] When God gives the promise that He "will

> abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart**. David had the **true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart,** O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us**." Psalm 103:12. MB 114.1

Of course, God the Creator, the Sovereign, the Builder of reality the Creator of all the laws upon which all life operates forgives us—this was never in question. If one wants to consider the legal elements of forgiveness God legally forgave us immediately. This forgiveness from God, His personal pardon as sovereign was given before Christ died, but as we discussed last week—His personal pardon wasn't the obstacle to our salvation—our own sinful condition is the obstacle. Thus the right understanding of forgiveness goes far beyond God's personal pardon, it includes the provision of all that is necessary to heal and restore us to sinlessness!

Read third paragraph, "Most people think…" How do you hear what they are saying? Do you hear it as "who has received a new heart" or "who has been legally pardoned?"

They reference Romans 3:23-26, from NKJV:

> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How do you understand it? What law lens do you read it through? When you hear terms like propitiate or justify is your mind pulled down legal paradigms?

Consider this quotation from the book *The Desire of Ages* and tell me which vies does this quote harmonize with, the lesson author's legal view or our design-law healing view:

> **Christ could, if He chose, save Himself from death. But should He do this, He must abide alone. He could bring no sons and daughters to God**. Only by yielding up His life could He impart life to humanity. Only by falling into the ground to die could He become the seed of that vast harvest,—the great multitude that out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, are redeemed to God. DA 623.4 [Why? Is this legal—no payment made to God and thus God would have to execute us? Or, is it that the truth of God would not be revealed to destroy lies and win us to trust and no remedy would be procured—no sinless human character developed for us to receive as a free gift?]

With this truth Christ connects the lesson of self-sacrifice that all should learn: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." All who would bring forth fruit as workers together with Christ must first fall into the ground and die. The life must be cast into the furrow of the world's need. **Self-love, self-interest, must perish. And the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation… To give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man**. **Those who for Christ's sake sacrifice their life in this world will keep it unto life eternal**. DA 623.5 [What law? What kind of law is this? This is how God's kingdom works, it is reality, it is not arbitrary legal rules]

The life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away, and he has nothing. **The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction**… DA 624.1 [What law? The law of sin and death—what kind of law is this? This is not arbitrary legal rules and inflicted punishments, but how reality works!]

Only through the death of Christ could Satan's kingdom be overthrown. **Only thus could man be redeemed, and God be glorified**… DA 624.4 [What does this mean? Only through the death of Christ could Satan's kingdom be overthrown—what is Satan's kingdom? The kingdom of lies, of imposed law, of coercion, of destruction and death, the kingdom of selfishness and sin. Only by Jesus' death could this kingdom be overthrown—why? From where is it overthrown?]

"Now is the judgment of this world," Christ continued; "now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." This is the crisis of the world. **If I become the propitiation for the sins of men, the world will be lighted up. Satan's hold upon the souls of men will be broken. The defaced image of God will be restored in humanity, and a family of believing saints will finally inherit the heavenly home. This is the result of Christ's death**. DA 625.4 [What is the result of propitiation? How do you hear it here? Is it legal or something else? If Christ becomes the propitiation

- the world will be lighted up—what does this mean? That the lies about God will be exposed and the truth about God and His kingdom revealed, which has its impact where? Does the lighting up of the world with truth impact God or impact sinners? Does it change God or change sinners? Thus, the first result of the propitiation is not to change God or God's law, but to enlighten us and win us back to trust in God.
- The next, Satan's hold upon souls will be broken—what holds our souls in bondage? The lies we believe and fear and selfishness, the carnal nature. The propitiation breaks the hold of Satan over our souls—where is the effect of the propitiation, on God? on God's law or on us?
- Next, the defaced image of God will be restored in humanity. Again, where is the effect of the propitiation? In us, it is real, it is transformational, it is healing, it is recreational—it is NOT legal. It is the outworking of God's design law in healing us!

Here is how I rendered Romans 3:23-36 in *The Remedy:*

> for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

So, what view do you hold to in regard to salvation and the understanding of what forgiveness actually means?

What is the relationship between faith and works?

Under imposed law it is always tension and confusion—but under design law it is simple to understand—we reap what we sow.

If we sow into the heart lies and selfishness (in other words we have faith in the methods and principles of Satan) then we reap fruits of rebellion, sin, hardness of heart, corruption of character and destruction. But, if we open the heart to the Spirit of truth and love and have the seeds of truth and love sown into the heart exercising our faith in God, trusting Him and practicing His methods, then we reap the fruits of the Spirit and our lives are transformed and will be evidenced in our behaviors.

There is no tension and conflict between faith and works they are linked by reality, by the laws upon which life is built.

The last sentence on the page reads, "The preconversion life of sin has already been washed away by the blood of the lamb."

What does this mean?

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "When in Nazareth…" Do you see Jesus returning to use power to inflict pain and suffering on His enemies to take vengeance upon them? Does Jesus return smiling at the righteous and scowling at the wicked? Does He return with two faces—a loving kind face and a vengeful punishing face?

So why do some rejoice at His return and others run and hide begging for the mountains to fall on them?

Why do some experience love and happiness at His return and others experience pain, suffering, weeping and gnashing of teeth?

Does Jesus treat the righteous and wicked differently? Is Jesus less kind, less gracious, less loving, less merciful to the wicked than He is to the righteous? Or asked another way, is Jesus more angry, vengeful, punitive, punishing, unkind to the wicked than the righteous?

What law lens do we look at this through? The lie of human law teaches that Jesus does indeed treat them differently, that He uses His power to inflict pain and suffering and death as a punishment for their sins. The design law view teaches that the wicked suffer terribly for their sins, but it is a result of unremedied sin in their characters when they come into the presence of infinite truth and love where their denial and lies can no longer shield them from the reality of their own condition and what they have done. Thus it is the truth itself, the truth of their own choices and condition that torments them, not God—God stops shielding them, stops veiling His infinite self and fires of love and truth flow over all—the righteous thrive and are renewed in God's presence, but the wicked are tormented by God's presence.

The middle of the lesson asks, "How do you reconcile the notion of a loving God with a God who also promises vengeance? Are the ideas incompatible? Or do you understand vengeance as a manifestation of that love?"

Read the last two paragraphs, "Though Jesus has told us…" How do you hear these last two paragraphs? What law lens do these paragraphs present?

It is Satan's view that justice requires punishment because Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of imposed law.

God's kingdom of creation, of design law, requires the God of love to heal, to provide remedy and to leave free and if the Creator lets go or leaves free what happens to those who refuse remedy?

There is a punishment for sin, but from where does it come, from God inflicting it upon those who would otherwise live eternally if God simply restrained His anger, or from sin when God stops using power to hold the destruction that sin brings at bay?

Why does destruction come in Revelation 7 when the 4 angels act—what do they do? They let go what they have been holding back.

Consider this description from the book *The Great Controversy:*

> **God does not force the will or judgment of any**. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. **He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love**. He

would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And **all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes**. {GC 541.3}

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies." **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited**. **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character**. [What does this mean? What laws? What justice?] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will**? {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become **fixed in their characters**. Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,-- [what does that light look like? From where does it come? Do you integrate texts like these: “the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” (Dan 7:9-10 NIV84) “for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” (Heb 12:29 NIV84)? Is this fire harmful? Do the righteous get injured by it? Why not? What about the wicked, why do they experience pain in this fire? From where does the pain come, from the fire or from unremedied sin?] could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no;** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; **but they have never trained the mind to love purity**; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has**

unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. *They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction*, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What is being described? Do you integrate texts like "They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Rev 6:16 NIV84)? What kind of law? What is the reason? Is God acting justly? He is executing justice?] The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. ***Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves*, and just and merciful on the part of God**. [Who decides the fate of the wicked? What does it mean voluntary with themselves? It is what they want, is it right and just on God's part to grant them exclusion from heaven? What kind of law?] {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [Why are they lost? Who made them incurable? Is this just on God's part? Is it an infliction that their condition does not bring upon them?]{GC 543.1}

W EDNESDAY

Read Isaiah 61:1:

> The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor… (NRSV)

What does this text mean? When was this fulfilled?

- Did you notice again that Isaiah correctly details the Godhead—we have the Holy Spirit, the Father and Jesus all in the same text. This happens multiple times in Isaiah.
- Anointed—means what?
- What is the good news?
- Who are the oppressed and what is the cause of the oppression?
- What causes brokenheartedness and what binds up the broken heart? Would this be related to writing God's law on the heart? How?
- Who are the captives? What holds them captive? What sets them free? Is there a cost to their freedom? To whom is the freedom or ransom price paid?
- Who are the prisoners and what is the prison and how are they released?
- What is the meaning of the year of the Lord's favor?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts power point slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign: March 2021 Meditation Guide—Biblical versus Eastern

Be sure to use our website store to place your order—don't send an email or use the store feedback tab.

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 13
Rebirth of Planet Earth

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title for this week's lesson?

As a Christian, what do you believe the future for this planet is?

Read Memory Verse: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." (Is 65:17 NKJV)

What is going to happen to this planet?

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and **the first earth had passed away**, and there was no longer any sea." (Re 21:1 NIV84)

What is going to happen to this planet?

> In the beginning you laid the foundations of the **earth,**
> **and the heavens** are the work of your hands.
> **They will perish**, but you remain;
> **they will all wear out like a garment.**
> **Like clothing you will change them**
> **and they will be discarded**.
> But you remain the same,
> and your years will never end. (Ps 102:25–27 NIV84).

> Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
> look at the earth beneath;
> **the heavens will vanish like smoke,**
> **the earth will wear out like a garment**
> **and its inhabitants die like flies**.
> But my salvation will last forever,
> my righteousness will never fail. (Is 51:6 NIV84).

> Neither their silver nor their gold
> will be able to save them
> on the day of the LORD's wrath.
> In the fire of his jealousy

the whole world will be consumed,
for he will make a sudden end
of all who live in the earth." (Zep 1:18 NIV84).

What is going to happen to planet Earth?

Can we stop it?

Because the Earth is going to be destroyed by God and replaced with a new Earth, a planet free from all marks of sin, does that mean we do NOT have to be good stewards, that we are free to pollute, that we are free to destroy the Earth? No!

We have a responsibility to be good stewards—why?

- What happens to the Earth if we are good stewards? It still gets destroyed in the end.
- What happens to us if we are negligent, selfish, and unfaithful stewards? We harden our hearts and obstruct God's healing plan and are lost in the end.
- What happens to us if we are good stewards, living in harmony with God's design, protecting nature and helping others? We develop mature Christlike character and will be saved in the end.

So, yes! We are to be good stewards and care for the planet, we are not to exploit the animals etc. But if we are good stewards—what happens to the planet?

Now—let's be very clear—let the truth come home to your mind, our enemy the liar, the father of lies, has advanced his false worldview and is seducing Christians into joining his ranks through their desire to be good stewards. What am I talking about?

What is the philosophy that the world is embracing today? Is the modern, so-called enlightened view that there is a God in heaven, the Creator, who is returning to eradicate sin and who will recreate this world in perfection, or is the accepted popular view that there is no God, we evolved from lower life forms and our future is up to us?

And what future do those who reject God, who believe we evolved from lower life forms see? They see over-population of the Earth that will destroy the planet and the only way to have a future is that we must act to save ourselves.

The lie that is being foisted on the world today is that because there is no God, this planet is our mother our lifeboat and it has limited resources and if we don't stop population growth, carbon emission, consuming of the forests and fishing out the oceans, then the planet is going to die and humanity will die. Therefore, we must save the planet. And in order to save the planet we must stop consuming, stop using fossil fuels etc., stop filling the earth with waste, plastics, garbage.

Understand there are two grand world philosophies—a Creator God who created the Earth and life upon it. In this worldview, God loves us—human beings made in His image—and the future is a future

of hope in which the Earth, as we know it, is going to be destroyed and a new perfect Earth will be created by God. There is nothing we can do to stop this and in this view **people are more valuable than the planet. We do NOT seek to save the planet at the expense of the people, we take the gospel to the world to save the people!**

But in the godless Green worldview, there is no God and we must save ourselves. In this view, if we don't act then overpopulation will consume all the resources and eventually destroy the planet, so we must stop this process. In the **Green worldview the planet is more valuable than the people. Understand, if you give your support to political movements that advance the Green worldview, you are empowering those agencies that will one day kill you and your descendants**. The future for them is to reduce the population and protect Earth's limited resources for themselves and their descendants.

Martin Armstrong, an economist, posted a satire about Greta, the cute little Swedish girl who became famous as a Green activist. He wrote as if she had a dream of the future where the Green had a world without any more petroleum products when she wakes up:

> She tossed aside her cotton sheet and wool blanket and stepped out onto a dirt floor covered with willow bark that had been pulverized with rocks. "What's this?" she asked.
>
> "Pulverized willow bark," replied her fairy godmother.
>
> "What happened to the carpet?" she asked.
>
> "The carpet was nylon, which is made from butadiene and hydrogen cyanide, both made from petroleum," came the response.
>
> Greta smiled, acknowledging that adjustments are necessary to save the planet, and moved to the sink to brush her teeth where instead of a toothbrush, she found a willow, mangled on one end to expose wood fiber bristles.
>
> "Your old toothbrush?" noted her godmother, "Also nylon."
>
> "Where's the water?" asked Greta.
>
> "Down the road in the canal," replied her godmother, 'Just make sure you avoid water with cholera in it"
>
> "Why's there no running water?" Greta asked, becoming a little peevish.
>
> "Well," said her godmother, who happened to teach engineering at MIT, "Where do we begin?" There followed a long monologue about how sink valves need elastomer seats and how copper pipes contain copper, which has to be mined and how it's impossible to make all-electric earth-moving equipment with no gear lubrication or tires and how ore has to be

smelted to a make metal, and that's tough to do with only electricity as a source of heat, and even if you use only electricity, the wires need insulation, which is petroleum-based, and though most of Sweden's energy is produced in an environmentally friendly way because of hydro and nuclear, if you do a mass and energy balance around the whole system, you still need lots of petroleum products like lubricants and nylon and rubber for tires and asphalt for filling potholes and wax and iPhone plastic and elastic to hold your underwear up while operating a copper smelting furnace and . . .

"What's for breakfast?" interjected Greta, whose head was hurting.

"Fresh, range-fed chicken eggs," replied her godmother. "Raw."

"Why raw?" inquired Greta.

"Well, . . ." And once again, Greta was told about the need for petroleum products like transformer oil and scores of petroleum products essential for producing metals for frying pans and in the end [Greta] was educated about how you can't have a petroleum-free world and then cook eggs. Unless you rip your front fence up and start a fire and carefully cook your egg in an orange peel like you do in Boy Scouts. Not that you can find oranges in Sweden anymore.

"But I want poached eggs like my Aunt Tilda makes," lamented Greta.

"Tilda died this morning," the godmother explained. "Bacterial pneumonia."

"What?!" interjected Greta. "No one dies of bacterial pneumonia! We have penicillin."

"Not anymore," explained godmother "The production of penicillin requires chemical extraction using isobutyl acetate, which, if you know your organic chemistry, is petroleum-based. Lots of people are dying, which is problematic because there's not any easy way of disposing of the bodies since backhoes need hydraulic oil and crematoriums can't really burn many bodies using as fuel Swedish fences and furniture, which are rapidly disappearing – being used on the black market for roasting eggs and staying warm."

This represents only a fraction of Greta's day, a day without microphones to exclaim into and a day without much food, and a day without carbon-fiber boats to sail in, but a day that will save the planet. https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/world-news/climate/gretas-nightmare/

Understand this satire is what the elites that push the Green movement want—they want a future in which about two-third of the world's population die. They want the planet and the resources for themselves and their descendants.

The Green is not a movement of love, a movement of people who believe in the God of love, it is a movement that is led by those who do not believe in the Biblical worldview and thus they do not value human life over the planet—they value self-preservation. But they know that they cannot present their

true agenda because everyone else also values self-preservation, so they present their agenda through the lens of what we must do this to save the planet lest we all die. But the impact, if their reforms become reality, will not impact all equally, the wealthy, the elites will have their private generators, medical facilities, laboratories, factories, work force, it is the masses, the poorest, that will be without heat, food, water, medicine, shelter it is the masses that will die.

When you hear the rhetoric about saving the Earth consider implementing what they want to do and the consequences—it will lead to mass starvation, rationing of resources and the reduction in population, because the Green values the planet more than the people.

Consider what Peter wrote about the future of Earth:

> First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. [Do we have scoffers today that scoff at the idea of Creation, and scoff at the idea of a worldwide flood and Noah's ark? They deliberately forget—meaning they deny evidence and truth. Understand that the evidence of intelligent creation of life is irrefutable at this point. Life requires matter, energy and coded information found in the DNA of all living organisms. It is impossible for information to code itself. All reasonable people know this, but they all deny it purposely. And these people who deny evidence, deny truth, cling to a false worldview are the ones who are leading the Green movement. And since they have denied the evidence of God, and have denied God then who do you think is leading them, inspiring them? It is Satan—the Green movement is not a godly movement and young people you need to realize this and reject it.] 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. [Why? What does this mean? What law lens do we see this through? This is talking about God's accurate diagnosis that these people have hardened their hearts, destroyed the faculties that respond to truth and love and therefore no amount of truth or love will win them. This is what happens when one persistently rejects evidence, truth and love. Paul writes in 2Thes 2:11-12:
>
> > "They perish because they **refused** to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned" (NIV84)
>
> What does this mean? What law lens do you hear this through? What happens to the mind that refuses truth? What is the only thing left for the mind to believe if it rejects truth? Lies, they become delusional. This is what is happening in the world today. As people reject the truth about God and believe evolutionism their minds become less capable of recognizing other truths and thus they reject them. We see this in the world today—people rejecting obvious truths like the reality that there is male and female—yes in every species. But agendas are going forth denying this reality. In California, there is currently a bill in the CA assembly, that

if passed will fine stores $1000 if they have a boys and girls clothing or toy section. Minds are being damaged. We live in a time of scoffers and liars and we must cling to the truth or our minds will be damaged as well.]

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; **the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare**. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming**. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and **the elements will melt in the heat**. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and **a new earth, the home of righteousness**. (2 Pe 3:3–13 NIV84).

What is the future of planet Earth? Understand reality, this planet is going to be destroyed. Before God returns and recreates it anew, things are going to get worse and we cannot stop it. Satan is going to use the worsening conditions on the planet to incite fear, fear of climate change, rising oceans, terrible storms, famine, pandemics, and Satan will cause these calamities to increase and thereby increase fear. This will cause those who have rejected God to become more fearful and seek to save themselves by taking greater coercive control and passing more laws and taking away more freedoms and ultimately seek to cull the population to try and save the planet.

The righteous, those who love people and speak the truth, will be targeted as agitators and the cause of these problems.

Consider this historic quote about the end time judgments of God:

"**I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way**;

"**They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then **He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

"**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress,** and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; **we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of**." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3

Are there Bible texts to support this? Revelation 7, the angels holding back the four winds—they are described as having power to destroy the land—how? By letting go what they hold back.

If you are a Christian and you are supporting the movement of the Green, you are supporting the enemy of God; you are empowering those who value the planet more than the people and whose policies are designed to cull the population in order to save the planet. As children of God, we love people and want as many people as possible to come to salvation, which means we don't want to cull the population, we want to bring people to Jesus.

Don't misunderstand what I am saying—I already said it once today, but will say it again because some will misunderstand if I don't. Rejecting the Green movement does not mean we fail to be good stewards of the Earth in the way we govern ourselves. We will practice God's methods and not pollute, not abuse animals, not exploit the environment etc. But we will not give our support to a godless movement that values the planet more than the people and will initiate policies that will result in injuring billions in the name of saving the planet.

What do you think of the second part of our memory verse: "the former shall not be remembered or come to mind"?

Does it mean that we won't remember our sin-sick lives? We won't remember our sins, our heartaches, our healing, our deliverance?

What is the problem if we believe we won't remember the events of sin and God's deliverance from it?

- Then it can all happen again—what protects the universe from sin ever arising again is that all remember what sin is, what sin does, and what God did to eradicate sin and save sinners. Without this knowledge then the lies could rise again.
- What happens to our appreciation and love for God if we don't remember? Jesus said that those who are forgiven much love much, if we don't remember all that Jesus did for us will we still love and appreciate and trust Him as much?
- What does it mean to sing a song of our experience, as the Bible says we will do, if we don't remember our experience?
- If we don't remember our sins and our deliverance from them, then will David and Bathsheba remember Solomon is their son and how they got together? Will Uriah remember he was married to Bathsheba and wonder how David became her spouse?

So whatever this means it doesn't mean erasure of the memory of historic reality or facts—remembering those historic events is essential for a secure future without the risk of sin arising again.

So what does it mean then?

Consider this quote from *The Great Controversy:*

> **Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin**. [If Satan's rebellion is to be lesson through all coming ages and a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin, what is required? Isn't that we must remember what happened with sin here on earth?] The working out of Satan's rule, **its effects upon both men and angels,** would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. [Some argue that we remember Satan's sin and rebellion but not our own, but this author says we remember the effects of sin upon both men and angels. And what is the greatest impact of sin's effect and the lessons each of us must learn—what sin has done in other people's lives or our own sins and our redemption from sin?] It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. **Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments**. GC 499.1 [In a universe where there is real love there is real freedom and real freedom requires informed choice, knowledge, awareness. If God were to erase memory, He would only be creating an environment where sin could rise again. And God will NOT do that. It is a sad fact that many Christians teach the lie that God erases all memory of our sins.]

From the SDA Bible Commentary on this passage:

> Some have felt that the prophet here predicts **a future oblivion concerning things on this earth, at least concerning past sins.** The Hebrew of this verse need not be so understood. Zakar, translated "remembered," frequently defines the action or condition that results from conscious memory. For example, the statement that the children of Israel "remembered not the Lord their God" (Judges 8:34) does not mean that God never entered their conscious mind. It simply means that the people did not render unto Jehovah the worship that a knowledge of Him should have led them to render (see on Judges 8:34). If such a shade of meaning is to be attached to Isaiah's statement, then the passage may be understood to assert that **a memory of former things will no longer distress or annoy the mind or cause feelings of remorse**…
>
> **A knowledge of the history of the great controversy will be the safeguard against any future repetition of the evil experiment of sin** (GC 499) (Vol. 4, pp. 332–333).

So what does this mean? Not that we don't remember, but that these historic facts that we do remember, don't intrude into our minds, don't cause us fear, distress, guilt, shame, we will no longer think of them and worry whether we are good enough, or whether others will like us or love us because of these past sins. We remember our sins and tell our stories of God's redemption, patience, love, forbearance, Christ's sacrifice, our deliverance and healing and give thanks to God and rejoice in His salvation.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Through the prophet…" What is going on here? How do we understand the destruction of the wicked?

The way it is worded in the lesson it sounds like an act of infliction, God uses power to inflict an outcome that the wicked would not otherwise reap if God didn't do it to them.

What is the truth? Does sin destroy or does God destroy? Could the wicked live eternally if God simply refused to use power to kill them?

Do the wicked, including Satan, have life that originates with them? Do they have the ability to live on their own disconnected and separated from God? Or, does all life originate from God and is sustained by God?

So, what does sin do to the relationship between God and sinners? Sin severs the relationship, and if that disruption in our relationship with God is not fixed, if the sin is not removed and if we are not restored to unity with God, what happens?

If a branch is cut off from the vine, what happens to that branch if it is not grafted back into the vine? What causes the death of the branch?

Understand reality, the wicked die, but why do they die?

So, we read in Isaiah 33:14-16:

> The sinners in Zion are terrified;
> trembling grips the godless:
> "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?
> Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"
> 15 He who walks righteously
> and speaks what is right,
> who rejects gain from extortion
> and keeps his hand from accepting bribes,
> who stops his ears against plots of murder
> and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil—
> 16 this is the man who will dwell on the heights, (Is 33:14-16 NIV84)

Who dwells in the consuming fire and eternal burning? The righteous not the wicked—why? What is this fire?

- Moses and the bush Exodus 3:2
- Sinai Exodus 24:17

- Solomon's Temple dedication 2 Chronicles 7:2
- Lucifer amongst fiery stones Ezekiel 28:14, 16
- Ancient of days and rivers of fire Daniel 7:9, 10
- God is a consuming fire Hebrews 12:29
- New Jerusalem Revelation 22:5

Satan's grand lie is: the place you don't want to go is the place of eternal burning and consuming fire—but that place is God's very presence!
The righteous are transformed—just as Moses' face radiated after 40 days in God's glory. Exodus 34:29–35

But the people shrank back—why?

The wicked are destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming.
2 Thessalonians 2:8 what does this mean? Isn't this God inflicting it upon them?

Consider this description from the book *The Great Controversy:*

> **God does not force the will or judgment of any**. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. **He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love**. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And **all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes**. {GC 541.3}
>
> **The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God.** Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies." **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited**. **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character**. [What does this mean? What laws? What justice?] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will**? {GC 541.4}
>
> **Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God**. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become **fixed in their characters**. Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not

appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and **ceaseless streams of light** flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,-- [what does that light look like? From where does it come? Do you integrate texts like these: "the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." (Dan 7:9-10 NIV84) "for our 'God is a consuming fire.'" (Heb 12:29 NIV84)? Is this fire harmful? Do the righteous get injured by it? Why not? What about the wicked, why do they experience pain in this fire? From where does the pain come, from the fire or from unremedied sin?] could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no;** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; **but they have never trained the mind to love purity**; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. *They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction***, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What is being described? Do you integrate texts like "They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Rev 6:16 NIV84)? What kind of law? What is the reason? Is God acting justly? He is executing justice?] The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. ***Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves*, and just and merciful on the part of God**. [Who decides the fate of the wicked? What does it mean voluntary with themselves? It is what they want, is it right and just on God's part to grant them exclusion from heaven? What kind of law?] {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [Why are they lost? Who made them incurable? Is this just on God's part? Is it an infliction that their condition does not bring upon them?]{GC 543.1}

WEDNESDAY

In the middle of the lesson it reads:

In God's "new world order," Gentiles would not only join God's people but they also would be equal partners with Jews in the combined community of faith that would be a "royal

> priesthood." Therefore, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles would become functionally irrelevant.
>
> Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, proclaims: "There is no longer Jew or Greek…. for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:28,29 NRSV).

Is it true? Are we all, Jew or Gentile, now part of the promise and considered royal priests of God? Does that include women?

Did you notice the lesson authors cut out part of what Paul proclaimed, they put in an ellipse and edited out male or female, I wonder why?

If we are all priests of God, both Jew and Greek, male and female, as Paul wrote it, what does that mean functionally in how we work for God? And why did the authors cut out male and female?

The bottom green section asks, "In light of the Cross, in light of the gospel commission, why is any kind of spiritual or ethnic or even political elitism so abhorrent in the sight of God?"

What about gender elitism—that only men can be ordained, or church leaders, or pastors? Is this abhorrent in the sight of God?

THURSDAY

Read Isaiah 66:22-24:

> As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. 24 "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind." (Is 66:22–24 NIV84).

What does this text mean?

Read the second paragraph, "Though there are…" Do you like this explanation? Does it satisfy or are there questions unanswered? What questions are not answered?

Did the Sabbath exist before sin? No, it existed before human sin, but not before angelic sin. If it didn't exist before sin what was its purpose in being created (remember the Sabbath was "made")? Will that purpose remain for all eternity? Is this the reason for the Sabbath—a perpetual reminder of God's character, methods, laws, and principles—truth, presented in love, leaving us free?

Is the Sabbath a legislative order, a legal requirement? Will we be monitored in heaven and have citations issued for Sabbath violations?

As the lesson indicates we may worship many days of the week, so the Sabbath is more than a day to worship—what?

What does it mean that the Sabbath is a day of rest? What would a day of rest be like in a sinless world?

What do you think about the description of looking on the dead bodies and the worm not dying and the fire not being quenched?

Is this literal? Will dead bodies have worms (maggots) in them that live in fire and can't die and the fires never go out? Is the new earth a volcanic pyre of smoke and death? Will the new earth be covered in dead bodies? Or is this symbolic?

We have read about the elements burning in the fervent heat in 2Peter, we have read about consuming in Isaiah 33:14, and we read here in Isaiah 66 about suffering and fire that won't go out. We also read in Revelation 14 about the wicked burning in sulfurous fire and their torment rising forever and ever. And then we read in Revelation 20:

> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Re 20:14–15 NIV84).

So what is all of this? What kind of fire is it? How do we put it all together?

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following describing events after the 1000 years and the final eradication of sin:

> Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action. But fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. I saw that some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer. They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained. Said the angel, "The worm of life shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon
>
> Satan and his angels suffered long. Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of his own sins, but also of the sins of the redeemed host, which had been placed upon him; and he must also suffer for the ruin of souls which he had caused. Then I saw that Satan and all the wicked host were consumed, and the justice of God was satisfied; and all the angelic host, and all the redeemed saints, with a loud voice said, "Amen!" EW 294.2

How do we explain this?

- Does God perform a miracle to keep people alive to torment them in fire until the die?
- Why do some suffering longer?
- What is the cause of the suffering?
- What is the fire?
- What kind of fire can destroy death—death and the grave are thrown into the lake of fire? The fire of life!
- These are the unveiled fires of God's life-giving glory the fire of truth and love—and what happens to those in that fire? And why do some live longer? Because they fight it longer, resist it longer, and because some have many many more lies for the truth to burn through. Another way to say it is that some have more sins in their minds for the truth to burn through and Satan with the greatest amount of lies, distortions, denial, selfishness and sin struggles to resist the truth the longest. But the truth burns through and each sinner sees the truth, experiences the reality of their own sinfulness, guilt, shame and the reality of the pain they have caused others. This is a terrible torment of unremedied sin in their minds and eventually they all accept the TRUTH of THEIR condition and surrender their lives and die.
- The fire that torments those with the mark of the beast in Revelation 14:10 happens "in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb."
- Then, the fires of combustion burn the corpses and cleanse the earth

Questions?

SUNDAY

What will the new Earth be like?

Read Isaiah 11:6-9:

> The wolf will live with the lamb,
> the leopard will lie down with the goat,
> the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
> and a little child will lead them.
> 7 The cow will feed with the bear,
> their young will lie down together,
> and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
> 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
> and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
> 9 They will neither harm nor destroy
> on all my holy mountain,
> for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
> as the waters cover the sea. (Is 11:6–9).

What does this mean? Is this literal or is this a description to teach the idea that there will be no killing there, no animal will eat another, no animal will be poisonous or predatory? In other words, the new Earth will be completely safe because there will be no sin and nature will be restored to perfection.

TUESDAY

What does it mean to you to be a missionary for God? Is this only going to foreign lands, or are we missionaries in our community?

Read second paragraph, "Just as the Israelites…" What is the reason grain offerings are used in this way? What is the object lesson?

In order for grain to bring forth more grain what does it have to do?

> I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (Jn 12:24–25 NIV84).

Can we take the truth about God and love of God to people if we don't have the truth and love of God in our hearts?

And how do we get the truth and love into our hearts? We must "die to self" we must fall on the rock Jesus and be broken, we must be born again. Thus the metaphor of the grain being buried and bringing forth more grain.

FRIDAY

read the two paragraphs, "And the years…"

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Change in Class Time: April 3, 2021 our class will start meeting at **10:00 a.m**. and go until 11:00 a.m. Then we will have a live 30 minute Q&A for our online viewers. This will be one of the benefits for members only.

Have you notice the changes to the website? Have you noticed it is faster to load? Dean Scott has been working furiously to move our website from a provider that was becoming slower and slower, to our own, unshared, virtual private server. He has also changed the core operating system the website used to create content on demand to a new one that powers 64% of all websites today. This required updating the multitude of articles and adding new features. He's currently creating a member's section, which will contain exclusive content.

New Member's Section: March 20, 2021 we will open our new Member's Section to new applications. This will be FREE and will contain member's only content, so it will require creating an account on our website. We are currently loading *The Remedy* audio to this section and when complete, will remove it from Soundcloud (due to their addition of advertisements during playback). We will also have other exclusive content on this site as well.

Our goal, as a ministry, is to continue to enhance your growth and experience with the wonderful, life-changing message of God's design and healing plan.

SHARING campaign March 2021: Meditation Guide—Biblical versus Eastern
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 Q2 The Promise: Lesson 1
What Happened?

by Russell Atkins

In order to understand what was needed as a remedy for mankind, of which the Covenant is a symbol, we need to understand what happened in the "beginning." NOT the beginning of Scripture or the beginning of our earth. NOT the beginning of the time of trouble or the latter rain. We need to understand the very beginning – the creation of the first intelligent being, and the beginning of sin itself. We need to imagine how Lucifer came to believe God's design law was imposed on His creation, and how those laws, instead of guaranteeing the happiness and freedom of intelligent beings, were presented as restrictive, selfish, arbitrary, and damaging.

This week's lesson is about the "fall" of mankind, but we need to understand the context within which mankind was created in the first place – a universe at war. God could have just made declarations that He was right, and as the Sovereign of the universe, everyone better get on board. But no – He provided evidence. Not proof, but evidence, and the distinction between the two is critical. Irrefutable proof can be coercive, and coercion has no place in God's government. Evidence is given to intelligent beings and then they are **free** to question, debate, and accept or reject the evidence given.

Once we conceptualize God's gift of the Creation of Earth and mankind as evidence refuting the allegations of Lucifer, we can better understand the cost of mankind's "fall" and the Promise / Covenant given as a Remedy.

From the introduction of the lesson:

> In 1588, a young English woman (seven months pregnant) looked out over the sea, and what she saw—the Spanish Armada, with 130 heavily armed ships planning to invade the island—so frightened her that she went into premature labor, the midwife being fear.
>
> Fear, in fact, was an apt image for her child, Thomas Hobbes, who became one of Europe's greatest political theorists. Living at a time when England had been wracked by civil war and endless religious violence, Hobbes wrote that humankind, without a strong, all-encompassing government, existed in a state of perpetual fear—fear of instability, fear of conquest, and, most of all, fear of death. People lived in what he called "the war of all against all" and that unless something radical was done, human life would be, he warned, nothing but "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."
>
> What was the solution? Hobbes said that there was only one: the people must place themselves under a single power that would reduce all their wills to a single will and that would exercise complete authority over them. This power, this sovereign—be it a single man or an assembly of men—though wielding absolute hegemony over the nation, would end the terrible

conditions that made their lives so fearful and unstable. In other words, in exchange for all their rights, the people got peace and security instead. This transfer of power, from the people to the sovereign, is what Hobbes called the "covenant."

The covenant idea, however, did not originate with Hobbes. On the contrary, thousands of years earlier, God made a covenant with Israel, a covenant whose roots, in fact, went back even further in time. Unlike Hobbes's covenant, which was initiated and promulgated by the people, this covenant was initiated and promulgated by the true Sovereign, the Creator of heaven and earth. Also, though Hobbes's covenant was motivated solely by fear, God's covenant is motivated by love, His love for the fallen race, a love that led Him to the Cross.

Thus, because of what Christ has done for us, we love God back, and just as in the Hobbesian covenant, in which the subjects had to surrender to the sovereign, we surrender, too—our sinful ways, our fears, our twisted notions of right and wrong. We do this not to gain something in return, but because we already have been given the best that the Sovereign can give—Jesus Christ and the Redemption found only in Him.

How does it all work? It is as simple as an exchange: Christ takes our sins and gives us His righteousness so that, through Him, we are accounted as righteous as God Himself. In this way, sin is no longer attributed to us; it no longer must keep us separated from Him. Murderers, adulterers, bigots, liars, thieves, and even the incestuous can all be viewed as righteous as God Himself. And this wonderful gift, this accounting of righteousness, comes to them by faith, and faith alone. Hence the phrase, "righteousness by faith."

But it does not end there, either. Murderers, adulterers, bigots, liars, thieves, and even the incestuous can, through Jesus, enter into a relationship with God, because Jesus' blood brings not only forgiveness but cleansing, healing, and restoration. We are, through Christ, born again, and through this experience God writes His holy law upon the fleshy tables of our hearts. Thus, murderers, adulterers, bigots, liars, thieves, and the incestuous no longer do the things they used to do. From and by this inward law, all of life is shaped for the believer. These people desire to work out what God puts within them, and that desire is matched with the promise of divine power. Here is the essence of what it means to live in covenant relationship with God.

This quarter, then, we look more closely at what God's covenant is, what it offers, even what it demands. Though drawn from many sources, the lessons rely heavily on work of the late Gerhard Hasel, whose insights into the Word (where the covenant promises are revealed) will give encouragement, hope, and understanding in order that we can learn something that, perhaps, Hobbes never did: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Does this introduction make sense to you? Are you able to discern what is being communicated? What Law lens are you viewing the above with? Do you agree with the above passage? Be prepared to defend your answers…

*****I highly recommend reading Patriarchs and Prophets chapters 1-4. There are deep insights to the origin of sin, the Creation, the Trees, Adam and Eve's fall, and the Promised One – The Remedy for sin.*****

SABBATH

> "Then God said, 'Let us make ~~hu~~mankind in our image, according to our likeness...' So God created ~~hu~~mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26, 27, NRSV)

It's entertaining that we cannot use the term "mankind" anymore because certain groups get angry. I will use the term "mankind". Direct your spittle flecked rage at your gender studies professors.

What does it mean to be made in "God's image"?

Is it 2 eyes/ears/arms/legs? Is it 1 nose/mouth/brain? Is it the capability to reason/use judgment? Is it emotions? Is it our procreative abilities, and our dominion [e.g., sovereignty] over the Earth? Is it our ability to freely give of ourselves for the betterment of others? Is it more than these things?

Read that last sentence again. "… male and female he created them." The current cultural climate in the West demanding that you stop using sex-based pronouns [he/she] and start using sex-neutral ones strikes at the foundation of a Creator God and perpetuates the lie of evolution.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
She *(She is here)*	Her *(I called her)*	Her *(Her hands are wet)*	Hers *(That is hers)*	Herself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
Ze	Zir	Zir	Zirs	Zirself
Xe	Xem	Xir	Xirs	Xirself
Sie	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themself

them.

Let this chart sink in for a moment. This is the result of years' worth of debate, and countless hours and dollars of "higher education" spent coming up with these new pronouns simply to avoid **REALITY**.

> "Once you deny reality, it immediately begins working against you." -- unknown.

If the zealots within the religion of "equalism" can coerce us to give voice to the lie that there is no male or female, then they can make us say or believe any lie.

The lesson correctly notes that at the end of Creation, things were perfect and asks, "what happened?"

What happened, indeed?

From the bottom of Sabbath's lesson: What does the Bible teach about origins? What kind of relationship did God want with humanity? What was the purpose of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What hope was given to Adam and Eve immediately after they fell?

Great questions. Do we have any answers? Do we only use Scripture to answer these questions of origins? Does science and experience play any role?

SUNDAY

Turtles All the Way Down

Read the 1st paragraph in Sunday's lesson then cue the flat earth contingent bombarding us with e-mails and social [disease] media messages.

The lesson asserts that God does not attempt to prove He's Creator – He expects us to take it on faith. Is this correct?

It is inconsistent with the God I know. The God I [now] know provides ample **EVIDENCE** that He's Creator and invites me to examine the **EVIDENCE** and leaves me free to accept or reject the **EVIDENCE**.

MONDAY

In the Image of the Maker

Again, I ask what does it mean to be made in "God's Image"?

Some say it's the ability to bring forth life in our image, but most of nature has that ability as well, so is procreation really what distinguishes humans from other animals?

What is nature's prime driving force in procreating? **Instinct.**

How do humans differ, or do we? Is his bringing any Scripture to memory?

> [10]…and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt passion and despise authority. Reckless, self-centered, they speak abusively of angelic majesties without trembling, [11] whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a demeaning judgment against them before the Lord. [12] But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, using abusive speech where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, [13] suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. 2 Peter 2: 10-13.

Are we not called to use our reason, guided by a clear conscience, and discernment to engage our wills to choose to act in accordance with God's design laws for human procreation and everything else?

See if this quote adds any insights:

> "Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is "the express image" (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will." PP 45.

The lesson asserts that both Adam and Eve were made "from the same material." Is this accurate? Adam was made from Earth. Eve was made from Adam. Consider what men relate best to – it's the world [Earth] we live in. We test, experiment, explore our earth. Now consider what women relate best to – it's men [e.g. relationships].

> "Men test ideas. Women test men." Jordan Peterson.

Consider the EGW quote at the end of Monday's lesson…

> "…Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved ***and protected by him***." PP 46. emphasis mine.

What on earth did Eve need protection from in perfect Eden?

TUESDAY

God and Humankind Together.

God tells Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply -- to fill the Earth and "subdue" it. Again, what needed subduing in a perfect Creation? What did Eve need protection from?

In Genesis 1: 29, God tells mankind He has given them ***every*** plant yielding seed and ***every*** tree that has fruit yielding seed as their food. In Genesis 2: 16, 17 God told Adam he may eat from ***every*** tree in the garden **EXCEPT** one – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Are these passages ringing any bells regarding their eventual fall? Hint: See Wednesday's lesson.

God initiated the relationship with mankind. He introduced Eve to Adam and presided over their wedding. He came and walked & talked with them both in the cool of the evening [Gen. 3:8], and they were visited by angels who educated them regarding the fall of Lucifer and his host as well as the design laws of Heaven.

> "The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels. The mysteries of the visible universe— "the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16)—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. The laws and operations of nature, which have engaged men's study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life. With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds," the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were open to the study of our first parents. On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God's name was written. The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power. They were ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude. PP 50.

WEDNESDAY

At the Tree.

It is important to review what our law lens is when we contemplate God placing the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the midst of Eden. If we have an imposed law viewpoint then the tree was an arbitrary test of loyalty and obedience, and acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. If we have a ***design*** law viewpoint then the tree was necessary for the development of character in our first parents in accordance with the Laws of Truth, worship, exertion, liberty, and Love.

It was a simple task. Avoid eating of the fruit of one tree.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider Satan's question to Eve: "Did God say you may not eat from any tree in the garden?" Implied in this question is the premise that God is stingy, and selfish. He does not really care about His creation; He just wants to lord his sovereignty over it.

Now consider Eve's reply to Satan: "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; [but] from the fruit of the tree, which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it ***or touch it***, or you will die.'" Emphasis mine.

Eve is recorded as the first human to lie about God. God never forbade them from "touching" the fruit [according to Scripture], and in fact, Mrs. White states that Satan used this against Eve when he placed the fruit in her hand, and she did not immediately die.

THURSDAY

Breaking the Relationship

Eve was deceived into sin. Adam "listened to his wife" [Gen 3: 17] and sinned willingly.

Does the law of gravity treat differently the person who was tricked in to jumping off a cliff and the person who jumps willingly? Do the laws of health treat differently the person who ignorantly eats a poor diet and refuses to exercise and the person who willingly does these things? To ask is to laugh. I think this is one of the best evidence that God's law is design law and not imposed law. If His law is imposed, Eve could have simply been "pardoned", or God could have chosen "not to prosecute" because she was deceived. Adam, on the other hand, would have had to die.

> "Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan." PP 52.

In the garden, God told the universe of a coming redeemer – a Remedy for the condition that mankind had brought on itself. The entire rest of the Old Testament is the history of God's actions and restraint in order to bring the Remedy to Earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and Satan's efforts to prevent it.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 2
Covenant Primer

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Read Quarterly Intro First Four paragraphs, "In 1588…"

Do we see these dynamics today? Do we see fear rising? Do we see people willing to give up freedoms in order to feel safe?

What does a covenant of fear seek? Control!
What does a covenant of love seek? Freedom!

Read second paragraph page 3, "How does it all…" Thoughts?

What is the problem with this paragraph? What is the root lie that it is based upon? That God's law functions like human law.

Truths:

- God is love
- God is Creator
- God created humans sinless
- Adam and Eve sinned taking humanity out of harmony with God and God's design laws for life. Humanity would die unless God intervened
- Jesus is our Savior, Messiah and no human could be saved without the incarnation and victory of Jesus

All of these things are true—the question is, as the lesson asks, "How does it all work?"

And our answers depend upon whether we see the issues through God's law or through human law.

If we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, then we give answers like the quarterly just gave.

But if we reject the human law construct, and return to design law, the laws our Creator built reality to operate upon, then we understand that Christ took our sinfulness upon Himself in order to eradicate the infection of fear and selfishness and be the connecting link that reconnects humanity with God. Jesus, as a human, was tempted in every way just like we are but instead of choosing to sin, Jesus chose to live sinlessly, righteously, or another way to say it, He lived out God's design law perfectly. Thus, Jesus, in His humanity, developed a sinless human character and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that causes death.

He arose on the third day with a perfected humanity and became our Savior—as Hebrews 5:9 says: "once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." NIV84

Bible perfection is about maturity of character, which had to be developed. Jesus was sinless, but He also developed a mature character and this He offers as a free gift to all who accept it.

Thus, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Co 5:21 NIV84).

Notice the big contrast between what the Bible teaches and the lesson presents—Jesus is our substitute, and because He took our position and won the victory we can never win, we, through trust, are healed to BECOME righteous! We are not declared righteous even though we are not. This is the big lie that keeps so many trapped in sin.

This penal legal fraud is so corrupt because it takes the most amazing good news and makes it into a trap that prevents billions from experiencing the healing and joy that God has provided for them in Christ.

Jesus said the same thing to Nicodemus. Jesus didn't say, "Unless a man be legally pardoned" or "Unless a man has my righteousness credited to his account in heaven." Jesus said, "Unless a man is born again" i.e. receives a new heart and right spirit, receives my righteousness into his mind and actually becomes righteous.

Now if we want to use the language of "accounting" or "accounted" or "credited" righteous, what is the only "righteous" way we can actually use that language in regard to our righteousness?

Can we be accounted righteous by God if we are in fact not righteous? Will God lie and say we are one thing when we are actually not? No! We can only be accounted as righteous AFTER we have been made righteous by the victory of Christ being reproduced in us via the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:6 is a classic passage that the penal legal adherents who apply human law models love to quote to support their false supposition that our righteousness is *declared* and not *actual* righteousness. It reads:

> Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. KJV

According to the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, the word translated "accounted" in the KJV or "credited" in the NIV, is *logizomai* (pronounced: low-geeze-oh-my) and means:

> to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over… This word deals with reality. If I "logizomai" or reckon that my bank book has $25 in it, it has $25 in it. Otherwise I am deceiving myself. This word refers to facts not suppositions. Strong, J. (1995). Enhanced Strong's Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

So if God "logizomai" or accounts Abraham as righteous it is because Abraham has righteousness in him, otherwise God deceives Himself and all of us and God is not a deceiver.

Despite the actual meaning of the word, the way the vast majority of the Christian community teaches that the accounting is a "proclamation" "supposition" but not fact, a declared legal accounting or adjustment not an actual righteousness in the believer.

The reason people teach this falsely is because, having rejected the truth about God's law, having accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law, they have misdiagnosed the sin problem and thus misconstrue the solution—the plan of salvation.

To those who hold the false legal view, the sin problem is a legal problem, that we broke rules and the ruling authority finds us guilty of breaking the law and is required to inflict punishment for law breaking; but they also teach that God loves us, so sent His Son to take our legal position and placed the legal burden of our sins on His Son and then God, to be legal and just, punished His Son in our place and if we accept this legal payment of the blood of an innocent human sacrifice, then God will legally account His Son's death as our legal payment and we get to be declared legally righteous even though we remain unrighteous in heart, mind and character.

It is all a grand fiction that teaches people to continue to live sinfully while they claim they are legally righteous in heaven's judicial system. This makes God out to be a terribly capricious, unjust and untrustworthy being. Such a god inflicts punishment on the innocent and declares the guilty just or righteous, this god promotes lies by declaring unrighteous beings to be righteous when they are not. This entire system creates a deity that cannot be trusted.

When we return to design law, we recognize that after Adam's sin the condition of humankind was changed from sinless love and trust, to hearts filled with fear, selfishness and distrust of God.

The natural heart is enmity against God (Rom 8:7)—we don't trust Him.

Thus, the Bible teaches that AFTER Abraham trusted God he was reckoned, accounted, or recognized as being righteous—why? Because his untrusting heart had been changed, or set right, or justified into trust, this is why God counted or accounted Abraham as right or righteous because His heart actually was put right with God. This is reality, in the trust relationship, we open the heart and receive into our hearts and minds the righteousness of Christ "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." This is why God accounts us righteous, because as 2Cor 5:21 says, "we become the righteousness of God."

SABBATH

In the first paragraph the lesson states, "This is a summary of the whole quarter, as we take one day each to look at the early covenants, the ones that in their own way were all present-truth manifestations of the true covenant, the one ratified at Calvary by the blood of Jesus, the one that we, as Christians, enter into with our Lord."

This correct—and this is a key to understand all the covenants—all the covenants of the OT were various local or situational manifestations, templates, object lessons, applications of the one true covenant the covenant of grace.

In other words, the covenant of God is God's healing plan—the actions God initiated and carries out to remedy the sin condition. Beneath the grand plan are many smaller interventions that are part of that grand plan and reveal the grand plan, but we should not lose site of the true covenant because of the local covenant.

For instance, the covenant not to destroy the world again by a flood is merely part of the larger covenant—the flood was a therapeutic intervention to keep open the avenue for Messiah, to keep the plan of salvation operational, to work out the larger true covenant of grace fulfilled in Christ.

All the covenants are communications from God of what He would do. Whenever there is some responsibility for human beings, it is always the responsibility that design law, reality, requires!

- Covenant with Adam was what God would do, He would send a Savior—Adam responsibility—to believe or trust that God would do it and unite with God in heart first and action second
- Covenant with Noah is what God would do, He would not destroy the world again with a flood again—humanity's responsibility—believe it to be true and unite with God in heart first and action second
- Covenant with Abraham is what God would do, He would make a great nation from Abraham's descendants and the Messiah would come through his children—Abraham's responsibility—to trust God would do it and unite with God in heart first and action second
- New Covenant is also what God will do, He will reveal truth, destroy sin and Satan and restore His perfect design law in humanity by living it out as a human and then restoring His law in the people who trust Him, ultimately healing His universe—our responsibility—to trust Him and unite with Him in heart first and action second.

SUNDAY

The lesson suggests the covenant with God is like a marriage covenant which defines both a relationship and an arrangement—what do you think of this idea?

The lesson states that "the covenant obligation was obedience to God's will as expressed in the Ten Commandments…" Is this true?

Are the Ten Commandments the complete and ultimate expression of God's eternal law? Or are the Ten Commandments a list added after sin that did not even exist before Sinai?

- Did Adam and Eve in Eden have a law to honor their mothers?
- Did angels have a law in heaven to honor their mothers and fathers, or that sins would pass down the generations?
- How is the Sabbath defined according to Scripture—sunset Friday to Saturday—this planet rotating in relationship to our sun that didn't exist until day four of creation week of this planet. Yet Job 38 tells us the angels were already in existence.

The commandments were added and Paul makes it clear they were added in Galatians—the law was added as both a diagnostic tool and protective hedge for the sick and immature.

But God's law of love, the moral principles upon which life is constructed are eternal, they are principles the Ten Commandments are based upon, and this is why the greatest law is to Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and neighbor as yourself.

The law of love originates in God Himself for God is love and God created His universe to operate upon the law of love. Thus, our covenant responsibility is to trust God and have our hearts reunited in love to Him such that He restores His living law of love within us.

As we are going to discuss in detail each of the covenants in future lessons, we won't go into each one in detail today. Instead, we will examine in detail an old article I found while studying for this week's lesson. It is from the pamphlet *The Savior of the World* entitled The Covenant of Grace, written by WW Prescott and I want us to unpack it together. Do you agree or disagree with what is described?

> **When I become confused over the apparent chaos in world affairs, and am perplexed over some of my own trying experiences, and a suggestion of doubt about the love of God arises in my mind, I find an antidote for such a poisonous atmosphere by thinking of Jesus and Calvary**. [Can you see why I was intrigued by this article? Are we tempted today to become confused, perplexed, distraught, upset over the chaos in the world or our own struggles? I would recommend the same antidote—Jesus and Calvary.] God does love us. His thoughts toward us are "thoughts of peace." Jeremiah 29:11. [Do you realize how the false legal view distorts and obstructs this truth. Billions of Christians falsely believe God is against us, a severe judge waiting to punish sinners, being who needs His Son to pay a penalty, to offer His blood as a payment in order not to kill us. Yet, they turn around and say "God is love while teaching this." It creates conflicts in the mind that don't make sense and damages human reason and causes people to lose the ability to discern and makes them more vulnerable to authority, someone in authority to tell them what to believe, think and do. The truth is that God's thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace!] He has given us full proof of His love. What more could He do for us that He has not done? Isaiah 5:4. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:31, 32. [Do we recognize God is always for us and never against us!] Away with doubt and fear! "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26:3."O Jehovah, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name." Isaiah 25:1.

In considering the wondrous love of God as revealed to us in redeeming us from sin and its dreadful consequences, [What is God redeeming us from—sin, not His own anger, wrath or inflicted punishment! Do you see the lie embedded in much of Christianity that Jesus came to take away our punishment—this isn't true—Jesus came to take away our sinfulness, to restore us back to God's original and perfect design of love] it may throw light upon the whole problem of His manifested grace if we give some thought to **the divine purpose in creating us**. [What was God's purpose in creating us?] This is clearly stated in the Scriptures. God speaks of His sons and daughters as those "whom I have created for My glory." Isaiah 43:7. And He further says of Israel, "Thou art My servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Isaiah 49:3.

Creation was an act of love on the part of a holy God in bringing into existence beings who could reveal the glory of His own love. [What does love do? How does love function? What do loving parents naturally want to do? Why do they want to have children? What is God's purpose? To love us, to give us every ability and capacity to grow and develop to be as much like Him as a created being can be—thus we have abilities to love, but also to procreate and to have dominion—but to be experienced as God designed it, in loving service. Thus we are to rule as Christ rules through loving service!] **Love formed us in His own image, that we might love**. [What is our purpose? To love!] Genesis 1:26. **Hence the fundamental law of our being, and the very purpose for which we have been redeemed**, was expressed by our Lord when He was asked to distinguish between the commandments in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." Matthew 22:37-40. [What is the fundamental law of our being, our purpose? To love—what kind of law is this? Is it a rule or is this built into our being, a protocol upon which our very lives are constructed to operate? Can love be generated by threatening to punish those who don't love? Do you see the perversity of how human law works? Do you see the perversity of suggesting that God will use power to externally inflict punishment on those who don't love Him? Such lies, when believed, break the circle of love and trust and obstruct God's healing love from entering the heart.

The fundamental law of our being is to love, and Satan seeks to coopt this law, to hijack it, to replace the love of God and the love for with something else. Satan seeks to get us to love something other than God, to love power, money, ourselves, our looks, our countries, our race, our political parties, our gender and then fight anyone who doesn't love what we love the way we love it. It is a perversion of our fundamental design that destroys rather than heals!] **In our relation to God nothing can take the place of this love.** [Why? Because God has rules that if we break it, He will punish, or is it like saying: in our body nothing can take the place of blood? If we replace our blood with anything but blood what happens? If we replace love for God with duty to God, fear of God, obligation, legal rule-keeping to honor God, what happens? If we replace love with anything else and still seek God what happens? And if we love anyone or anything more than God what happens?] "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I

give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:3. **A burning body cannot be substituted for burning love.** And why?-**Because God made us to reveal His character of love by living with Him in the atmosphere of His love; anything short of this will not satisfy the heart of God.** [Why? The answer given is because this is how we were made by God—it is how we are built, our design, to operate upon the living law of love! And why would God not be satisfied if we choose not love? Why would a parent not be satisfied if a child with leukemia refused a life-saving bone-marrow transplant?]

Sin banishes love and genders hatred. [What does sin do? Does sin cause an outcome? Is this outcome predictable? Then it becomes a diagnostic tool or measure we can use to discern whether God's principles are active or sin is active. In the world today, do we see more love or more hatred and less love? Then what does that mean? It means there is more sin and what is sin? Transgression of God's design laws for life. In other words, we see more hatred and less love because people are seeking to advance their agendas through imperialism, rule of law, legislation, coercion, the power of the state, violations of the law of liberty. People are not practicing God's law of presenting truth in love while leaving others free, instead they are presenting lies, propaganda, and using coercion to silence and intimidate and punish all who don't believe the lies. Satan's kingdom is advancing by using more imposed laws to restrict more liberties and when that happens love is always damaged and rebellion instilled.] **Sin seeks to abolish the law of love to God and man, and to put in its place the law of selfishness**. [What is described here? It is not simply doing bad things, sin interferes with God's design, obstructing our actual life and function, damaging and destroying those who sin. And when someone sins against us or someone we know or love, the act of sin will plant a seed in our hearts, a seed of hurt, anger, frustration, resentment, and if not removed then the wrong done will inflame our own fears and selfishness (carnal drives) and we will be tempted to seek to resolve our fear by retaliating, directly or through legal means, suing, getting political power and changing laws and forcing others to comply. In other words, each time a person sin they not only damage themselves, they spread seeds into other hearts that if not rooted out cause others to become more fear-ridden and selfish, i.e. sinful. We pluck out such sin-seeds by God's grace, by forgiving the wrong doer, by applying truth and understanding the wrong doer is searing their conscience and hardening their heart, by love for the wrong doer and uplifiting them in prayer for God's grace to reach them, and by practicing God's methods in how we conduct ourselves. We are to be lights in a dark world, and the light shines the brightest in the darkest places. So it is when the darkness of Satan's methods are practiced that we have opportunity to live the light.] Sin has no time or place for the worship of God, but sets up the idolatry of self. **Sin must be dealt with in order that the purpose of God in our creation may not be thwarted, but that the image of God may be restored in us. And God has dealt with sin.** [Why must sin be dealt with? So that God's purpose in our creation may be achieved—and what is that purpose? To glorify God in love! To live lives of love! And who deals with the sin problem? And what does it mean to deal with it—does this sound like a legal solution in a book is required, or something in the living soul is required?]

Man was originally crowned with glory and honor, and given dominion over the world (Psalm 8:5; Genesis 1:26), empowered to reign upon a throne of love; [What kind of

crown? One of Glory and honor—what does this mean? From where would humanity's glory and honor originate? From our Creator, who built us with the abilities, capacities and operational protocols to love, beings in His image, and what is the throne upon which we are to reign? The throne of love! Remember Ezekiel's vision of God's throne, it rests upon a moving wheel inside a rotating circle inside a moving wheel—the law of love is the foundation of God's throne and is to be ours! What kind of throne or government or authority or law is this? Contrast this with Satan's government—remember in Isaiah Satan is described as seeking to ascend to rule over and this is how all the kingdoms of the world govern, by a few ruling elites exercising power to exploit, dominate and take from the masses to maintain their power. But Jesus, did not think equality with God was something to hold on to, but surrendered Himself all the way to the cross in order to uplift the masses. This is the government or throne of love it is exactly the opposite of the kingdoms of this world.] **but distrust of God dethroned him [mankind], and he became the slave of sin**. [What happened? Lies believed break the circle of love and trust. Notice, we became enslaved to fear and selfishness, to sin, through distrusting God. Not through breaking rules, the acts of sin are the manifestations of distrust displacing love and the outworking of fear and selfishness in the heart.] **The purpose of God in the gospel is to restore man to his place on the throne by renewing the love of God in his heart, and so enabling him to conquer selfishness**; "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21. **Love is the all-conquering power, and love will win**. [How is it we are restored to the throne that God has for us? Is this a legal process where God sends Jesus to pay a legal penalty, take punishment, and declare us righteous even though we are not? No, it is literal, actual, restoring God's living law of love into the heart and mind of all who are restored to trust in God. It is love enabling us to overcome fear and selfishness.]

The source and ground of our salvation is the grace of God, which is love dealing with sin. [What is grace? It is love dealing with sin, to achieve what? The eradication of sin from the heart and mind, the restoring of love into our inmost being!] **The assurance of this love manifested in saving grace is made known to us in the promises of God, which constitute the covenant of grace**. [What is the covenant of grace? Love manifested to eradicate sin from sinners!] The fundamental promises, designated as the "**new covenant**," are thus expressed; "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will accomplish [margin] a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the **covenant** that I will covenant [margin] with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put My laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them**: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his fellow citizen, and every man his brother, saying, **Know the Lord: for all shall know Me**, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more." Hebrews 8:8-12… [What is the covenant, the agreement—we agree to trust God and He agrees to fix us—to remove fear and selfishness and restore His law of love in us!]

… **The moral law, which is to be written in the heart, is the law of love**. [What is the moral law? Where is it to be written? Is this a list of rules? Is the moral law imposed like human law, or is it design law, protocols upon which life is built by God to operate?] **It [the moral law] is the expression of the very nature of the God of love as interpreted to us in the life and teachings of Christ,** who said, "I have kept My Father's commandments." John 15:10. **To keep this law is to love as God loves. To the natural heart this is impossible, and so God has promised to give us a new heart**: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezekiel 36:26. In harmony with this provision is the prayer of David: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a steadfast [margin] spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. **We may call this conversion, or regeneration, or the new birth, or the new creation; but in any case it is the impartation of a new life from God, that life which is love, and is revealed in loving**. [Is this describing a legal accounting or an actual healing, recreating, transformation of the heart and mind? Understand, our God is the Creator, the God of reality, the God who is love and who built life to operate upon love. Sin is a breach in that law, that results in death unless remedied by God through the work of Christ. Thus, God has covenanted to provide us a new heart and right spirit to heal all the damage, if we trust Him. There is nothing legal in the covenant it is the covenant of love not rules.] **Those who have this experience are "partakers of the divine nature**" (2 Peter 1:4), and that nature is expressed in obedience to the divine law of love.

"**When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new covenant promise is fulfilled**, 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.' And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? ... [When is the covenant promise fulfilled? Notice, it is when the heart is changed back into the image of Christ. It is not fulfilled in a legal declaration that we are accounted righteous even though we are not righteous. If we haven't been transformed to righteousness, if we haven't been reborn, if we haven't had a new heart recreated within, the covenant of grace has not been realized in our lives. The penal substitution theology is a lie and a fraud that cheats people out of what God wants to do in their lives.] **<u>Here is the true test</u>. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law."** [What is the true test? Our thoughts, feelings, purposes, actions being restored to harmony with God. Does this sound like being declared righteous even though we are not, or as 2Cor 5:21 says, we become the righteousness of God?]

And this experience is guaranteed to us by the promise of God, and is provided for us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love: for we know that "the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us." Romans 5:5. "Salvation is of Jehovah." Jonah 2:9. [Who is the agency that makes this experience a reality in the believer? The Holy Spirit—do you see why Satan works to destroy our value of the Holy Spirit in various ways?]

Obedience to the law of love is not a hardship, not a burdensome duty imposed upon us as the price of blessing from God, [notice the language this author uses, God's law is NOT

IMPOSED upon us, it is not some obligation we must do as the price to receive God's blessings!] but the fruit and the test of our fellowship with God through the Spirit. But at the same time it is the **absolute condition of maintaining our standing before God**. [What does this mean? What law lens are you hearing this through? Obedience to design law is not a burden any more than breathing is a burden. Living out God's design laws bring life, health, joy, happiness, and invigorate us. Breaking the design laws destroy us, cause us suffering and pain. Why is obedience an absolute condition of maintaining our standing before God? For the same reason that breathing is an absolute condition for maintaining our health!]

At the very root of the relation of a creature to his God, and of God admitting the creature to His fellowship, lies the thought of obedience.... In the promise of the **new covenant** it takes the first place. God engages to circumcise the hearts of His people-in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ-to love God with all their heart, and to obey His commandments. **The crowning gift of Christ's exaltation was the Holy Spirit, to bring salvation to us as an inward thing**. The first covenant demanded obedience, and failed because it could not find it. The **new covenant** was expressly made to provide for obedience. To a life in the full enjoyment of the new covenant blessing, obedience is essential." [How is obedience possible? Though the agency of the Holy Spirit working in the heart—to do what? Change the heart, obedience is the living out of God's law of love, which is only possible after the heart has been renewed, recreated, circumcised, transformed, justified, set right, which the Holy Spirit does when we trust God! This is healing, not legal. So, again, why is obedience essential? Is it a legal obedience, like obeying human law, or the obedience of free people who desire to live in harmony with God and His design laws for life?]

The enabling power for such a life of obedience is ministered to us in this most helpful promise: "**I will put My Spirit within you**, and **cause you** to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep Mine ordinances, and do them." Ezekiel 36:27. **This means simply that God in Christ has personally assumed the responsibility for our life of love and obedience, according to the covenant promise which He has made in these words**: "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them, that I will not turn away from following them, to do them good; and I will put My fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from Me." Jeremiah 32:39, 40. **This is the gospel of the grace of God**. **This is the covenant of grace**. Here is the distinguishing feature of Christianity as interpreted to us by Inspiration. **By promise and by oath God has pledged Himself as the Saviour of those who trust in Him**, that "we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Hebrews 6:18. "Jehovah, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou hast also wrought all our works for us." Isaiah 26:12. Blessed assurance! Strong encouragement indeed! [Is this a legal process or an actual activity of God in the species human…First in Jesus Himself as a human and secondarily the work of God via the Holy Spirit applying in us the victory of Christ to regenerate and recreate us. Thus the covenant is God's treatment plan, God's activity and actions to nullify sin and restore His righteousness, His design of love in us through Jesus! So the agreement or covenant is—God sending Jesus to be our remedy, to take up the broken condition of humanity caused by Adam and cure, fix, cleanse, restore the human

condition back to sinless perfection, first in the humanity He assumed, and then, to work in each person who trust God to infuse us with a new heart, right motives, desires, the character of Christ via the work of the Holy Spirit. God does all of this in the covenant, our responsibility is to trust Him and choose to align ourselves with Him following His directions in our lives.]

Another feature of the new covenant, the covenant of grace, which marks its superiority over the old covenant, is that it has a gloriously efficient mediator, even **Jesus the Son of God**. [How do we understand Jesus as mediator? To whom is Jesus working to influence and change? Where is Jesus' activities being applied? Where is the effect needed if we are to be saved? Does God need Jesus to work on Him? Do we need Jesus to work on us?] We have not come to Mt. Sinai, but to Mount Zion, and "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 12:24); to Jesus who has shared with us in our experiences of temptation (Hebrews 4:15) and knows our need: "for there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." 1 Timothy 2:5, 6. **Through His mediation all the blessings of the new covenant are ministered unto us**. [To whom are the blessings of the new covenant ministered? to us, not to God!] **By His life of suffering obedience, culminating in His death on the cross, He has made atonement for our sins**. [What does this mean? What laws lens do you hear it through? Atonement, at-one-ment, reconciliation. Our sinfulness has damaged us and separated us from God, Jesus' victorious life is the means through which God seals the breach, reconnects us to Him, fixes the problem, restores unity, makes us one or at-one with God again. When Adam sinned God did not get changed, God's law did not get changed, but the condition of humankind did get changed inciting a disconnect, rebellion, a break in our unity with God. We became filled with fear and selfishness and no longer operated upon God's design law of love. Thus, atonement is reuniting us to God. Jesus is the means whereby God fixes the brokenness and simultaneously maintains the integrity of His law, why? Because the means of fixing the sin problem is through the application of His law, through living out of and restoration of His law in humanity. The new covenant, writing my law in the heart and mind. You cannot have health while violating the laws of health, you only have health by restoring one to living in harmony with the laws of health. Thus, God fixes the sin problem through restoring His living law into humanity.] Exalted at the right hand of God and sitting upon the throne of grace, He has "become the surety of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22), and **through His mediation the gifts of God are supplied to us, and all the requirements of God are wrought in us.** [Again, to whom is the mediation ministered and the requirements provided? To us!] Through His mediation the covenant of grace, instead of being a mutual agreement, is resolved into His "precious and exceeding great promises" (2 Peter 1:4), of which He Himself is the yea: "[For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God]." 2 Corinthians 1:20. **Apart from His mediation, we should be utterly helpless, "having no hope and without God in the world**." Ephesians 2:12. [Why? Is it because apart from His mediation we would not have anyone to influence God, to plead with Him to bless us, or to turn away God's anger and wrath and God would lash out to destroy us? Or is it because apart from Christ's mediation we would not have the remedy to our terminal sin condition and would die in trespass and sin?]

But some one may feel like suggesting, "You are making it too easy for the transgressor by placing all the responsibility for success in the Christian life upon God." Do not misunderstand me. **There is one thing which God does not do, and which He does not permit any other person to do. He has given to us freedom of will, and He will not disregard it. I can say No to God, and He will be governed accordingly, but I must take the inevitable consequences**. **In this sense I am the arbiter of my own destiny. I can take my own choice**. [What law is active in this description? The law of liberty, and why is this law operational and why won't God violate the law of liberty? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom, if God were to threaten to kill us if we don't submit it would destroy love and incite rebellion. If God were to make the choice for us, manipulate our minds in some way, it would destroy our individuality and make us robots. God will not do this because He is love and did create us in His image with our own individuality to operate upon His living law of love. Why if we say no will God "be governed accordingly"? Is this some law outside of God that God is bound to obey? No, it is because God is bound by Himself, His own nature, character of love and God will not violate the law of liberty because to do so would not only destroy love, destroy our individuality and incite rebellion, it would violate His own character and nature.] This privilege and its meaning were recognized by Moses, the man of God, when he solemnly declared to the people, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed." Deuteronomy 30:19. **There is no power which will compel us to choose to commit sin. There is no power which will compel us to choose to do righteousness**. **We alone are responsible for the choice which we make. Therefore we commit no sin without first consenting to it,** and an act is charged against us as sin when we consent to do that which we know to be contrary to the will of God. [And is the sin problem the act, or is the act the evidence of the sinful condition of the heart and the real problem is a fear ridden selfish heart out of harmony with God's law of love?]

Judas was a traitor at heart before he actually betrayed his Lord. [There it is, the issue is always the heart, the behaviors are the manifestation of the heart. This is why a legal religion always fails because legal religions focus on outward appearance, on behavior, but God's kingdom is within you, it is the kingdom of love that heals the heart and then the behaviors change.] He deliberately chose to do the infamous deed, for we read that "he consented, and sought opportunity to deliver Him unto them in the absence of the multitude." Luke 22:6. We imitate Judas when we **consent** to commit a known sin. The will determines our way of life.

Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; **He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure**. Thus **your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ**; your affections will be centered upon Him, and your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."

Such are the results of making a right choice.

I do not need to be told that the god of this world will use every possible means to keep us from choosing to serve God. I know it in my own experience. **He paints the glories of the world in glowing colors, and promises all that the natural heart desires**, if we will only choose to worship him. [And what does it mean to worship Satan? Does this mean joining a satanic cult? How do people worship God's enemy? Is it not by aligning their hearts with the methods, motives, principles and actions of Satan? And what are those? Lies, fear, selfishness, coercion, exploitation—like pursuing social justice through more human government, law, coercion and punishment!] But we must not forget that "there is no truth in him," and that "he is a liar, and the father thereof." John 8:44. In his service all joy ends in bitterness of soul, **all selfish pleasure destroys the capacity to love**, and all hope is quenched in everlasting despair. [All selfish pleasure destroys the capacity to love. This is design law. This is what sin does, it sears the conscience, hardens the hard, damages the reason. In other words, sin persisted in will eventually destroy the faculties that respond to truth and love—it destroys the capacity to love. Notice, the author did not say all pleasure, all selfish pleasure and that is what the world offers—selfish pleasure. Worse, it offers it in a way that justifies the selfishness, claiming it is healthy and right and ridiculing godliness as judgmentalism] **Do not listen to his fables of deceit**.

From the first promise of victory over the serpent, made in Eden (Genesis 3:15), to the last promise of the advent of our Lord in glory to reward those who have been redeemed by His loving mercy (Revelation 22:12), we are dealing with the covenant of grace. [There has always and only been one covenant, the covenant of grace, all the others are simply various manifestations of it.] The call to us now, as to His people of old, is, "Come ye, and join yourselves to Jehovah in an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten." Jeremiah 50:5.

"**Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God**." [What kind of covenant? A relation—not a legal transaction. And the relationship operates upon love, truth, liberty, trust—it is the outworking of God's character built into the laws He constructed reality to operate upon.]

Let each one of us say with absolute sincerity, "Into this covenant of a wholehearted love in God and in me I do with my whole heart now enter." Thrice blessed is he who will thus accept the inestimable blessings of the covenant of grace.

The Savior of the World - SOTW p. 81 https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/1409.319#333

MONDAY

How was the covenant with Noah a manifestation of the true covenant of grace fulfilled through Jesus?

- Satan was working to destroy the avenue for the Messiah
- God worked with the one human and his family still loyal to God to keep open the avenue for

the Messiah

Was the decision to destroy the earth in the flood done as punishment for sin as grace working to heal and save? What law lens do you use?

If you deal with those stuck in the human law lie and teach God was punishing sin at the flood—ask them, in their model, when does the judge inflict punishment, before or after judgment? And since the judgment is future, even in their model, the actions of God cannot be for punishing sin, it must be for another purpose, which is the covenant of grace acting to keep open the avenue for Messiah.

TUESDAY

Read Genesis 12:1-3, from the NIV84:

> The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

What does this mean?

From *The Remedy:*

> The Lord had told Abram, "Leave your homeland, your relatives and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you. My plan is for your descendants to become a great nation that lives out my methods, for they will be the avenue for the Messiah. I will change your character and make it a great example of my healing plan – that healing comes through trust – and you will be a blessing.' I will bless those who bless and support you, but those who oppose you I will oppose; and the entire human race – all earthlings – will be blessed through you."

How is this the true covenant of grace?

WEDNESDAY

Exodus 6:1-6 God tells Moses how He will deliver Israel from Egypt in fulfillment of the covenant promise to Abraham.

For what purpose was the promise given to Abraham and what purpose in bringing Israel out of Egypt?

Are these different covenants or all part of the one true covenant?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

The New Covenant—which is recorded in Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 and 10, and it is writing the law on the heart and mind. Is this a new covenant, as in, never been thought of before or is it the true covenant that people forgot or didn't understand?

The lesson asks how do we understand the law being written into the heart?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph and discuss, "The yoke…"

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Change in Class Time: April 3, 2021 our class will start meeting at 10:00 a.m. and go until 11:00 a.m. Then we will have a live 30 minute Q&A for our online viewers. This will be one of the benefits for members only.

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content. We are currently loading *The Remedy* audio to this section of our site and will eventually remove it from Soundcloud. We will have other exclusive content on this site as well.

SHARING campaign: March 2021 Meditation Guide—Biblical versus Eastern
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 3
All Future Generations

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Last week I read a quotation from an article entitled The Covenant of Grace from a pamphlet entitled *Savior of the World.* I said this was written by EG White. One of our online listeners, Kent Johnson, emailed that it was written by WW Prescott, another SDA pioneer. I doubled checked and Kent is right. I made this mistake for three reasons, 1) I got the quote from the EG White Estate website and didn't see the small note that it was written by WW Prescott 2) the concepts expressed are true and consistent with design law understanding of things and 3) being very familiar with the writings of EG White the writing style read like her. So, I went and did a little research comparing the WW Prescott article with some of EG White's writings and in some places he quoted her directly but didn't reference her. All the Bible texts are referenced, but some quotes are in quotation marks but with no reference. Other places it is just very similar in style but not a direct quote, the concepts are the same:

WW Prescott article is in black EGW in red below it:

> **Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise**. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; **He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure**. Thus **your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ**; your affections will be centered upon Him, and your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.
>
> > Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him. SC 47.1
>
> **When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new covenant promise is fulfilled**, 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.' And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life?
>
> > **When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new covenant promise is fulfilled**, 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.' And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? SC 60
>
> It may throw light upon the whole problem of His manifested grace if we give some thought to **the**

divine purpose in creating us. This is clearly stated in the Scriptures. God speaks of His sons and daughters as those "whom I have created for My glory." Isaiah 43:7. And He further says of Israel, "Thou art My servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Isaiah 49:3. **Creation was an act of love on the part of a holy God in bringing into existence beings who could reveal the glory of His own love Love formed us in His own image, that we might love**. Genesis 1:26. **Hence the fundamental law of our being, and the very purpose for which we have been redeemed**, was expressed by our Lord when He was asked to distinguish between the commandments in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." Matthew 22:37-40.

> **Every act of self-sacrifice for the good of others will strengthen the spirit of beneficence** in the giver's heart, allying him more closely to the Redeemer of the world, who "was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." **And it is only as we fulfill the divine purpose in our creation that life can be a blessing to us.**—The Review and Herald, December 7, 1886. Counsels on Stewardship 20.2
> **Every faculty, every attribute with which God has endowed us is to be used to His name's glory**. **Man must cooperate with Christ to restore the moral image of God in man**, and it is in wearing the yoke of Christ, and learning daily Christ's meekness and lowliness, **that Christ can use him to be a blessing to his fellow men.** This Day with God 90.2
>
> **The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God**. DA 329.3

There is one thing which God does not do, and which He does not permit any other person to do. He has given to us freedom of will, and He will not disregard it. I can say No to God, and He will be governed accordingly, but I must take the inevitable consequences. **In this sense I am the arbiter of my own destiny. I can take my own choice**.

> T**he law of love being the foundation of the government of God**, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all his creatures the service of love,—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of his character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and **to all he grants freedom of will**, that they may render him voluntary service. GC88 493.2
>
> **O that every one might realize that he is the arbiter of his own destiny**! Your happiness for this life, and for the future, immortal life lies with yourself. MYP 31.2

Sin banishes love and genders hatred. Sin seeks to abolish the law of love to God and man, and to put in its place the law of selfishness.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **Sin destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him.** The whole human organism is deranged, the mind perverted, the imagination corrupted. For want of moral force to overcome, the soul is debased. From Splendor to Shadow 125.1
>
> **To the heart that has become purified, all is changed. The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul, bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ; and the inward man is renewed in the image of God.** From Splendor to Shadow 125.2

Man was originally crowned with glory and honor, and given dominion over the world (Psalm 8:5; Genesis 1:26), **empowered to reign upon a throne of love**; **but distrust of God dethroned him, and he became the slave of sin**. **The purpose of God in the gospel is to restore man to his place on the throne by renewing the love of God in his heart, and so enabling him to conquer selfishness**; "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21. **Love is the all-conquering power, and love will win**.

> "To him that overcometh," Christ said, "will **I grant to sit with Me in My throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21**. The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who has drunk most deeply of His spirit of self-sacrificing love,**—love that "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5),—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice even unto death, for the saving of humanity. AA 543.2
>
> **When we seek for appropriate language in which to describe the love of God**, we find words too tame, too weak, too far beneath the theme, and we lay down our pen and say, "No, it cannot be described." We can only do as did the beloved disciple, and say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." [1 John 3:1.] In attempting any **description of this love**, we feel that we are as infants lisping their first words. Silently we may adore; for silence in this matter is the only eloquence. **This love is past all language to describe. It is the mystery of God in the flesh**, God in Christ, and divinity in humanity. **Christ bowed down in unparalleled humility, that in his exaltation to the throne of God, he might also exalt those who believe in him, to a seat with him upon his throne**. CE 77.1

Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law.

> **Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law**. SC 61.1

There is no power which will compel us to choose to commit sin. There is no power which will compel us to choose to do righteousness. We alone are responsible for the choice which we make.

> **No one can force you to give your heart to Jesus, no one can compel you to throw off the yoke of Satan. You may choose to do his bidding**, to be children of the wicked one… RH December 24, 1889, Art. A, par. 8
>
> **In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom**. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, **the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God**. DA 466.4

From the first promise of victory over the serpent, made in Eden (Genesis 3:15), to the last promise of the advent of our Lord in glory to reward those who have been redeemed by His loving mercy (Revelation 22:12), we are dealing with the covenant of grace.

> **Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the covenant was made that all who were obedient, all who should through the abundant grace provided, become holy in character**, and without blame before God, by appropriating that grace, should be children of God. **This covenant, made from eternity,** was given to Abraham hundreds of years before Christ came. With what interest and what intensity did Christ in humanity study the human race to see if they would avail themselves of the provision offered. Fundamentals of Christian Education 403.1

So, while the article was authored by WW Prescott, the concepts are those that we believe are the truth and therefore not surprising were also expressed in the writings of EGW.

SABBATH

Memory text: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” (Gen 6:8 KJV)

> “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.” (NIV84)

What do you think this means? Does it mean:

- Noah was the only one who figured out the secret to get God to be gracious?
- That God wasn’t gracious to anyone but Noah?
- That God plays favorites and God preferred Noah and didn’t like the other people on Earth?
- Noah took advantage of the grace/favor God made available to everyone? If this is how you read it, why does it say found favor in the Lord’s eyes?

Here is how I rendered it in *The Remedy:*

> "But the Lord was pleased that he had a friend in Noah."

There is certainly nothing wrong with the translation from the Hebrew in the KJV or the NIV, then why did I paraphrase it as I did?

Note the context of this statement:

> The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Gen 6:5-8 NIV84)

Is the context emphasizing the issue from Noah's or God's perspective? So, to me it seemed more accurate to render it as focusing on God, that despite the heartache God experienced because all His other children were wicked, with hearts hardened against Him, He was pleased that Noah was his friend. But the traditional way of translating this makes it sound like God just couldn't take it any more and was going to lash out to punish, but Noah was fortunate to find favor in God's eyes.

Here is my paraphrase of these verses from the design law understanding:

> The Lord saw how human beings, by choosing to indulge selfishness, had completely corrupted themselves, destroying in themselves his design of love, and how their every desire was totally selfish and their hearts sought evil all the time. 6 The Lord grieved at their suffering, and his heart ached over humanity's terminal condition. He also grieved at the action his love must take in order to slow the spread of sin and to keep open the avenue for the Messiah to come and save the human species. 7 So the Lord pronounced his therapeutic plan: "I will remove the malignantly selfish humans from the face of the earth that I have made; I will remove humans and animals, both large and small, and the birds of the air. Having to do this grieves me, for I have created them." 8 But the Lord was pleased that he had a friend in Noah.

The lesson gives the example of how bacteria multiple rapidly through fission with one cell becoming two, two becoming four, four becoming eight and so on. And then states, "This microscopic phenomenon in the natural world illustrates the rapid growth of evil after the fall."

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this illustration?

- Strengths—sin is like an infection in that once it is has invaded, once it has become part of a heart or mind, it will spread and increase on its own unless actively opposed.

- Weakness of the illustration—we are not petri dishes in which bacteria grows on its own. We have individuality, the power to think and choose and God did not leave us on our own. God has provided every resource necessary to stop the spread of sin in our hearts and minds and prevent the corruption of our characters and to restore us to righteousness.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 3 that God promised the Messiah to come and eradicate sin and save humanity. It tells that God would put enmity between the woman and the serpent. This means that God would intercede in human hearts to convict of sin, to woo, to put a desire for something better, to draw us—to give us power to resist sin and overcome it. God did not abandon us to the power of sin, but has been interceding to restore us to sinless perfection. From the very first moment sin entered, God has been interceding in three places:

- God intercedes in our hearts and minds to draw us back to Himself
- Here is an historic quote from EGW commenting on God's intercession in human hearts:
    - The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." **The enmity does not exist as a natural fact.** As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and **if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven**, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. **There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men**; both are evil through transgression of the law of God, **and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship**. {ST, July 11, 1895 par. 5} [Understand if the heart is not under the influence of the Holy Spirit it is naturally in harmony with satanic agencies. Meaning, that even if Satan isn't specifically tempting, encouraging, guiding, inspiring, the unrepentant heart, devoid of God's influence, will value the same methods as Satan, will practice the same principles, come to the same conclusions and take the same actions as the evil one. These actions are the activities driven by fear and selfishness, known as survival of the fittest. These actions will lead to lying, manipulating, seeking to dominate and control others, power over, passing laws and enforcing those laws with coercion, taking away liberty, inciting more fear, the destruction of love, inciting more division, exploiting others to protect self. All of this will be the natural results of human action without specific temptation of Satan's agents if humans are not under the influence of God's Spirit.]
- God intercedes with the principalities and powers to put a hedge of protection around us to limit the power of evil to harm in order to allow all who will to choose Him and be reborn with new hearts to receive eternal salvation.
    - The book of Job reveals God restrains evil forces
    - Elisha and the angel army holding back the Assyrians
    - God holding back the scorpions and snakes in the desert
    - The four angels holding back the four winds of strife
    - God's actions in OT times to keep open the avenue for the Messiah
- God interceded in the course of sin itself, in what sin naturally does to human beings when Jesus "who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God." (2Cor 5:21)

- Jesus became human, with a humanity subject to our weakness and temptations and was tempted in every way like we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). He exercised the power of His human abilities to trust His Father and receive power from His Father to live victoriously over internal and external temptations to act selfishly, (the temptation of the survival drives seen in Gethsemane). And He established in humanity a perfect, sinless, human character thus becoming our Savior (Heb 5:9), altering the natural results of what sin would do by picking up humanity damaged and terminal from Adam's sin and fixing, healing, perfecting, cleaning it. (2Tim 1:10)

So while it is true that sin, if unchecked, would multiply like a bacterial infection, it is not true that sin has been left without remedy to stop it.

SUNDAY

The first paragraph contrasts the perfection of God's creation at the end of creation week with the wickedness before the flood and states, "the transgressions and rebellion were clearly something that even a loving, patient, and forgiving God couldn't tolerate."

What does this mean to you? How do you hear it? What is the message that you take away from it?

The transgressions and rebellion were "*clearly* something that a loving, patient, and forgiving God couldn't tolerate"? Clearly?

Does it make it sound like things got so bad God just couldn't take it anymore, that God becomes intolerant? Does is make it sound like God only has so much patience and when God reaches the limit of His patience He just can't take anymore wickedness and lashes out to crush those in rebellion?

Does it make it sound like God is not infinite, but limited in patience, limited in His ability to tolerate offenses against Him, limited in self-restraint, that there is a limit beyond which God simply can't take it anymore?

Now, I want to be very clear. We believe there are limits, real limits, real limitations to how far **sin** can go, no question about it; but are those limits of how far sin can go, limitations in God, or limitations in sinners?

Can we rephrase the concept of limits on sin in some way that expresses it better, that expresses the limitation as being due to the limitations of human nature and not some limitation in God's character of love? And can we understand God's actions to intervene as evidences of His limitless, infinite, love and patience acting when sin reaches a limit whereby any further patience on God's part no longer has any redemptive value, but would only allow pain, suffering and the obstruction of God's saving plan? In other words, can we see God's actions as infinite patience and love acting with mercy to heal and save when sin reaches a limit that the only way forward for life and health is for God to act, to excise necrosis?

What law lens does one read the events through?

If human law, then God is acting to punish; He gives His law. He gives warnings and time, and if people won't change, then God must inflict punishment. This is how most people read Scripture and stories like the Flood because they assume God's law works like human law.

But with the design law view, we realize God waits until waiting any longer will do no good. He waits until the limits of resilience in the sinner is surpassed and the faculties in the sinner that respond to truth and love are irrevocably destroyed and no amount of truth and love will have any impact on them. Then God acts, not to inflict punishment, but to therapeutically intervene to limit suffering and save the species, in this case keep open the avenue for Messiah.

How long did God wait? Until there was only one righteous man and his family left on the Earth! Does that sound like God became intolerant or impatient? Just the opposite, it sounds like infinite love and patience waiting until there was nothing more love could do except act therapeutically in order to save the species.

The lesson makes a great point in the third paragraph, "Genesis 6:5 and 11…" This is true; sin is progressive, the law of diminishing returns, the same sinful activity that brought the initial reward, pleasure, or thrill, will be less rewarding the next time, so the sinful activity has to become more vulgar, corrupt, vile, extreme, a bigger dose, compounded with others abuses in order to get the thrill:

- the gambler has to risk more, make bigger bets
- the addict has to take more, bigger doses or compound with other substances
- the sex addict has to watch and indulge in ever devolving acts
- serial killers start with abusing animals, then killing animals and work their way up to people

Not only is the practice of sin progressive, it simultaneously destroys the faculties that prefer righteousness. Every act of sin sears the conscience, warps the character, hardens the heart so that minds become warped. The human heart is deceitful above all things and utterly wicked (Jer 17:9). The unrepentant lie to themselves, and others—"this isn't sin." They:

- Deny, distort, blame, project, externalize, obfuscate, accuse others
- They hate all messages that would counter their sinful lives, not just written or spoken messages, but the lives of the righteous who won't participate in their sinful choices. Those in darkness won't come into the light lest their evil deeds be exposed.
- It isn't enough that they are left free to corrupt themselves, because of what sin does; sin always causes guilt, fear, shame, inadequacy until the conscience is fully seared, so the unrepentant sinner must live in a world of lies to minimize their sense of guilt and shame.
- They seek to deny their own guilt and shame by demanding that people around them (society) accept them and tell them that they are okay. They cannot leave people who have different values free to live differently, but will seek to corrupt the innocent into their own sin or expel or destroy those who remind them of their own sinful lives. We see this in high schools where those using drugs work so hard to get those who don't use drugs to partake and if the some

won't join in, then they are rejected and ostracized, or even intimidated, mocked, and bullied.
- The unrepentant will seek to silence voices that speak truth; they will seek to destroy the livelihoods of those whose lives are not conforming to their wicked standards.
- Look at Daniel—he didn't go around pointing out the sin in other's lives. He didn't go around preaching about the falsehood of the Babylonian and Persian gods. He merely went to his window and prayed to God three times a day and lived his life by refusing to participate in activities that gave honor to pagan gods. And what did the pagans do? They sought to destroy him.
- Look at God's prophets through Old Testament times, how many were persecuted.
- Look at Jesus—He spoke truth to the people and those wicked leaders sought to destroy Him. Same with the Apostles.

The wicked cannot stand those who live godly lives and speak the truth in love.

This is another evidence that those who have discernment can use to determine where God's enemy is at work. The people of God present the truth in love and leave others free. The enemies of God always seek to abuse, coerce, compel, restrict, restrain, punish, silence, eliminate the sources of truth:
- The Dark Ages church persecuted and sought to destroy the Reformers
- Nazi Germany persecuted and sought to destroy all voices that opposed their persecution of the Jews
- Communist countries always persecute and silence voices who challenge their authority, expose their abuses
- What about today—who seeks to de-platform, silence, coerce, intimidate, and use the power of either the state or commerce to inflicted punishment for speaking up and refusing to go along with agendas that violate liberty?

There was a progression to the wickedness, the hardening of the hearts of people in Noah's day. Do we see a similar thing happening today? Let's examine the progression in Noah's day and compare the pattern to today:
- First, they rejected God and adored nature in the place of the God of nature and came to value their own genius, ingenuity, and works of their hands and thus they forgot the knowledge of God—selfishness, rather than love, became the primary drive to existence
    - This led to worship of the created instead of the Creator, and in harmony with the law of worship, they became more debased
    - Has the theory of evolution become dominate in the world today? Are people forgetting the knowledge of God? And what happens when we worship the created rather than the Creator?
- Second, they became sexually perverse rejecting monogamy and engaging in polygamy and rather than marriages of co-equals men dominated women and women used their sexuality to seduce men
    - Has human sexuality become perverted in society today? Has God's design for marriage been devalued?
    - Has pornography grown like no time in human history?

    - Has gender itself come under attack?
- Third they became violent, taking by force whatever they wanted, including the women they wanted and blood sport became a passion
    - Have we seen in the world today increasing violence and the decreasing value of human life?
    - Have we seen groups advancing their agenda through mobs, riots, and violence?
    - Have we seen the state using more coercive powers of force and intimidation?
    - Have we seen increasing terrorism and wars?
- Fourth they perverted their diets and began eating animals
    - Have we seen in the world today the perversion of human diet and undermining of human health?
    - Have we seen the foods God created to nurture us replaced with foods God never gave for us to eat?
    - Have we seen the foods God did give us processed and altered with various man-made dyes, chemicals, preservatives that alter its nutritional value?
    - Is human health and mental health undermined by unhealthy diet? Absolutely!
- Fifth they perverted nature—it is my view that the dinosaurs are the result of various breeding, hybridization and other experiments done by the antediluvians to create creatures of violence for their blood sports. And because they were not part of God's creation they were not included on the ark.

From one of the founders of the SDA church, EG White, commenting on events prior to the flood:

> **But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere**. God purposed to destroy by a flood that powerful, long-lived race that had corrupted their ways before him. He would not suffer them to live out the days of their natural life, which would be hundreds of years. It was only a few generations back when Adam had access to that tree which was to prolong life. After his disobedience he was not suffered to eat of the tree of life and perpetuate a life of sin. 3SG 64.1
>
> **Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood**. 3SG 75.2

Do you think this is too fantastical, that the writer was using her imagination to create fiction, or the writer was writing truth?

- Have we seen in the world today the corruption of nature itself, man-made bio weapons, viruses altered in virology labs and released upon the population?
- Have we seen the making of animal hybrids that are not part of God's creation?

Well, today, more than 6000 years from the fall, when we don't have the vitality they did, this is what we are doing today:

Hybrid animals today:

- Liger—a cross between a tiger and a lion
- Zonkey—a cross between a zebra and a donkey
- Jaglion—cross between a jaguar and lion
- Geep—cross between a goat and sheep
- Grolar bear—cross between a polar and brown bear
- Coywolf—cross between a coyote and wolf
- Wholphin—cross between a false killer whale and dolphin
- Beefalo—cross between a buffalo and cow
  https://www.boredpanda.com/strange-hybrid-animals-that-are-hard-to-believe-actually-exist/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

But what about human-animal hybrids?

- "In a remarkable—if likely controversial—feat, scientists announced that they have created the first successful human-animal hybrids. The project proves that human cells can be introduced into a non-human organism, survive, and even grow inside a host animal, in this case, pigs." https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/science-and-technology/human-pig-hybrid-created-lab

- Human Monkey hybrids created in China https://singularityhub.com/2019/08/13/wait-what-the-first-human-monkey-hybrid-embryo-was-just-created-in-china/

- Mice with human brain cells are smarter https://www.intelligentliving.co/mice-human-brain-cells/

These are just some of the amalgamations that have occurred in our day.

Are we seeing the world corrupting itself just like it did prior to the Flood? And what is the impact upon the hearts and minds of people of these actions?

What is the role of the Christian in combating this activities?

- **First** we share the everlasting gospel, which calls people back to worship the Creator God—calling people out of both the godless worldview AND the imperial dictator god worldview, to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water. We share the good news of our God of love whose laws are design laws that life itself is built upon! And thus we always live out God's design laws and never seek to advance God's cause using Satan's methods, for regardless of how righteous the cause, when Satan's methods are brought to bear it will worsen the problem. The various coercive practices and loss of liberties brought about under the COVID rules are already demonstrating a devastating result that will in the end kill millions more than any potential lives saved from the virus.
- **Second** share God's original design for human relationships—God designed marriage of two co-equals who are joined together in bonds of other-centered love. We call people out of self-centered, survival driven, fear-based relationships in which individuals seek power over others

to dominate and control them. We oppose the sexual exploitation of others and the lies about human gender and sexuality that are infecting the world.

- **Third** we refuse to use violence, coercion, intimidation, or compelling power to force our way. We present the truth in love and leave others free and we trust God with the future. We do not use the methods of the world, imperialism, threat, inflicted punishments, to force people to comply with the truth as we know it. Thus we are peacemakers, not war makers.
- **Fourth** we return, as far as possible, to the healthiest diet we can consume in the circumstances where we live. We teach the principles of healthy nutrition and advocate for healthy lifestyle, but we leave others free to decide for themselves.
- **Fifth** we protect nature, we as far as possible seek to be good stewards of the planet and the animals on the planet. We do not seek to advance the human being by splicing in animal DNA, or computer chips creating cyborgs. We recognize that we are created in the image of God and any attempts to improve on the human being will eventually degrade it. This does not mean we avoid medical interventions, prosthetics, designed to restore lost function whether cochlear implants, or artificial joints, of course we do. It means we don't seek to evolve the species into some next generation of so-called advanced species, what some are calling human 2.0.

TUESDAY

The Covenant with Noah—read Genesis 6:18:

> But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. (RSV)

What is the covenant? Is this a separate covenant from the covenant of grace or is it part of that covenant?

What is the covenant of grace? The promised Messiah to remedy sin and save humanity.

Was the covenant with Noah necessary to achieve or fulfill the covenant of grace? Yes, so it is part of the larger covenant, a local and specific action to carry out the covenant of grace, keep open avenue for Messiah to save the world.

Read third paragraph, "However unique this…" Do you like the way this is expressed? What does it suggest? How would you say it differently?

Did the sin problem affect human beings differently than God? Yes, we were dying, terminal, corrupted, damaged, broken—God remains sinless, perfect, infinite, unsullied—but was God without injury? No, God had been wounded by loss, by grief, by heartache from the rebellion and sin in His universe and the loss of His heavenly family as well as Adam and Eve.

So, certainly we need a solution to do something different for us than God personally needed to for Himself—we needed healing, God didn't. But the very same solution that heals us also benefits God in

that He has the joy of saving the people He loves. We benefit by personally being healed, saved, delivered from sin—God doesn't need this. God benefits by saving those He loves, both His human family and also stopping the loss of more of His heavenly family.

Parents, if you act to save your child from dying from some condition, do you benefit from that action? Of course, in a different way than the child who is healed, but you are benefited *because* you love the child. So God's benefit is because He is love!

So, understanding this that God's benefit is saving the lost and protecting His heavenly family from rebellion, here are some quotes I find do a good job in dsecribing this larger perspective on what God accomplished through Christ:

- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1:19-20 NIV84)
- **But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth;** it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might r**egard the law of God as it should be regarded**; but it was to vindicate the character of God **before the universe**. To this result of His great sacrifice--its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man--the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. **It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin**. {PP 68.2}
- **By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels.** He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name,"--"merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"--"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. **Our little world is the lesson book of the universe**. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. **Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song**. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus **is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven**; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. DA 19, 20
- **That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels**. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? **The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God**. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from

> apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. **Angelic perfection failed in heaven**. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God. The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. {5BC 1132.8}

Does God benefit from the covenant? Yes, but in different ways than we do.

Regarding the covenant or agreement—can God save a sinner without that sinner's participation or agreement? Can a sinner be saved without God?

God, through Christ becoming human and living sinlessly and overcoming and reestablishing God's law into the species, could save the human species, which He did in Christ. But any other individual human God cannot save without that individual human's consent and active participation.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Few natural phenomenon…" Do you see how Satan will take something of God and exploit, abuse, pervert, coopt it for his agenda to injure and harm?

Other examples of Satan doing this?

- The law of worship—replacing the truth of God for a lie and getting people to worship the created or anything other than God and being damaged by it.
- The Sabbath—either rejecting it completely and losing the benefits of weekly rest and time with God and the evidences that the Sabbath reveals in God's design law methods of truth, love and freedom. Or keeping the day but replacing it with imposed law understanding such that it becomes a rule people must keep in which the Sabbath misrepresents God as imperial and punishing.
- Marriage—rejecting co-equals operating upon other-centered love where the relationship builds up both parties, they expand and grow as they unite their complementary abilities in loving union and instead making marriage something else—hierarchical in which one spouse dominates and rules over the other; polygamy in which true union of co-equals never occurs; cohabitation without marital commitment; adultery and every other means to subvert the relationship.
- Foods given by God for our health replaced with foods never given to us by God to eat, or by manipulating the foods to such a degree with added manmade chemicals that the foods become harmful rather than nurturing.
- Replacing God's law with man's law and teaching that justice is infliction of punishment rather than eliminating defects and restoring to health

Read third paragraph, "The Lord said He would…" Have all humans been benefited from the

covenant of grace given in Eden, even those who reject it?

Hasn't God held at bay the full consequences of sin to allow the plan of salvation to be carried out and offered to all humanity? Isn't this a benefit to all humanity whether they accept it or not? So in that regard God's actions to carry out the covenant of grace is just like the covenant with Noah.

THURSDAY

The lesson raises the concept of the remnant, those who are left. Noah and his family being a remnant. What does this concept mean to you?

Who are the remnant today?

Read sixth paragraph, "At the time of the Flood…" What do you understand the concept of God being Judge and the judgment to be?

What law lens to you understand it through? If human law then what does it mean?

If design law what does it mean? To make it simple and help you shift your mind from a false human law model of judicial proceedings with artificial imposed rules and punishments, just replace the word "judgment" with the word "diagnosis" and "judgments" with "therapeutic interventions" and you will get it right.

God looked upon the world and diagnosed or judged that all hearts were beyond healing except Noah and his family.

- He judged that the rest of the world had rejected Him and practiced sin so long that they had destroyed the faculties that respond to truth and love and there was nothing more He could do to save them.
- He judged that if He didn't intervene that Noah and his family would be destroyed and the avenue for Messiah would be closed and the entire human species lost.
- Thus He judged a therapeutic action was necessary. He needed to act to put to sleep the rebellious and terminal children so that the healthy children would not be destroyed and the avenue for Messiah would reman open and the human raced saved.
- Further, He judged that the conditions on Earth had to be changed to reduce the easiness of life, to make life harder in order that the necessities of living would occupy their time and reduce time for sinful indulgence.
- Further, He judged that it was necessary to reduce life span to 120 years so that the truly wicked could not influence as many generations and accumulate as much power and thus again limit the spread of sin and rebellion.

So, through design law we see the Flood as an incredible manifestation of love, mercy and grace in carrying out the plan of salvation and nothing in it of a punitive or arbitrary nature.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Member's Section is now open: This resource requires a FREE account sign in and will contain member's only content, such as *The Remedy* and *Could It Be This Simple* audio books. Other exclusive content will be added over time.

Our goal, as a ministry, is to continue to enhance your growth and experience with the wonderful, life-changing message of God's design and healing plan.

SHARING campaign: April 2021 *The Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms*
USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 4
An Everlasting Covenant

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What is a covenant? A solemn agreement, a contract.

What is the everlasting covenant? What is the everlasting agreement or contract?

- God covenants, agrees, commits, contracts to do something we need and we are required to do something in order for the covenant or agreement to be fulfilled in our lives
- What has God agreed, committed, contracted to do?
    - God agreed to send Jesus to be our Savior and through Jesus deliver humans from sin, restore planet Earth to perfection, establish an everlasting kingdom and give the Earth to Abraham's descendants with Christ as the supreme Ruler
- What did Abraham agree, contract, commit, to do?
    - To trust God and follow God's directions

Is this a legal contract or simply an expression of the agreement that reality requires in order for salvation to occur?

Is marriage a covenant relationship?

- And as God designed marriage was it a legal contract?
- What kind of agreement or covenant is marriage as God designed it?
- And marriage is used as a metaphor for the relationship between Christ and the church, so what insight does the marriage covenant give us about the covenant of grace?

Is the New Covenant, the covenant of grace, a legal agreement or something else? Is it the agreement that healing, saving, restoring sinners requires in the universe God built?

- What is required in order for sinners to be saved?
    - Is faith or trust required?
        - Faith or trust in God is the means whereby the requirement of salvation are applied into the believer—so without faith or trust the sinner cannot be saved. But does faith or trust save the sinner?
        - Consider a person dying of a terminal illness and the doctor has a cure, but the patient doesn't trust the doctor and refuses to allow the doctor to administer it, will the patient be saved?
        - Consider the dying patient trusts the doctor but the doctor has no remedy to cure the terminal condition, will their trust in the doctor result in their getting well?

No, it requires the patient have faith or trust and permit the doctor to apply the remedy, but the doctor must have a remedy that heals.

- So our faith or trust is required in order to access, receive, partake of what God provides that saves us—but our trust does not save or heal us, the remedy provided by God does.
- So, Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is the substance of things hoped for…" Substance comes from the Greek hypostasis—which has two parts, hypo as in hypoglycemia or hypo tension and it means low or under and was translated as sub, as subway or submarine. And stasis means something solid, something in stasis doesn't change or waver. So it was translated as the stance, substance. Which is in English literally faith is our understanding—and understanding has two meanings, our comprehension and also our agreement—we have an agreement with God based on our understanding of the problem, who God is, what He has provided and our confidence in Him. Thus our faith is based on solid evidence of reality and also an expression of our agreement with God. Just like a marriage covenant—when you covenant in marriage you trust or have faith in your spouse and that faith is your understanding of their love, trustworthiness, and commitment to you and also your commitment and responsibility to them.
- So faith is required but faith does not heal, it is the avenue through which we connect with God to receive the remedy which heals and that faith is an intelligent, enlightened understanding of God, the sin problem and His solution.

- Grace, is grace required or our salvation?
  - If God is not gracious, if God does not act in grace toward us or extend grace toward us, then would He have sent Jesus?
  - So yes, grace is required, without a gracious God extending grace we could not be saved.
  - But God was always gracious, even before humankind sinned. But sin required an action from God, an expression of grace that was never before needed; and that action, that intervention, is God's work, favor, beneficial activity to provide the remedy or cure to our sin condition.
    - This activity, intervention, active working of God's power to heal us from sin is grace and it is not earned by us, the remedy is not procured by is, it is not worked for, bought, or an any other way compensation to us for something we have done. So in that sense it is unmerited grace, unearned. But, because of who we are to God, He loved us so much that He sent His only Son—so while we didn't do anything to merit it, we merit it because of who we are to God—His creation, His children, designed by Him to glorify Him. We are His and that is why we merit it, but not because of some work.
- Forgiveness, is forgiveness required?
  - If God refused to forgive then we couldn't be saved, so yes forgiveness is required.
  - Is God's forgiveness a legal action in a court, or a personal action from His

heart?
        - Did Jesus forgive His murderers at the cross? Did that save them?
            - They didn't open their hearts to receive the forgiveness and with it the transforming power of God to save and heal them.
        - Does God's personal forgiveness fix the damage sin has caused? No, so something more is required.
        - So God's forgiveness is required—both from God and within the sinner, meaning the sinner must receive into their heart that forgiveness which results in repentance and conversion and receiving the remedy that heals or saves us.
    - Is an erasure of historic records required to save sinners?
        - Will a coverup of what happened move sinners from death to life? No!
        - Will erasure of historical records heal or change sinners? No! So this is not needed to save sinners.
    - Is an adjustment of God's attitude required to save sinners—assuaging His wrath, propitiating His anger?
        - Is God the problem, the obstacle? When humans sinned did God get changed? Does any activity need to be done to God to fix God so sinners can be saved? Or did Adam's sin change the condition of human beings and God needs to remedy, fix that condition in order to save sinners?
        - So no payment, appeasement, or propitiation to God is needed to save sinners
    - Is a legal payment to the law or lawgiver required?
        - Did God's law get changed when Adam sinned? No! So again, nothing needs to be done to God or God's law to save sinners, but something does need to be done to human beings to save us. What?
        - So no legal payment is needed to save sinners.

What is required to save us?

- What is the basis of life? God is the source of all life, and what has God constructed life to operate upon? Perfect harmony with Him, which is His law built into nature itself. God's design law for life is the law of love, the protocol of beneficence upon which life is constructed to operate. This law originates in God Himself, emanates from God and is sustained constantly by the outflow of God's energy and sustaining power. Life only exists in harmony with God.
    - Our current life on earth is due to grace, to God acting to create an artificial bubble of reality to allow the plan of salvation to occur. We are metaphorically speaking, on artificial life support, while God does spiritual heart surgery on us, restoring our hearts and minds back to His design so we can be taken off this artificial life support and live eternally in His presence.
- Sin transgresses this law, the protocols life is built upon, and sin, the breaking of the law, causes death.
    - The wages of sin is death Romans 6:23
    - Sin when full grown brings forth death James 1:15
    - Those who sow to the carnal nature, from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8
    - Salvation requires that the law of life be restored as the operating principle in the living being in order for there to be life.

- So salvation of sinners requires that we must:
  - be reborn
  - have a new heart and right spirit
  - have the law written on the heart
  - have the mind of Christ
  - die to fear and selfishness and be resurrected to love and truth
  - have the heart of stone removed and a tender heart put within
  - have circumcision of the heart
  - die to self and have Christ live within us

So, we have a terminal condition inherited from Adam that we did not choose and which results in eternal death unless it is remedied. We cannot procure the remedy, so God sent Jesus to do that for us.

God covenants or agrees to take up this terminal condition, to become human and subject to all the weakness and temptation of this condition and eradicate the sin-infection, to destroy the death causing principle and restore the law of life into humanity, thereby saving the species and simultaneously providing the remedy to all who trust Him. When we trust Him, we receive via the Holy Spirit the victory of Christ in our hearts and minds. We die to selfishness and fear and are born again with motives of love and trust.

So the covenant: God agrees to provide the cure and we agree to trust God, open the heart and let Him heal us and then follow His directions or prescription.

This a legal contract it is the relational agreement reality requires to heal sinners. Why? Because we could not procure the remedy and God cannot use power to force a change in our hearts and minds without destroying our individuality. His healing of us requires our agreement—our understanding, our trust or faith in Him in order for Him to work in our hearts and minds and heal us without destroying our unique personhoods.

Consider these historic quotes that document what we are teaching is not new not something we invented, as it shouldn't be because the sin problem and its solution have been the same since Adam sinned. This first one is one of my favorites:

> **The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character**; **and this man has not to give.** [What does the law require? a righteous life—is this a righteous life in the sinner, or a righteous life in a non sinner? Where is the righteous life to be that the law requires? What kind of law is this? Why does the law require it? Why don't we have a righteous character to give?] He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character**. [Heb 5:9 "once he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him." Bible perfection isn't about sinlessness, Jesus was sinless but He had to "become" perfect. Bible perfection is about maturity of character. God can create sinless beings, Lucifer, Adam, Eve, but those sinless beings did not "perfect" or mature their character, they become corrupt. After Adam's sin there were no human beings with sinless character—"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

But life requires perfect harmony with God's design laws because life is built to operate upon them. So Jesus became human and as a human was tempted in all points like we are yet lived out, as a human, using human abilities, by constant trust in His Father, a sinless life thus developing a perfect human character. At the cross He destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and established permanently God's law of life into the humanity He assumed—thereby saving the species while simultaneously procuring the remedy we need. This is why He arose on the third day and could predict that He would arise, not because He had a prophetic vision of the future, but because He knew the law of love is the protocol of life and when that law was perfectly into His humanity and the infection was eliminated He would arise again. The grave could not hold Him. So Peter says in Acts 2:24 it was impossible for death to hold Him.] **These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** [He offers us a holy life and perfect character—Not in some legal way applied to some registry in heaven, but actual, within us. "It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" Gal 2:20. Revelation describes those who are saved as "these are they who do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" vs. 12:11. Fear and selfishness, the survival of the fittest drives, are overwritten with God's law of love, and these individuals, through trust in Jesus, have been transformed. They are saved/healed.] His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. **More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. **Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ.** [Where is this happening, in a courtroom, in a record book, or in the believer? This is actual, literal, real transformation and healing. It is not legal in a courtroom!] God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2} [Notice that justifying is building up or putting the human character right with God again, the law is fulfilled IN THE BELIEVER not in a legal court!]

But the law requires that the soul itself be pure and the mind holy, that the thoughts and feelings may be in accordance with the standard of love and righteousness.--RH, Apr 5, 1898. (2SM 211.) {2MCP 564.1} [What are the thoughts and feelings combined? Our moral character, so the law requires our character be in harmony with the standard of love—which is the law of love, which is the protocol upon which God built reality to operate. Why does the law require this? For the same reason the law of respiration requires we breathe.]

The divine law requires us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. Without the exercise of this love, the highest profession of faith is mere hypocrisy. . . . {A New Life NL 32.1} [Do you see this can be no other law than design law—why? Can you get love through legislation, or imposition, or threat, or coercion, or inflicted punishment? Understand, human law, imposed law, is made up and enforced through punishment—and love can never be generated in such a way. Therefore, if God's law requires us to love God and our neighbor, it cannot be like human law. Satan has infected Christianity with the destructive lie that God's law is like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed punishment. This has resulted in Christianity teaching and worshipping a false god who is like Satan in character, a being who uses his power to torment and inflict death to punish sin.]

So there is a covenant—an agreement with God—what is it?

What was the covenant with Abraham?

- Was it different than the covenant given to Adam, the promise of Jesus, or what is the continuation of that same covenant, adding the specification that Jesus would come from Abraham's descendants?
- Was the covenant with Adam to provide a Savior to save only one ethnic group, or to provide salvation for all human beings?
- Was the covenant to Abraham only for those who are genetic descendants, biological relatives, of Abraham or was the covenant for all humanity?
- Who is considered a descendant of Abraham and heir to the promises of God given in this covenant?
- What was the land promised to Abraham?

My view is that God gave multiple explanations of the covenant to Abraham as recorded in Genesis, and God referenced both the local establishment of the nation of Israel as the conduit for the Messiah and the larger promise of deliverance from sin and restoring the Earth to sinlessness.

The various promises to Abraham are:

> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." (Gen 12:7 NCV).
>
> The LORD said to Abram… "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." (Ge 13:14–17 NIV84).
>
> Then the word of the Lord came to him… "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Gen 15:4-6 NIV84)
>
> As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." (Ge 17:4–8 NIV84).

Do you hear elements of God's promise to Abraham's biological family to work through them to bring about the larger promise given to Adam? Do you hear elements of a promise that goes far beyond just the land of Palestine?

So, I paraphrased Genesis 13:14-17 as:

> The Lord said to Abram, "Look around you in every direction – north, south, east and west. The whole earth – all that you see – I will give to you and your descendants forever. I will make your descendants beyond counting – like trying to count the dust of the earth. Go ahead and walk about the land that I am giving to you."

My view is that God was communicating to Abraham the working out of the everlasting covenant to save the species, restore Earth to perfection, and the planet will become the home of the righteous.

thoughts?

So, God has covenanted to save humanity. He chose Abraham to be the progenitor of the family through whom Jesus would be born—but the covenant was not restricted to his biological descendants, but given to all those who are like Abraham in character.

The Jews in Christ day believed the promises to Abraham were based on biology, genetics, and Jesus told them they were wrong:

> **I know you are Abraham's descendants**. [Jesus acknowledges their genetics] Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard **from your father**." [But Jesus tells them that their genetics doesn't determine whose children they are; He tells them that they have a different father than Abraham]
>
> 39 "**Abraham is our father," they answered**. [They protest and insist that it is genetics that matters]
>
> **"If you were Abraham's children,"** said Jesus, **"then you would do the things Abraham did**. [Now Jesus makes it clear, being a child of Abraham is not about genetics, it is about being like Abraham in character, about trusting God, having the faith of Abraham, living out God's methods and following where God leads. In fact, in Scripture the faithful are often referred to as the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—why? Because the three represent the covenant lived out—We must have the faith of Abraham and thus are children of Abraham, but we must also have a miracle birth (be born from that which is dead—remember Sarah womb was considered dead. So we which are dead in trespass and sin must be reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit) and thus are children in Isaac, and we must in union with God wrestle against our own fears, selfishness and sinfulness to be overcomers and thus are children of Jacob and get a new name Israelites—heirs of the promise.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. **You are**

> **doing the things your own father does.**" [Jesus again makes it clear we are children of whose character we emulate and develop.]
>
> "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [Again they protest Jesus' revelation and now claim God as their Father.]
>
> Jesus said to them, "**If God were your Father**, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:37-44 NIV84). [Jesus makes it unmistakable, genetics are irrelevant, what matters is character. Those who have faith like Abraham are children of Abraham. Those who reject the truth, don't trust God, prefer a legal religion with an imperial dictator god are children of their god the devil]

Paul wrote the same thing: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29 New English Translation)

So, what is the covenant? What is God's responsibility? What is ours?

We are to trust, or have faith and obey—what does it mean to obey?

In the New Testament the Greek word for obedience, obey, to obey is: **πακοή** [*hupakoe* /hoop·ak·o·**ay**/

And it has two halves—the first half is where we get hypo, as in hypoglycemia, or hypotension, or hypodermic and means low, or under, and the last half is where we get acoustics and acoustical, and means to listen or hear. And thus the Biblical meaning of obedience is a humble willingness to listen, learn, comprehend and hear was God is teaching.

This is why Jesus said repeatedly, things like, hearing though they do not hear, or let him who has ears, hear. So people say things today like, "Do you hear me?" "Are you listening?"

So what does it mean to be obedient in God's kingdom? It is about performance, or about heart motivation?

Why is this our responsibility in the covenant?

- What is the war between God and Satan over? God's character and trustworthiness
- Where is the battlefield? Our minds and hearts (2Cor 10:3-5)
- What are the weapons of Satan? Lies, imperial law and human governments or force to coerce, human economics—buying selling owning—greed, accusation, temptation to sin, division and death. All designed to inflame fear and inspire more selfishness to protect self at the expense of others.

- What are the weapons of God? Truth, love and freedom, which provides evidence to build or faith or trust and we exercise that faith in active interacting or relationship with God, talking to Him, connecting with Him—i.e. prayer, reading the Bible, meditating upon God, His design law, nature, what Christ accomplished at the cross. We humbly listen and choose to embrace and act upon those principles of God that He reveals to us. Thus, we work out our salvation with awe and humility, constantly covenanting with God in our daily cooperative relationship with Him.
- What is it that determines who is considered righteous—behavior or the condition of the heart?
- But, as the heart is healed do the behaviors change?
- But what is the key to changing the heart? Trust in God
    - and what is the key to trusting God? The truth
    - and what is the key to understanding and assimilating truth? A humble willingness to listen and learn—which is Biblical obedience!
    - Thus as we obey, as we listen, learn and follow Him in action, we gather more evidence by experience of God's goodness, the reliability of His methods, the constancy of His laws, the peace, joy, love, and spiritual healing of His presence, and our trust or faith increase based on the evidence of our experience with Him harmonized with Scripture and His design laws for life.

Thus our responsibility in the covenant with God is to listen, think, really hear what God is saying to us, trust Him and choose what He reveals to us.

SUNDAY

Read paragraphs 3-5, "When God first entered…" What does the name Yahweh mean to you? The eternal self-existent God. The being who has life original, unborrowed, underived from another source.

Who is this Yahweh? Jesus said it was Him, "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58 NIV84).

Do you see why the Jews wanted to kill Him? Jesus is Yahweh—the eternal self existent one, with life original, unborrowed, underived.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on another of God's names, El-Shaddai, which means Almighty God, what does this mean to you?

Who is this being? It is also Jesus—He is the member of the Godhead who interacts with human beings throughout the Old Testament. Paul says Jesus was the rock from whom Israel drank!

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the change in name from Abram to Abraham.

What is the significance of a name in the Bible? It is about character.

So, when we consider God's various names what are we to be learning? Things about His character. And what is the most significant aspects of God's name, character, that we are to know? What part of God's name came under attack by Satan?

- Did Satan allege God was not powerful?
- Satan's attack was upon God's trustworthiness, which was through allegations of imperialism and partiality—arbitrary rules arbitrarily applied

Have humans struggled with knowing God? Have human beings accepted various lies about God? Has God worked to bring us back to the truth about Him?

There are several attributes of God that recur through Scripture that God repeatedly utilizes to differentiate Him from the multitude of false gods, what are some of these?

- God is Creator—all false gods cannot create—meaning God is the life-giver
- God is eternal—He has no beginning—all false gods are created
- God is forgiving, He freely pardons—all false gods require payment, appeasement, offerings to purchase pardon
- God is truth—all false gods are liars
- God is love—all false gods are selfish
- God sacrifices Himself to uplift His creation—all false gods demand the worshippers sacrifice to uplift the god
- God governs via design laws—all false gods govern via imposed rules with imposed punishments

There are many names for God in the Bible, but they all reveal elements of His character and methods of love, how He as Creator built reality to operate and His plan to restore us to unity with Him and eternal life.

Notice how God describes what he does for the sake of His name in Ezekiel:

> "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that **I am going to do these things**, **but for the sake of my holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. **I will show the holiness of my great name**, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, **when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.**

> " 'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and **you will be clean**; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh**. **And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws**…(Ezekiel 36:22-27 NV84).

What does the Lord do to magnify His name? He heals hearts and mind!

And how is this possible? What is the means, mechanism, mode of healing hearts and minds?

Can hearts and minds be healed by:

- Legislation?
- Imposed laws?
- Threats of inflicted punishment?
- Coercion?
- Imprisonment?
- Judicial action?
- Declaration?
- Legal accounting in books?
- Jesus pleading to God to be gracious?
- Jesus pleading to God to be forgiving?
- Rituals such as water baptism or eating a communion wafer?
- Going to church on the right day?
- Eating the right foods?

What is the only method to actual glorify God's name and removing hearts of stone and putting in tender hearts so that we live out God's law of love?

> Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84)

And the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love. God wins us with the truth and then pours His love into our hearts. In trust, we open our hearts and the Spirit takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us, we get new desires and motives of God's living law of love produced within us. We are literally transformed in character. And only the Creator God can do this.

And when this happens, we get a name change—for our character changes and our "names" are registered in the "books" of heaven. Our characters are recorded as healed and renewed in heaven.

Abraham's name is changed in Genesis chapter 17. Let's read verses 1-14 from *The Remedy* and see what you think? Do you agree? Have I missed something?

1When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai – the Almighty Creator God. If you go where I direct; if you stop depending on yourself and perfectly trust me, 2then our agreement that you and your descendants are to become my helpers in fulfilling my plan to save humanity can go forward, and I will bless you with many descendants."

3Abram, overwhelmed with awe, dropped to his knees and put his face to the ground. And God said to him, 4"This is the agreement that I made with you: Through you and your descendants my promise to save humanity will be accomplished, thus you will be the father of many nations. 5You will no longer be called Abram (which means 'exalted father'), henceforth you will be known as Abraham (which means 'father of many'), for I have made you the father of many nations. 6I will make you extremely fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7I will carry out my promise of grace – to provide the Remedy, free and complete, to all who trust me. This is as an ongoing promise to you and your descendants for generations to come: I will be your God – your Savior, Protector and Sustainer – and the God of all who trust me like you do.8The entire land of Canaan, where you are now a foreigner, I will give to your descendants as part of my plan to fulfill my everlasting promise of grace – my plan to save humanity. I will be their God."

9Then God instructed Abraham, "You must keep our agreement: You agree to trust me and follow my instructions, and I agree to heal your heart and mind; you and your descendants must keep our agreement – as you trust me, I will heal your hearts and minds. 10This is my promise to you and your descendants. Our agreement – which cuts fear and selfishness out of your hearts and writes love into your hearts – you are to inscribe symbolically, as a reminder, on your flesh, by having every male among you circumcised. 11You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be a sign of our agreement – your trust in me and in my healing of your heart and mind. 12For generations to come, every male among you is to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies to all males born into your family as well as those born to your servants or any foreign-born servants whom you purchase. 13Whether they are born in your household or bought with money, all males must be circumcised. My promise to heal you will be inscribed on your flesh as an ongoing reminder of our agreement. 14Any male who is uncircumcised and refuses to be circumcised will be cut off from the people, for he has broken the agreement – he has refused to trust me and let me heal him and cut fear and selfishness out of his heart."

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "As we have seen so far…" this is well said, it is always the covenant of grace, the covenant of God to send the Messiah to remedy the sin problem and provide us a free remedy that we can partake through faith or trust.

The lesson asks us to read Genesis 18:19, the lesson puts the verse at the top of the page and has chosen the KJV, which reads:

> For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

What do you think of this translation?

What does justice and judgment connote? Does it lead your mind down legal paths? Do you get tempted to think legal or imposed laws, rules, deeds, tribunals, examination of records, judicial findings, need of legal payment etc?

Here are some other translations of this verse:

- For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by **doing what is right and just**, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." (NIV84)
- I have chosen him so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then the LORD will give to Abraham what he promised him." (New English Translation)
- For I know Abraham and have chosen him to head the family through whom I will fulfill my promise to save humanity. He will teach his children and their families to live in harmony with me and my design for life, to do what is right and exercise good judgment, and I will fulfill through Abraham what I promised him I would do." (The Remedy)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE, requires a sign in, and will contain member's only content, such as *The Remedy* and *Could It Be This Simple?* audio books to stream and download.

Our goal, as a ministry, is to continue to enhance your growth and experience with the wonderful, life-changing message of God's design and healing plan.

SHARING campaign: April *The Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms* **BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.**

Website: Our new website on our new virtual private server is filled with free resources:

- Our weekly Bible Study Video, Audio, and notes
- Healing the Mind in a Broken World Seminar
- The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course
- Weekly Blogs
- The Remedy
- Useful search engine

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 5
Children of the Promise

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read the story in the lesson, “A father and…” Do we know Jesus is coming back to get us? Do we have the same confidence of this little girl?

Why wasn’t the little girl afraid? Was she floating in an ocean free of sharks? So she wasn’t afraid of abandonment, she didn’t doubt her father would return, but why wasn’t she afraid of sharks while she waited for her father’s return? Because she didn’t focus her attention on sharks, she focused her attention on her father’s promise.

Where does the Bible tell us we are to focus?

> “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith…” (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84).

What would have happened to the little girl’s attitude had she focused on the possibility of sharks or fatigue or drowning? Could her worrying about such things have actually burned up more energy and exhausted her sooner?

Are we vulnerable today to taking our focus off of Jesus and allowing the dangers in the world to fill our minds and overwhelm our hearts?

What happens if we focus upon:

- COVID
- Global warming
- Over population
- Social injustice
- Governmental abuse

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- Gun violence
- Or any other danger in this world?

Who is the prince of this world? What is his goal? It is critical that at this time in human history we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and fulfill our responsibilities in how we live, practicing His methods in our lives while trusting our Savior with the future, with how things turn out.

SUNDAY

Read Genesis 15:1:

> After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward" (NIV84).

What does this mean?

What does it mean that God is Abram's shield?

Shield from what?

Is this primarily a temporal shield from physical disease, starvation, attack from marauders, or is it something more, a spiritual shield, a shield against fear, selfishness, and eternal death?

Is it a shield from Satan's attacks that would seek to destroy his faith, to destroy his usefulness in God's plan—and what is God's plan? To bring Messiah to heal him and the human race from sin and save us eternally—so is God shielding merely from temporal problems or is His shielding from temporal problems for the working out of His plan of salvation and deliverance from eternal ruin and death?

In fact, if we look at God's shielding from a spiritual perspective—about carrying out the plan of salvation to save sinners—does God sometimes NOT shield people from personal temporal trials and even death because they are spiritually healed and have eternal life and their temporal trials or death, while

not brought about by God, God does not interfere to prevent because it will be the means to reach others and bring more people to salvation? Consider the martyrs during the time of Rome how their deaths in the arena led many to Christ.

The lesson asks, “Why would the first thing the Lord says to Abram be, ‘Fear not?’ What would Abram have to fear?”

From where does fear originate or come? It comes from sin and being out of harmony with God. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid.

The sin condition itself incites fear, guilt, shame a sense of inadequacy, fear of rejection, of not being good enough, insecurity, and fear of punishment. This comes from the condition and it is magnified when exposed to God’s love and truth.

When a sinner comes close to godly truth and love their sense of personal shortcomings, sinfulness, defectiveness becomes more intense and this causes a greater sense of fear. The individual either surrenders themselves in trust to God or runs from God. Thus, every time an angel appears to one of God’s prophets they first thing they say is “fear not” or “don’t be afraid.”

We have nothing to fear from God, we have something to fear from the sin condition, from sin itself, from refusing to allowing God to heal us.

It is like cancer, we don’t need to fear the cancer doctor, we need to fear unhealed cancer.

Or it is like going to the dentist, we don’t need to fear the dentist. He or she is there to help us, to identify any cavities and fix them. Yet, many people are afraid of going to the dentist—why? Because the healing process can be painful, even when the dentist is gentle.

Likewise, this truism holds: **Once there is brokenness there are no pain-free options.** There is only healing or remaining broken and getting worse. Going to Jesus requires dying to self, circumcision of the heart, crucifying the flesh and this process is painful to the self. It is going through the valley of the shadow of

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

death led by our shepherd in the path of righteousness for the restoring of our soul. Yes, it is painful, but not harmful; it results in healing, renewal and the resolution of pain and a life of joy and happiness. Yet, many people reject healing and instead choose the path of pain avoidance, of what feels good right now. It would be like taking pain medicine for a cavity instead of getting the tooth fixed.

This is what Eastern meditation does—it avoids the valley of the shadow of death by self-directed emptying meditation that results in calming the fear circuits and creating a sense of disconnection from the immediate. Biblical meditation leads one to truth, the truth of their condition and the truth of our God of love who longs to heal us; and then God leads us through the healing process, which is transiently painful, but results in transformation of the heart and curing of the sin problem.

So, where does fear come from? From sin and it is resolved by experiencing God's love transforming our hearts. Perfect love casts out all fear.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the promise to Abraham and his "seed" and how all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

What does this mean?

Are the promises to Abraham just to the genetic descendants of Abraham or to all humanity?

God has covenanted in Genesis 3 to save the human species. He chose Abraham to be the progenitor of the family through whom Jesus would be born—but the covenant was not restricted to his biological descendants; **it was given to all those who are like Abraham in character.**

The Jews in Christ day believed the promises to Abraham were based on biology, genetics, and Jesus let them know their understanding was wrong:

I know you are Abraham's descendants. [Jesus acknowledges their genetics] Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. [They are not lovers of truth. They are not open to be led out of lies into the light of truth. Remember those who are lost in the end are those who did not love the truth and thus be saved. The Bible doesn't say that the saved know ALL truth, for none of us know all truth, only God is infinite and knows all things. The saved are those who have hearts that love truth and want to grow in the truth when it is presented and the Holy Spirit enlightens them to see and understand it. But these leaders didn't have minds and hearts that loved truth, in fact they hated it and constantly worked to obstruct it. Thus the means to heal them they rejected.] I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard **from your father**." [Here Jesus tells them that their genetics doesn't determine whose children they are; He tells them that they have a different father than Abraham even though they are genetically descended from Abraham.]

"**Abraham is our father," they answered**. [They protest and insist that it is genetics that matters]

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, **"then you would do the things Abraham did**. [Now Jesus makes it clear who is a child of Abraham and it is **not** about genetics; it is about being like Abraham in character, about trusting God, about having the faith of Abraham, about living out God's methods and following where God leads. In fact, in Scripture the faithful are often referred to as the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—why? Because the three represent the covenant lived out—We must have the faith of Abraham and thus are children of Abraham; but we must also have a miracle birth (be born from that which is dead—remember Sarah womb was considered dead. So we which are dead in trespass and sin must be reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit) and thus are children in Isaac; and we must, in union with God, wrestle against our own fears, selfishness and sinfulness to be overcomers and thus are children of Jacob and get a new name Israelites—heirs of the promise.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. **You are doing the things your own father does.**" [Jesus again makes it clear we are children of whose character we emulate and develop.]

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [Again they protest Jesus' revelation and now claim God as their Father.]
>
> Jesus said to them, "**If God were your Father**, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:37-44 NIV84). [Jesus makes it unmistakable, genetics are irrelevant, what matters is character. Those who have faith like Abraham are children of Abraham. Those who reject the truth, don't trust God, prefer a legal religion with an imperial dictator god are children of their god the devil.]

Paul wrote the same thing: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29 New English Translation)

What of the genetic descendants? They are also promised salvation through Christ—there is no difference between any human being—there is no Jew or Greek, there are only sinners who have accepted Jesus and been reborn, healed, saved, and sinners who have not accepted Jesus and remain terminal. Thus the Bible divides humanity into only two groups:

- Saved and lost
- Wheat and tares
- Fruitful vine and withered vine
- Faithful woman and harlot
- Righteous and wicked
- Sheep and goats

But humanity divides itself into many various groups and then fights against each other, such as:

- tribes
- races

- ethnicities
- nations
- political parties
- religions
- denominations
- sports fans
- climate change believers and climate change deniers

In America, the greatest divisions seem to be along race and politics—yet the racial division in the 21st century is a manipulation and diversion to prevent the people from genuine unity, from uniting. The real cause of the majority of conflict, hostility and division in our society is not caused by racism in the hearts of the vast majority of people, it is caused by classism—by powerful wealthy elites who control various media outlets and constantly inflame racial tensions to prevent the financial middle and lower classes from uniting and electing leaders that represent their concerns and breaking up these mega-corporations that are now directing the policies of this nation and in fact the world, all of this the move toward globalism. These mega corporations don't want national boundaries because they can't make as much money in one nation, they need to operate in all nations, getting the cheapest labor to produce their products and then selling their wares around the world with minimal taxes, tariffs and trade barriers.

And so, they incite racial divisions to prevent a majority of the people from uniting and acting to break up their power and monopolies and influence.

It is exactly as Revelation predicted, the beastly system is forming and will coerce through various means including economic means to advance its agenda. There will only be two groups in the end—the righteous and the wicked and they will not be separated by denomination, political party, race, nation—**they will be separated by character**!

The lesson in the first paragraph states that Jesus, "would at the cross pay for this sins of 'all the families of the earth.'"

What does this mean?

What law lens are we reading this through?

- To whom is the payment made?
- What is the payment?
- Is it blood? Is it death?
- Is it a human sacrifice?
- Is it paid to God?
- What kind of god requires a human sacrifice?
- Is it paid to Satan?
- What would God need a payment for?
- What is the purpose of a blood payment?
- Do we need to understand what the payment is for, what it is to accomplish?
- Does the law lens we look through impact our understanding?
- What questions do you have about this?

Under design law does it may more sense? If a parent donates a kidney to save their child dying of renal failure—has the parent "paid a price" to save their child? What kind of price is paid? Is it a legal price? Is it a price paid to the doctor or hospital? Who receives the donated payment of a kidney? The one dying and why is this the price necessary to save them?

This is the reality—we are terminal and dying of a condition we did not choose but were born with. Jesus came and paid the price necessary to save the species, procure the remedy to cure our condition, and thus the payment is made to us. And what is that payment? It is metaphorically taught as flesh and blood (John 6:53-56) or bread and wine—but what is it? The Word or truth to destroy lies and win to trust and the new sinless life/character of Christ which is represented by the "blood" –the life is in the blood—Leviticus 17:11.

Read last paragraph, "No question…" First, we agree completely that Jesus is the means whereby the covenant is realized. Well said!

But there is a word used in this paragraph that too often is misunderstood, a word that is used by those who advance the imposed law concept to create a falsehood that obstructs God's plan of salvation. And the word? "accounted."

The way it is taught is that this is a legal accounting, some forensic adjustment in ledgers somewhere in heaven, in which we are accounted or declared to be righteous through the legal application to a book in heaven when we remain unrighteous. This is a lie.

The Bible teaches that “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2Cor 5:21 NIV84)

This is substitutionary atonement—or substitutionary at-one-ment. Jesus our substitute, took our terminal sin condition upon Himself in order to overcome it, cure it, become our remedy SO THAT we might BECOME the righteousness of God. This is the healing substitution model. It is based upon reality, upon God’s design laws, in harmony with the character of God.

But the penal legal lie is based on human imposed law and makes God out to be the source of pain, suffering, death and it is taught that God must be appeased by the blood of His Son in order to not use His power to kill us.

Now I have some good news and sad news, not bad news, sad news. The good news is that our message is penetrating and many people are responding to this incredible good news and having their minds freed from the lies about God. The message of God’s character of love is reaching hearts and mind and changing lives—that is the good news! But the sad news is that the promoters of the imposed law view of God are attacking us again. It is very sad to see this, but it is evidence of our success at countering their false views.

Recently, I became aware that another pastor is going around presenting a PowerPoint program entitled “Tim Jennings”—yes, his title slide is my name. His presentation is not a mere discussion of doctrinal beliefs, contrasting various theological positions, even a discourse on what he believes is faulty theology. No, this is a specific and personal attack designed to discredit me, and do you think he is presenting an honest program, an accurate description of what I teach and then merely disagreeing and showing why he disagrees? No, he has created multiple false characterizations of what I teach, woven in with a couple of quotations of others used by me, to represent me as teaching things I do not teach.

First, I want to comment on his method.

He doesn't attack my actual beliefs or positions, but other people's positions that he assigns to me. He does this in two ways, first he identifies historic references that I have cited, such as Irenaeus and Robert Franks, and then takes ***their*** positions (not mine) on atonement and attacks those theories making it appear that those views are mine when they are not. I cite these historic sources to demonstrate that the church did not always promote penal substitution, not to endorse those theories. The second way he does this is by quoting an email he received and using the emailer's description of what they think I teach and then attacking that view as if that is my position. What he does not do, is take my view as presented in my various materials and address truthfully what I teach. Instead he assigns to me, by association, views that are not mine and attacks these false views.

The three big lies he presents are that:

1) I don't believe Scripture and think myself superior to the Bible and have taken it upon myself to correct errors in the Bible.
2) I don't believe in the substitutionary nature of Jesus sacrifice for our salvation and
3) that I teach Moral Influence Theory.

These assertions are false! I absolutely believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, but not the inerrancy of translation. But he attacks me for paraphrasing the Bible. He uses EGW quotes about letting the Bible speak for itself and that men should not seek to correct the Bible. He compares me to Joseph Smith. This is another fraudulent allegation by association. Joseph Smith believed the Bible has errors that needed correction. I do not. I believe the Bible is without error in the truths revealed for salvation—however, translators are not without error. There are many errors that have entered via translation that are not in the original Greek or Hebrew. The comma placement when Jesus was talking to the thief on the cross; the insertion of the word "men" when Jesus said "when I be lifted up I will draw all *men* unto me" are just a couple of examples. The purpose of translation is to make the meaning of the original manuscript most understandable. Not the original words, the original meaning. But, he sets up *The Remedy* falsely as my attempt to correct the Bible rather than my attempt to make the Bible's message most truly and accurately understood. This is quite different than what Joseph Smith did. He also doesn't compare my paraphrase with the Greek, but with other English translations, which I criticize for being

done after the imposed law construct became accepted orthodoxy and thereby introducing false legal concepts. The reason he does this is that he has the false law premise and falsely believes the Bible should teach appeasement theology, when it doesn't teach any such thing.

I teach that salvation is only possible because of the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus, but teach that this at-one-ment is a healing restoration to unity with God through Jesus' accomplishments, not penal-legal, not paying some legal price to God or God's law. We don't believe that God needed something done to Him, but sinners needed something done to us. And what we needed is two fold—we needed to be influenced morally—influenced with the truth about God to reject the lies and be won to trust. But if we stopped at this point and only taught this much, then we would be teaching the Moral Influence Theory. Bu**t we never stop here**, we always say that our salvation required more than a revelation of truth to win us to trust; our salvation also required an actual remedy to cure our sin condition and we could not develop it. Jesus, as our substitute, took our sin condition upon Himself and overcame it. He developed a perfect, sinless, human character and destroyed the infection of the carnal nature (fear and selfishness). This is what the law requires and what Jesus objectively achieved, and it is a requirement for our salvation (DA 762). This view is presented widely in my blogs, *The God Shaped Brain*, the God and Your Church Seminar, the Power of Love Seminar. In the *God Shaped Heart* I actually go through the various atonement models and demonstrate how they correlate with the different moral developmental levels and that what we teach is level 7—healing substitution. Yet this pastor failed to acknowledge this and instead presented only a portion of our position to make it appear we teach something we don't teach. He is publicly lying to people about what I teach. Did this pastor contact me first before going forward with his presentations? No.

Finally, this is a public accusation against me personally—it is an attempt to malign me and our ministry with his false view or understanding of me, rather than following God's principle of first coming to me to clarify and truly understanding what I teach and then if he disagrees do so honestly. He quote EGW many times in his attack on me, so here is a quote from her that I would like to share with him:

> Those who cannot impartially examine the evidences of a position that differs from theirs, are not fit to teach in any department of God's cause. 1SM 411.2

Why does this pastor, and others in church leadership, do this? Because their views are false and they know their views cannot stand up to truth. Thus they fear actually discussing their positions openly. I have, on multiple occasions, offered to have public discussions with those who think like this pastor, allowing each person to present their views, ask questions, answer questions, in front of a live audience and broadcast live, but these individuals won't do it. The truth can afford to be fair, it loses nothing by close investigation so I don't fear such discussions, in fact I want it because I want my views corrected in any place they are inaccurate. But, those who hold the imposed law model, don't want such a discussion because it would expose their errors and so they create straw men, false representations, about me and what I teach and attack those false representations and then feel good that they don't believe those false views. This is exactly how the Pharisees treated Christ, alleging He didn't obey the law or support what Moses taught.

So, if you have friends around the circle who hear some of these people doing this, be prepared to call them on it. First ask either your friend who heard the program, or the speaker, if the speaker has called me, talked to me, given me an opportunity to clear up any questions they have? If not, why is your friend listening to them? Why is the speaker presenting such things without talking to me first? Second, ask them how they understand God's law functions—if they claim it is both design and imposed, ask them to explain how they see any aspect of God's law being imposed, what laws are imposed? How are they imposed? And then explore this with evidence. And if you have a chance to talk with the speaker ask them if they would be willing to have a public discussion with Dr. Jennings live, to present the two views and answer questions.

TUESDAY

In the first paragraph the lesson quotes Augustine commenting on the human condition, "This life of ours—if a life so full of such great ills can properly be

called a life—bears witness to the fact that, from its very start, the race of mortal men has been a race condemned."

He goes on to describe many corruptions, struggles, woes of sinful humanity—but what do you think is meant by "a race condemned?"

When you hear condemned what comes to mind? Doesn't this term typically connote the idea of judicial condemnation?

I don't know if that is what Augustine meant or not, but the first definition in the dictionary is:

- pronounced guilty; sentenced to punishment, especially capital punishment

Is this how you hear condemned? This is the condemnation of imposed law, a ruling authority passing a sentence.

There is another definition in the dictionary that is closer to what we understand God's reality to be, but could be misunderstood if not thought through:

- deemed or declared unfit for use or service: One of the condemned buildings is going to be demolished to make room for luxury apartments.
    - Why is the building deemed or declared condemned—because its actual condition is deteriorated, decayed, run down, unfit. The declaration doesn't make it so, the declaration acknowledges what actually is.
    - This is how it is in God's reality. This is why the wicked, unrepentant, are condemned in the end because they are corrupt in character and beyond healing. God's pronouncement, or judgment, is simply the accurate diagnosis of what is. God's judgment doesn't determine their condemnation, it merely confirms the reality of their terminal state.
    - Some will focus on the human legal aspects of local government and say that regardless of the actual condition of the building it isn't condemned until the building inspector declares it condemned. As if a building is safe until the inspector gets there, or it is the inspectors

declaration that makes it so. No, the condemnation is inherent in the condition, the inspector merely acknowledges what is.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the promise to Abraham that his descendants would form a great and mighty nation and in the second paragraph, the lesson states: "God repeated to Jacob, with the added information that the promise would be fulfilled in Egypt (Gen 46:3), though Jacob did not see it."

What is the significance of this? What does it mean? How do you understand it?

First is it an evidence of God's foreknowledge? Yes, here is another example that God does actually know the future, including the future choices of people. Some who hold to open theism and teach God doesn't know the future choices of people, fail to acknowledge that events like this cannot occur without people making choices:

- Joseph's brothers choosing to sell him into slavery
- the traveling slavers choosing to going to Egypt
- Potiphar choosing to buy Joseph and then choosing not to kill Joseph when his wife made false allegations against him, but instead to imprison him.
- Pharaoh's decision to imprison the baker and cup bearer.
- Then God intervenes with dreams for the baker, cup bearer and later for Pharaoh, but God's interventions are happening around all the freewill choices of people that God foreknew and thus God told Jacob they would grow in Egypt.
- Then Pharaoh chooses to give land to Joseph's family, Jacob and the family decided to move to Egypt and accept Pharaoh's offer.

Why did God not only foreknow this, but actively worked to bring this about? What is the context in which these events are playing out?

- The working out of the plan of salvation—the coming Messiah
- Satan is working to stop God's plan to save humanity, God is working to bring Jesus to save us.

- God has told Abraham that it is through his descendants that the Messiah will come. What does Satan do? Does he go on vacation to seek to destroy this branch of the human family?
- What actions can you see that are works of God's enemy and if not countered would have resulted in interfering and obstructing God's plan to be realized through Abraham's descendants?
    - Sarah's temptation to take Hagar and fulfill the promise
    - Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities—their perversity and corrupt cultural influence if not removed would be a seducing and destructive influence on Abraham's descendants and thus God excised them
    - Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, dishonest dealing with the Shechemites, which would incite hostility in the various nations around them to seek to destroy them
    - Joseph's brother's jealousy—where did that originate, who was the inspiring source?
    - The famine—without God's intervention, what would have likely happened to Jacob's family? Who would have wanted that outcome? Is there evidence from Scripture that Satan can affect weather?
    - Then their captivity in Egypt—who inspired Pharaoh with jealousy to turn on the Hebrews and enslave them? And what was the goal of the enslavement? To degrade them, to destroy the image of God in them, to corrupt them and harden their hearts and thus close the avenue for Messiah.
    - Why did God allow the captivity? Why didn't God intervene sooner, send someone like Moses at the very beginning of the enslavement to lead them out? Because Satan had other human agents, states, nations, groups, that would have attacked and destroyed them and the children of Israel needed to grow their numbers large enough to be a sustainable population and group. Thus, while in Egypt they were protected by the Egyptian government from all the other nations and could increase and grow until the time was right to leave Egypt. This view of why God permitted them to be slaves in Egypt is held by many Jews.

The lesson asks why God wanted to make a nation, a special people, out of Abraham's descendants? What was God's purpose?

Read the last paragraph, which is a quote from *Christ's Object Lessons:*

> "The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God's purpose that by the **revelation of His character through Israel** men should be drawn unto Him. To **all the world the gospel invitation was to be given**. Through the teaching of the **sacrificial service Christ was to be uplifted** before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live." COL 290.1

What do you hear in this quotation? What was God's purpose for Israel?

Reveal His character—which is what? Love, truth, liberty.

To whom is the gospel given—all humanity and Israel was to be God's representatives, helpers, agents, spokespersons to take the truth about God, the good news about God, to the world.

What was the sacrificial system supposed to do? Teach people about Jesus—meaning it was all symbolic, educational, theatrical, metaphorical, none of that system was actual. Jesus is the actual, Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

The other nations were to be dispossessed what does this mean in regard to God's desire to save all the people of the world?

In the very process of dispossessing God was saving those who were savable—consider Rahab, she is not only saved from mortal death, saved from being driven out of Canaan, she is saved from eternal death and becomes one of the progenitors of Jesus. This is incredible, a non-Jew becomes an ancestor to Jesus by being incorporated into Israel through faith. This is another revelation that salvation isn't about genetic descent, but about character—about trusting God and having the heart changed. Later Ruth, the Moabitess, is also grafted into Israel through faith and becomes another ancestor of Jesus.

What does this tell us about the others non-Hebrews who were either killed or drive out of the region?

Why did this happen?

THURSDAY

Read the first paragraph, “However much the plan of salvation…” Do we have a role to play in our own salvation? What is it?

Can we be saved without Jesus? Can Jesus save a sinner without their cooperation?

This is the core difference between Arminianism and Calvinism.

Arminianism is named after Jacobus Arminius who opposed John Calvin’s view of unconditional election.

Historic Calvinism has 5 main points and uses the acronym T.U.L.I.P to remember them:

- T—Total depravity of humankind. We are born corrupt, at enmity to God, with a carnal nature that naturally wars and rebels against God and we can do nothing to change this situation.
    - In this view total depravity includes our inability to choose to respond to God and accept His offer of salvation. It fails to recognize that God in Genesis 3 immediately interceded in the human condition to put enmity between Satan and sinful humans, putting in a desire for something better, convicting and wooing us and thus giving us the power to choose God, to open the heart to God and receive the indwelling Spirit, which provides the power to resist sin. In other words, while we cannot overcome sin, we do have the power to choose to trust Jesus.
- U—Unconditional Election. This means that God *chooses* to give some people eternal life because God wills it regardless of what that person

wants, chooses or does. God's election is sovereign and overrules any choice on the part of the sinner—and is an evidence of God's love.
    - This is a gross perversity as it is a violation of the law of love and the law of liberty, and teaches that love is authoritarian, domineering and forces it way and doesn't grant real freedom. It is impossible to get genuine love without freedom. Further, if God were to do this, it would erase the individuality of the sinner and make a programmed robot.
- L—Limited Atonement. Calvinism teaches that the atonement was made only for the elect, not for all humans. That Jesus death did not make it possible for all human beings to come to salvation, but only those who God chose to save.
    - They make this argument for several reasons, but all of them are based in multiple layers of false assumptions. Calvinists believe the lie that God's law functions like human law and Jesus' death was necessary to pay our legal sin debt.
    - This distortion of God's law as imperial, God making up rules and then enforcing His way, leads to a distorted view of the atonement. They ask questions, "If Christ's death was for all men, then why are all men not saved?" "Couldn't a sovereign God save all men if He wanted to?" etc. Thus, because they misunderstand God's law, they misunderstand God's sovereignty and think that whatever happens, like some being lost, is because God wants them lost, worse, God chooses for them to be lost.
        - Understanding God's law as design law fixes this because we understand His sovereignty correctly—God is Creator, who built reality to operate upon design protocols, the supreme one being love, and love requires real freedom. Robots, computers, cannot love. Thus God sustains and maintains His laws, including liberty, which means that some freely choose to reject the love and life that God offers.
- I—Irresistible Grace. This means what is says, to whomever God decides to hit with His grace they are unable to resist it and will be saved. According to this teaching God's grace *cannot* be resisted. Thus, only those who God *chooses* are saved. The lost are lost because God didn't choose them and hit them with irresistible grace.

  - Again this teaching violates the law or liberty, would erase individuality, destroy personhood, created robots and make human beings devoid of the image of God.
  - Who wants to destroy the image of God in man? This doctrine teaches ideas that if they were true would result in the destruction of individuality, identity, capacity to think and do, and ability to love, creating instead robots controlled by the supreme power.
  - And what kind of God would God be if He actually operated this way? This is exactly Satan's view of God—a being who arbitrarily chooses to do things—just like make up laws and enforce them.
- P—Preservation of the Saints. Essentially means that if God has chosen you and hit you with irresistible grace, then He preserves you so you can never be lost.
  - It is a form of once saved always saved, but even more corrupt because in the Calvinist view you don't even have to initially choose. You are a passive pawn in the hands of a controlling god. And such a view again destroys individuality and the ability to love because we have no freedom and are merely puppets directed at the whims of God.

Arminianism—advances the principles of freewill, that God provides what is necessary for salvation for all human beings, but each person must choose to accept what God offers. This view retains our individuality and is in harmony with the law of liberty thus advances the restoration of the images of God within and retains our ability to love.

So John Wesley was Armenian and so is the Methodist tradition as well as the Baptist and Adventist traditions and many others.

FRIDAY

Read third paragraph, "Now read Hebrews…" What about us today, do we realize that we are just passing through, that this current Earth is not our home? Do we get too attached to our houses, communities, nations or other earthly possessions or groups and forget this earth is not our home?

What difference does it make for you to keep you mind focused on our eternal home?

Read first paragraph,

> "It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God has spoken, and His servant must obey; **the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be**." PP 126.3

From where does happiness come?

Read and discuss questions.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

SHARING campaign: April 2021 *The Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms* **BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.**

Website: Our website is filled with free resources:

- Our weekly Bible Study Video, Audio, and notes
- Healing the Mind in a Broken World Seminar
- The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course
- Weekly Blogs
- The Remedy
- Useful search engine

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 6
Abraham's Seed

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" 1Peter 2:9 NKJV).

What does this text mean to you? Does it help you know who you are?

Are you a royal—a prince or princess? Are you chosen by God as His special child? Are you a priest—whether male or female?

Do you experience these facts as part of your identity, your sense of self, or are they just words?

What difference does it make in how you live to be a royal prince or princess of God's celestial government and a priest of His court?

What is the function of a priest? To minister—to minister what? The text tells us, marvelous light—what is the marvelous light we are to minister?

Isn't it the truth of reality—which is first and foremost the truth about God Himself—His character of love, Him as Creator, His laws as design laws, how life is constructed to operate upon love, and the marvelous light of healing truth found in Jesus that delivers us from sin and death to eternal life?

SUNDAY

Sunday's lesson pulls out another descriptor of God's people besides royalty and priesthood, but a holy people, just as Peter does.

What does it mean to be holy? What is holiness?

- Set apart? Set apart from what? The world, from sin?
- So if we are set apart from sin would that be the same as being restored to righteousness, being healed, being transformed, being made at-one with God again?
- When Moses went to the burning bush he was instructed to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground—what does that mean?

- The Bible repeatedly says that the Sabbath is holy—a holy day, which is not an object, but time—how is the Sabbath holy?
- When Israel went to Sinai a boundary was put around the mountain and it was set apart as holy—what does that mean?
- When they build the sanctuary it had a holy place and a most holy place, what does that mean?
- The high priest wore on his turban a plate of pure gold with the inscription "Holy to the Lord"
- The golden altar and all the utensils used in the sanctuary service were holy to the Lord
- Anything that was touched by the blood of the sacrificial animal become holy

So, what is holiness, what does it mean to be holy? How can objects and time be holy? Is it merely an arbitrary declaration by a rule-making God, or is there something objective, something based in reality that is going on?

- What was different about the burning bush and the ground around from every other bush and ground in the region?
- What is different about the time of the Sabbath hours from every other day of the week?
- What was different about Sinai than every other mountain in the region?
- And what was different about all the elements of the sanctuary then any other instrument or blood of any other animal?

Everything that was holy was set apart to reveal truth about God in a way that the similar could not:

- The burning bush and ground were God met Moses revealed to Moses truth about God and His presence that the other bushes and ground did not and could not do—God's presence was literally there, the bush was shining literally, the ground was impacted by God's physical presence. This was not a declaration—it was a reality of God being there and manifesting truths to Moses in that place. Exactly the same reality at Sinai.
- The Sabbath was created as a day which reveals God's methods and character. Days 1-6 of Creation Week, reveals God's power to create, but Day seven reveals God's character and how He wields power—He presents truth, in love, and then leaves His intelligent creatures free to think for themselves. God rested, God stopped using power in the face of an assault on His right to rule. Thus, the Sabbath is set apart at Creation as a time that is invested with God's character and principles and a time for us to rest, reflect, and remember God and His methods and practice those methods in our lives.
- The Sanctuary and all its elements were set apart as teaching tools and object lessons to reveal truths about God and His plan to heal and save.

So what is holiness—being set apart from the profane, the worldly and being united with God in His kingdom of love to fulfill His purpose and live in harmony with Him and His methods. Thus His people are called a holy people a holy nation.

Here is one historic quote do you agree or disagree?

> Those whom God accepts and **sanctifies** to Himself are called to be diligent and faithful in His service, **being set apart** and devoted to Him. It is not a form of godliness, nor a name upon the

> church records, that constitutes "a living stone" in the spiritual building. It is being renewed in knowledge and **true holiness, being crucified to the world and made alive in Christ**, that unites the soul to God. The followers of Christ have one leading object in view, one great work: **the salvation of their fellow men**. Every other interest should be inferior to this; it should engage the most earnest effort and the deepest interest. 2Testimonies 168.1

What is holiness?

It is being set apart from the profane, what is worldly, sinful and being united with God, cleansed by Christ.

I want to suggest that holiness is perfect harmony with God, ultimately in every domain of existence—thus holiness is healthiness. Anything that violates God's design laws for life is unholy and damages and destroys. God, through His agencies, is working to restore us to holiness, which restores us to harmony with God and results in eternal life.

Would being holy mean that we live in harmony with God's laws—and what type of laws are those?

Consider this historic quote:

> At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments,—"Christ our righteousness." [What is this describing? Now it is very interesting that in 1888 a message was presented to SDA church that was about moving away from a legal accounting to actual transformation, to becoming the righteousness of God as 2Cor 5:21 states, but the church leadership didn't like that advancement in truth and when EGW endorsed that message, leadership shipped her away to Australia—the farthest point from North America one can go and still be on planet earth, and leadership chose to teach that righteousness by faith is a covering over sinfulness in a legal way so the Father cannot see our unrighteousness—that we are declared righteous even though we are not. But EGW wrote in Christ's Object Lessons that "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." COL311] There are clear, decided distinctions to be restored and exemplified to the world in holding aloft the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. **The beauty of holiness is to appear in its native luster in contrast with the deformity and darkness of the disloyal**, **those who have revolted from the law of God.** Thus we acknowledge God, **and recognize His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and throughout His earthly dominions**. [What does this mean? What is God's law? What kind of law? Is it related to the final message of mercy, to worshipping Him who made the heavens, earth, sea? Is it connected to holiness? Is it beautiful to be restored to God's perfect design for life? Can one be perfect, sinless, flawless, without any defect or deformity while violating God's law? Is any defect, deformity or flaw beautiful? So, what is the beauty of holiness? Restoration to God's design, harmony with God's law, healing! Holiness is to appear in its native luster—what does this mean? Native luster? Its original beauty and setting and where did God originally place His law? In the hearts of Adam and Eve!

> God's law is a living law, the protocols of life, and holiness is having God write His law again on our hearts and minds.] His authority should be kept distinct and plain before the world; and **no laws are to be acknowledged that come in collision with the laws of Jehovah**. [What does this mean? Does it mean a specific commandment change or does it mean the entire concept of law, that we are not to embrace and teach God's law as functioning like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed punishments? Do you think it is beautiful to imagine a god that would use power to torture and kill his creatures? But isn't that what all of Christianity teaches that a holy God must torture for all eternity or kill the unrepentant sinners? Why? Because they have accepted the lie about God's law. When we return to worshipping the Creator and present the 3 Angel's message as we were called to do, then we will glorify God and call people out of that fallen system of confusion.].... Christian Experience and Teachings 207.2

So, what is holiness? Restoration of the law of love into the heart and mind of the individual such that we love like God loves, Jesus said:

> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven**. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [Notice in the context of love Jesus uses the example of design law in nature] If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5:43-6:1 NIV84).

The law of God is a living law—a parameter of life. Love cannot be understood, or function in the dead. It doesn't operate on stone. Rocks don't love. **Love requires life and life requires love.**

Consider this historic quote from the SDA BC 1117:

> **Holiness is the gift of God through Christ**. [What kind of gift? Is it a gift that is legal, registered in a book in a building in some remote corner of the universe, or is it a gift of life, a gift of transformation of the inmost being? Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, **born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness**. **Their minds are changed.** [What is described here as true holiness? Being reborn, renewed—this is actual, literal, just as Scripture teaches in 2Cor 5:21] With clearer vision they behold eternal realities. They are adopted into God's family, and **they become conformed to His likeness, changed by His Spirit from glory to glory**. [What is happening? Healing, regeneration, transformation—we are to be holy—which is a change in our living reality] From cherishing supreme love for self, they come to cherish supreme love for God and for Christ. . . . {6BC 1117.13}
>
> Accepting Christ as a personal Saviour, and following His example of self-denial--**this is the secret of holiness** (ST Dec. 17, 1902). {6BC 1117.14}

So what is holiness? Having God's living law of love written on the heart, which is the same as the New Covenant. And this law is the law of life, the protocol life is built upon and always results in healing and happiness. Thus, holiness is healthiness, which brings happiness.

thoughts?

Read first paragraph, "There is no question…" What of the idea that this choice was a total act of God and there was nothing in the people that deserved this grace?

This is very poorly stated and mixes up ideas that cause confusion. Let's see if we can clarify the issue:

- God's actions are always 100% God's action
- God's choices are always 100% God's choices
- So, God choosing Abraham's descendants was 100% God's choice, no question about that
- But, does that mean Abraham didn't have to make a choice, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants through the generations—does God choosing them as His representatives and to be the avenue for the Messiah mean that they didn't have a choice in the matter?
- Or does history show just the opposite, that millions in fact did choose to reject God's choice and instead made idols their gods? But God foreknew a remnant of Abraham's descendants would remain a faithful avenue for the Messiah and retain the Scriptures for the rest of humanity.
- They use the word "deserve" and by that I believe they mean Abraham and his descendants didn't get chosen as a reward from some good work, it wasn't compensation, it wasn't pay, it was not something they had a right to by some righteousness in them or some action they created.
- But, it doesn't mean that God's choice to call Abraham's family was devoid of something in them—it wasn't. God chose Abraham and his descendants because God knew Abraham and many of his descendants were not beyond healing, and many would respond to Him and be restored to trust and be saved and thus be the avenue for the Messiah.

God made promises to Abraham that his descendants would form a great and mighty nation and God repeated the promise to Isaac and Jacob and told Jacob that the promise would be fulfilled in Egypt (Gen 46:3).

What is the significance of this? What does it mean? How do you understand it?

First it an evidence of God's foreknowledge! Here is another example that God does actually know the future, including the future choices of people. Some who hold to open theism and teach God doesn't know the future choices of people, fail to acknowledge that events like this cannot occur without people making choices:

- Joseph's brothers choosing to sell him into slavery
- the traveling slavers choosing to go to Egypt and sell Joseph there

- Potiphar choosing to buy Joseph and then choosing not to kill Joseph when his wife made false allegations against him, but instead to imprison him.
- Pharaoh's decision to imprison the baker and cup bearer.
- Then God intervenes with dreams for the baker, cup bearer and later for Pharaoh, but God's interventions are happening around all the freewill choices of people that God foreknew and thus God told Jacob they would grow in Egypt.
- Then Pharaoh chooses to give land to Joseph's family, Jacob and the family decided to move to Egypt and accept Pharaoh's offer.

Why did God actively worked to bring this about? What is the context in which these events are playing out?

- The working out of the plan of salvation—the coming Messiah
- Satan was working to stop God's plan to save humanity, God was working to bring Jesus to save us.
- God had told Abraham that it was through his descendants that the Messiah would come. What does Satan do? Does he go on vacation or seek to destroy this branch of the human family?
- What actions can you see that are works of God's enemy and if not countered would have resulted in interfering and obstructing God's plan to be realized through Abraham's Seed?
    - Sarah's temptation to take Hagar and fulfill the promise
    - Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities—their perversity and corrupt cultural influence if not removed would be a seducing and destructive influence on Abraham's descendants and thus God excised them
    - Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, dishonest dealing with the Shechemites, which would incite hostility in the various nations around them to seek to destroy them
    - Joseph's brother's jealousy—where did that originate, who was the inspiring source?
    - The famine—without God's intervention, what would have likely happened to Jacob's family? Who would have wanted that outcome? Is there evidence from Scripture that Satan can affect weather?
    - Then their captivity in Egypt—who inspired Pharaoh with jealousy to turn on the Hebrews and enslave them? And what was the goal of the enslavement? To degrade them, to destroy the image of God in them, to corrupt them and harden their hearts and thus close the avenue for Messiah.
    - Why did God allow the captivity? Why didn't God intervene sooner and send someone like Moses at the very beginning of the enslavement to lead them out? Because Satan had other human agents, states, nations, groups, that would have attacked and destroyed them and the children of Israel needed to grow their numbers large enough to be a sustainable population and group. Thus, while in Egypt they were protected by the Egyptian government from all the other nations and could increase and grow until the time was right to leave Egypt. This view of why God permitted them to be slaves in Egypt is held by many Jews.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Deuteronomy 28, the promises and curses to Israel depending on what Israel does.

Read the second paragraph, "The first part…" How do you understanding this?

If you read Deuteronomy it says God will bless and God will curse—what does this mean? Does it mean that God uses His power to injure, to harm, and I am not talking about discipline here, I am not asking about a therapeutic intervention. I am asking, Does God use power to inflict curses or harm that if God merely restrained Himself from acting the sinner would not otherwise reap? Is God the source of pain, suffering and death?

Then why does the Bible read like it does as if the Lord is causing this and is bring this upon them?

What is the purpose of these promises and warnings?

At what level of maturity are most of these people?

Does a parent talk differently to a 4-year-old than a 24-year-old?

Might a loving parent threaten to inflict pain onto a child who plays in the street? Why? In the child's mind what would be wrong with playing in the street? Why does the parent allow the child to think the problem with playing in the street comes from the parent?

This is what we read in the OT, God stands between His children and the reality of breaking design law and allows Himself to be viewed as the inflictor of pain and suffering and punishment to prevent them from destroying their souls in idolatry and rebellion, so that they can grow up and realize that God was never the actual source of pain and suffering, any more than the parent who threatens to spank the child playing in the street is the source of destruction. But sadly, many never grow up and even today still teach that God in order to be just must punish sin.

TUESDAY

Read Jeremiah 11:8: "Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done." (NKJV)

Read first paragraph, "Look at the above text…" How do you understand this? Is God doing something bad? The lesson suggest it is something bad—is it?

- Is it bad for a parent to discipline an unruly child?
- Is it bad for a dentist to pull a rotten tooth?

- Is it bad for a surgeon to excise a cancer?

Does our understanding of what is transpiring make a difference?

What happens in the character of people if they sin without negative consequence?

What happens to a person with leprosy? Why? Leprosy damages the nerves that signal pain, thus when a person with leprosy touches a hot stove, or cuts themselves, they don't feel it and do much more damage to themselves. The pain we feel with a burn or cut alerts us something is wrong and we minimize the damage.

Leprosy is a metaphor for sin because sin sears the conscience, it makes us insensitive to the damage sin causes us and we engage in more destroying more and more of our souls, debasing more of our character.

So, God bringing increasing amounts of painful consequences to people acting outside His law of love is evidence of love, designed to get them to repent, to turn around to be saved.

But all of this wisdom requires we reject the imposed law lie, the idea that God's law functions like human law and embrace the truth that God is Creator and His laws are design laws.

If we hold to the imposed law lie, then we see sin as merely bad deeds, breaking rules, and rule-breaking requires external enforcement and infliction of punishment to uphold the law. Thus God is the source of pain and suffering as law enforcer.

But design law realizes that the pain and suffering comes from sin itself and God may artificially intervene with discipline and therapeutic boundaries like a loving parent or doctor, seeking to heal and restore.

The lesson asks us to compare the pre-flood world and God's actions in bringing the flood and God's curses on Israel—what are the parallels?

What is the overall landscape or context? Humankind is dying of sin and God promised to send Jesus as our Messiah to save us and Satan is working to obstruct God's saving plan. That is the context—that is the theme of the Bible.

In that context what do we see and learn?

The lesson says, "for the most part, the history of national Israel was repeated pattern of apostasy followed by divine judgments…"

What do you understand this to mean and be? How do you hear "divine judgments"?

What law lens do you hear this through?

What does "judgments" mean in the human law world, when law functions like we make up, rules that require enforcement?

What does "judgments" mean when we see God as Creator and His laws are the laws life is built to operate upon?

Understanding this reality, then what is the "judgment"? Is it a legal judgment or is it the accurate diagnosis of what happens when we violate God's design laws?

The question of judgment is confusing because in the Bible there are at least four judgments:

The First Judgment:

- "Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when **You are judged**.'" Romans 3:4 NKJV
- Satan lied about God.
- Jesus reveals the truth about God.
- **We must judge: Is God like Satan says—or is God like Jesus revealed?** (Elijah Carmel)
- This judgment of ours determines whether we choose to trust God and open our hearts or not.
- "I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment** has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.'" Revelation 14:6, 7

The Second Judgment:

- "'Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. '**So I will come near to you for judgment**.'" Malachi 3:1–5

- This is the Judgment of the Great Physician, diagnosing what is wrong and determining the best therapeutic intervention.
    - God bringing "judgments" upon rebellious people throughout history to alert, to convict, to redeem, to protect, to redirect, and to keep open the avenue for Messiah (Flood, Sodom, captivity).
- Jesus' work in the heavenly sanctuary to determine (judge):
    1. Who has trusted Him and given Him access to their hearts and
    2. What residual elements of sin remain to be removed in order to perfect them for the resurrection and second coming

Third Judgment:

- "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge**. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Revelation 20:4–6
- "Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?" 1 Corinthians 6:3
- In the future, the saints review the history of what transpired and the lives of the lost and of angels, and judge God's actions in saving who is saved and not saving who is not saved, which confirms that every lost person is lost because they actually don't want to be in heaven, so that no doubt is left in any mind as to why the unrepentant are not in heaven.

Fourth Judgment

- "I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books." Revelation 20:11, 12
- And what is recorded in the books of heaven?
- The names are written there, and in the Bible what does name represent? Character! And what determines our character? Who we have chosen to trust—either opening our heart to Jesus and allowing Him in or clinging to fear and selfishness.
- "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned**." Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84
- What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what actually is.
- The end of the 1,000 years:
    - New Jerusalem is on earth and the gates are open and no one comes in.
    - The wicked acknowledge they were wrong and God was right—but they attack the city anyway.
    - They then experience the fire of unveiled truth and love and cry for the mountains to fall upon them, reaping what they have sown: eternal non-existence.
    - And all the saved judge that God could have done nothing more to save them.
    - There is no human law court determining guilt or innocence and imposing punishments—that is Satan's lie.

So how do you understand judgment?

Read fourth paragraph, "This brings up something…" Well said, the covenant is not a legal agreement, it is a holy relationship of love and trust in which we surrender self and experience the indwelling Spirit that infuses us with new motives, desires, attitudes, methods, principles—the character of Christ.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the remnant. What is a remnant? Who are the remnant?

Read second paragraph, "The purpose of God…" Do the remnant reveal God's glory? And what is God's glory? His character, which is what?

What is the message for the world today?

> Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Rev 12:17 NIV84)

What does it mean to obey the commandments of God?

What does it mean to hold to the testimony of Jesus?

What was Jesus' testimony? "If you have seen me you have seen the Father"

So the true remnant will give the same testimony about God Jesus gave, which means the true remnant will teach what about God's law and government?

What did Jesus teach about God's law and government?

Below is a review of some of Jesus' parables which demonstrates He taught God's law as design law:

The Lamp | Matthew 5:14–16

- If one lights a lamp and allows it to do what it does naturally, it shines and illuminates. What kind of law is revealed in this parable? God's truth and love will always shine out through the lives of those who possess it, brightening the world around them. And if one tries to hide the light, they are working against how reality operates.

New Cloth on Old Garment | Matthew 9:16, 17

- What happens when new cloth is sewn onto an old garment? The new cloth tears the old fabric. Why? Does a ruling authority inspect the garment and issue a decree that is enforced by government agents, who tear a bigger hole? Or is it design law—how reality works? This is the same lesson taught in the story of the new wine in old skins, which one of our class members

wrote an excellent blog about. The good news about God—the gospel—cannot be sewn onto the old garment of legal religiosity; it requires a new heart for the new truth.

The Sower | Matthew 13:1–23

- Why do the same species of seeds grow differently? Is it because God uses His power to miraculously make the seeds grow differently? Or are the seeds equally healthy when planted and receive equal amounts of sunlight and rain, but the soil in which the seeds are planted is different? Which represents what? The hearts of people into which the seeds of truth are planted; again, what kind of law is involved?

The Leaven | Matthew 13:33, 34

- What is the lesson of leaven? How does leaven work? Is it that God inspects the flour and, if the flour contains leaven, then God uses miraculous power to make it rise, but for those who don't use leaven, God refuses to perform the miracle so that their bread doesn't rise? No—it is a natural result of design law at work, how these various substances function in harmony with the laws that God built life to operate upon. It is the kingdom of God's reality.

The Net | Matthew 13:47–50

- What determines which fish are kept and which are discarded? It is the condition of the fish themselves—there is no jury, no prosecutor, no defense lawyer, no judge. It is all based on the actual condition of the fish. So too, in the end of time, people will be separated by their condition of heart: having accepted Jesus and been renewed in love—or rejected Jesus and been hardened in selfishness. This is design law and not a penal/legal issue at all!

What Comes Out of the Mouth | Matthew 15:10–20

- Why is it that what goes into a person's mouth does not determine his cleanliness, but rather what comes out of his mouth? What kind of law is involved? Is the person who speaks evil unclean because someone hears what they say, reports it to authorities, which causes a judicial review and a legal ruling that declares them unclean? Or do the words and actions of a person reveal the actual unclean nature of their character?

Laborers in the Vineyard | Matthew 20:1–16

- This is a great parable because it powerfully exposes the fallacy of imposed law—the lie of penal (legal) salvation. The workers who worked one hour got the same pay as those who worked all day. What did those who worked all day think? What do you initially think when you hear this story? What if we added to the story that those who worked all day were people of color while those who worked only one hour were white—and they all got the same pay? Is that fair?

It is totally unfair *if we have an imposed-law view*, but if we have a design-law view and understand how reality works, we immediately see just how fair God's kingdom is.

The payment is eternal life; this is the reward. The field is the earth, where we work with Jesus to save souls. Those who worked all day had salvation early in their lives and the privilege of working with

God and, therefore, coming to know Him and His truths more fully and growing in character and skill in God's methods. They applied His methods early in their lives and became more skilled in laboring for Him and applying His principles, which means they became more mature than those who worked only an hour. The thief on the cross came at the last hour and got the same pay (eternal life), but he did not have a lifetime of growing with God. But if one holds the human-law model, the penal lie, then this parable appears unfair. This is why the Pharisees hated what Jesus taught!

The Two Sons | Matthew 21:28–32

- One son says he will work in his father's field but then doesn't; the other son says he will not work in his father's field but then does. What is the lesson? That actions speak louder than words. It is what we ultimately do with our lives that matters, not what we initially say. How many are being duped today because they go merely on the words people say and don't look at their actions? Lies are words; truth is how reality works. Thus, the parable is another example of the application of design law revealing the truth in spite of the words spoken.

The Ten Virgins | Matthew 25:1–13

- What makes the difference between the wise and foolish virgins? Why don't lamps give light without oil? Is it that God performs a miracle for those who have oil but refuses to perform a miracle for those who don't? Or is it how reality works—that lamps do not burn without fuel? Can any human have the light of God's character shine forth from their life without the oil of the Holy Spirit in their hearts? We can have the Bible (lamp) without the oil (Spirit), but we cannot have light (godly character) without the oil. So who decides who are the wise and who are foolish? Who has the oil—and who doesn't? What law is involved?

Ten Talents or Gold Coins | Matthew 25:14–30

- This parable beautifully describes the law of exertion! What happens if you don't use the talents you possess—if you don't use it, you lose it. But if you apply yourself, you gain more abilities. No jury, no presentation of evidence, no judge passing sentence—it is the reality of the outcome of our choices.

The Good Samaritan | Luke 10:29–37

- In this parable, which person is right with God: the priest, Levite, or Samaritan? What determined who was right with God? How many Sabbaths did the Samaritan keep? How many sacrifices did he make at the temple? How much tithe did he pay? How many kosher meals did he eat? Do you see what mattered was not a list of rules—but having God's love in the heart. What law is this?

The Beaten Servant | Luke 12:47, 48

- The servant who knows his master's will but doesn't do it receives many stripes, but the servant who doesn't know his master's will receives few stripes. Is this, as the penal/legal adherents claim, proof positive that God's law is imposed and functions like human law, with God inflicting different amounts of punishment upon sinners?

Not at all! Jesus did not say that the servants were beaten by the master—only that they would receive differing amounts of blows, or stripes or pain or suffering, depending on how much they actually knew. Jesus is again describing how reality works—we actually experience differing amounts of guilt, shame, regret, and sin-damage to our hearts and minds depending on how much truth we know and choose to reject. It is simply how reality works and how I paraphrase it in *The Remedy*:

"The aide who understands the Master — his design, the problem being addressed, and how to apply the Remedy — and either doesn't heed his instructions or applies a false remedy will suffer many blows: a guilty conscience, warped character, damaged reason, broken relationships and ultimately, a destroyed soul. But the one who doesn't know about the Remedy or how to apply it and therefore doesn't share it, or applies a false remedy will suffer few blows — regret, disappointment, and grief."

In all of these parables, Jesus revealed that the kingdom of God is based upon the laws that our Creator built into the fabric of reality—and that these are an expression of His character of love. Jesus never taught penal/legal theology! God's law originates in His being, and emanates from Him. All creation is sustained by Him. It is Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law: imposed rules that require imposed punishments.

At this time in Earth's history, God is calling for His people to come out of the confusing systems of religiosity based on imposed rules and inflicted punishments. So reject the penal/legal lie and worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and fountains of water.

The remnant teach call people back to worship Him who made the heavens, earth and sea, design law worship!

THURSDAY

Who is spiritual Israel?

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29 NIV84)

Who is an heir of the promises made to Abraham? All those who have faith like Abraham!

It is about character, not genetics, Jesus made this plain when He told the Jewish leaders that they were of their father the devil.

The lesson says, "By baptism we acquire kinship to Christ and through Him acquire the right to participate in the promises made to Abraham."

What baptism?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What does "the right" sound like? Does it introduce a legal connotation?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "No distinction…" Why does God make no distinction regarding nationality, race, cast? Where do such distinctions come from?

How many races did God create? Would the various races in the world today be a result of sin impacting God's creation?

Would the physiological changes we see in the world today, such as shortening lifespan, wrinkles, aging, shortened height, obesity, diabetes, cancers be a result of sin altering God's physical design for human beings?

What about differences in skin color?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content. You will have the option of making your contact information available to our other members—over 240 people have already done this and we have members from all over the world, currently 20 different countries, and most with multiple people signed up. There is a search engine where you can search to find people close to you to network with.

The Remedy Audio and *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.

Our website is filled with free resources:

- Our weekly Bible Study Video, Audio, and notes
- Healing the Mind in a Broken World Seminar
- The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course
- Weekly Blogs
- The Remedy
- Useful search engine

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 7
Covenant at Sinai

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "As a people…" The lesson asks: "How could the Lord win them back to Himself?"

How does God win them back? What are the obstacles God has in bringing the people back into loving fellowship with Him?

Does their being slaves, being uneducated, abused, oppressed, mistreated, having human life devalued, being immersed in pagan culture and practices have any impact on their minds and their ability to process truth, trust others, trust God, believe in God, believe God is good, and to love?

In other words, does God have to take into account where their mindset and understand of things are and meet them there? And does God have to speak a language that they will understand?

So, where does God start with people who have lived as slaves?

What will be the most important factor for slaves to win them to believe in Him and follow Him above all the other gods they have heard about?

Would the most important factor for these slaves be—God is love, gentle, kind and meek and God loves you? Why or why not?

When we consider the seven levels of moral development do we see exactly why God did what He did, why He acted as we read and how God slowly led them from infancy to maturity, at least for those who would learn?

What are the seven levels and do we see God speaking to the people at each level?

1. **Reward and punishment**: The most basic level of understanding whether something is right is if we receive reward and wrong if we are punished.

   This level of functioning is normal for small children and a necessary starting point in our learning. But for an adult to operate at this level something is terrible wrong. This is a slave mentality, don't think, don't understand—just do what the master says to avoid the whip. This is the level of the Nazi soldiers who put people in the gas chamber. Why did they do it? They

would be punished if they didn't, so it was right to do as they were ordered. This is ancient Israel as slaves in Egypt, doing what the master said to avoid punishment.

Are we seeing society moving toward level one thinking—fear of deplatforming, fear of censoring, fear of riots, fear of mobs, fear of governmental sanction, fear of economic ruin, travel restriction, don't ask questions, don't think, shut up and do what you are told?

At stage one, a ruler establishes his right to rule by displays of power and vengeance upon his enemies. He rules by threat of punishment and hope of reward. Mercy, or failure to punish, is seen as evidence of weakness, not morality, by stage one mentality. People at this level see a God of mercy as a marshmallow God and insist God must use his power to torture and kill his enemies.

God meets people where they are, so with ancient Israel and the people of Egypt he first established his credentials to rule by acts of punishment upon the Egyptian gods, and by mighty, spectacular miracles demonstrating the Egyptians gods were not gods at all. "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (DT 29:6)

Level one decision-making is so primitive it doesn't even require a brain; the mind is completely sidelined. Animals, plants, and bacteria avoid painful stimuli and grow toward rewarding stimuli. This level of functioning is not worthy of human beings created in the image of God. In fact, it is Satan's goal to reduce us to "brute beasts creatures of instinct" operating at level one. (2Pet 2:12)

2. **Marketplace exchange**: Level two morality is the quid pro quo system of right and wrong; you do something for me in exchange for something of agreed value in return. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, the let's make a deal mindset.

   This is ancient Israel at Sinai, with "an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth" mentality and saying when the law was first read, "All the Lord has said, we will do." (Ex 19:8, 21:24)

   At level two vengeance is a moral duty. People who do evil must be paid back with an equal amount of pain and suffering. This is the level of retributive justice. The idea that justice means paying back proper amounts of pain and suffering upon the perpetrator. To not return pain and suffering is considered immoral. Sadly, far too many people still make decisions at this level.

   This level of understanding of right and wrong also manifests itself in the health-wellness gospel. If you do the right rituals, attend the right church, or say the right prayer every day for thirty days then God fulfills the bargain by giving you better health, wealth or expanding your territory. At this level it is a simple business transaction with God: If you do right, you are blessed by God, if you don't do right you are not blessed by God.

   Level two development requires only the most minimal amount of mental awareness. Monkeys, dolphins, dogs can operate on this level seeking to make a deal—to get a treat for

doing a trick. Again, okay for small children, but not worthy of mature beings created in God's image.

3. **Social conformity**: At this stage right and wrong is determined by community consensus. This is the child who says, "Everyone else is doing it." Right is determined by the approval of peers. Individual vengeance not allowed, forgiveness is preferred, but group punishment is deemed just. If group punishment doesn't happen, then social order is undermined.

   This was ancient Israel when they wanted kings. All the other nations had kings, so it must be right and Israel demanded to have kings. This was also manifested by ancient Israel collectively punishing those who didn't conform to the agreed norm.

   Level three decision-making also doesn't require thinking, reasoning or significant engagement in higher cortical activity. Many herd animals function just like this, determining the right way to go is the way the herd goes, even if it's right over the cliff.

   Following the herd, the group, what's popular in culture can bring an emotional sense of security, but doesn't develop the person into a son or daughter of God.

4. **Law and order**: At level four right and wrong is determined by a codified system of rules, impartial judges and imposed proscribed punishments. At this level individuals defer judgment to properly elected or otherwise constituted authority. Right is getting a proper pay or reward for good work, and proscribed infliction of punishment for breaking the rules. Authority figures are rarely questioned, "He must be right he is the president, the judge, the pastor, the pope."

   Elementary school children operate at this level and find security, predictability, and peace in the rules. At this level "tattletales" abound as children are intolerant of "rule-breakers" and demand "fairness," which is typically some imposed punishment. The black and white thinking of this level of operation leads to fragmenting into divergent groups or cliques who share a common core set of group rules and who will demean and criticize those who don't share their rules.

   This was ancient Israel at the time of Christ – "we have a law!" they proclaimed, as they sought to stone Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. The Jews in Christ's day were also separatists who were intolerant of those who didn't keep their rules and obey their rituals.

   This is much of our modern world, with its codified laws, courts, prosecutors, judges, juries and imposed punishments. Authority at this level rests in the coercive pressure of the state to bring punishment upon those who deviate from the established laws. At this level police agencies and law enforcers are required to monitor the populace, search for breaches in the law and inflict codified penalties.

5. **Love for others**: Level five morality understands right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others, realizing people have value in who they are irrespective of the rules. Wrong is when our actions are objectively harmful to others.

   Jesus demonstrated this level of functioning when he touched lepers, spoke to women, socialized with tax collectors, healed on the Sabbath, and turned over money tables in the Temple. All of these acts were acts of love but violated the laws of the Jewish authorities. The Pharisees, operating at level four and below wanted to stone Him for breaking their rules.

6. **Principle based living**: Level six decision-making understands the design protocols or principles upon which life is constructed to operate and intelligently chooses to live in harmony with them. It is not doing something because a rule says to do so, but because it is understood to actually work that way.

   Mature individuals recognize governments can pass laws to make substances, such as tobacco, "legal" but they can never pass laws to make them healthy. Thus, level six thinkers don't use such substances, not because of its legal status but because they violate the laws of health and damage body and brain.

   Jesus lived in harmony with God's principles, revealing God's character of love in all He did. And all His parables taught design laws not imposed laws.

7. **Understanding Friend of God**: At level seven a person not only has love for God and others, not only understand God's design protocols for life, but also understands God's purposes and intelligently chooses to cooperate in fulfilling their role in his purposes.

   Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:15 **"**I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

   Persons functioning at level seven understand the truth about God's character of love, his nature and design for life, the origin of evil, the nature of sin, the weapons of Satan, the original purpose for the creation of humanity, the fall of humanity into sin, God's working through human history, the purpose of the Cross, and the ultimate cleansing of the universe from sin.

The history of Israel is the history of reality—how God works, truth, presented in love, leaving people free. God cannot heal hearts and minds without the active free-will participation of that person why? Because God cannot "create" or miraculously give certain things such as:

- maturity cannot be instantly given, it must be developed.
- Trust
- Reciprocal love –God can and does love us with infinite love, but our love for God must be given freely, it cannot be programmed like a computer, it cannot be forced
- Loyalty

- Friendship

The lesson asks us to read Exodus 19:4: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I lifted you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (NET).

What is the imagery of lifting on eagles wings supposed to teach?

Read fourth paragraph, "These illustrations…" What is the lesson?

- Can an eaglet fly when it is hatched?
- Can an infant walk?
- Why can't a newly hatched eaglet fly? Why can't an infant walk?

What is the lesson?

- Does the eaglet and infant have to be fed by the parent, and ingest the nurturing food so their body can grow?
    - Do newborn Christians have to be fed the bread of life, the truth of God and ingest that food—those truths and principles into their heart and minds—in order to grow?
- Do eaglets and infants need the protection of their parents in order to not be ravaged by predators?
    - Do babes in Christ need protection from God and others mature Christians in order to not be ravaged by the wolves in sheep's clothing?
- Do eaglets and infants need parents to teach them how to fly or walk and to help them grow?
    - Do babes in Christ need mature Christians to help mentor them and teach them God's methods and principles for living, how to reason, how to discern and problem solve, how to handle powerful emotions, how to stand on their own two feet?
- Do eaglets and infants need to actual develop the abilities within themselves before they can fly or walk on their own?
    - Do babes in Christ need to actually grow up, mature before they can actually walk the Christian walk—be responsible for Christian duties?

And what does maturity look like according to Scripture?

> We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain **because you are slow to learn.** In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, **you need someone to teach you the elementary truths** of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being **still an infant**, **is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness**. But solid food is for the **mature**, who by constant use have **trained themselves to distinguish good from evil**. Therefore let us **leave the elementary teachings** about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again t**he foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death**, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment" (Heb 5:11–6:2 NIV84).

What is immaturity? It is levels four and below functioning that we just reviewed, which focuses on self, on:

- Reward or punishment
- Getting a good deal
- Being accepted by the crowd
- Getting one's legal debt paid or avoiding legal trouble

But we are to move beyond Sinai, beyond the childish immature things and grow up into maturity, because if we don't w**e are not acquainted with righteousness**—true maturity is level five and above who:

- Love God and others more than self
- Live in harmony with God's design laws or methods
- Intelligently cooperate with God to fulfill His purposes

And we see this in the various atonement models people teach and believe:

Atonement through the 7 levels:

Level 1 reward and punishment:

Because God said don't do something, but they did and God got offended and responded with angry vengeance, taking the life of Jesus in our place.

This is the **Satisfaction Theory of Atonement**

Level 2 marketplace exchange:

Because Satan now had rights to this earth and claimed the lives of the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, and God struck a bargain with the devil to exchange the life of Christ for the life of humans. Or Aslan had to give his life to the White Witch to free the son of Adam.

This is the **Ransom Theory of Atonement**

Level 3 social conformity:

So that all will agree that God's government is fair in dealing with sin.

This is the **Governmental Theory of Atonement**

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Level 4 law and order:

To pay the legal penalty the law demanded and the heavenly judge imposed. The Law must be kept. Man broke the Law. Someone had to pay the penalty. Jesus paid that penalty. The integrity of the Law was maintained.

This is the **Penal Substitution Theory**

Level 5 love for others:

Because He loved us too much to let us go and His death was the means to reach us with His love and restore us to trust in Him.

This is **Moral Influence Theory**

Level 6 principle based:

It was the only means to fix what sin had done to God's creation. When mankind sinned, they deviated from God's design for life and their condition was terminal. Christ came to fix what sin did to this creation. Thus "he who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God." 2Corinthians 5:21

This is the **Christus Victor and Recapitulation Theories**

Level 7 understanding friend of God:

Christ died to reveal truth to win us to trust (John 8:32), destroy death (2Timothy 1:10), destroy sin and Satan (Hebrews 2:14), restore humanity back to God's original ideal (1John 3:8), and secure the universe unfallen in its innocence. "All things in heaven and in earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross." (Colossians 1:20)

This is the **The Healing Reality**

The Mature Ways to Understand the Bible Metaphors of Salvation:

Satisfaction Theory

- Creation is out of harmony with God and in a terminal condition
- God is like a parent whose child is dying of leukemia—what is the only thing that will satisfy?
- A Remedy that heals and saves!
- "He will see the result of the suffering of his soul and be satisfied" Isa 53:11

Ransom Theory

- Ransom is the price required to free from bondage

- What holds us in bondage?
- Lies about God and our own carnal nature
- What is the price to free?
- Truth and a new nature (bread and wine)

Governmental Theory

- God rules on design law—love, truth, & liberty
- God can only heal minds, i.e. win to love and trust in harmony with His methods
- Thus God's government, design laws, are sustained as the only method upon which life, health and peace operate

Penal Substitution Theory

- This metaphor is not found in Scripture but is a lie based upon accepting false human imposed law and obstructs God healing plan
- Added law (10 Commandments, ceremonial law etc.) is rightly understood as setting healthy boundaries for the immature to protect, diagnose, teach and lead to Christ for healing

Moral Influence Theory

- Accepted as part of the reality needed to heal
- But understood as being incomplete—in addition to winning us to trust, a real remedy to fix the damage of sin and to restore God's original design for human character was needed

Christus Victor and Recapitulation

- Understood as Christ's victory over all opposition to His methods here on earth:
- Truth overcomes lies; Love overcomes selfishness
- Jesus took up humanity broken and damaged by sin and perfected it!

Healing Reality

- Accepts Moral Influence of truth to destroy lies and win to trust
- Accepts the Victory of Christ over Satan directly and over the carnal nature to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness and restore love within
- And realizes All things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross. (Col 1:18-20)

MONDAY

The lesson quotes Exodus 6:6: "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment" (Ex 6:6 NIV84).

What do you understand "might acts of judgment" to mean?

When you hear judgment what comes to mind? The Hebrew for judgment is sapat—but this word is not speaking of one branch of government, judicial

From the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*:

> The primary sense of šāpaṭ is to exercise the processes of government. Since, however, the ancients did not always divide the functions of government, as most modern governments do, between legislative, executive, and judicial functions (and departments) **the common translation, "to judge," misleads us**. For, the word, judge, as šāpaṭ is usually translated, in modern English, means to exercise only the judicial function of government. Unless one wishes in a context of government—civil, religious, or otherwise—consistently to translate as "to govern or rule," the interpreter must seek more specialized words to translate a word of such broad meaning in the modern world scene. For the participle NIV uses "leader." Culver, R. D. (1999). 2443 שָׁפַט. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (electronic ed., p. 947). Chicago: Moody Press.

So God's great acts of judgment are not judicial, legal, penal, they are God exercising His Sovereign authority in the running of His government to fulfill His covenant promise to Adam to bring the Messiah in order to heal His creation.

Read third paragraph, "The word *redeem*…" What does this mean?

How do you understand the ransom metaphor now?

What was the price that was paid? Why was it paid, to whom was it paid?

TUESDAY

Read third paragraph, "This covenant…" Is this a different covenant than the previous or merely the most recent iteration of the same covenant—God working to fulfill His promise to bring the Messiah?

In the last paragraph the lesson states, "Though the Lord had redeemed Israel from the bondage of Egypt, He wanted them to understand that redemption had a greater, more significant meaning than merely freedom from physical bondage. He wanted to redeem them from sin, the ultimate slavery, and this could happen only through the sacrifice of the Messiah, as taught in the types and symbols of the sanctuary service…."

God wants to give us freedom—Paul wrote to the Galatians:

> "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Ga 5:1 NIV84).

What is Paul talking about?

What kind of slavery is this? What is the cruelest type of slavery—is it not the slavery that takes away your mind, your identity, your soul?

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt 10:28 NIV84).

The cruelest slavery is the slavery that enslaves the mind, that destroys individuality, that crushes the spirit, that sears the conscience, that causes a person to be enslaved to destruction, sin, and prefer their slavery.

One time I was consulted to see a man who was in the ICU in liver failure from alcohol dependence. I was asked to get him into rehab, but he refused. He knew he was dying of liver failure, and that if he went home and drank again he would likely die, but he told me he would rather die than stop drinking. He didn't want to die, he would like a new liver so he could keep drinking.

His attitude was different from others I have seen die from alcoholic liver failure—others I have known didn't want to drink any more, they wanted freedom but for various reasons in their life kept relapsing, but they also kept trying, longed to be free. These were like the Apostles in Gethsemane—their spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

But the man in the ICU had no desire to be free, his slavery was beyond physical addiction, his mind was enslaved.

Today many are enslaved to various things:

- addictions
- fears
- debts

But the biggest enslavement I see in society today is the enslavement to worldly systems of imperialism. I won't say more, but look around and you will see the minds enslaved to all kinds of false ideas, false standards, false values that are contrary to God's design laws.

The sanctuary service given by God to ancient Israel is, as the lesson says, symbolic, object lesson, metaphor—it teaches a larger reality. It had no saving benefit in the acted-out system. It was all theater, a grand play, with great costumes, an immaculate stage, and a detailed script—we call Scripture.

But none of that acted-out theater had any saving value—it all taught the larger reality of Jesus. I want to remind everyone that we have a seminar series on website that unpacks the meaning behind the various symbols showing how it all taught the larger reality of Jesus and God's plan to save us from sin. The link is: https://comeandreason.com/category/media/sanctuary-feast-days-seminar/

WEDNESDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "In these verses the Lord…" Why doesn't it work this way? Isn't God Sovereign? Can't He do whatever He wants? Doesn't the Bible say:

> "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
> and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."
>
> It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden (Ro 9:15–18 NIV84).

What does this mean? Does God just harden people?

What is the theme of this passage? Paul is writing to Jews who are not inclined to see Gentiles as part of the promises to Abraham. Paul is making the point that God's mercy is up to God and He can be merciful to anyone and it doesn't matter about genetics. What matters is the condition of hearts and minds and how we respond to God's invitation.

Thus God has the right to be merciful to whomever He chooses, and who does God choose to be merciful to? Every single person—then why doesn't everyone experience God's mercy? Because not everyone responds to God's mercy, just like not everyone accepts God's forgiveness even though God personally forgives everyone.

What about hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Who did it?

The Bible describes the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in three ways:

Description #1 – God hardening Pharaoh's heart

- "The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." Exodus 4:21
- "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites." Ex 7:3,4
- "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses." Ex 9:12

Description #2 – Pharaoh's heart became hard

- "Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said." Ex 7:13
- "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go." Ex 7:14

- "But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said." Ex 7:22
- "The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said." Ex 8:19

Description # 3 – Pharaoh hardened his own heart

- "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said." Exodus 8:15
- "But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go." Ex 8:32
- "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had said through Moses." Ex 9:34,35

Which of these descriptions is the inspired one? Which is true? All of them, but how? How are all three true?

It requires we understand design law, how reality works, how hearts actually become hardened—and how do they?

What happens to a person when they are convicted of some truth—don't they have to make a decision—either to accept and apply it or resist it, ignore it, reject it?

And what happens to a heart that rejects truth? It hardens—that's how it works. So, if a person is never presented with truth their heart doesn't become as hard as the one who has rejected the truth.

God gave Pharaoh more evidence and truth than any other ancient leader and Pharaoh was convicted, and then in each instance hardened and rejected the truth.

Thus God hardened Pharaoh's heart by bring truth to him over and over again, but Pharaoh hardened his own heart by choosing to reject it over and over again, and thus Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

But the immature, the level four and below, read the Scripture about God hardening Pharaoh's heart as God using divine power to turn Pharaoh into a puppet and destroy Pharaoh's individuality. Such a teaching, whether they realize it or not, perverts the divine character and presents an arbitrary rule-maker who functions like a human dictator.

But the question remains, Why did God present truth to Pharaoh when He, in His foreknowledge, knew Pharaoh would reject it and experience a hardened heart?

Even though Pharaoh was going to reject the truth, God knew it is only by the presentation of truth that sinners can be set free (John 8:32). God would not deny Pharaoh the opportunity to be freed from sin. God would not deny Pharaoh the opportunity to be saved. Therefore God presented truth to Pharaoh in order to reach his heart and save him; God did not force Pharaoh's will. Pharaoh freely chose to reject the truth and when Pharaoh hardened his heart, God used Pharaoh as a powerful

demonstration of the futility of worshipping false gods. The lessons of Egypt were publicized throughout the ancient world and awareness of the true God spread.

Therefore, God presents truth, which sets free all those who accept it, but God does not force the will of individuals to either accept or reject the truth. When we reject the truth our hearts harden in proportion to the truth rebuffed. The Bible record of all three descriptions of this event is accurate. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by presenting truth in such a way that Pharaoh was forced to make a decision upon it. But it was Pharaoh who hardened his own heart by rejecting the truth and refusing to repent.

THURSDAY

The lesson asks about the promises and why Israel failed to experience them in full? They point us to Romans 9:30-32:

> What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone…. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Ro 9:30–32; 10:3 NIV84).

What does this mean?

What is the righteousness that comes by faith?

What if we change what Israel did, a righteousness that they work for, their own good deeds, into a legal accounting of vicarious righteousness that we claim in a legal way applied to our accounts in heaven by Jesus? Does this result in the righteousness of God in us?

And this is what Christianity has been tricked into doing, we have just exchanged one false legalism for another, the first was the legalism of our legal obedience earning, meriting or creating our own righteousness. The second is believing the lie that Jesus came to fulfill legal requirements and that we claim His perfection in some legalistic accounting scheme in books in heaven, rather than Jesus perfected humanity and offers to imbue His righteousness into our hearts and minds if we trust Him, making us right with Him, making us righteous.

The truth of Scripture though is that:

> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Co 5:21 NIV84).

The promises are the promises to heal hearts and minds, to restore us to righteousness, to write His design laws of life into our hearts and minds, our inmost being. This is the reality, of which the Sanctuary was designed to teach.

So what is a legalist? A legalist is someone who is preoccupied with their legal standing—whether through their own legal works or through the legal works of a vicarious substitute—both are legalists.

The true Christian is the one who is reborn in heart and mind to be like Christ in character, having God's design laws for life reproduced in their inmost being as the wellspring of action and motive, such that "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me."

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

New Member's Section is now open: Sign up for a FREE user account on comeandreason.com > Members Menu to gain access to special, member's only content. You will have the option of making your contact information available to our other members—over 270 people have already done this and we have members from all over the world, currently 20 different countries. There is a Members Directory with search engine where members can search to find nearby people to network with.

The Remedy Audio and *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.

May's SHARING campaign: *Fundamental Focus*: *A Closer Look At God*
USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 8
Covenant Law

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Online listener John Gross, after hearing our description of the atonement models and the ransom price being what was needed to free us from bondage of sin, the truth to free us from lies and a new sinless human nature developed by Christ which we partake by faith, thus the price was paid to us—he sent this quote from EGW:

> "The Lord requires of every Christian, growth in efficiency and in capability in every sense. **He has paid us our wages, even his own blood and suffering to secure our obedience**… For our sakes Christ became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. He descended in humiliation from depth to depth in our behalf until he reached the cross. He could go no farther in self-denial and self-sacrifice. It was impossible for divine condescension to reach a lower depth. **This wonderful sacrifice moved all heaven, and can we look upon it without our hearts breaking at the sight?** May the Lord have pity upon us in our hardness of heart, and **may he give us a new heart to honor and glorify his name**." The Home Missionary, June 1, 1897

Read first paragraph, "One of the important…" What does it mean? What does the path of righteousness look like? What does it feel like? It is the path that leads through the valley of the shadow of death—why?

What is required for the sinner to experience in order to be righteous? Conversion, being reborn, or another way to say that is, we must die to the old self and be resurrected with Jesus with a new heart and right spirit. This conversion experience is the "valley of the shadow of death"—in which we feel like we are dying on the inside, but in which, when we trust Jesus and follow our Shepherd, we only die to sin and selfishness.

What does it mean "for His name's sake?" What is symbolized by God's name? His character—how does our going down the path of righteousness connect to God's name? Where does God want to write His name or place His character? In us, we were created by God to be living temples in which God dwells by His Spirit and thus those who follow our Shepherd through the valley of the shadow of death are following Him in the path of righteousness where He restores in us His true character or name!

Which takes us to the next paragraph in the lesson, "What are the safe…" When you read about the commandments of the Lord, or when you read about God's law—what comes to mind?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Do you ask, "what law lens"? Does it matter when we think of the law of God whether we are thinking of design law or imposed law?

If the people read "God's commandments and law" through the human law lens, where does that path lead? It leads to all forms of legalism:

- the legalism of the Jews at Sinai, "all the Lord says we will do"
- the legalism of the Pharisees in Jesus' day, who crucified Jesus as a law breaker
- the legalism of the Dark Ages church who enforced its law on people even burning people at the stake
- the legalism of penal substitution theology which promotes the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules and that sin is a legal problem from which we need a legal solution so the imperial cosmic judge wont kill us.
- Thus legalism is the focus on legal standing and legal solutions that always results from believing the lie that God's law functions like human law and thus sin is legal trouble requiring a legal solution.

That doesn't mean we undermine or discount God's law—quite the contrary. The design law view uplifts, sustains, upholds, magnifies and validates God's laws as the protocols that life and reality are built upon and they are beyond any change or abrogation. We either die from being out of harmony with them, or we are restored by the power of God to live in harmony with them.

So comparing the referenced Psalms from different versions:

Psalms 119:35:

- Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;
  For therein do I delight. (KJV)

- Keep me obedient to your commandments,
  because in them I find happiness. (GNT)

- Guide me in the path of your commands,
  for I delight to walk in it. (NET)

- Lead me to live according to your ways,
  because it brings me health and happiness. (REM)

Psalms 119:172:

- My tongue shall speak of thy word:
  For all thy commandments are righteousness. (KJV)

- I will sing about your law,

because your commands are just. (GNT)

- My tongue will sing of your promise,
  for all your commandments are right. (NRSV)

- Let my tongue sing of your revelations of truth,
  for all your laws are perfect — the protocols for life and health. (REM)

The lesson says, "God's law is a safe, firm path through the treacherous swamp of human existence." Absolutely true—as long as one understands God's law is design law. But as soon as one believes God's laws are like human law, rules imposed requiring legal enforcement, then one leaves safety and will ultimately cause injury to themselves and others:

- Jesus was accused of being a law breaker and rejected and crucified
- The disciples were accused of being law breakers, of harvesting grain on the Sabbath, of not washing their hands properly before eating
- Jesus told them that when they convert people to their religion—which was converting them to Judaism, God's chosen people the true Sabbath, the inspired Word given through God's prophets, yet because they substituted human imposed law, Jesus told them they make people twice the sons of hell.
- Look through history all the problems that religions have caused always have their root in legal enforcement of their religious code on others. Whenever people return to design law, love, truth, freedom healing occurs.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jewish tradition…" "For whatever reasons…" What is your understanding of God's reasons for choosing Israel?

To me it is very simple—God foreknew that in this branch of the human family enough people would choose to stay faithful to Him, that despite Satan's worst attacks and attempts to try and destroy them, He would succeed in fulfilling His promise to Adam and Eve, to bring our Messiah.

What do you think of this sentence, "They had no merit of their own that would make them worthy of God's love and His choice of them as His people"?

What about Gabriel or Adam and Eve in Eden before sin—did they have merit of their own that made them worthy of God's love and God's choice of them to fulfill the roles given to them? Did Lucifer before his fall?

In other words, are we saying that when we are good—perhaps sinless like Gabriel we merit God's love, but when we are sinners (being born in sin without any choice of our own to be born this way) we do not merit God's love? If this is true, is it actually love or is it what some call "conditional love"?

What kind of god would that god be if only the righteous merit his love?

But the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son…" "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Love based on merit is not love!

The lesson asks a very pertinent question regarding God's election of Israel, "What did God choose Israel for?"

Was Israel chosen for exclusive salvation? No, what were they chosen for? To be God's helpers in spreading the truth about God, the problem of sin, God's solution of the coming Messiah, preparing the world for the first Advent of the Messiah.

The lesson states in the second paragraph, "As Seventh-day Adventists, we like to view ourselves as the modern-day counterpart to Israel, called by the Lord, not to be the only ones redeemed but to proclaim the message of redemption to the world, in the context of the three angels' messages. In short, we believe we have something to say that no one else is saying."

What are the parallels between the Jews of Christ's day and the SDA church?

- Both observe the save weekly Sabbath
- Both believe God is Creator of earth and life on it is six literal days resting on the 7th day
- Both have a sanctuary message
- Both have a dietary or health message
- Both promote the importance of tithes and offerings
- Both were called to prepare the world for the Advent of the Messiah
- Both believe they were blessed by God with individuals with special inspiration and have writings of dead prophets

Is that where the similarities end?

Do we believe that ancient Israel was called by God to be His people to prepare the world for His coming? Do we believe that being called by God for this purpose would have elevated their value as a military target in Satan's estimation? In other words, because they were called by God would Satan have put them at the top of his hit list to seek to infiltrate, divert, pervert and destroy?

What about the SDA church—if their view is correct and they are the end-time counterpart with a special message to call the world to prepare to meet Jesus, would they also be targeted by Satan for infiltration, infection, perversion and destruction?

Ancient Israel was attacked literally, by warring nations—but those nations failed to destroy Israel, they were attacked by paganism but that also eventually failed, but what didn't fail, **what was the one**

strategy that succeeded in getting the nation to reject Jesus as their Messiah and to crucify Him? Infecting their minds with the lie that God's law functions like human law and thus they became legalists and rejected the Creator.

Do we see any parallels in Christianity and the SDA church to what caused Israel to fail? Specifically, to we see in Christianity and the SDA church the embracing of human law as God's law and what has that done to the message that is to prepare the world for Christ's return?

What is the unique message to be given to the world today—the 3 angels' messages? How would you describe it?

Let's examine the third angel's message—in it is the gospel, the righteousness by faith message—but let's read it and ask, what is the good news? Do you hear it in this message?

> A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. (Re 14:9–12 NIV84).

What is the good news?

> A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, [God's law of worship is revealed here and upheld and sustained by God. The law of by beholding we become changed or in psychiatry we know as modeling.
>
> Paul describes these same events about how things will be just before the coming of the Lord:
>
> "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God**." (2Thes 2:1-4 NIV84)

This is describing the church of the Dark Ages arising and rejecting God's design laws and infecting the Spirit Temple, the minds of human beings with the anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-love, anti-design law message of human law, that God's law works like human law, imposed rules requiring God to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. And the Spirit temple became defiled requiring our heavenly High

Priest to cleanse our temples before He returns to get us. This is the message of the 3 angels—the message of worshipping God as Creator and rejecting the dictator views of God.

Paul goes on describe the results of believing the lawless one, the one who denies God's design laws and promote justice through legislation, enforcement, punishment which only causes more division and hostility, notice why the wicked perish:

> The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. **They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (2 Th 2:9–12 NIV84).

The mark is the counterpart to the seal of God—God's people are sealed in their foreheads, which is where we reason, think, choose, it is symbolic of character, love, loyalty. The lost are marked in their foreheads or hands, because there are two groups of lost, the believers in Satan's ways, and the practitioners of Satan's ways.

These lost people marked in the forehead are marked in their minds as rejecting truth, they develop characters of selfishness, control, fear, anti-love.

The mark of the beast in the forehead symbolizes people who believe the lies of Satan the methods of the beast are right and have formed characters like Satan. The mark in the hand are those who don't agree with the practices, actions of the beast and wouldn't initiate the abuses themselves, but also do not have God's character reproduced within, thus they still live to protect self, so they go along with the beast in practice (the work of their hand) and enforce the methods of the beast in their lives and others in their community. From Nazi Germany Hitler, Goebbels, Mengele would examples of be people who would be marked in their foreheads—their characters, beliefs, mindsets were corrupt. They believed in what they were doing. The Nazi soldiers and German citizens who cooperated, who willingly went along to protect self would be the ones marked in their hands.

The message of this angel is saying that God gives each person freedom to worship the God they prefer, but if they reject the truth, reject the remedy provided by Jesus, then they reap what they have sown into their own lives and will be marked in character to be beastly, or in conduct to be beastly.

> he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath.

God's law of liberty is revealed here. God truly let's go all who insist on rejecting Him and refusing the remedy provided by Jesus. As painful as it is for God and for the lost, God is love and love only exists in freedom. So God lets them go to reap what they have sown—and this in Scripture is known as God's wrath (Romans 1:18-32). Again, good news that God never forces any to comply or do what He says.

> He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

This is the revelation of God's laws of love and truth—God's life-giving presence is described in Scripture as a consuming fire, but it is the same fire seen at Pentecost. It is infinite love and infinite truth unveiled and flowing over the earth and its inhabitants again. Notice where this place of torment occurs, "in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb." This is good news because to the righteous this same fire invigorates, brings joy, brings peace, happiness, health and eternal life. But to the wicked it is a place where they suffer terrible torment—but why? The good news is revealed that the torment doesn't come from God, it comes from sin when God let's go His protection and stops shielding the wicked from what sin does to them.

> And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.

The good news that the lessons of what happened, that sin causes pain, sin causes suffering, sin causes death, and refusing God's healing results in the torment and death—those lessons will never be forgotten. Just as smoke remains after something is consumed in fire, these lessons will remain in the minds of the saved for all eternity **so that sin will never arise again**. And that is good news.

> There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

There is no rest because they have embraced the lie about God's law functioning like human law, a system of imposed rules that requires imposed penalties. This false earthly sinful legal system is symbolized by a mark or sign of imperial rule and that is the church's legislative change of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. But God gave the Sabbath at the end of Creation week as a sign of His methods and design laws for governing. Therefore, those who embrace God's design law methods and have the law written on their hearts enter God's rest as symbolized by the Sabbath. The first thing Adam and Eve did after coming to life on Creation Friday was to enter Sabbath rest with God. Likewise, when the new Christian is truly converted they enter into a state of rest with God, rest from fear, guilt, shame, sin, selfishness and all the legal penal lies and they Remember the Sabbath all week long as they practice God's methods of truth, love and freedom in how they live. But for those who reject God's design laws as symbolized by the Sabbath, and who insist God's law is imposed and God is the punisher of rule breakers, they never experience rest with God, they remain alienated and disconnected just like the Pharisees, because such beliefs about God's laws actually interfere with trust—they need someone to protect them or hide them from the god they really don't trust.

> This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. (Re 14:9–12 NIV84).

More good news, that the patient saints, those who have God's law written on their hearts and minds, are sealed, healed and restored to unity with God and thus live in harmony with God's laws and are faithful in telling the truth about God and His design laws of life. They reject the imposed penal/legal

lies told by the beast and its various agents and don't seek justice through legislation and governmental enforcement but by living justly in how they treat others.

Do we have a special message at this time in earth's history?

MONDAY

Read Deuteronomy 4:13:

> "He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets." (Dt 4:13 NIV84).

Why did God write the 10 Commandments in stone?

Are the 10 Commandments eternal—meaning they have always existed?

Are the 10 Commandments written in stone in heaven for the angels?

Did God have a law written in stone or some other substance in heaven posted for the inhabitants to obey before Lucifer rebelled?

Consider this quotation from the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* as the author describes her view of how the angels in heaven obeyed God and their views on law—what do you think?

> **The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy law, and the principles of this law are the principles of heaven**. [What does this mean? Are the expressions of God's law in precepts the same as the principles or are they referring to two different things? And if so, what are the differences? Expressed precepts would be referring to the written law, the 10 Commandments. But are principles the same as expressed precepts? So, which is described here as the law of heaven? The principles, what are the principles of God that is the law of heaven that are expressed in the precepts—love for God and others!] The angels of heaven attain unto no higher knowledge than to know the will of God, and to do His will is the highest service that can engage their powers. MB 109.1
>
> **But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality**. [Why not? Because the heavenly beings do not consider law as imposed man-made rules, but as design protocols, how things work. It isn't a spirit of legality that causes you to not jump off a bridge, or not to smoke, it is love for life. Likewise all righteousness is love for God and others.] **When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of**. [What kind of law can be in force and people are obeying it but they have not thought about it; they haven't been told about it; they don't even realize there is a law? Only design law can function this way. Consider Isaac Newton telling his friends his discovery about the law of gravity—don't you think they might

> have said, "Law—hmmm…I never thought it was a law, it just how things work"? Have you considered that Satan's rebellion against God was a rebellion against God's law? Now do you think Satan came right out and said "I am rebelling against God! I want to overthrow God! I am a better god that God?" No, what did he likely do to rebel against God? He would have made it appear he was seeking a better way, that there was something wrong with how God was doing things—and in this case it was by alleging God is a rule-maker and if you break His rules God will punish.] In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. MB 109.2

So, in heaven no law written on stone, it wouldn't make any sense, but there is a law that is in operation and disobedience cannot be ignored—why? Because all disobedience to God's law damages, it must be addressed in order to stop the damage and heal the injury.

Read first paragraph, "However much we have been stressing…" Why is grace not a license to sin?

Read Romans 3:5-8:

> But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved. (Ro 3:5–8NIV84).

What do you understand is being taught here?

From *The Remedy:*

> But if our sickness and selfishness make God's enduring, healing love easier to see and understand, how do we interpret that? Do we say that since our wickedness makes God's goodness easier to see, since our selfishness makes God's love easier to comprehend, since our sickness makes God's Remedy easier to understand, that we are therefore helping God win his case? Is God unjust if he doesn't give us a free pass? (I am using a human argument that fails to understand the basic principles upon which the universe operates.) Absolutely not! If that were the case, how could God allow anyone to experience the consequences of the persistent refusal of his life-giving Remedy? Some who see sin as a legal problem might argue, "If I were to lie in order to help God reveal what truthfulness is and thus increase his glory, I am actually on his side helping him, so why should I suffer the fate of a sinner?" They might as well try claiming–as we are being falsely accused of saying–"It is by doing wrong that the right occurs. It is by doing evil that good results. It is by acting selfishly that love grows." Those who teach such

> things deserve the consequence of a depraved and destroyed mind, which is the only result of practicing methods at variance with God's. They fail to understand that violations of God's law of love actually damage the sinner and destroy God's image, methods and principles within them. (Ro 3:5–8 REM).

This is why disobedience cannot help God's cause, it only causes more injury, even though our sin has brought to light God's grace and love more fully.

Read second paragraph, "When you think about what a covenant…" My reaction was—this is sick! Its twisted, is gross, its perverse—and is exactly what the legal lie has done to God's universe and the church.

This is so sad—but let's bring truth to bear. What is the essential elements for a marriage to be healthy? Love and Trust!

What kind of law can you legislate, or rule can you pass or boundary can you enforce upon another that will cause them to love you and make them more trustworthy?

What happens in a marriage when it is based on rules and laws?

So what is the purpose of the written law, who is it for?

> We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1 Ti 1:8–11 NIV84).

Who is the written law given for? The wicked, the immature, the rebellious, in other words, not for those who are reconciled to Christ—it serves no function for them.

For the lesson to suggest that our relationship with God requires rules and rule-enforcement is one of the grossest perversions of God's character possible, it perverts the gospel and obstructs God's healing plan.

Does that mean the righteous are lawless—absolutely not—it means they are living the law of God as it is written in their hearts but it is something not even thought of.

When you give your spouse or child a hug, do you think? Well, the law requires that I hug them, I want to be obedient, I don't want to get punished, I don't want to get in legal trouble so, I will do my duty and obey the law and give my spouse a hug?

Or, as the lesson states, do righteous husbands and wives think, "Well I sure would like to commit adultery, but I don't want to get in legal trouble, so I won't cheat on my spouse because the rules say not to; but if it wasn't for those pesky rules I sure would."

It is foolish to teach such things. Just as Paul says, only perverts—those who have perverted God's law—think this way.

How do you explain:

> You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, **punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation** of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Ex 20:4–6 NIV84).

Does God inflict punishment on the descendants of sinners? Then what do you do with Ezekiel 18?

> The word of the Lord came to me: [2] "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel:
> " 'The fathers eat sour grapes,
> and the children's teeth are set on edge'?
> [3] "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel…
> [5] "Suppose there is a righteous man
> who does what is just and right…
> [9] He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord.
> [10] "Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things [11] (though the father has done none of them)…
> [13] Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he will surely be put to death and his blood will be on his own head.
> [14] "But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things…
> [17] He withholds his hand from sin… He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live…
>
> [19] "Yet you ask, 'Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?' Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. [20] The soul who sins is the one who will die. **The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son**. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.
>
> [21] "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. [22] **None of the**

offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. **Because of the righteous things he has done**, he will live. [23] Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?
[24] "But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? **None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered**. Because of the unfaithfulness he is guilty of and because of the sins he has committed, he will die.
[25] "**Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear, O house of Israel: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust?** [26] If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin, he will die for it; because of the sin he has committed he will die. [27] But if a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will save his life. [28] Because he considers all the offenses he has committed and turns away from them, he will surely live; he will not die. [29] **Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.**' Are my ways unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?
[30] "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.
[31] Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? [32] For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live! (Ezekiel 18:1-32 NIV84)

How do we harmonize these verses? Design law! When we sin we change ourselves, we cause epigenetic alterations in our DNA expression that passes to our children 3-4 generations down making them more vulnerable to sin, addiction, selfishness, etc. Further, our sins are passed along through our examples, teaching, education, and practices to our children, thus their characters are molded by ours. So if a child chooses to reject wickedness that the parent passed along and choose loyalty to God then they don't suffer any guilt, but if they choose to agree and embrace wickedness either from what was passed along or by rejecting the righteousness taught by the parent, they they reap destruction.

So, God's punishing of the descendants in the Commandment is about God's design laws being sustained. You having freedom to make choices in governance of yourselves and those choices change you and you then have the ability to procreate beings in your image and you pass along to your children advantages or disadvantages based on both your own inheritance and choices before you had children and what you teach your children. God's design created us this way and God's laws sustain these abilities thus God takes ownership over His design and laws, but it is still our choices that make the changes and only character is what matters when it comes to

TUESDAY

Great question to open the lesson, "What are your first thoughts when you think of law?" Yes, this is the key question to almost all issues of theology—if your concept of law is wrong almost every conclusion from the Bible will be wrong.

Read fifth paragraph, "The part played by the law…" If the lesson means by natural law—the natural law of sin and death, i.e. survival of the fittest, the strong dominating the weak, then yes, they are correct. But if the lesson means by natural law that they couldn't live by the design laws of God, then they are wrong.

Consider Romans 1:20 and then 2:12-16:

> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—**his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made**, so that men are without excuse….[What is Paul saying? What is revealed in nature? Why are men without excused? So Paul establishes that God's divine nature is seen in what He has made then goes on to describe something incredible] All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For **it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts,** their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. (Ro 1:20; 2:12–16 NIV84).

What is described?

What kind of law is this? They don't have Torah, they don't have rules, a code, but something is written upon their heart? What?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "God's law is…" What does a transcript of His character mean to you? What are the strengths of this analogy where does it break down?

Consider DNA—a transcript of a person—it is the hidden code that codes for their life. God's law is like this, it is the hidden foundation of life, the building blocks of life. But, can we understand the fullness of a person by studying the code written on paper?

Can we know the person's laugh, love, heart, motives, smile, ingenuity by studying the code?

Can we know the fullness of God's character by studying any written law? No! It is a transcript not the fullness—God's law is living just like DNA is supposed to be living. We only truly understand in living beings.

The universe is under unvarying moral and physical laws—absolutely true—well said, which means they cannot be imposed, legislated or function like human law.

The lesson asks in the middle "If God's law cannot save a person from sin, why did He make it a part of the covenant? (Hint: see Amos 3:3)"

> Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? (Am 3:3 NIV84).

So, if God's law cannot save why is it part of the covenant?

What is the basis of life? God and how did God construct life to operate? In harmony with Himself, His character of love. Thus, God's laws are the basis of life. So, harmony with God is harmony with God's laws and is harmony with life.

So, while God's laws are not the source of life, they are the structure, protocol, basis upon which God extends His life-giving energy to flow out to the universe and thus harmony with God's laws is harmony with God reconnecting to the source of life.

Once Adam sinned, humans were disconnected and put on artificial life support to allow Jesus to come and reestablish the sinless perfect connection back into the species human, putting God's design law back into humanity. Thus, the law isn't the source of our salvation Jesus is, the law isn't the source of life God is (and Jesus is as a member of the Godhead He has life original unborrowed underived), but the law is the expression and outflow of God's person whereby God built, sustains and governs life. So we are saved by Jesus who becomes the connecting link back to God and the Spirit working to write God's law, the character of Christ which is a transcript of God's law into our hearts.

The lesson states that, "Because God is not only the Creator of the world but also its moral Governor, law is essential for the happiness of His created, intelligent beings to live in harmony with Him."

thoughts? What type of law? How do you understand it? What happens if we get created intelligent beings to change their view of law from design law to imposed law?

Consider this commentary on sin's origin in heaven from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. DA 761.4

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What kind of law is Satan promoting? Imposed, human like law, which requires the infliction of punishment. And what happened when heavenly intelligences accepted this idea? Rebellion, division, destruction of love!

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "God openly…" Why is obedience a basic part of the covenant with God?

If you went to the doctor with a terminal condition and were given a treatment that would cure you, what would be a basic part of that covenant with the doctor—if you wanted to get well? Would it not be obedience, compliance, following the instructions? Why?

And what happens if a patient doesn't follow the instructions? What does the doctor do? Does the doctor kill them?

And does following the instructions and taking the medicine mean the patient produced their own cure or saved themselves?

In the second paragraph the lesson states, "The people could reject the gift, deny the grace, and turn away from the promises. The covenant, as with salvation, never negates free will. The Lord does not force people into a saving relationship with Him; He doesn't impose a covenant upon them."

So true, well said—yet, if most Christians believed this, why do most Christians teach that God will kill those who don't let Him save them?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content.

The Remedy Audio and *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.

Our goal, as a ministry, is to continue to enhance your growth and experience with the wonderful, life-changing message of God's design and healing plan.

SHARING campaign for May: *Fundamental Focus*: *A Closer Look At God*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 9
Covenant Sign

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Last week I mentioned that one of the founders of the SDA church, EG White, in aftermath of the 1888 General Conference where the leaders rejected the Design Law healing model of righteousness by faith and chose instead to stay with the imposed law view of penal substitution, she said that they would have treated Christ like those who crucified Him had He been there.

Someone asked for that reference. It is:

> On many occasions the Holy Spirit did work, but those who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis were waiting for a chance to travel over the same ground again, **because their spirit was the same**. Afterward, when they had **evidence heaped upon evidence, some were convicted**, but those who were not softened and subdued by the Holy Spirit's working, **put their own interpretation** upon every manifestation of the grace of God, and they have lost much. **They pronounced** in their heart and soul and words that this manifestation of the Holy Spirit was **fanaticism and delusion**. **They stood like a rock**, the waves of mercy flowing upon and around them, but beaten back by their hard and wicked hearts, which resisted the Holy Spirit's working. Had this been received, it would have made them wise unto salvation; holier men, prepared to do the work of God with sanctified ability. **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ**. {1888 1478.2}

SABBATH

The lesson is about the Sabbath as a sign of the covenant. What is the covenant? The covenant of salvation—how would you state it?

- God provides everything necessary to save human beings through Jesus Christ the Messiah, we trust Him to do it corporately and individually and follow His instructions.

Did the Sabbath exist before or after sin? After Lucifer sinned in heaven.

Did the Sabbath exist before or after human sin? Before Adam and Eve sinned in Eden.

Did the Sabbath exist before or after the covenant with Adam? Before the covenant with Adam.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

If the Sabbath was created before Adam sinned and before the covenant with Adam, how is it part of the covenant of salvation?

Is the Sabbath part of the evidence necessary to defeat the father of lies? What is that evidence?

Was the Sabbath made for man or man for the Sabbath?

What was the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden before humans sinned?

- How did Adam and Eve begin their lives? They entered into Sabbath rest with God *before* they worked.
- Is your view that we work six days and then rest, or we rest and then work six day?
- What is the difference? What is the spiritual lesson?
- Can we do any good work for God if we don't rest in Him and what Christ has done for us first?
- So, is resting in the work of the Lord, the Sabbath of the Lord a legal work a legal test of obedience, or is it something else? What?

SUNDAY

The lesson points out that Jesus said that Sabbath was *made* for man not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made—it had a beginning, at the end of Creation week—meaning the Sabbath did not exist back when Lucifer rebelled in heaven.

Why is this important—especially to SDAs who value the Sabbath?

SDAs have taught that the final conflict will involve the Sabbath in contrast to Sunday—SDAs have held this up as a test issue, a demarcation issue—but is it possible that SDAs have not accurately presented how and why these days are involved and have thereby misrepresented the real issue?

Consider these comments from one of the founders of the SDA church—and let's keep in mind the question of the Sabbath and how it fits in.

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (GC 582.2)
>
> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be** holy, just, and good, complete in itself. It cannot be repealed or changed. To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (PK 625.1)

> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the *last great conflict* of the controversy between truth and error**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle **not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. (PK 625.2)

If the last great conflict between truth and error is just the completion of the longstanding battle over God's law which began in heaven, then how does the Sabbath fit in since the Sabbath did not exist in heaven when the conflict over God's law began? So, while the Sabbath is involved because it is somehow connected to God's law, it cannot be simply about the Sabbath.

In order to understand the Sabbath question accurately, we must first understand God's law accurately, we must first understand how God's law was the issue with the angels in heaven. Once we identify this problem, then we can move on to understand the question of the Sabbath and any other question about God's law as we approach the final events leading up to Christ's return.

Satan attacks God's law in some way? How and why?

How did angels in heaven, before Lucifer rebelled, view God's law? Historic Adventism saw it this way:

> But in heaven, service is **not rendered in the spirit of legality**. **When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** (MB 109.2)

What kind of law *cannot* be weakened or strengthened, has always been, and will always be, and is in force but unthought of? None other than the design-laws upon which reality is built to exist! Imposed rules, like *humans* make—which require external enforcement—must be posted, beings must be informed or instructed about them in order to hold them accountable. But not design law.

Consider again the example of Isaac Newton telling his friends about the law of gravity, might they respond with "Wow, never thought there was a law, its just how things work."

So, what did Satan do to attack God's law in heaven? From the book *The Desire of Ages* the author describes:

> **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would **be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned**. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761.4

What kind of law requires God to inflict punishment for disobedience? Imposed law. This is the foundation of the long-standing conflict over God's law—is God's law the type of law that requires Him to inflict punishment or is God's law design law, the protocols of life that requires Him to heal

the damage done to the sinner, lest if He does nothing, they die from taking themselves out of harmony with life? All those who teach the inflicted punishment view are advancing Satan's attack on God's law, government and character.

So, if you are an SDA and you value the position of the founders of the SDA church, especially EGW, then the final issues will come to a head over the same thing the war in heaven began over, which is a question over God's law. And it is not primarily a question about the Sabbath; it is a question of how God's law functions, what kind of law it is and any Sabbath questions fall into this bigger issue.

Why is the question of God's law important to answer?

Consider what kind of God one believes God to be based on the law they accept as God's law?

If God's law functions like human law, requiring judicial oversight and infliction of external punishments and death by God—what kind of God is that?

In such a universe where the deity kills his own disobedient children:

- Is there real freedom?
- Without liberty can love exist?
- What happens in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings when they are threatened?
- From where does death originate in such a universe?
- Safety in such a universe is through restraints put upon the ruling authority—this is why the penal legal people cling so desperately the imposed law lie. It gives them perverse power over God claiming legal authority over His wrath by the blood of Jesus who paid the legal penalty for them therefore God has no legal right to kill them. The legal penal theologians live in fear of what would happen if Jesus wasn't there to restrain the Father from lashing out with punishment. It is exactly paganism, the worshipper, through some ritual, incantation, blood sacrifice controlling the power of the deity.
- What happens to trust, love, loyalty, development of individuality in an atmosphere without liberty?

Understand, Satan's original lie in heaven is that God's law requires God to punish rule-breakers. This represents God to be a being other than love, a being who is the source of pain, suffering and death, a dictator, power-monger, and one who cannot be trusted. Thus rebellion spreads and love and trust are destroyed.

The final issues will revolve around the question of law and authority. Those who value Satan's view of law and justice will use Satan's methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement to get people to comply with their views. This is the beastly system of Revelation. It may be through governments, it may be through big business (no one buying or selling or traveling or going to college or entering buildings), but the coercive pressure will be the same.

Here is the formula for Satan's methods:

- Lies that when believed break the circle of love and trust—
- This incites fear and selfishness—survival drives
- This results in seeing more threats which increase fear and the need to protect self
- which results in using power, might, force to control, compel, coerce or destroy others in order to make self feel safe

Examples:

- Sadam Hussein
  - Lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were told
  - Increased fear in people which increased our need to protect self—survival drives
  - which resulted in the use of might and power to eliminate the threat and compel compliance
- Nazi Germany
  - Lies about Jews were told
  - Increased fear of economic and other injury
  - Increased need to protect self
  - use of might and power to coerce, compel and destroy—and it started with lies, then incremental laws that restricted liberties, and eventually genocide
- Climate change
  - Lies are told—lies that there no God, no future other than global warming and destruction of the planet, no new heaven and new earth
  - increased fear
  - increased desire to protect self—survival drives
  - increased use of compelling power to raise oil prices, restrict liberty, restrict scientific investigation, restrict free speech
- COVID19
  - real virus but lie after lie has been told and continues to be told
  - increasing fear
  - with increased survival drive
  - with increasing sense of threat when minimal to no threat exists, such as the lie that there is a 10% transmission rate in outdoor environment, so we must wear masks outdoors, when the transmission rate is actually less than 0.1% outdoors. Or the lie that you must be 6 feet apart to avoid transmission, but 6 feet doesn't provide any more benefit than 3 feet. But these lies incite fear, which cause people to see others who are not wearing masks or inside of 6 feet as threats.
  - use of governmental and economic coercion to pressure people to comply
  - Some are calling for forced injections of everyone? If people under the advice of their own doctor don't get the vaccine, because they survived the infection and have antibodies that give them better immunity than the injection, they are being threatened with travel restrictions, some are calling for laws to prohibit people from entering any public business or building unless they have a vaccine passport—but why? Think about it? Measles is much more contagious and deadly than COVID—why don't we make

people get a measles vaccine passport to travel or enter buildings or go to sporting events? Because once YOU have been vaccinated you are protected from measles—others are not a threat to you. What is the messaging that says even though you are vaccinated you are not safe if others are not vaccinated doing to the minds of people? There is a lie imbedded in here—either the vaccines don't work, which means the messaging about protecting yourself by getting it is a lie, or you being at risk if someone else doesn't get the vaccine is a lie.

How is this happening? It is Satan's methods at work. Note the process:

- A virus is released that causes disease, illness, death in some—viruses are not part of God's creation, they are infections to God's creation. Just like computer viruses are not part of the operating system of any computer software maker, the computer viruses are made by hackers intent on harming, so too viruses in nature are not part of God's original creation, but part of Satan's attack on it. And evidence now reveals that this COVID 19 virus is a bat virus that was purposely augmented by humans in a lab in China, with funding from the NIH. https://nicholaswade.medium.com/origin-of-covid-following-the-clues-6f03564c038
- The virus and illness and deaths incite fear in people—fear is Satan's number one emotion that drives selfishness.
- Note in society today, we have a virus, but worse than the virus we have lies upon lies being told. The cure for lies is the truth, but the truth is not to be tolerated in our society today, free speech is censored, people asking legitimate questions are maligned, de-platformed, called names like "conspiracy nuts" or "antivaxxers" all designed to keep the lies from being exposed. These methods alone should warn people to the agenda of those who are practicing them.
- The lies incite more fear, fear causes people to become more self-centered, more survival driven, which causes people to be more threat sensitive—in other words, the more fearful the more easily people perceive others as threats, even when they are not.
- The fear and heightened sense of danger, the heightened drive to survive, the heighten sense of threat from others, damages love, incites actions to protect self at the expense of others. We need villains, enemies we can destroy, control, eliminate, imprison to make ourselves feel safe—it doesn't matter that these perceived enemies are not actually a danger to us, we still force our agenda to make us feel safe.
    - So we lie about the risk of outdoor spread which increases fear
    - We mandate community masks despite the evidence that they provide no protection and actually cause harm to many https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/8/4344/htm
    - We shut down houses of worship
    - We shut down schools
    - We deny families the ability to be with loved ones in hospice or in hospitals going through medical procedures despite overwhelming, long standing scientific evidence that all health outcomes are improved when people have their family with them and all outcomes are worsened when people are socially isolated—but truth doesn't matter, we must make people comply.
    - We shut down free speech, we can't have people asking questions

- We do human medical experimentation and use coercive tactics to pressure people to participate while we continue to lie about the dangers

What does fear cause people to do? And where does the Sabbath fit into all of this?

The memory text for this week is Exodus 31:16-17:

> The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.' " (Ex 31:16–17 NIV84).

How is the Sabbath a sign of the covenant of salvation, the covenant of grace? Remember sin began before the Sabbath—the issue in the long-standing struggle is over God's law—and the Sabbath is part of that, but how?

I am going to read a quotation, used by some to make themselves feel good about their behavior, and too often used to accuse or condemn people who worship on Sunday. But let's consider this quote carefully:

- The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . . The mark of the beast is the opposite of this--the observance of the first day of the week.--8T 117 (1904). {LDE 224.3}

What do you understand this statement to mean? What law lens to you read it through?

- Is the issue in our salvation, in our preparation to meet Jesus, in our being ready to translate into heaven without seeing death as simple as which day of the week a person worships upon?
- If a person absolutely insists on worshipping on the Bible Sabbath does that guarantee they won't get the mark of the beast?
  - Those who crucified Christ 2000 years ago wanted Him off the Cross by sunset why? So they could keep the Sabbath – does that mean they had the seal of God?
- Does Satan care if a group of people worships on Sabbath as long as they worship him?

Here is another quote from the same person as the previous quote, consider it in light of what we have presented:

> Be sure the Sabbath is a test question and how you treat this question places you either on God's side or Satan's side. The mark of the beast is to be presented **in some shape** to every institution and every individual.--Ms 6 1889, p. 6. (Written Nov. 4, 1889.) {3MR 189.2}

If God's law is not imposed rules but design protocols, then how is the Sabbath a test question? How is the Sabbath, which didn't exist when Lucifer rebelled in heaven, related to the conflict over God's law that began in heaven? How is the mark of the beast to be presented in ***some shape*** to every

institution…Is it merely which day of the week, or is it what the day symbolizes, what the day signifies in regard to God, his character and method of governing?

FRIDAY

The lesson, the lesson points out that the Sabbath contains the name of God as Creator and the sphere of His influence i.e. heavens, earth, sea and all that is in them and "in these two aspects the Sabbath commandment has the characteristics that are typical of seals."

The lesson is making the case that these elements make the Sabbath the seal of God—this understanding is a level four, human law understanding of the seal of God, name, territory, authority, it is understanding God's law through human law model. Simply listing God as Creator and the entire universe as His is *not* the true seal of God, even though God is Creator and all reality is His.

What other Bible texts speak of God's seal?

- "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a **seal on the foreheads** of the servants of our God" (Rev 7:3 NIV84). –is this talking about the Sabbath? Maybe having the fourth commandment tattooed on our foreheads?
- "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his **seal of ownership on us**, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Co 1:21–22 NIV84).
- "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were **marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**…" (Eph 1:13 NIV84).
- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30 NIV84).

What is the seal of God? The character of God being reproduced in His people by the Spirit of God! Being so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that we cannot be moved. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth and Love—and we are settled intellectually when we are settled into the Truth about God and His design laws and character which win us to trust. We are settled spiritually when we die to selfishness and have love written into our characters such that we are those "who do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

This is the seal of God. The mark of the beast is the opposite, it is being marked in mind/heart/character—symbolized by the mark on the forehead—to be beastly, to be selfish, to be fear driven, survival driven, willing to coerce and compel others in order to protect yourself, and especially if it is through legal action of governments. The mark in the hand represents those who don't believe the methods are right, but go along with the laws that compel and coerce others, even participating as enforcers in order to protect themselves, to not lose their property, travel privileges, licenses, businesses etc.

And how does the Sabbath fit into this? Those who are renewed in heart to have the character of God live out God's law of love—they present the truth, in love and leave others free—which the Sabbath is a sign or flag or pennant or evidence of God's methods.

What is a mark or sign?

A symbol that stands for or signifies something else:

- The sign of the cross stands for what?
- The goat's head symbolizes what?
- What is a flag? Is the US flag a sign or symbol of the USA? Is the flag the same as the United States of America? And historically the flag stood for liberty, for freedom for all!
    - Thursday, I went to my grandchildren's elementary school musical program. The entire program was a patriotic presentation, songs like: *You're a Grand Old Flag, The Star Spangled Banner, My Country Tis of Thee, The Battle Hymn of the Republic.* They emphasized the land of liberty in which we live. And what was striking to me is how different my experience was this time than every other time in my life I have been to such programs. In every other time in my life such songs stirred up a sense of patriotic pride in America, a sense of happiness for the liberties and freedoms we have, a sense of joy. But this time I was struck by a deep sense of sadness—the contrast between the liberties we had throughout all of my life and the current infringement and restrictions of our freedoms.
    - If you remember the musical *The Sound of Music* when the family performed in the musical competition, Captain von Trapp sang Edelweiss, he called it a love song, it was just before the Nazi's took over Austria—he was mourning the loss of liberty and freedom that was falling upon them. That is exactly what I felt—are you aware? Do you recognize the evil powers that are at work taking away our God-given freedoms?
    - But note what the liars, the enemies of liberty have done—they have attacked the symbol of freedom in America—the US flag, by kneeling at sporting events and claiming the flag represents slavery, oppression, abuse, the exact opposite of freedom. The enemies of truth and liberty have taken the symbol of freedom and turned it into a symbol of slavery.
    - And what has happened in society as people have started to believe the lie that the US Flag is a symbol of slavery and abuse? Division, hostility, conflict, and an erosion of freedoms—how? By more lies, lies such as critical race theory, there is no male or female gender is your choice, that we are safer without police, that free speech is a threat to democracy and must be censored or silenced, all of these lies and more incite greater fear, which cause more survival drives, which cause people to feel more threatened, and this causes more legislation and rules that restrict liberty.
- The Sabbath is like the US Flag in this way—it is a sign of the freedom we have in God's government, under God's design laws. But it, just like the US Flag, has come under attack by Satan—by two primary ways:
    - Satan has mispresented the Sabbath through imposed law and the flag of our freedom is taught as a test of obedience, a day of restricted liberty, a day of rule-keeping, a day of fear if you break it you will get punished.

  - Or by replacing it with another flag, another day—Sunday, a worship day that came about through legislation, through imposed rule-making. Sunday was not made by God as a day set apart for freedom, for rest in God. It was made as a work day. But the church, in counsel, voted to make it a rest day. This is human law and thus Sunday symbolizes imposed law, it is a flag of a foreign power, foreign to God's government.
- There is another Commandment that God gave with a unique instruction—not a "thou shalt not" but an affirmation—"honor your mother and father"
  - But what are the liars in our society doing—the same ones who attack liberty?
  - Did you hear they want to change Mother's Day to "Birther person day"?
  - Every thinking person in the world knows a mother is more than just a birthing chamber—yet the haters of God want to destroy another institution of God—the family.
- Now could someone wave the US Flag and be working for another government?
- Can someone worships on Bible Sabbath and be working for Satan's kingdom and receive the mark of the beast?
- Can someone worships on Sunday and be advancing God's kingdom of love and be sealed of God?

If we accept that these two days are signs or marks of loyalty to one side or the other, does that actually inform us of whom is on which side?

These two days of worship are distinct **in their origin as days of worship**, and thus contain the very elements of the two types of governing – God's vs Satan's—design law that governs reality versus imposed rules that require infliction of punishment. This is the real issue in the war.

Here are some more quotes:

> "Christ died to save sinners, not in their sins, but from their sins. [Imposed law constructs all teach that we are saved in our sins, from the legal penalty, but not saved from our sins, that we continue live sinfully until Christ returns. The truth is that God actually transforms us here and now and we stop living for self, and live to love God and others. This is the opposite of the world, the opposite of the methods that drive people to force others to comply to make themselves feel safe] The warning given in Revelation shows us the terrible consequence of transgression. By lips that will not lie, God's law is declared to be holy, just, and good. **Our duty to obey this law is to be the burden of the last message of mercy to the world**.[1] [The law as the last message? How? Because it is the truth of God's law being design law, which represents God as Creator and overthrows the lie that God is a cosmic dictator who inflicts punishment for disobedience.] **God's law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but**

[1] It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth… The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. {COL 415}

> **holiness made known.** [Think about rules a parent has for handwashing, or exercise, or sleep etc. Those rules are not healthiness created, but healthiness made known.] **It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It presents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man.** {RH, April 27, 1911 par. 4}
>
> "'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' This command contains the principles of the first four precepts. And 'thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Upon these two great principles, the Word of God declares, hang all the law and the prophets. {RH, April 27, 1911 par. 5}
>
> "These **principles** are made known by the third angel's message, which declares that **the Creator has always required and always will require obedience to his royal law**. [Why does the Creator require obedience? Why does the Creator require we breathe? Because that is how life is built to operate. Remember the law is not holiness created but holiness made known. The commandments did not impose a law, but made the law known. And last week we explored how the 3rd angel's message is the warning of what happens when one chooses to violate God's design law, one after the other—the natural, unavoidable destructive results when God stops artificially protecting people from the damage their choices naturally cause.] But this law has been disregarded and transgressed, **and is now being ignored by the churches**. **Human enactments are placed where God's law should be.** [Imposed rules take the place of designed reality] Sunday, a child of the Papacy, has taken the place of God's holy Sabbath. As Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image, and set it up to be worshiped by all, so Sunday is placed before the people to be regarded as sacred. This day bears not a vestige of sanctity, yet it is held up to be honored by all. {RH, April 27, 1911 par. 6}

Understand it is not about worshipping on Sunday—get that clear, just like there is no wrong in worshipping on Wednesday night, or Tuesday or Thursday. It is what the Sunday, within the religious system represents!

And what is the implication of changing the Bible Sabbath to Sunday? What does this act mean in regard to how God and his government are understood? How can a church vote to change the day of worship? What must first happen concerning God's law?

So what does it mean if an ecclesiastical board votes to change the Sabbath? That they believe God's law is imposed, and therefore believe God is like a Roman emperor a cosmic dictator. **And accepting this change in the law is the root to the beast system**.

And this lie comes out in the rest of Christian doctrines, like God is required to punish; penal substitution theology; eternal burning hell; Jesus died to pay or legal debt; etc. etc.

So let's review – what makes the Sabbath holy?

- What significance is it that the Sabbath was "made" or created?

  - It is not "legislated" any more than any other aspect of God's creation. The earth was made, the animals were made, angels were made, mankind was made, and the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
- What significance is it that the Sabbath was "made"?
  - When was the Sabbath made?
  - What was happening in the universe?
- What did God do? He RESTED – what does that mean?
  - If He RESTED what was God not doing? He was no longer prosecuting His war, His case. He wasn't pressing his agenda. He wasn't intimidating. He wasn't using his power to force his way!
- It is God's Sabbath – the day He rested, the day He revealed by action how He handles opposition, how He treats enemies, how He deals with allegations and rebellion. He gives us freedom!
- What does it reveal that God created the Sabbath in the context of an assault on his right to rule?
- The Sabbath was "made" as further evidence of God's character of love; truth presented in love leaving us free. The first six days of creation week we learn God has power, but the Sabbath reveals God does not coerce or pressure or threaten with His power, but leaves us free. The Sabbath is evidence of God's character of love, established upon the principles of truth, love and freedom.
- **The Sabbath is evidence that Satan's allegations about God, that God imposes rules, that God imposes punishments, that God abuses power are all lies**. This is why Satan hates the Sabbath, because rightly seen and understood it reveals Satan as a liar.
  - Satan hates the Sabbath in the same way Richard Nixon hated the Watergate tapes or Clinton hated Monica's dress. Nixon would have loved to destroy the tapes, and in fact tried. Clinton would have loved to destroy the dress. And Satan tries to destroy the Sabbath, to distort and twist the evidence into something it isn't. How? By replacing it or twisting it into an imposed law test.

Therefore, the Sabbath stands as evidence, as a sign, of those who value God's law of love, and practice his methods of presenting the truth in love and leaving others free.

Then what is the mark of the beast?

> The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands. **To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** {RH, July 13, 1897 par. 5}

What decisions did the beast make and what ideas did it advocate that are in direct opposition to the word of God?

That God's law is imposed, and as an imposed law it can be changed, amended, abrogated, altered, thus, under the imposed law construct Sabbath can be changed to Sunday. And, imposed laws require judicial proceedings, investigation, records, judgments, imposed punishments. **Therefore, coercive pressure is used to punish law breakers and ensure obedience**.

Thus the issue in the end, of which **the two days stand as signs**, is the issue of God's law of love, versus Satan's imposed law construct; God's rule of love versus Satan's rule of fear and selfishness; **God's design laws versus worldly imposed laws.** It comes down to the methods one practices and the two days are symbolic of two systems.

Here is another quote from the same founder who wrote the others we have read:

> In striking contrast to the wrong and oppression so universally practised were the mission and work of Christ. Earthly kingdoms are established and upheld by physical force, but this **was not** to be the foundation of the Messiah's kingdom. **In the establishment of his government no carnal weapons were to be used, no coercion practised; no attempt would be made to force the consciences of men. These are the principles used by the prince of darkness for the government of his kingdom. His agents are actively at work, seeking in their human independence to enact laws which are in direct contrast to Christ's mercy and loving-kindness.** {RH, August 18, 1896 par. 2}
>
> **Prophecy has plainly stated the nature of Christ's kingdom. He planned a government which would use *no force*; his subjects would know no oppression**. [no arrests, no detainments, no imposed punishments, no force] The symbols of earthly governments are wild beasts, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God. **Not as a fierce tyrant did he come**, but as the Son of man; not to conquer the nations by his iron power, but "to preach good tidings unto the meek;" "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" "to comfort all that mourn." **He came as the divine Restorer,** bringing to oppressed and downtrodden humanity the rich and abundant grace of Heaven**, that by the power of his righteousness, man, fallen and degraded though he was, might be a partaker of divinity.** [which is healing and restorative, an expression of the law of love, the law life is built to operate upon] {RH, August 18, 1896 par. 3}

Those who promote a god who acts like a Roman emperor, who imposes law, who inflicts punishment, are actively promoting the system of the beast—even if they worship on the Bible Sabbath!

Here is the problem regarding days of worship, of which Sunday is a sign:

> But when the decree shall go forth **enforcing** the counterfeit sabbath, **and** the loud cry of the third angel **shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image**, the line will be clearly drawn **between the false and the true**. **Then** those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.--Ev 234, 235 (1899). {LDE 225.4}

Notice it is not about Sunday, but the "enforcing" worship, about the use of arbitrary power to coerce, this is beastly. This is Satan's way.

But what if it is not enforcement of a day of worship, but enforcement of defilement of your Spirit temple? **If you were told that you couldn't go to college unless you eat a piece of pork—as an SDA, Jew or Muslim what would you do?** But what if you are told you can't go to college unless you get an experimental RNA based injection that will invade your cells and instruct them to start making a foreign protein what will you do?

Consider this quote from a book called *Prophets and Kings*:

> The spiritual restoration of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah's day **was a symbol**, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: "They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities." "They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah 61:4; 58:12. {PK 677.2}
>
> **The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the *principles* that are the foundation of the kingdom of God**. **They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law--the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection**, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard. {PK 677.3} [What are principles? Design laws—we are to restore the design laws—why do they need to be restored? Where do they need to be restored? What has caused the breach? Where is the breach?]
>
> In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of this remnant people who build the wall. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:13, 14. {PK 678.1} [If we identify the Sabbath as an arbitrary test of obedience and teach people that if they refuse to accept it they will be breaking God's law and God will be required to punish them—are we repairing the breach or doing just the opposite, make the breach bigger?]
>
> In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. **The *breach made in the law <u>at the time</u>* the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired**. [Notice, the breach is not the change of the Sabbath, the breach was made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed—what was the breach? The concept of law changing from design law to imposed, which resulted in the change of the Sabbath. No committee votes to change the law of gravity, so the change of the Sabbath is evidence of the breach, but not the breach itself. The breach we must repair is how we understand God's law and government, which is design law, not imposed law.] God's

> remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show t**hat the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** [why? Because it is the law of life, the principles upon which life is established and operates. One cannot have health in violations of the laws of health] and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as **a memorial of creation**, **a constant reminder of the power of God**. [What do you hear when you hear this? Do you think might and power? If so, why does Zechariah say not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord? What power did God display on the 7th day of creation week? Is the Sabbath a memorial to physical power of to another power—the power of truth and love and freedom, the power of God's character, the power of the gospel, of design law. What did Paul say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." Romans 1:16 NIV84. What kind of power is the gospel? What kind of war has Satan waged? A war of ideas, words, not a war of power. Then what kind of power is necessary to defeat Satan? The power of truth and love. Do we see the Sabbath as a memorial of truth, love and freedom? Or to we misrepresent it by promoting the idea of imperialism and force?] In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. See verse 12. {PK 678.2}

What was the breach made in the law **when** the Sabbath was changed? It was not the mere change of the day of worship—the breach was the idea that God's law is imposed law—this is the breach we are to repair.

Isaiah not only prophecies that God's people will be repairers of the breach but also **raise up the foundations of many generations**. What does this mean, the foundations of many generations?

What are the foundations of God's government that Satan has torn down in the minds and hearts of people that we are to raise up?

What is the foundation of any government? It is the law upon which it is built. So, would the foundation of God's government be God's law? And what type of law would that be, design law or imposed law? And how has Satan torn down the foundation and how do we raise it up?

Consider these historic quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> **The law of love is the foundation of God's government**, and the service of love the only service acceptable to heaven. ST December 15, 1914, par. 1

> **Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government** in heaven and earth, and **it must be the foundation** of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation. COL 49.1

> **The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness**. [why? Because happiness is a by-product of healthiness in all domains, and healthiness is only possible in harmony with the laws of health—the laws upon which life is constructed to operate. So again, this statement reveals that God's law is design law, not imposed rules like humans make.] God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. **He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service**. [What kind of law forces and compels? Imposed law!] GC 493.2

What is the foundation that we are to raise up? It is the same as the repairing of the breach, which is restoring the truth about God's design laws, which are all expressions of God's character of love.

Do you see the issue in the war has always been over God's character and Satan has always attacked God's character by attacking how we conceive of law, either design law or imposed law.

We will not repair the breach by getting every person in the world to go to church on Saturday while teaching that God's law is imposed and God, in order to be just, must inflict punishment upon sinners.

So what does it mean the Sabbath was made for man? For what purpose? A gift, a gift of what—a rule we must keep or a resource for our healing, for our protection? How?

Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy? What does this mean?

- If you commit sin on Sabbath have you made the Sabbath less holy?
- If you do righteousness on Sabbath have you made it more holy?
- Is it about keeping the Sabbath holy or keeping ourselves holy?
- Can we keep ourselves holy one day in seven?
- Then, what about "Remember the Sabbath" is the Lord telling us that this day, given for man, is a resource to help us all week long remember something that will work to help us live holy lives? What?
- Could it be to Remember God's design law, God's methods, of truth presented in love leaving others free. So that all week long we practice those methods in how we deal with others?

Consider this quote:

> **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter**. **We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent the principles of His government**. **They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom**. Daily it will be their prayer that **the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them**. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ, and will

exemplify the perfection of His character. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works. 3TT 20.3

MONDAY

Sabbath before Sinai—the lesson points out that the Israelites were given manna to collect six days each week, but on Friday they collected double portion and none fell on Sabbath. This occurred before the law was given at Sinai, an evidence that the Sabbath existed before the written law was given.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson states:

> "The Sabbath as a *sign of knowledge*
> The Sabbath as a *sign of sanctification*

What kind of knowledge? What does it mean "This is life eternal that they might know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" John 17:3?

So, if we have the right Sabbath day, does that mean we know the Lord and are sanctified? Did the Pharisees who crucified Christ have the right Sabbath day?

Did having the right Sabbath day function as a sign that they knew God and were sanctified? Why not? What about us today?

When we have the right Sabbath day, but the wrong law lens, i.e. believe the right day under the imposed law understanding, then we remain in Satan's kingdom and still don't know God and end up rejecting Jesus, while we claim we are advancing the gospel of Jesus.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that those who Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy will be blessed by God.

What about those who do this on Sunday instead?

Bubba and Cindy Cathy, owners of Chick-fil-la close their stores every Sunday because they love Jesus and want to honor Him. Are they blessed?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content.

The Remedy Audio and *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.

Our goal, as a ministry, is to continue to enhance your growth and experience with the wonderful, life-changing message of God's design and healing plan.

SHARING campaign May: *Fundamental Focus*: *A Closer Look At God*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 10
The New Covenant

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Jeremiah 31:31-34:

> "The time is coming," declares the LORD,
> "when I will make a new covenant
> with the house of Israel
> and with the house of Judah.
> 32 It will not be like the covenant
> I made with their forefathers
> when I took them by the hand
> to lead them out of Egypt,
> because they broke my covenant,
> though I was a husband to them,"
> declares the LORD.
> 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
> after that time," declares the LORD.
> "I will put my law in their minds
> and write it on their hearts.
> I will be their God,
> and they will be my people.
> 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
> or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,'
> because they will all know me,
> from the least of them to the greatest,"
> declares the LORD.
> "For I will forgive their wickedness
> and will remember their sins no more." (Je 31:31–34 NIV84).

What is the difference between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant?

- Was God different in the two?
- Did God offer something different?
- Does God do something different—for instance in the old He wrote the law on stone and in the new He writes it on the heart—why?
- What covenant did Adam, Enoch, and Abraham participate in, the new or the old?
- What about people after Sinai? What covenant did Moses and Elijah participate in—both already taken to heaven?

Read the first paragraph, "It is clear…" thoughts? What do you hear?

And this is so sad to read—it is again diagnostic that the authors of the lesson continue to operate under the false law lens—the idea that God's law function like human law and that sin is rule-breaking, and salvation is legal adjustment of a blood payment to one's account through faith.

They really don't see that the covenant at Sinai is not the same as the new covenant because it was not based on faith but on works, it was not based on healing the heart by God, but based on obedience to rules. In other words, the New Covenant is the covenant of design law in which God heals the damage in hearts and minds. The Old Covenant is the covenant of human law in which sinners perform and obey rules and bring sacrifices to pay their way into the grace of an offended God.

Consider this historic quote from *Eternity Past*:

> **The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden**. After the Fall, there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. **To all men this covenant offered pardon** and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. **It also promised eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law**. Thus the **patriarchs received the hope of salvation**. EP 258.6 [Hope of salvation based on what? The promised seed to come—which would destroy our enemy. This agreement or covenant offers pardon and grace to enable us to live in harmony with God's law and eternal life is only available in harmony with God's law—why? So, what is the covenant promising? To restore sinners to harmony with the principles, protocols, laws of life]
>
> **This same covenant was renewed to Abraham** in the promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. Abraham trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. **It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness**. [What is this? What came first, the recognition, accounting, of Abraham as righteous or Abraham's change of heart to trust God? And consider you have a spouse that doesn't trust you at all, is afraid of you, suspicious, won't listen, is constantly seeking to do their own thing—but then they have a genuine change of heart and come to truly trust you completely—what happens in your relationship? What do you recognize of them? What can now happen in your marriage that could never happen before? Do you see how corrupt the penal legal lie is that teaches that Abraham had faith in a payment that enabled God to legally account him righteous even though Abraham wasn't set right or justified or made righteous? It is a lie. Abraham's natural, sinful heart, which is at enmity to God, was transformed, put right, set right. When Abraham trusted God, the God of all truth recognized or reckoned or accounted it to be exactly what it was, a right heart, why? Because through trust Abraham was in dwelt with the Holy Spirit who healed and transformed Him, wrote the law upon Abraham's heart and mind. This is another way of saying, having the mind of Christ, or circumcision of the heart, or receiving the character of Jesus.] **The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law**. [What law and what authority? The law of life, the law of love, the law upon which life is built and its authority is over the operations of all life, including the mind. And thus, the

covenant was the restoration of God's law within the heart and mind of Abraham which resulted in Abraham living out his trust in application and following God's directives] The testimony of God was, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:5. Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, **it could not be ratified until the death of Christ**. [What does this mean—ratified? Is this some legal stamp, some forensic execution of documents, some formal signing ceremony? Or is this ratification something actual, something real? Ratified simply means "confirmed" The promise to provide the Remedy to sin was made to Adam and to Abraham—the seed of the woman—but the promise wasn't "confirmed" "ratified" or "realized" until the seed of the woman, Jesus, actually came, lived sinlessly and destroyed "him who holds the power of death that is the devil" (Heb 2:14) and "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light" (2Tim 1:10). In other words, the ratification was the actual accomplishment of Jesus living out God's law as a human, being tempted in all points like we are, exposing Satan's lies and developing a sinless human character thereby destroying the infection of fear and selfishness and becoming the connecting link that restores God's living law of love back into the species human.] **It had existed by the promise of God; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant**. **The law of God** was the basis of this covenant, [What law? The design law of love] which was simply **an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will**, placing them where they could obey God's law. EP 259.1 [What is the new covenant? An arrangement for brining human beings into harmony with God and God's law. It is not a legal adjustment, a payment, a judicial process. It is the process of fixing in human beings the deviation from God's design sin has caused!]

Another compact—called in Scripture the "old" covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. [This "other" compact is not the New Covenant, it is something else, what?] The Abrahamic covenant, ratified by the blood of Christ, is called the "second," or "new" covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. EP 259.2

But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai? In their bondage the people had to a great **extent lost the knowledge of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant**. [What did they lose the knowledge of? What are principles? What kind of law are principles?] In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal His power and mercy, that they might be **led to love and trust Him**. [How can you lead someone to love and trust you? Can you get love and trust by giving a list of rules and promising rewards for obedience and threatening punishment for disobedience? But isn't that what parents often do for children? And do children come to love and trust parents who may do this very thing? What is the difference when parents give rules with promises of reward and threats of punishment and when the state does it? Does it always work with children? Do some children rebel? If rules and rule enforcement cannot engender love why do parents set rules? Is it a greater evidence of love to have no rules for children or to have rules? What is the key for children to come to genuinely love and trust their parents who have set rules with promises and threatenings? Isn't it getting to know the heart of the parents and

coming to understand the purpose of the rules, i.e. how reality actually works, so that they eventually appreciate their parents setting the rules to protect them from themselves in their immaturity? But what if the parents set non-sense rules, rules that have no connection to reality, but are just arbitrary? Or at least the parents never understood the reasons and thus the children never learned the reasons and only obeyed for fear of punishment?] He bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage. EP 259.3

But they had no true conception of the holiness of God, [What is your conception of holiness? I was not taught a conception of holiness that made sense to me. I was taught a concept that was mystical, fearful, threatening—but what is a more accurate view of holiness? Perfect harmony with God and God's law which is the basis of life, so holiness is actually perfection, restoration God's original design for life, to perfect eternal healthiness and happiness.] of **the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, and their need of a Saviour**. EP 260.1 [They didn't understand that sin is an issue of heart, mind, character, motive, not mere behavior and therefore salvation is healing the inner being, not adjusting the legal standing—how many still don't understand this today and are teaching the New Covenant is merely an extension of the old? No, **the old covenant is a legal covenant based on the false law concept of the former slaves. The New Covenant is the restoration in the sinner of God's law of life, that heals and transforms the being to live in God's presence**.]

God gave them His law with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience: "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, ... ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Exodus 19:5, 6. **The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law.** [Again, the old was based on external, behavior, performance, law, code, ritual, the New is based on the condition of the heart, dying to the old being reborn with a new heart and right Spirit received by faith.] **Feeling able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient."** Exodus 24:7. [And this is the basis of the penal legal theologies, we form a god that is the god-king, (If you haven't been reading the current blog series *Who Created Whom— An Exploration of the Origin of Our Favorite God* I encourage you to read it. A guest blogger has written it and I have really enjoyed it. , part 2 went up Thursday and the final part will go up this Thursday), imperial dictator ruler, who makes up laws and teach that justice is the inflicting of punishment for law breaking, and then we make up the theory that salvation is getting legal adjustment through the right payment made to the heavenly judicial system. And in this way, we exert power over God by applying the right payment, the blood of a sinless human sacrifice, that restrains or legally prohibits God from killing us. We create a false priestly class who intercedes with sinners and this god navigating the complex and confusing theological legal landscape for us. But it is all based on Satan's lie about God's law. We must reject it and leave this old covenant behind and embrace the New Covenant of actual healing, having God's design law of life restored into our hearts and minds] They readily entered into covenant with God. Yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant and bowed down to worship a graven image. Now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour

revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant. EP 260.2

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Hosea 2:18-20 and consider its implication in the New Covenant, but let's read verses 14-23:

> 14 So I am going to take her into the desert again; [This is a reminder of leaving Egypt, which represents bondage in sin. So God is saying, I will lead you out of the bondage of sin, to the desert where you will be free. But the desert is also where you cannot provide for yourself, where you will live and thrive only as you depend upon me and eat the bread of heaven I provide, which is the truth and drink the water I provide, which is the water of life—my love—the living law of love restored into humanity by Jesus.] there I will win her back with words of love. [What is it that wins us to God? Law, rules, threats, or love? As Paul wrote in Romans 2:4 "the kindness of God leads us to repentance."] I will give back to her the vineyards she had and make Trouble Valley a door of hope. [vineyards represent life, thriving, development, living, productivity, fruits of the harvest—and in this case Jesus is the Vine we are the branches, as we are connected to the Vine, we who were dead in trespass and sin, receive the life of Christ and the dead branches come to life and produce fruits of righteousness—our lives blossom—despite the hardships and troubles in this life] She will respond to me there as she did when she was young, when she came from Egypt. [This is the end-time people of God who are called out of the world, out of Babylon out of the false legal systems, out of the slavery of this world and into true covenant relationship with God in which they love God and others more than self] Then once again she will call me her husband—**she will no longer call me her Baal**. I will never let her speak the name of Baal again. [Wow—what kind of a relationship is marriage? It is a covenant relationship based on mutual love and trust. This is a reference to the New Covenant, in which we come into unity with God, in which He writes His law upon our hearts and minds and we love and trust Him. And notice, when we genuinely enter into the new covenant, in which God writes His law on our hearts and minds, and we are united with Him, then we will not call God Baal—and who was Baal?
>
> Baal was son of El; Baal was the god of weather, thunder, renewal, harvest. Baal fought against the great serpent the leviathan, and also against Mot, the god of death. In his battle with Mot Baal dies and rises again to bring life to the land. Now, what is wrong with worshipping a god who is the son of the father god, who is the creator and governor of the nature, who fights the great serpent, who fights against death and dies and rises again to bring us life? Baal required appeasement, payment, sacrifice to merit the blessings. Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people and Jesus Christ to all those who worship a god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice be paid in order not to kill us.
>
> God is saying that when we enter into the New Covenant with Him and genuinely know Him (life eternal is knowing God John 17:3) then we will no longer call God Baal. We will finally

see the truth that the penal legal theologies are pagan and false and we will be united in heart with our God and when we finally do this, then Malachi's prophecy of Elijah coming again to call the people out of Baal worship is realized, notice what God says happens when we finally reject the imposed law Baal-god] **At that time I will make a covenant** with all the wild animals and birds, so that they will not harm my people. I will also remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, and will let my people live in peace and safety.

19 Israel, I will make you my wife;
I will be true and faithful;
I will show you constant love and mercy
and make you mine for ever. [What does God do? He heals nature, He removes the survival of the fittest infection from His creation so the animals stop killing each other, and the people stop killing each other, and we are united in eternal union with our Creator God!]

20 I will keep my promise and make you mine,
and you will acknowledge me as LORD.

21–22 At that time I will answer the prayers of my people Israel.
I will make rain fall on the earth,
and the earth will produce corn and grapes and olives.

23 I will establish my people in the land and make them prosper.
I will show love to those who were called "Unloved",
and to those who were called "Not-my-People"
I will say, "You are my people,"
and they will answer, "You are our God." (Ho 2:14–23 GNT). [And who is included in this promise? All human beings, from all races, nations, tribes, cultures, and languages!]

The lesson also asks us to look at Ezekiel 11:19-10:

> **I will give them a new heart and a new mind**. I will take away their stubborn heart of stone and will give them an obedient heart. Then they will keep my laws and faithfully obey all my commands. They will be my people, and I will be their God. (Eze 11:19–20 GNT).

What is described? What kind of salvation is this? What kind of law is this?

I was reading in the book *Steps to Christ* this week and read the following, describing the New Covenant, what do you think is being described?

> When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, **love springs up in the heart**. [What is this? Is it a declaration, a proclamation, a legal adjustment or a living reality, an actual change in experience and function?] Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. **Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a**

pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness. SC 59.2

The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God. Love to God, zeal for His glory, was the controlling power in our Saviour's life. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. **Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it.** It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. "We love, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19, R.V. [What is described? Is this a legal process or an actual recreating of the heart, the wellsprings of action?] **In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action.** [What is described? Healing, regeneration, renewal, notice the next words] **It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections**. [This is not some legal accounting in books, this is the outworking of the law of life, of design law, of God's law of love, which is a living law rewriting the operating systems of the soul] This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. SC 59.3

There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first, already dwelt upon, is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. **It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can <u>make us holy</u>.** SC 59.4 [What is described here? Is this saying it is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that legally declares us holy even though we are not? No! It this is describing real righteousness by faith, actually healing of the soul, heart, mind, character. We are changed. This is the truth!]

The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption. SC 60.1 [Why is this dangerous? Because God's law is the law of life, the protocols upon which life is built, salvation restores us to live out the law, not violate it. And if we were to continue to break God's law such actions injure us and result in our death. It would be like an alcoholic with liver failure getting a liver transplant—a new lease on life, but the liver transplant that brings new life, doesn't give the person license to keep drinking because the alcohol violates the laws of health and will still result in their death. The person must live in harmony with the laws of health if they want to live. This is how it is with all of God's laws including the moral laws.]

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. [If it is not outward compliance what is it? What kind of law is focused on outward compliance? Imposed law, but God's law is not like this. So what kind of law is God's law?] **The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth**. [Where does God's law originate? His nature, His character, it is the expression of Himself that exudes from Him and is what life is built to operate upon. What law is the foundation of God's

government in heaven AND earth? Do you see how Christianity has failed to present the truth about God's law and government and how the message to lighten the world, the 3 angels' messages is the message of the truth about God's character, law and government? The First Angel is the message of the good news, the eternal good news about God and His design law for life—it is a call to worship the Creator to make a right judgment about who God is. The Second Angel is the message of the corruption of the Babylonian system of imposed law, the rule of law god is a lie and we are to come out of that system and back to worship our Creator whose law is design law. And the Third Angel gives the message of what happens when God's design laws are persistently violated and God sets people free to reap what they have chosen.] **If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul**, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? **When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled**, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? [What is described here as the New Covenant? Is it legal or is it healing, recreational, actual? No legality at all!] Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 5:3; 2:4. **Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.** SC 60.2 [Why? Because faith results in renewal of heart to live in harmony with God's design laws of life!]

TUESDAY

Read the third paragraph, "Though the new…" God is the same yesterday today and tomorrow—so if we are saying about the old and new covenant that it is the same Creator God of love involved in both and who has the same goals and who heals through the same methods then that is, of course true.

But is the covenant to save individual sinners a one-sided arrangement?

God covenanted or promised to save the human species and did this in the person of Jesus without our help.

But, for individual sinners, does it require the active involvement, engagement, participation of the individual sinner to be saved?

So, if the Old and the New covenant are the same, why are they called Old and New, why not just one covenant?

While God is the same, the actual agreement or arrangement of the two are not.

In the New Covenant, which is the actual plan of salvation—the only treatment plan that actual heals or saves sinners—the law is written upon the heart.

If the old covenant was the same, why didn't God write it upon the hearts of the people at Sinai? Was God unwilling to write it upon their hearts? Or were the people unwilling to let God write it upon their hearts? And since they wouldn't let God write it upon their hearts, what was God's purpose in putting it on stone? Wasn't it to act as a promise and a diagnostic instrument and a protective hedge for children, for the immature?

- **The 10 Commandments as a Promise**—if you trust me and let me heal your heart, then you will not have any other gods before me, you will not make graven images, you will not misrepresent my name/character, you will remember the liberty and freedom of my methods by honoring my Sabbath, you will honor your parents, and won't murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness and covet.
- **The 10 Commandments as a Diagnostic Tool**—the law exposes the corruption of the sinful heart, how far from love we are, our terminal condition, and also leads back to Jesus who will heal us fulfilling the promise of what we will look like if we let Him write the law on our hearts
- **The 10 Commandments as a Protection**—even before the sinner trusts God and allows Him to heal the heart, if they choose not to murder, commit adultery, steal, worship false gods etc. they are protected from greater damage to their hearts, minds, characters, and consciences

But what was the problem with the old covenant? It was the people's false belief that it was a legal agreement with God that if they performed correctly, behaviorally, then they would get the blessings, but if they didn't they would be punished by God. It is all based on the false human law model, which gives them power over the deity through legalistic performance, ritual, sacrifice etc. They made it pagan and sadly Judaism, Islam and Christianity continue to operate on this false paradigm.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Yesterday…" Do you see the imbedded false legal distortions?

They say it is by the forgiveness of God that we enter into covenant relationship. Now let's be very clear—if God did not forgive, we could not be saved, we could not enter into salvation, or covenant with Him—this is absolutely true. But, was God's forgiveness ever an obstacle to our salvation? In other words, was God's forgiveness something that needed to be procured or was it always freely given, never unavailable, never an obstacle?

Pagan religions, those based on human law, the god-king idea of a supreme dictator all teach that the offended god must receive something—a sacrifice, a bribe, an offering, a legal-payment, in order to merit, earn, legally permit the god to forgive. This is a lie regarding our Creator God, this idea is what Baal required.

God forgives all freely—it is Satan who alleges God cannot do this, from the commentary *The Desire of Ages*:

> **In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. DA 761.4

It is always Satan's version of law that makes forgiveness from the deity the issue. But this is a lie. God forgives everyone, but not everyone is saved. Those who put Jesus on the Cross, were forgiven by Jesus, but they remained lost because the true barrier to their salvation was not removed and the true barrier is what? Sinfulness! Sin their own hearts kept them out of God's grace, their refusal to surrender in love and trust to Jesus, which is known as repentance.

So, when a wrong is perpetrated upon another, the wrong or sin causes injury to the wrong-doer's heart/mind/character and the bonds of love and trust within the relationship are damaged. The sinner experiences fear, guilt, shame. In order for reconciliation to happen, for the relationship to be actually healed, for the two to be at-one, two things need to occur.

- The injured party must forgive—which God does
- The offending party must repent—have a change of heart!

So, in order for the paragraph to be accurate it should read, "The bottom line is that salvation by faith is in God who forgives all our sin freely without any work or payment from us, and it is His kindness, His free pardon, His forgiveness that leads us to repentance. As a result of His forgiveness and our repentance we enter into relationship together in which He heals all the damage caused by sin and gives us the gift of eternal life."

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The book of Hebrews…" What does the idea of Jesus as our High Priest ministering in the sanctuary in heaven mean to you?

What law lens do you understand this through?

According to Scripture what is the building material of the sanctuary in heaven?

> Paul says, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's house [sanctuary/temple], built on the foundation of the

> apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building [sanctuary/temple] is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too [you all] are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22.
>
> And Peter says, "As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones [building blocks of the Temple], are being built into a spiritual house [Temple] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Pet 2:4,5.
>
> And Paul says, "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building [Temple]…Don't you know that you yourselves [the church] are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you [you all] are that temple." 1 Cor 3:9,16,17.
>
> Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. Revelation 3:12

From the commentary *The Acts of the Apostles:*

> Through the ages that have passed since the days of the apostles, **the building of God's temple has never ceased.** We may look back through the centuries and see **the living stones of which it is composed** gleaming like jets of light through the darkness of error and superstition. Throughout eternity **these precious jewels will shine with increasing luster, testifying to the power of the truth of God. The flashing light of these polished stones** reveals the strong contrast between light and darkness, between the gold of truth and the dross of error**.**
>
> Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. **But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act. We are to bring to the foundation material that will stand the test of fire—gold, silver, and precious stones, "polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12)**. To those who thus build for God, Paul speaks words of encouragement... : "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." ... **The Christian who faithfully presents the word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God He will be honored as a wise builder.—The Acts of the Apostles, 598, 599.**

Or consider this quote from the same author:

> The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple

> in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. {3MR 231.3}
>
> Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. {3MR 231.4}

If the sanctuary in heaven is built out of living beings, is that a real sanctuary or a pretend sanctuary?

I ask this because many people ask me if I believe in a real sanctuary in heaven—and I do—but when I use the Scripture to demonstrate what it is actually constructed out of, they suddenly accuse me of no longer believing in a real physical sanctuary.

It is as if to them, inanimate matter, gold, silver, wood, which is what idols are made out of, which cannot sing, pray, worship, praise, love, trust, are somehow more real that living intelligent beings.

So, if the sanctuary in heaven is composed of living beings, what is Jesus our High Priest doing there?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content.

SHARING campaign May: *Fundamental Focus*: *A Closer Look At God*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 Q2 The Promise: Lesson 11
The New Covenant Sanctuary

by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

What do you think about this week's lesson? I had a couple of thoughts while studying it… it sounded familiar, like the traditional view of the OT sanctuary system and atonement. It also made me a little frustrated and a little sad…it gave me some insight into how pagan God constructs and penal legal substitution theology has infected our church just like so much of Christianity. And it made me really grateful…grateful for the Holy Spirit who enlightens and continues to shine new light on old truths…grateful that I found Come and Reason…and grateful that I have some different answers and explanations when faced with these penal legal lies and distortions. Answers and explanations that are consistent with scripture, with science and God's natural design laws and methods, and consistent with my experience of God's character of love. So, what I'm going to do today is look at both the OT sanctuary symbols, the rituals, and the meanings from the healing reality perspective with a design law lens…and then look at the new covenant heavenly sanctuary with the same healing reality and design law view. Now remember, Dr. Jennings held an entire one-day seminar focused on the OT Sanctuary, decoding the symbols, the rituals, the feast days…so we are only going to hit just a few of the high points. But the seminar is called "The Sanctuary and Feast Days: A Hidden End Time Message", and we recorded it, made it into a DVD, and it is available to watch right on our web site…stay tuned for the members-only Q&A after 11, and I will show you how to find it. Everything I needed to prepare this lesson study today is available on our web site.

All Bible metaphor points to one reality – the truth about God's character of love, His methods and principles (design laws), and His plan to heal and restore each of us – along with the whole universe – back to his design.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Remember…if a metaphor, or symbol, or parable, or simile does not point to some larger reality, then it is no longer metaphor…it is merely *fantasy*. Of course, the challenge is to interpret the symbolism correctly…and there is something even worse than not understanding a symbol's meaning… attributing a false meaning to the symbols is worse, because then you believe you "have the truth", and you stop looking for correct answer or the true meaning.

Not one element of the OT sanctuary is to be taken literally…every element is symbolic in some way…it all points to a larger reality, so in order to correctly understand it we must decode the symbols and the metaphors…and correctly understand the larger reality to which it is pointing.

I believe some of the content in this week's lesson illustrates some of the ways in which the sanctuary (OT and heavenly) has been terribly misunderstood, which has resulted in gross distortions about God, His character and methods, and the plan of salvation…and keeps millions trapped in a distorted belief system that has no power to heal and transform. It should be no surprise that the imperial law construct is the basis for these distortions and misunderstandings…believing that God's laws function like human laws – just a system of rules, without inherent consequences, that requires judicial oversight and infliction of external penalties or punishments… leads folks to misinterpret the meaning and significance of the OT animal sacrifices, the requirement of bloodshed as a legal process in a judicial system. However, notice what the Bible actually says about OT sacrifices in Hebrews 9 and 10:

> The gifts and sacrifices being offered were ***not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper***. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – external regulations applying until the time of the new order…But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because ***it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins***.

Animal sacrifices were NEVER able to deal or address or take away the sin problem, and God told them this during OT times – while the ceremonial system was active – in Isaiah 1:

> "The multitude of your sacrifices – what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats…wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."

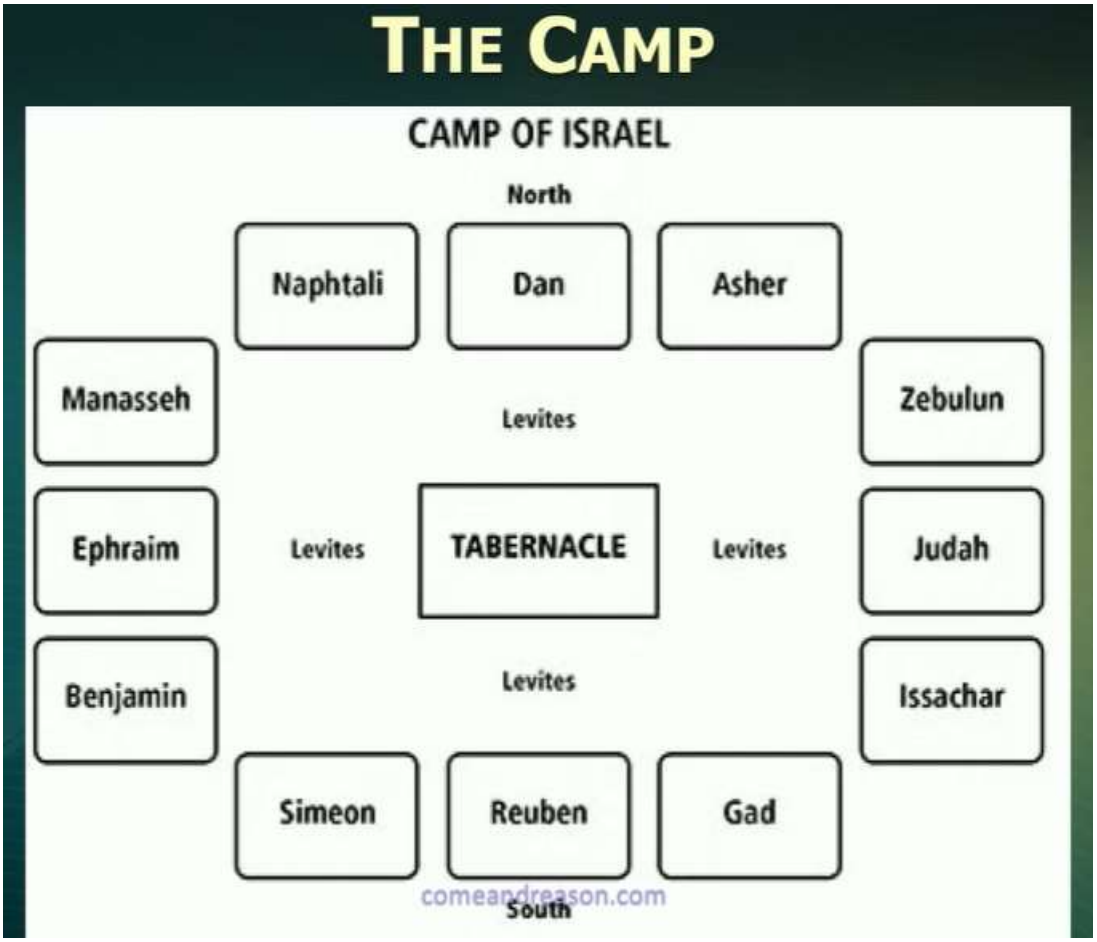
God was not interested in animal sacrifices…He was interested in changing people to be more like Christ. As Hosea so eloquently puts it, "I want your constant love, ***not your animal sacrifices***. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me."

So, if these elaborate ceremonies and animal sacrifices could not cleanse from sin, then what in the world was the purpose? It was theater…a drama or a play to engage the sinner, (in this case primitive, dark-minded, slave mentality) in activities designed to teach, to transform, and to enlighten. Can you imagine placing your hands on the head of your pet doggy or pet kitty, confessing some sin you committed, looking in their sweet sad eyes while you cut their throat and watch them die? Do you think that might have an impact on you…on even the most darkened, crusty, hard-hearted person? This was part of the purpose – to cause you to be sickened by sin…to have a gut revulsion to its destructiveness…to make you want to never participate in sin again. But there was an even bigger purpose…the entire Levitical system was a drama, a play, a little theater. Again, this system was given to a group of recent slaves…they were uneducated, likely illiterate…so God directed them through Moses to build a very impressive stage (the sanctuary/temple), with intricate costumes, expensive props, and provided them with a very detailed script. The Israelites were the cast, the acting

troupe, and they were to act out in yearly cycles a revelation of God's plan to heal and save humankind from sin – for themselves, for the surrounding nations, and for the entire universe.

Salvation was NOT dependent on participating/acting in this play nor was being an Israelite…to be saved, you only had to experience the reality to which the drama/play was pointing. Many of the actors became so consumed with following strictly to the letter of the script that they failed to comprehend and embrace the reality to which it points…so consumed and focused on the rituals and the rules that when Jesus – THE larger reality – came and dwelt among them, they hated him and they killed him.
OT Sanctuary – Decoding the Symbols

The overarching theme of the entire drama: Humanity is separated from God by sin, and God is working through Christ to bring humanity back into unity with himself, by restoring in our hearts his character of love (at-one-ment). The tabernacle was placed in the center of the camp, and the tribes/people are camped all around the outskirts, separated from God with the Levites in between. This is symbolic – the twelve tribes represent the unconverted peoples of the world…and the Levites, the priesthood of believers, the people of God stand between God and them, going out to minister the gospel, the good news, the attributes of God to the tribes of the world, bringing them back to a knowledge of the true God, bringing them to the temple/tabernacle. They camped in a rectangle to represent people in every walk of life, on all four corners of the earth we find that God's Levites are ministering to bring people to Him.



Three main elements in the OT sanctuary system all represent Christ, but at three different stages of time. Moses represents Christ in His pre-incarnate form, and notice the similarities:

MOSES	CHRIST
• He spoke to God face to face • Left God's presence and confronted the ruler holding the Israelites in slavery • Set the people free and built the sanctuary	• He spoke to God face to face • Left God's presence to confront the ruler of this world holding humanity captive • Set us free and built the true sanctuary

The Lamb – represents Jesus as a human during his 33-year sojourn here on Earth.

High Priest – represents Jesus after His life/death/resurrection/victory on Earth and ascension to heaven.

Now let's see if we can interpret and understand the meaning of the sin offering ritual while at the same time decoding the remaining sanctuary symbols…first, for a non-priest Jew – a member of the twelve tribes – what lesson does it teach us? The sinner would come and place his hands on the head of the sacrificial animal and confess his sin…why on the head do you think? This is symbolic of where sin happens…it happens in the mind, and the sinner (not the ministering priest) would cut the circulation…**the life is in the blood**, and what does the blood do in the body…it circles…this is an object lesson of how love works, love is other-centered, it just keeps giving and giving, never-ending giving…yet sin severs the principle of giving and the blood stops circling and the animal dies…sin severs my design, the principle of love, the law of life, and results in death. The sacrificial animal (and its blood) represents sinless Jesus, who took our terminal sinful condition upon Himself, in order to fix humanity and become our remedy. The blood was carried by the ministering priest in vessels – both the priests and the vessels represent the priesthood of believers carrying the gospel message, the truth of God's kingdom throughout the world. The life is in the blood/the blood is life – the life of Christ and life is only carried in living beings…love is carried in you…and as you love other people, you become the hands and feet Christ, thus you carry the love or the blood of Christ to others…you're a vessel.

For the non-priest Jew, that blood was poured out at the base of the brazen alter, and represents a foundational change in the heart of the sinner, the conversion from distrust and selfishness to love and trust. The horns on the altar represent the defects in character that we develop living in sin (Jer. 17:1)…this is why the blood was applied to the horns on the brazen altar,

and represents the work of Christ in our hearts, new character development, old pathways/habits being pared back, character defects are being removed and replaced with new motives, new desires, and new Christ-like character traits (some might say "merits").

The inner fat of the sacrificial offering being removed and burned is symbolic of Christ's victory on earth overcoming the internal temptation of the carnal nature, as we see in Gethsemane when he agonizes and is tempted in every way just like we are yet without sin, He is destroying that internal survival drive of fear and selfishness…represented by the inner fat that you cannot see from the outside, those internal fears and insecurities we all have, Christ destroyed those in his mission and it's symbolically represented by burning it away. This is why every time you read about the fat being burned, it's a pleasing aroma to the Lord…not the actual smell, *symbolically* it's pleasing to him… just like if you have a child with leukemia, and the child gets radiation treatments to burn away the cancer, that burning away the cancer is pleasing to you. So, burning away the fat…burning away the fear and selfishness in our hearts…that is pleasing to the Lord.

Washing the organs represents the cleansing of the inner man, removing guilt, shame, selfishness, and fear from the heart. Separating the fat from the organs and burning it represents Christ's work of destroying the carnal nature and circumcision of the heart, cutting away the ties to all those destructive things we were attached to prior to conversion. Burning the organs represent the work of the Holy Spirit within to burn away the old desires and recreate new motives and values.

The fire represents the Holy Spirit. Before the blood was applied, it represents the unconverted person being convicted of sin, being drawn, being wooed…after the blood is applied, it represents the transforming power, the renewal, the healing, the regeneration.

The priests would eat the meat of the sacrificed lamb, which represents that as we minister the gospel, and share and teach others the truth of God's kingdom, we are strengthened by partaking of as we're sharing and ministering to others.

The ritual and meaning of the sin offering was a little different for the Daily Priests in their white robes – they represent the priesthood of believers, and the white robes represent the renewed character of Christ that is being developed within them. The sinning priest confessed sin on the head of the sacrificial animal, and then cuts the circulation and the animal dies. The blood is carried by the ministering priest in vessels, but this time the blood is not poured out initially at the base of the brazen altar…it is taken into the holy place.

Holy Place – Contrasting with the bronze altar, which was covered with an impure metal…the HP is covered in gold – a pure metal and it represents the church, which has the purity of the truth and love of Christ. The door to the HP was always kept open, it was never closed…and the door represents Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, the life, the entry point for a person's salvation…He is the way in in order to come into fellowship with God and with each other in the church. The door was always kept open and the light from the lampstand would shine out into the courtyard…thus, the light of Christ shines out and would draw people from the world into church.
So, instead of being poured out on the brazen altar, the priest's sacrificial blood is taken into the HP and is sprinkled seven times before the veil…why would that be necessary? Imagine you're a priest working in the sacrificial system, daily priests in their white robes symbolic of a Christian who loves God…you're in the church, you're in the Holy Place, you love God, you long to see him more clearly…maybe you ask like Moses did, "Lord, let your glory pass before me," you know the Shekinah's back there and you want to see God face to face…but as you look to see God more clearly, there's something in the way, something blocks your view…what is blocking your ability to see God? What does this veil represent? What

happened to the veil? It was destroyed…rent from top to bottom by God when Christ died. What obstructs our view of God, but when Christ dies that obstruction is torn/ripped/destroyed and now I can see God more clearly? Satan's lies about God and our own carnal natures we are born with. Angels on the veil represent God's agencies sent to help us battle these two forces and overcome…but no angel could break the barrier, only the son of God could break the barrier, and thus Jesus destroyed the lies of Satan and the infection of fear and selfishness, and opened a new and living way back through the barrier into unity with God. So why does the blood get sprinkled 7 times before this veil? If the veil represents the obstruction that prevents us from seeing God clearly – the lies and misrepresentation and distortions about God – then when a person who carries the name Christian, a person who says "I'm like Jesus" goes out an commits sin, do they make it easier for people to see God, or do they add to the obstruction? Therefore, it takes the perfection of Christ or seven times to overcome the additional obstructions that we Christians put in the way when we misrepresent Christ with our lives (twice the son of hell?).

Then the blood was taken over to the golden altar and placed on the smaller horns there, showing that the blood of Jesus or the character of Jesus is cleansing them and removing the habit patterns and the vestigial remnants of sin from the heart of the repentant believer. Prayers were only offered by the converted, thus the incense in burned on the golden altar…no incense was burned on the bronze altar because the unconverted don't offer their praise and prayers. Incense represents Christ's character lived out and wafting out over the camp, so when they would burn incense it's not only our prayers but also our adoration – the way we live our lives to celebrate and testify what God has done for us, this is the sweetness of our lives as we have been renewed by Christ, and so the incense burning on the golden altar would waft out over the camp and draw the people groups of the world into interest in what's happening in the sanctuary. Fire on the golden altar represents the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to enlighten, to provide wisdom, to enable, to equip, to transform, to renew, to regenerate.

The remaining blood is poured out at the base of the brazen altar, representing God's power to reach the unsaved people of the world as we within the body of Christ are gracious to each other and forgiving of each other…as we handle the sinfulness that we all still struggle with, and help each other overcome, people are witnessing that and their hearts are touched and brought to conversion.

Other items in the Holy Place included:

The Lampstand – represents the Word of God…thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path…but both the living and the written word of God are represented here. The central stand, also made of solid gold, represents Christ (the word made flesh), and there were six branches attached to the central stand…six is numerically representative of humanity or mankind…six branches, humankind, connected to Jesus Christ makes seven, which is perfection or completion…and so only connected to Christ can we be completed or perfected and enabled to shine light and truth into the world.

The Oil – represents the Holy Spirit. The bowls at the top of the stand represent the hearts of those who have accepted Christ, as the word enlightens their minds and the Holy Spirit burns within with light and truth and witness for God's kingdom. What was interesting is only the High Priest (Jesus) trimmed the wicks of the lamp, evening and morning…no one else. Only Jesus works in our hearts to heal and transform and cut away the dross, cut away the encumbrances, cut away the old habits, cut away the distortions so that we burn brighter and brighter for Him.

The Table – it was made of wood but covered in gold…this represents Jesus, our incarnate God, who became human but was perfect, gold, sinless. On the border of the table…this is the only element of the sanctuary service that was not measure in cubits, it was measured in hands breadth,

symbolically suggesting that the hand of God is protective around His son and what His son provides for us. There were twelve loaves of unleavened bread (without yeast), representing the bread of heaven/life (without sin)…the word of God that we are to ingest and partake of. The twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes in the theatre, and the twelve tribes represent all the people groups of the world…and thus the word of God, His provisions, are sufficient for all the people groups of the world. Incense on top of the twelve loaves represents the sweetness of Christ and Christ's perfect character.

The Wine – represents the perfect character and sinless life and love of Jesus Christ that we are to "drink"/ingest. Interestingly, what would happen every sabbath, the daily priests in their white robes, representing the priesthood of believers who've been renewed and reborn to have Christ-like characters, enter the Holy Place…which is the church…and with the high priest, who represents Jesus, they would together eat the bread…which is the Word of God, and burn the incense…which is symbolic of offering prayers and praise to God every sabbath in church.

What about the **Most Holy Place** – what do we find there?

While the Holy Place is the church, the Most Holy Place is the universe cleansed of sin and restored to at-one-ment and perfection with God. We find the Shekinah glory or God's presence, we find angels which represent unfallen sinless beings, we find the lid of the ark made of solid gold which represents Jesus. Let's look at the box beneath the lid…so we've got God represented, we've got Jesus represented, we've got angels represented, who's not represented so far? Sinners saved – that's the box! The box was made of porous wood covered in pure gold (the perfection of Christ)…so human beings, who were sinners, who have through Jesus Christ been perfected and renewed to righteousness and restored into unity with God. What did the box contain? Three things were kept there and they were put in the box in a specific order on purpose…understanding the symbolism is

quite beautiful because the box represents the hearts of the converted restored into unity with God…and the first thing that went into the box was…manna….the bread from heaven…Jesus is the bread of heaven, so the first thing a sinner must partake of in order to have their hearts restored is they must partake of Jesus, the Word of God, the light than lightens all men, and as we partake of Jesus we are won to trust, the lies are destroyed, the fear is taken away, we open our hearts to him in trust…and when we open our hearts to Him, the second thing goes in the box, and that was the Ten Commandments, the law, and it says that He writes His law in our hearts and minds as we open our heart in trust, and thus we get new motives, a new operating system, a new method, God's principles and designs of other-centered love and truth and freedom are regenerated within us…and then the third thing goes in the box, Aaron's rod that was dead and had no life comes to life and begins budding as we who were dead in trespass and sin now bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness – we live again for God's kingdom. The lid is not Jesus covering the broken law…it was the *unbroken* instance of the law that went into the ark, because it's not the broken law being covered, it is the perfect righteousness of Christ being reproduced in the heart, written on the heart again…it's an unbroken law being restored in us. Again, Jesus is the lid of solid gold that connects the entire universe…notice the Shekinah is touching/connected to the lid, the angels are on the lid, the converted peoples of the world are touching the lid…all things in heaven and on earth are reconciled or brought together under one head, Jesus Christ…he is the unifying link that brings the universe back into oneness or at-one-ment.

Unity is the goal…the *entire* drama is designed to teach God's plan to eliminate sin and restore the universe to at-one-ment. The sin offering represents, in symbol, the plan to heal and restore individuals by removing sin – not from record books or account legers or smoke-filled rooms in heaven – but from the hearts and minds of people. Salvation is found in the *reality* – not in the symbols – and that reality is Jesus Christ!

New Covenant Heavenly Sanctuary

So, Christ is our faithful and merciful heavenly High Priest, he has entered into the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary, and is engaged in His High Priestly ministry…what does that look like? What have we been taught?

God, in order to refute the lies of Satan and reveal His true character has kept records, but not to judge us by, but to demonstrate that all those who are lost are lost because they have refused God's remedy. There is also another set of records in which our sins are recorded, but these records are not judicial records; they are the actual individualities of each person whose characters are perfectly recorded in heaven. In other words, every unrepented sin is recorded in the character of the unrepentant. This is why Jesus says, "Let him who is righteous be righteous still…"

Here is a quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, because this is what was supposed to be understood in teaching the sanctuary message:

> Remember, your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing your robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" [Revelation 22:12]. . . . {Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce 62.1}
>
> Every passing hour of the present is shaping our future life. These moments spent in carelessness, in self-pleasing, as if of no value, are deciding our everlasting destinies. The words we utter today will go on echoing when time shall be no more. The deeds done today are

> transferred to the books of heaven, just as the features are transferred by the artist onto the polished plate. They will determine our destiny for eternity, for bliss or eternal loss and agonizing remorse. Character cannot be changed when Christ comes... {Testimony to Ministers 429.3}
>
> You must remain pure and true and firm, remembering your character is being imprinted upon the books of heaven. {Our High Calling 317.4}

Those records (of a person's character) are recorded in the heavenly sanctuary—because the heavenly sanctuary is constructed out of living stones, the actual people who make up the temple where God lives by His Spirit – the priesthood of believers.

> "In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and

> sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Mal. 3:1-3. (DA 161).

Jesus is right now in the Most Holy Place in heaven, leading all the agencies at His disposal in the work of cleansing the minds, hearts, and characters of His people from the lies about God, the removal of selfishness, and the restoration of righteousness. They are the building blocks of His heavenly sanctuary.

> “The cases of all are pending in the heavenly sanctuary. Day by day angels of God are watching the development of character… All defects must be remedied. The character must be assimilated to the character of Christ... At an infinite cost a fountain has been prepared for our cleansing. In the blood of the Son of God we may wash our garments of character, and make them white.” (ST, April 17, 1901).

What is the reality these symbols point toward?

- Blood of Jesus = Character of Jesus
- Garments = Our character
- Washing in the blood of Jesus = Remove selfishness and assimilate the selfless character of Jesus

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 12
Covenant Faith

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Special thanks to Tom Price, Steve Morris, and Kent Johnson. We just finished 322 orders of CIBTS and misc orders.

Read memory text: "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith" Galatians 3:11 NKJV).

What does this mean?

The just are those whose hearts have been set right with God, those who have had love for God and others written into their hearts so that they are no longer governed by fear and selfishness. The just are the right or the righteous and they choose in governance of themselves to do what they know is right and trust God with the outcomes—they have faith in God for how things turn out.

Example, Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego on the plain of Dura. They had to decide in governance of themselves what they would do, bow or not bow to the idol—the just, or right—whose hearts have been healed and who love God more than self, choose to do what is right and they did not bow and they trusted God with how things turned out. They didn't know God would save them, but they trusted God with their lives because their hearts were restored to atonement with God.

This is the state of those who are ready for translation, Revelation describes them in "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and **they did not love their lives to the death**" (Re 12:11 NKJV).

The blood is metaphor for the life of Christ. These individuals have died to self and been reborn with the righteousness of Christ, His life, His character, within them, as Paul wrote "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." Because of this their testimony is the truth about God and His character of love. They embrace God as Creator and promote the truth about His design law and government—the word of their testimony refutes the imperial lies about God and they have hearts that do not operate on the survival drives of me-first.

This is genuine righteousness by faith.

If you haven't read the three-part blog series *Who Created Whom: An Exploration of the Origin of our Favorite God* written by a guest author, I encourage you to read it.

You will discover how our sin condition, the condition of fear and selfishness, with the chaos and the fight for survival has resulted in the development of the law-and-order method of imposed rules and inflicted punishments. How this way of governing only exists in sinful spaces, in places with beings operating out of harmony with God, that in heaven, in holiness there is no such thing as law and order as we know it. And that humanity merged the idea of law-and-order with belief in God making the god-king concept and projected Satan's false view of God onto God and has taught God runs His universe like sinful beings run nation states. It is a lie.

I encourage you to read it—it is so well done.

The lesson reflects on Homer's *Odyssey* and how Odysseus had many obstacles on a long struggle home that were inflicted by the gods to cause an appropriate amount of suffering before the gods decided it was enough and let him reach home.

Then the lesson states, "In one sense, we are like Odysseus, on a long journey home. The crucial difference, however, is that unlike Odysseus, we can never 'suffer enough' to earn our way back. The distance between heaven and earth is too great for us to atone for our mistakes. If we get home, it will have to be only by the grace of God."

It is true that our suffering will not do anything to fix the sin problem, save us, or return us to oneness with God. Suffering does NOT remove sin.

But, the way this is worded is incredibly sad, because it is fosters misunderstanding and perpetuates falsehoods about God.

What problems do you hear in this?

Is our problem that needs fixing "our mistakes" that we need to atone for? Or, are we born in sin conceived in iniquity? Is our problem the mistakes of life, or is our problem a condition into which we were born *that we did NOT choose*, yet if unremedied will result in our eternal death?

So the biggest problem with this paragraph is that it misdiagnoses the sin problem as a problem of our making mistakes. In other words, the sin problem is behavioral, bad acts, choices we make. This is how human governments function. But God's government is about reality, about the condition and attitude of the heart. And our problem is the condition of sin into which we are born that without remedy does indeed result in mistakes, bad acts, sins. But the sins are the symptoms of that condition, not the cause of our sin condition, which do worsen the condition, and if persisted in will destroy the very faculties capable of responding to God for salvation.

Adam and Eve are the ones who chose to infect themselves with sinfulness, with fear and selfishness, and every other human being since has been born with this terminal condition.

So, the lesson authors, and all those who hold the penal legal lie, always misdiagnose the sin problem as acts, deeds, behaviors, and therefore, always promote a false remedy that has no power to save. As

Paul wrote, they have "a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (2 Timothy 3:5 NIV84).

What do you hear with phrases like, "We can never suffer enough to earn our way back"?

Are they suggesting that suffering is a requirement to salvation? That while we couldn't suffer enough, Jesus could and it was His suffering that saves us by paying the appropriate price of pain and death?

SUNDAY

Read the first paragraph, "The Old Testament…" This is so poorly understood and again confuses and obstructs the truth about the plan of salvation—it is so sad.

Let's highlight the truth here first—it is true that people were saved in Old Testament times in the exact same way as they are in New Testament times—by grace through faith in the Messiah, the promised Seed to crush the serpent's head. It is through Jesus that all humans throughout all history experience salvation.

The lesson says it is by faith alone, but it is not by faith alone—it is by grace through faith.

> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph 2:8–9 NIV84).

Grace is God's work—it is God's initiative and actions that provide the remedy, the means and resources to heal us, to save us, to restore us, to recreate us, to transform us, to fix us—and Jesus is the individual through whom God provides all of this. Faith is our trust in God by which we partake of what God has provided through Jesus.

The next point the lesson misrepresents is about works, as if we have no role to play in our salvation. For those who continue to see the problem through human imposed law, they always misunderstand and always will. It is impossible for them to see the truth while believing a lie, thus their view of salvation and what Christ has done is always false, distorted, perverted.

What is the truth? That God, in the person of Jesus, saved the species human and simultaneously procured, produced, achieved, the remedy that will save any individual human who trusts God and participates in God's healing plan.

So, no human contributes in any way to the saving remedy or the saving of the species, that was 100% done by God through Christ. But every human that is saved works with God for their own salvation. Thus the Bible says:

> "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Php 2:12–13 NIV84).

And James wrote:

> But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."
> Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.
> You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that **a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone**. (Jas 2:18–24 NIV84).

What does this mean? Our individual salvation is a cooperative effort—it requires the work of God in Jesus to reveal the truth that wins us to trust, and also it requires a real remedy that fixes the sin condition, that restores in us godliness, righteousness, a new heart and right spirit etc. Jesus revealed the truth and in His person restored God's living law into the species human destroying the death causing principle of fear and selfishness.

So, everything we need for salvation is provided through Christ, but our individual salvation **requires** our willful participation, we trust God and we choose to follow His directions. Our works do NOT produce the remedy, they receive and live out the remedy. This is the only means whereby God can heal our hearts and minds while retaining our individuality.

The penal legal lie claims that we are righteous by a legal declaration while we remain unrighteous in heart and mind—such a teaching is fantasy. It is a fraud, it is like saying a person with terminal metastatic cancer who has a doctor remove the pathology report from their medical record and write into the record a report saying they don't have cancer is now cancer free and healthy. They are not and they continue to get worse. Likewise, the penal lie teaches that people are declared righteous in heaven, while they remain unrighteous on earth. This means they continue to live unrighteously, which means they continually add more damage to their hearts and minds, their consciences get seared, their hearts harden, they become more like Satan in character, like the Pharisees who crucified Christ, but all the while presenting themselves as religiously loyal to God.

So, EG White, who embraced the truth righteousness by faith message of 1888, in which we become righteous wrote, in harmony with what Paul and James wrote as quoted above:

> We are laborers together with God. This is the Lord's own wise arrangement. **The cooperation of the human will and endeavor with divine energy is the link that binds men up with one another and with God**. The apostle says, "We are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9). **Man is to work with the facilities God has given him**. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," He says. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13).--MS 113, 1898. {2MCP 694.3}

> **There are two grand forces at work in the salvation of the human soul. It requires the cooperation of man with the divine agencies--** divine influences, and a strong, living, working faith. **It is in this way only** that the human agent can become a laborer together with God. **The Lord does not sanction in any one of us a blind, stupid credulity. He does not dishonor the human understanding**, but, far from this, He calls for the human will to be brought into connection with the divine will. **He calls for the ingenuity of the human mind, the tact, the skill, to be strenuously exercised in searching out the truth as it is in Jesus**... Ye are labourers together with God. {OHC 310.5}

The third point is what we owe the law—the penal lie teaches that we owe the law a death penalty to be paid. But what does the law actually require? Does it require death, or does it require perfect harmony with it in order to have life?

Here are some historic quotes that are beautiful and with which I agree completely—they are all evidences of design law, how reality works, and understanding design law, like the laws of health, what do the laws of health require if you break them? They require simply that an individual be restored to harmony with them. If a person breaks the laws of health and drinks poison, their salvation, their healing, does NOT require someone be killed in their place, saving them requires the toxin be eliminated and the damage be fixed so the person is restored to harmony with the laws of health.

This is exactly what God's law requires—note what these quotes describe:

> **The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character**; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character**. [This is the remedy. This is the work of God, the grace of God, independent of any other human work or action. This is what we can never achieve, or work out on our own.] These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. [This is the remedy, the new heart, the mind of Christ, the character of Christ that we receive by faith.] His life stands for the life of men. [This is the corporate salvation, the saving of the species. Jesus is now the second Adam, the representative head of the human race.] Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. [No legal penalty, just like a doctor that cures a patient doesn't require something be done for the various symptoms the patient had while sick.] More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2} [This is the truth of salvation, that through faith we become the righteousness of God!]

> **But the law requires that the soul itself be pure and the mind holy, that the thoughts and feelings may be in accordance with the standard of love and righteousness**.--RH, Apr 5, 1898. (2SM 211.)

The divine law requires us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. Without the exercise of this love, the highest profession of faith is mere hypocrisy. . . . {A New Life NL 32.1}

God's law requires that justice and right be exercised between man and his fellow man; it requires that we shall not injure our neighbor in his property, his feelings, his health, or his good name. [Is this what you see in the actions of those in our society today who claim to be advocating for social justice? Do you see them protecting their neighbors property, feelings, health and good name?] **It requires compassion for the afflicted, even if he be our enemy, that in all our associations with our fellow beings we shall show the same love and care that we would wish to have exercised toward ourselves.** Who can stand before this great moral standard, and plead not guilty? {ST, January 7, 1897 par. 3} [Understanding design law enables us to do this. We don't have to hate the smoker, we have compassion on him for we know what he is doing to his own health. Likewise we don't have to hate the liar, the cheat, the bigot, the racist, they are all searing their own consciences, hardening their own hearts—it is sad!]

While the law is holy, the Jews could not attain righteousness by their own efforts to keep the law. The disciples of Christ must obtain righteousness of a different character from that of the Pharisees, if they would enter the kingdom of heaven. **God offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.** [What is described here? Actual healing and transformation of heart and mind. But what does the penal legal lie teach? That we are declared righteous even though we are not.] {MB 54.2}

> **Obedience to the law is essential, not only to our salvation, but to our own happiness and the happiness of all with whom we are connected.** [Why? What law? If a person dying with alcoholic liver failure gets a liver transplant and thus a new lease on life, are they now free from the laws of health, are they free to drink more alcohol without damaging the new liver that will result in their death? Life, health, and happiness are only possible in harmony with God's law for God's law is the protocol life is built upon.] "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165), says the Inspired Word. Yet finite man will present to the people this holy, just, and good law, this law of liberty, which the Creator Himself has adapted to the wants of man, as a yoke of bondage, a yoke which no man can bear. But it is the sinner who regards the law as a grievous yoke; it is the transgressor that can see no beauty in its precepts. For the carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). . . . {NL 32.2}
>
> **That which God required of Adam before his fall was perfect obedience to His law. God requires now what He required of Adam, perfect obedience,**

> **righteousness without a flaw, without shortcoming in His sight. God help us to render to Him all His law requires**. We cannot do this without that faith that brings Christ's righteousness into daily practice. {2SM 380.4} [Why does God require this? For the same reason that we are required to breathe—it is how life is built to operate!]

But in TUESDAY's lesson, the last paragraph, we read:

> "the righteousness that saves us is a righteousness that is credited to us, a righteousness that is (to use a fancy theological term) *imputed* to us. This means that we are declared righteous in the sight of God, despite our faults; it means that the God of heaven views us as righteous even if we are not. This is how He saw Abram, and this is how He will see all who come to Him in 'the faith of Abraham'" (Rom 4:16).

Oh, how incredibly sad, that these people, who I believe sincerely want to follow God, are so deeply immersed into the imposed law lie that they are just like the Pharisees in Christ day who devoted themselves to their religion, but ended up rejecting Christ.

> Is it true that Jesus works in heaven to pull the wool over His Father's eyes?
> Is it true that God, the source of all truth, all perfection, all knowledge, declares things to be something it is not? Does God lie, commit fraud, deceive? Or does God declare us righteous, because we are actually set right in heart and mind with God again? What is the natural state of the sinful heart—trust or distrust of God? Enmity, and Abram trusted God first and after Abram's heart was changed from distrust to trust God reckoned him as righteous or right because he was!

What is imputed righteousness? Which righteousness transforms us? The legal liars tell us imputed is what God legally accounts to us, while the imparted is what transforms us.

I say these distinctions are not significant in practice—both are operational in us and both transform.

> He would have us comprehend something of His love in giving His Son to die that He might counteract evil, **remove the defiling stains of sin from the workmanship of God, and reinstate the lost, elevating and ennobling the soul to its original purity through Christ's imputed righteousness**. TMK 206

> "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). [What law is this? The law of worship, by beholding we are changed, it is a design law, how reality works] Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word. We are to dig for truth as for hidden treasure. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ. When we take Him as our personal Saviour, this gives us boldness to approach the throne of grace. **By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character. By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him.** The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being. {AG 96.4}

> In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. **Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just.** He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. {AG 181.4} [God pronounces us just and treats us as just when? When we have been *made* righteous—through what? Through the imputed righteousness of Christ. The entire penal legal theological construct is false. It is based on the wrong diagnosis of the problem and thus constructs an entirely fraudulent treatment model that functions to keep people trapped in unrighteousness, sinfulness, while adhering to the church's religious behavioral requirements and claiming legal status change in some heavenly courtroom. It is so sad.]
>
> We aim too low. The mark is much higher. Our minds need expansion, that we may comprehend the significance of the provision of God. We are to reflect the highest attributes of the character of God. . . . **The law of God is the exalted standard to which we are to attain through the imputed righteousness of Christ**. {OHC 364.2}

Back to SUNDAY, read third paragraph,

> Christ has shown that His **love was stronger than death**. [What is the basis of life? God, from whom all life is derived, and what is the law upon which life is built? The law of love. So His love is stronger than death. What does it mean? Christ "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light" 2Tim 1:10, and "by his death he destroyed him who holds the power of death that is the devil" Heb 2:14. What does this mean? Death comes from violating God's design law of love. The law of love is the law of life. Fear and selfishness, which result from believing lies, causes separation from the law of love and results in death. Adam and Eve, choosing to believe lies had love fractured and fear and selfishness instilled, thus they became terminal. We are born with this survival drive, this terminal condition. Christ, through Mary became human, partook of our nature, and was tempted in all points like us. He was tempted with fear and selfishness and strong human emotions to act to save self. But, Christ chose to love others instead and gave His life freely. Thus at the cross love overcame fear and selfishness, the cause of death. Christ destroyed the death causing principle operating in the humanity He assumed and restored the law of love, the law of life into the humanity He assumed by choosing, with His human brain to love perfectly. This is why He rose again and could predict He would arise again, because He knew what God's law does.] He was accomplishing man's salvation; and although He had the most fearful conflict with the powers of darkness, yet, amid it all, His love grew stronger and stronger. **He endured the hiding of His Father's countenance**, until He was led to exclaim in the bitterness of His soul: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" [Why? Could Christ eliminate the infection of fear and selfness without facing and overcoming death? And could Christ die if His Father remained connected to Him? So the only way for Christ to accomplish His mission was for the Father to surrender Christ to what Jesus chose to accomplish. Thus, the Father was NOT punishing Jesus, but the two together were carrying out their joint plan for the salvation of humanity and this was only possible through the death of Christ] His arm brought salvation. **The price was**

paid to purchase the redemption of man, when, in the last soul struggle, the blessed words were uttered which seemed to resound through creation: "It is finished." EG White 2T 212 [What was the price and to whom was it paid? If you child is dying of renal failure and you donate a kidney to save them, have you paid a price to save them? Is it a legal price? So, our salvation did require a price—that price is metaphorically taught in the flesh/blood or bread/wine analogy—what do they represent? The Word became flesh, the flesh represents the truth, Jesus is the truth in living flesh and what does truth do to lies? It destroys them. Thus, the truth sets free. What holds us in bondage of sin? The lies we believe and our own carnal nature. So, the first price to be paid was the truth which destroys lies and win us to trust. But we also are held in bondage by fear and selfishness, we need a perfect and righteous human character and this we cannot produce or provide. So Jesus did this for us and this is represented in the blood, "the life is in the blood" thus, when we first partake the Word, the flesh, the bread (remember Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink." Jn 6:53–55 NIV84). So we partake the truth and are won to trust and then we open the heart and receive the life of Christ which is symbolically represented by the blood. So, the price of salvation is truth and a new human character that is paid to us to heal and restore us to perfect righteousness.]

MONDAY

The lesson quotes 1Peter 1:18,19 about how we were ransomed—we just described the ransom price and to whom it was paid—the price was truth to destroy lies and win us to trust and a new sinless human character, but paid to us that results in our healing and restoration.

Read last paragraph, "We have this promise…" Notice how they have us owing the law a debt—what are your thoughts on this?

What does the law require? What law, what law lens are we seeing this through?

When we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, then it is falsely taught that the law requires punishment, and the minimum punishment is death, thus it is taught that only Jesus, the infinite one, could pay the debt to the law to cancel the demands of inflicted death. This is pagan pure and simple—a deity that will kill us unless we offer that deity the right sacrifice, in this case the blood of an innocent infinite being.

But, some of the legal people will object to what I just said, they will say "you are misrepresenting us. God doesn't demand the life of His Son—God's law does. We wrote the paragraph precisely and it says the debt was owed to God's law, not to God. You have done us an injustice."

Well, ask these same people from where does God's law originate and they will say God. And ask them whose character does the law represent and they will say God, that it is a transcript of His

character. So, if the law originates in God and it is a transcript of His character to suggest the law requires the death of an innocent be paid to it, but God doesn't is another lie that the legal people tell. They must lie because the system is built on lies. If they told the truth no one would believe them and they would lose their followers.

Read the bottom pink section, "Imagine that in an art museum…" Do you think this is an accurate analogy? What is the problem with this analogy and how could it be presented more accurately?

They describe the crime or sin being done to the painting, but then they shift the focus away from the painting to the monetary value of the painting. Money is an artificial construct made by man, just like imposed laws. They have created a false monetary debt beyond the ability of the parents to pay, just like they create a false legal debt.

The analogy would be more accurate to say, that neither the child nor the parents have the ability to restore the painting to its original beauty. But Rembrandt is alive and he smiles at the child, and removes the ink and restores the painting to is original beauty. God, through Christ, removes the damage of sin, of fear, of selfishness, and restores God's original law and design of love back into humanity, first in His own humanity that He assumed, and then in all who trust Him.

WEDNESDAY

Read the second paragraph, "The same term is employed in other…" What is the lesson doing here? They are attempting to make the case that because the same term "reckoned" or "regarded" is used by people in the Bible to reckon or regard things to be other than what they actually are, that means God does this with our righteousness. What is the problem with this argument?

- People are sinners and God is holy, sinless and perfect. Does God conduct Himself as sinners?
- Just because the term *can* be used in this way does it mean it is always used in this way. In other words, can the term reckoned or regarded be used to reckon or regard what actually is? So just because a couple of places people use it this way does NOT mean God uses it this way.
- The example of Rachel using this word in regard to her father is an allegation she makes against her father, it does not mean it is true. In other words, the Pharisees in Christs' day regarded Jesus as having a demon—does that mean because Jesus didn't have a demon that the work regarded is rightfully used to reckon was doesn't exist, or that the person reckoning is wrong about what they are reckoning? Well when God reckons us as righteous it is because He has actually made us righteous.
- The example counting the offerings and tithes as if it was corn from the threshing floor of wine from their winepress. The lesson wants you to believe that God is setting up a system where He counts something that isn't as something else. This is a result of several cognitive distortions—first, failure to diagnose the sin problem accurately—again thinking it is legal and then going to the text with the wrong legal lens. Second, failure to understand the metaphorical nature of the sanctuary service. Third, failure to be able to abstract symbols to their true meaning. When

God says that when they bring their tithes and offerings they will be counted as corn from the threshing floor or wine from the winepress—what do those symbols mean? The winepress and threshing floor is where impurities are pressed out or blown away to get the pure wine or corn. And the metaphor of the winepress or threshing floor was to teach the healing of hearts and minds from sin, the pressing out of our fear, guilt, selfishness and producing good fruit of character. So, the metaphor is saying, when they gave tithes and offerings it will be accepted because it is coming from hearts that have been purified. So the lesson creates another fraud in its attempt to support the lie that God reckons us as righteous when we remain unrighteous.

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "As they near…" Where do we need the righteousness of Christ? Consider this quote from the book *Christ's Object Lessons,* which was written after the 1888 General Conference in which the delegates rejected the righteousness by faith message.

Is this description in harmony with the lesson or presenting something different?

> This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. **Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us**. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God "was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." Sin is defined to be "the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:5, 4. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, "I have kept My Father's commandments." John 15:10. By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah**. COL 311.4

Turn to **FRIDAY's** lesson and read first paragraph, keep the COL quote above in mind as we read and consider answer how we bring the merits of Christ to God. I am going to start the quote two sentences before the lesson does, see if it sets a different tone:

> Righteousness is obedience to the law. **The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law;** [What does the law demand? But the lesson has been teaching the law demands the death of a sinless substitute to pay the debt payment. This author says the law demands righteousness and this is what we owe the law. Why? Because the law is design law and we owe harmony to it if we want to live] **but he is incapable of rendering it**. [Why? Because we were born with a condition of fear and selfishness that makes it impossible on our

own for us to live in harmony with the law of life. It isn't our fault, we can't fix it, so God provides the remedy.] The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. **By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account.** [How do we bring the merits or achievements of Christ to God? Where are the merits or achievements of Christ placed? Where does God write His law of life? So, when, by faith, we surrender to Christ we receive the life of Christ in us, our thoughts are brought into harmony with His, we live His life. It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me. We become partakers of the divine nature. So that when we come to the Father we bring the merits, achievements, character of Christ to the Father **because His character is reproduced in us through faith**. Thus, our account, our life receives the obedience, the perfection, the victory of Christ in us.] **Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son**. [Christ is first accepted as the second Adam and the species is restored to righteousness in the person of Jesus, and then individuals who have faith or trust receive the righteousness of Christ reproduced within them and God recognizes this change of heart and receives them, pardons, justifies or fixes or puts right all that is wrong in those who respond in faith by repentance.] **This is how faith is accounted righteousness**; [How, by actually healing the heart of people and restoring them to righteousness.] and the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light. He can say with rejoicing, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). 1SM 367.1

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

- **New Member's Section is now open:** This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content. **A new Discussion Forum is now available to members.**

- *The Remedy* and *Could It Be This Simple?* audio books are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.

- **SHARING campaign** June: *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*
  BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 2Q The Promise: Lesson 13
The New Covenant Life

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read the memory text: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10 NKJV).

What does this mean?

- Is there life without God?
- Is there death with God?
- John 17:3 eternal life is knowing God, which is an intimate union with Him. He is the source of life, life originates in God and we have life only as we are connected to Him. If life eternal is knowing God then what is eternal death? What is Satan's power?
- What does abundant life mean—is it chronological length of years? Then for those who believe in eternal burning hell, would that mean tortured souls have an abundant life—they would have a lot of it, but would that mean they have the abundant life that Jesus promised?
- How can one experience abundant living?
- Can one have abundant living while violating God's design laws for life?
- Can you have abundant life without freedom—as a POW, as a slave, what about a slave to sin?
- Can you have abundant life without health, what about with a mind that is damaged or with brain disease?

In the middle of the second paragraph the lesson states, "The Lord cares about our lives *now*; He wants the best for us *now*."

Do we always receive what is best for us here and now? WARNING this is a trick question—it depends on whom we are focusing the question upon. Do we always receive from God what is best for us—yes. God always does, in governance of God, what is best for us—but God's choices are impacted by our choices. So, sometimes we experience things in life that are not best for us because we chose to do it our way rather than God's way, but God continues to work to bring us back to Him and His design for life, but that path may go through experiences we would not have had to go through had we not deviated from God's plan to begin with. Also, God isn't the only actor impacting our lives. God doesn't choose everything that happens to us—other free-beings are making choices that impact us as well. So not everything that happens to us is directly from God but everything God does for us is for our good.

> "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Ro 8:28 NIV84).

Consider these two quotes, do you agree?

> God is too wise to err, and too good to withhold any good thing from His saints that walk uprightly. Man is erring, and although his petitions are sent up from an honest heart, he does not always ask for the things that are good for himself, or that will glorify God. When this is so, our wise and good Father hears our prayers, and will answer, sometimes immediately; **but He gives us the things that are for our best good and His own glory. God gives us blessings; if we could look into His plan, we would clearly see that He knows what is best for us and that our prayers are answered. Nothing hurtful is given, but the blessing we need, in the place of something we asked for that would not be good for us, but to our hurt**. CCh 345.2

> **God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him**. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, **fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor**. DA 224.5

Do you agree with this?

In the second paragraph, the lesson also states: "The covenant is not some deal where you do this and this and this and then, a long way off, you will get your reward. The rewards, the gifts—they are blessings that those who by faith enter into the covenant relation can enjoy here and now."

What does this mean? What are the blessings we get *now* if we enter into the agreement, the covenant with God?

- A new heart and right spirit
- A mature character
- Freedom from guilt and shame
- Acceptance with God and peace of heart and mind
- A sound mind
- Self-control
- Love that casts out all fear
- Deepening friendship with and trust in Jesus
- If we practice applying God's methods we develop discernment

Are we promised in the covenant relationship with God that here and now we will:

- have perfect health?
- never suffer pain or persecution?
- never experience injustice?
- have wealth, fame, earthly success?

In other words, the promises of God for a better life now are not what the health/wellness gospel teach—that God brings us earthly wealth, power, fame, and bodily health. Those are not directly relevant to our eternal destiny, and in some cases may actually interfere with God's healing of our hearts and minds.

What God promises us now is a new heart and right spirit, to heal our characters so that:

- the dishonest becomes honest
- the selfish becomes loving
- the disloyal becomes loyal
- the impulsive becomes patient
- the cruel becomes kind
- the vengeful become forgiving
- the hard-hearted become merciful
- the ungodly become godly
- the fearful become courageous
- the wavering become steadfast and reliable

We are not promised new biology until this mortal puts on immortality. While sometimes God does perform miracles of healing the body, say cancer goes into remission—that person still lives in a body subject to aging, decay and death. In other words, God's plan for physical healing doesn't truly happen until the second coming when we received immortal bodies.

We must not let Satan discourage us when we don't experience earthly success. We must continually seek to glorify God in our lives, our characters, how we conduct ourselves. And the places where godliness shines brightest is not when everything is going well, but in the face of trials and tribulation.

And today in the world it is a constant battle—our minds and characters are under assault like never before. Every person is being tested, what kind of character are you developing—one that practices the methods of Jesus, truth, love, freedom or one that will use the power of force to compel compliance.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read 1John 1:4: "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full" (1 Jn 1:4 NKJV).

What is the difference between happiness and joy and from where do they come? How do we experience happiness and joy?

Both happiness and joy are byproducts. This means that you cannot get happiness and joy directly; they are the result of some other action, much like sawdust is a byproduct of woodworking, or pain is the byproduct of injury, or guilt is the byproduct of sin.

Happiness is the byproduct of healthiness in all domains—physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. When we are physically ill, our happiness is diminished, undermined, impaired; mental or emotional illness—not happy; relationship conflict—not happy; spiritual sickness (guilt, shame, condemnation)—not happy.

Happiness is the byproduct of healthiness in all domains, and healthiness is experienced only when we are in harmony with God's design laws for life—the protocols upon which the Creator God has built reality to operate. When we break the laws of health, sickness, disease, and suffering occur—thus undermining our happiness.

This is why the Bible repeatedly tells us, "Happy are those who keep God's law!" (Proverbs 29:18 GNT).

While we cannot choose to "be happy" or seek to directly obtain happiness, we can make healthy choices to live in harmony with God's design laws for life. And as we choose healthiness, the byproduct is ever increasing happiness.

However, many people fail to understand this and, instead of pursuing healthiness, they substitute pleasure-seeking, something which in the immediate moment will make them feel good. But this all-too often violates the laws of health (e.g., drugs, alcohol, casual sex, gambling, etc.) and causes only greater unhappiness. This often leads to addictions, as people, rather than seeking healthiness, double down on more pleasure-seeking.

While happiness is the byproduct of healthiness, joy is the byproduct of using one's energies in harmony with God's purposes.

God created humankind in His image and purposed that we should love others; should use our abilities to create, develop, advance, and discover; and should invest our physical and mental energies in godly achievement.

Parents, for example, experience joy in procreation. Artists and musicians experience joy in pouring out their passion in beautiful works. Farmers experience joy in a bountiful harvest. Scientists and mathematicians experience joy in new discoveries. And we all experience the greatest joy when we love others—when we give of ourselves for the good of others. This is why abundant life, health, happiness, and joy are found in living like Jesus, "who for the joy set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84).

This is the secret to experiencing happiness and joy:

- Happiness is a byproduct of healthiness, which is experienced only when live in harmony with God's design laws, having them written in our hearts and minds.
- Joy is the byproduct of living out God's purposes in our lives, ultimately loving others as God has loved us.

And as time unfolds every person will be faced with the choice of whether they want God's law written on their heart or the law of sin and death. God is permitting things to unfold before the second coming in such a way that each and every person will face a choice for Jesus—how? Not in the evangelistic since of an altar call or a profession of faith—but in the reality sense of whose law do you choose to apply to your life in how you treat others.

Will you:

- love others—present truth, in love, leave others free, sacrifice yourself, your resources to help others, protect others, shelter others, stand for truth even though the heavens fall OR
- love self first—and will withhold truth, spread falsehood, coerce others, support governments who will violate individual liberties, participate in the promulgation of lies, coercion, force, report people who don't comply to the government, refuse to shelter others, protect others, help others?

In so doing every person chooses either Jesus or Satan, for Jesus said:

> Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me (Mt 25:40 NKJV).

Every person on Earth will face a choice for or against Jesus in how they treat others, in what methods they employ. And the final deception will be so powerful if it were possible even the elect will be deceived. The final deception will be about protecting others, saving others, we must do this to save lives, those who resist are being selfish:

- A teacher who refuses to call a little boy a girl or a little girl a boy is being selfish and cruel we must fire that teacher
- A young person who doesn't want to get an experimental medicine for a disease that has almost no chance of killing them, while the treatment has a higher chance of harming them is selfish, we must prohibit them from attending college
- A world-renowned immunologist, highly respected and credentialed who speaks out a warning of the dangers of giving experimental agents to people who have already recovered from a certain illness is censored, for spreading dangerous information
- Church members tell their fellow church members it is loving to coerce others into getting an experimental treatment to save lives, they support actions to restrict liberty, freedom of travel, commerce, assembly, speech and worship for those who won't comply

Every person is deciding right now and will continue deciding—are you accepting Jesus and becoming like Jesus or are you being duped, under the lie of loving others, to use the methods of coercion to violate the law of liberty, to compel and force others to comply?

The true follower of Christ presents the truth in love and leaves other free. The true follower of Christ never seeks to silence opposition, instead they destroy lies by wielding the sword of truth, they overcome selfishness by living out God's love.

MONDAY

The lesson points out attention to Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1 NKJV).

What does this mean?

Why is there no condemnation? What kind of condemnation? From where does the condemnation come?

Note the text says, "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." So what is described? Is this a legal adjustment or is this explicitly stating there is no condemnation because they have had a change of heart, they live in harmony with God's design law because they now live according to the Spirit?

When a building is condemned, why is it condemned? Because of its dilapidated and corrupt condition. But, if the building is restored to perfection will it still be condemned?

This is what Paul is saying, for those in Christ they are renewed, restored, healed, recreated, perfected by the indwelling Spirit (which means matured so that they love God and trust Him so that they would rather die than betray Him); they are no longer corrupted in heart, mind, character and thus they are not condemned.

And how does this happen? Paul tells us in the next verse:

> "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 1:2 NKJV).

What are the laws referred to in this passage?

The law of the Spirit of life is the law of love, God's design law, that is written upon our hearts and minds. And the law of sin and death is the law of fear and selfishness, the survival of the fittest drives, kill or be killed. Paul is saying that when we, in trust, surrender to Christ we "die to self" and the law of love, the law upon which God created life to operate is restored in us and this sets us free from fear and selfishness and thus free from the death causing principle. We have life as we receive the life of Christ.

We then will live out God's principles:

- In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, male or female, free or slave, all are united—there is no black or white. If we live out the law of love we see all human beings as God's children and we don't buy into the world's theories of racial divisions.
- We are lovers of truth, we not only share the truth, we have minds that love the truth. But one of Satan's traps is to get people to accept a lie, act on the lie, speak the lie and this lie then becomes more deeply ingrained into their minds, their values, their beliefs, their sense of self and it becomes harder for the truth to set them free.
    - Good hearted doctors who believe a treatment to be good, but in reality the intervention is false, resist the truth that would change their practice:
        - Germ theory was resisted by the medical professionals when Pasteur and Lister presented their evidence
        - The abandonment of bleeding and leaching was resisted
        - Tobacco smoke was prescribed by doctors for lung disease and many promoted it as an invigorating agent—there was resistance to accepting the truth that tobacco is a carcinogen
        - Zyprexa, an antipsychotic was marketed for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Eli Lilly presented the risks and side effects fraudulently, purposely downplaying the obesity and diabetes risks from this medicine. Eventually they settled a multi-billion dollar lawsuit for their underhanded practices. But doctors who had believed the lies were complicit not only in prescribing it, but in promoting it, lecturing on it, educating other medical professionals falsely. And the doctors who accepted the lies were resistant to accepting the evidence of Zyprexa's role in causing obesity and DM until the evidence was too overwhelming to resist any longer.
        - Why does this happen? Because once a lie is accepted and acted upon a good-hearted person doesn't want to believe that they were duped, that they didn't know better, that they did something to harm others. And that means many good-hearted doctors will be part of promoting the falsehood until such overwhelming evidence comes to bear that the denial and lies can no longer hold back the evidence. I think the same thing is happening today on a certain health intervention.

The same process happens in religion with pastors and priests—resistance to advancing truth because they don't want to believe what they were teaching all along was false.

Only those who are lovers of truth, who are humble enough to acknowledge they don't know everything and are eager to grow and advance in the truth will be protected from this happening.

The lesson goes on to describe the case of a man who murders a woman and gets caught by going to her grave and asking her for forgiveness, the lesson concludes that it was his guilt that caused him to get caught.

The lesson then states,

> "Of course, though none of us (we hope) has ever done anything as bad as what that young man did, we are all guilty; we have all done things we are ashamed of, things that we wish we could undo but cannot.
>
> "Thanks to Jesus and the blood of the new covenant, none of us has to live under the stigma of guilt. According to the text for today, there is no condemnation against us. The ultimate Judge counts us as not guilty, counts us as if we have not done the things we feel guilty about."

Here again the lesson confuses issues because they are blinded by the wrong law. It is impossible to understand the truth while holding to lies. And the lesson authors continue to cling to the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring judicial oversight.

It is true we have all done things for which we feel guilt, for which we regret and that we cannot undo. But why did we do those things? Did any of us have a choice not to be a sinner? Could we choose to start life out like Adam and Eve as sinless beings? No, we were all born in sin and conceived in iniquity. Thus, we all sin because it is our nature. Our only choice is to accept healing, salvation or reject it. In accepting Jesus, accepting salvation, then we are reborn with new motives and divine power to live from motives of love rather than motives of selfishness.

So condemnation doesn't come to us because we are sinners, we are condemned when we refuse the Remedy of Jesus Christ!

Thus Oswald Chambers wrote in *My Utmost for His Highest:*

> **Sin is something I am born with** and cannot touch— only God touches sin through redemption. It is through the Cross of Christ that God redeemed the entire human race from the possibility of damnation through the heredity of sin. **God nowhere holds a person responsible for having the heredity of sin, and does not condemn anyone because of it**. **Condemnation comes** when I realize that Jesus Christ came to deliver me from this heredity of sin, and **yet I refuse to let Him do so**. From that moment I begin to get the seal of damnation. **"This is the condemnation [and the critical moment], that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light . . . " (John 3:19)**

Condemnation comes not when we are born into sin, nor when our sin condition results in symptoms, acts of sin, but when we refuse the light, the truth, the remedy that would heal and restore us to righteousness.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote that the wicked "perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved (2Thes 2:10 NIV84).

It is by accepting the truth that lies are dispelled, we are won to trust and choose to open the heart to God and the Holy Spirit enters our hearts and renews us with Christ's motives of love for God and others. This is being reborn and partaking the remedy. From that moment we daily surrender and walk in truth and love battling the temptations of lies, fear and selfishness.

What about the idea that the ultimate Judge counts us not guilty, is that what happens?

No, it isn't what happens at all—this is again a false legal perversion of reality. What happens is that the ultimate Judge judges us healed, restored, renewed, recreated.

Consider King David, what happens when Satan tries to accuse David as a murderer and adulterer?

> Does God say, "Well let me see. Yes, I see here right in the book of 2Samuel that David committed adultery and had Uriah murdered. Oh, my, I thought David was a real friend of mine, now wait now just a minute. Jesus—do you have anything to add before I pass a verdict?" And Jesus steps up and says to the Father, "Well yes Father, you are looking at the wrong book there. That's the Bible you are reading. Here take this book, it is one that I have applied my blood to. Please use it and relook up King David." So the Father opens the new book and finds David, son of Jesse and reads, "David, son of Jesse, born in Bethlehem of Mary, lived a sinless life, died on the cross." And the Father turns to the heavenly court with a big smile and says, "Sorry about the confusion folks, King David has a new record entered into the court and his actual life is erased from the record and in its place he is credited with the life of Jesus and therefore I find no evidence that David is guilty of sin. I declare David not guilty!" Is this what you believe happens?

This is not what happens! If one wanted to use such a courtroom scenario to try and teach the truth, then it would have to go like this. God looks to Satan and says:

> "Satan are you still trying to pawn off your fake imposed law system as the way my kingdom runs? No one here believes your lies any more. Of course we all know the historic deeds of what David did, and those facts of history never change. What changed was David, He trusted me and received a new heart and right spirit and the infection of fear and selfishness was purged. His spirit temple has been cleansed! He is now my friend, free from your lies and purified from your methods of selfishness. Your legal charges have no standing here. I rebuke you again! Next case."

Understand, we are never declared not guilty—we are either healed or not healed, that is the issue.

It is true that because of God's grace, because of living in a trust relationship with Him, that God removes *from our hearts and minds* the guilt, shame and fear that sin brings. Praise God. But this is not a legal guilt, it is the actual experiential guilt that violating the law of love causes.

Back to **SUNDAY**

Read the last paragraph, "Yet, notice, too..." What does it mean that Jesus opened the way for us to enter into close fellowship with God?

What is obstructing the way, blocking the way to God? What are the obstacles that prevent us from entering into close relationship with God?

- Lies we believe about God that keep us from trusting Him—thus Jesus is the truth, the Word made flesh and "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free"
- Our own fallen nature, our fears and selfishness, our inherent survival drives that operate antagonistically to God's design of love. Our internal guilt, shame and fear.

So what is needed to remove these barriers so we can enter into relationship with God?

We need the truth about God to dispel the lies and win us back to trust in God and we need to be reborn; we need new hearts and minds; we need the mind of Christ; we need the character of Christ reproduced in us.

Jesus destroyed both the lies of the devil and the infection of fear and selfishness that obstruct our returning to unity or at-one-ment with God!

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy** him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV84).
- Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed** death and has brought life and immortality to light (2Tim 1:10 NIV84).
- The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy** the devil's work (1John 3:8 NIV84).
    - What has Satan been working to achieve? To destroy the image of God in humankind and put Satan's image where God's should be. Satan works to live, or reside, or be enthroned in the spirit temple, our hearts and minds. This is why the temple must be cleansed before Christ comes. This is why we must have Christ living within.

Christ's destruction of the lies and our fallen nature that obstruct our reconciliation with God is also taught symbolically, acted out in the little theater known as the sanctuary? Where?

What is the only part of the sanctuary that God destroyed when Jesus died? The veil—the veil obstructed or prevented the priests in their white robes, who represent the priesthood of believes, from entering into the full presence of God and being reunited, or at-one with God. At the cross Jesus destroyed the barrier and opened a new a living way through the veil, which represents the lies of Satan and the carnal nature that keep us separated from God.

So through Jesus we can enter again into union with God. He is the new and living way through the lies and through our own fallen sinful natures when we in trust die to self and are reborn with a new heart and right spirit.

In the sanctuary service there were three sections which represented three different divisions of humanity in the plan of salvation:

- The court—which represents the world where the priests and the non-priests interact. This represents the priesthood of believers sharing the gospel and bringing people to conversion, which was symbolically acted out with sacrifices at the brazen altar. The brazen altar was made from impure metal, the mixture of two different metals, represented the divided or impure hearts of the unconverted.
- The holy place—which represents the church, covered in gold which represents the purity of Christ's character; the golden lampstand representing the Word of God, both living Word Jesus and written word the Bible. The showbread which represents Jesus, the golden altar which represents the converted purified hearts of the faithful. In the holy place only the priests and high priest entered, symbolic of the church, the converted. The daily priests in their white robes, representative of their characters being like Jesus, would enter every Sabbath and join with the High Priest, who represented Jesus, to eat the show bread, which represents internalizing the Word of God, both the truth of Jesus but also internalizing the living truth in loving relationship with God.
- The most holy place—represents the universe at-one again with God—a universe free from sin. The ark was covered by a lid made from solid gold. That lid represents Jesus, through whom all things in heaven and earth are united. The shekinah represents the Father and hovered over the lid, it's light shining down touching the lid, the angels represents the heavenly beings touching the lid, and the box below the lid represent saved human beings all united by Jesus.

Thus the church, the priesthood of believers in the holy place are separated from entering heaven by the veil, which was ripped open by Jesus at the cross. It is only through Jesus that the lies about God are destroyed and the carnal nature (fear and selfishness) is destroyed and we receive a new heart and right spirit to enter back into at-one-ment with God. Thus Jesus is the new and living way into unity with God.

Consider this quote:

> Christ said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." **Satan has planted himself between God and man, and seeks to intercept every ray of light that God would have come to man**. [The veil, with angels sewn on it seeks to intercept the light coming from the Shekinah glory of God in the MH place.] **He casts his awful shadow across the earth, and envelops the human race in spiritual darkness**. [The holy place, the church, would be in darkness except for the Lampstand, which represents Jesus, who is the light that lightens the world. And the door from the holy place to the courtyard was always kept open thus the light from Jesus shines out of the church to lighten the world. Without the light from Jesus, darkness covers the people, gross darkness the people. And we see in the world today what is happening as the belief in God is being replaced with godless evolutionism—terrible darkness is enshrouding the minds of people] But **through Jesus Christ, the Father is pleased to reveal his character to his chosen people**. O, then walk in the light, appreciate the light, and step by step advance from light to a greater light. RH Feb 13, 1894

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "As earlier…" Is salvation possible without receiving a new heart? Is salvation something other than this? No, this is salvation, it is healing, transformation, regeneration, recreation. Any theory of salvation that teaches we are saved by a legal adjustment is a lie.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson talks about death and the promise of eternal life.

It says, "Of course, we all die, but according to Jesus, this death is only a sleep, a temporary hiatus that—for those who believe in Him—will end in the resurrection of life."

One of the great areas of confusion throughout Christianity is the question of life and death. This is confused because there are two deaths described in Scripture, one that is the result of unremedied sin and one that is an artificial state of grace permitted by God, and most people confuse the two or conflate the two.

So let's define the terms:

First death refers to the cessation of biological activity of the body, but in which the individuality of the person is not destroyed. It is referred to in Scripture as a state of sleep. This is the death from which there is a resurrection. This is similar to a computer running out of power, it goes into a state of sleep, but the data is not destroyed. And thus, when power is restored to the computer it lives again. Or, if you have your data backed up on a cloud and someone destroys your machine, you can get new hardware, upgraded even, and download your data from the cloud and you have just resurrected your computer.

Second death is the death from which there is no resurrection. It is the death in which both the body and the individuality, the soul, (psyche), software are destroyed.

Both the righteous and the wicked die the first death, the sleep death. Only the unhealed wicked die the second death.

When God said to Adam in the day you eat you will surely die, what death was referred to?

What death did Jesus die? Did Jesus merely sleep in the grave like all of us? No! He did not die the first death. Did Jesus die the death that destroys the individuality and from which there is no resurrection? No!

According to Scripture Christ, by His death, "Destroyed him who holds the power of death that is the devil" (Heb 2:14) and destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light (2Tim 1:10).

There is a difference between dying the second death and destroying the second death.

When we understand what causes death—sin, which is violation of God's design law of life, we understand why the wicked die in the end, because they persist in being severed from God and His design protocols for life. We also understand that at the Cross Jesus destroyed the death causing infection of fear and selfishness and restored God's law of love back into humanity, by the exercise of His own human abilities to love and trust perfectly. Thus, He arose on the third day as the natural, normal, inevitable result of eliminating the cause of death and restoring the basis of life. Thus His death was the means of destroying death, it was not suffering the second death.

What Christ experienced at the Cross and what the wicked experience in the end are quite different:

- Christ died trusting the Father – Luke 23:46
  The wicked die distrusting the Father – Revelation 6:16
- Christ died longing to see the Father – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die hiding from the Father – Revelation 6:16
- Christ died when the Father's presence was hidden – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die when the Father is fully revealed – 2 Thes 2:8
- Christ died less than 72 hours – Luke 24:1-8
  The wicked die eternally – Malachi 4:1-3, Romans 6:23, James 1:15, 2Pet 3:10-12
- Christ died when love overcame selfishness – John 3:16, 10:17,18, 1John 3:16
  The wicked die overcome by selfishness – Revelation 21:8

Further, the Bible says that

- Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death (Rev 20:14 NIV84)
  - Hades here means the grave—how can one kill death? By life, and what then is this lake of fire? It is the earth when God's life giving glory flows over it again, where God's presence is the light. And the righteous live in this glory forever, but death, and all deviations from God's design are eradicated by life, truth, love.

Where there is similarity between Christ's death on the cross and the death of the wicked in the end, is in God's actions. God's actions toward Christ and the wicked in the end are the same. God surrendered Jesus to experience what Jesus chose, which was to go through the Cross and be our Savior. God granted Jesus His freewill choice and separated from His Son, so that Jesus could complete His mission of defeating Satan and defeating death. And God also, in the end, will grant all the wicked their freewill choice to be eternally separated from Him and they pass into the second death and eternal non-existence.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

The lesson speaks of Covenant Mission and how without purpose life becomes meaningless. We absolutely agree with this. This is why so many of us have joined together in forming Come and Reason Ministries and why so many have joined with us in sharing this beautiful end-time message with the world.

We are so thankful for all of you who join us each week to study, who watch us online, who share our resources, who teach this message to others. Haven't you found that your life has more joy as you participate in sharing God's end-time message with others?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: In February Come and Reason Ministries board met and prayerfully considered our vision, how to reach more people with this life changing message. We decided that our ability to do more is limited by our lack of space and facilities and we have decided to begin looking for a permanent facility for our Ministry—whether renovating a property or building on. The goal will be to build a professional recording studio with auditorium for our weekly class and other events, where we can begin producing more materials—possibly more live programming and live call in or interactive programming.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

SHARING campaign June: *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 1
Living in a 24-7 Society

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

During Q&A last week a question came in that I deferred until class this week as we are starting a new quarter with a study guide entitled *Rest in Christ* and the first week's lesson is focused on Sabbath rest.

The question from last week is:

> *I clearly understand how 9 of the 10 commandments are a diagnostic tool. But how is it that if I am a healthy Christian I will remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? How is this done without being legalistic? I am still having a hard time wrapping my mind around Sabbath being a day of freedom vs a day of rule keeping. Thanks!*

How would you answer this question?

What law lens do we look this through?

If we look through imposed law, then the Sabbath is s test of obedience a rule to keep and if you don't you get punished. Taught in this way, it undermines both love and trust and incites rebellion. Just look at the millions who have rebelled because of such teachings.

But what do we understand about the Sabbath through design law?

The Sabbath was designed, built, created by God differently than the other six days of the week. God Himself acted differently and created or designed this day with different purpose—what is the difference about the Sabbath as God created it from the other six days?

The first six days of the week are days where God created, God worked, God expended power and energy—but the seventh day God Himself stopped working, stop creating—God rested—why? What does that reveal? Why would God create a day in which He stopped working and rested?

Because at that time in universal history Satan's rebellion was under way. Questions about God's goodness, God's trustworthiness, God's use of power, God's law needed answers. Satan alleged God was arbitrary, that God made up rules and used His power to punish rule-breakers, basically that God runs His universe the way we see sinful humans run human governments today. What does the Sabbath have to do with such allegations?

If God were to run His universe on threat, on inflicted punishment, on intimidation, on domination, on power over others, would there be a weekly Sabbath day in which God rested? No! God created planet earth demonstrating His power to create. He created a new species and shared with them pro-creative power, godlike abilities, and dominion to rule and govern. Earth was a mini-heaven where Adam and Eve, two separate beings united as one in love could create beings in their image and govern—all operating on love. And then God rested—God said, "You have heard the allegations, you have seen the evidence, now universe, take 24 hours aside, consider for yourself, come to your own conclusions, no pressure, no intimidation, I rest my case."

Would the Sabbath exist if God is like Satan says? Are we in the middle of this same war? Do we need evidence to demonstrate and reveal the truth about God to free us from Satan's lies? Is the Sabbath a weekly evidence, its very existence that God is our Creator and that His laws are design law, that in Him we are free and He does not intimidate, or inflict punishment?

So the Sabbath's primary purpose is revelation and evidence of God's character, methods and law of love—truth presented in love while leaving us free. All true Sabbath observers will practice these methods.

But the commandment says we are to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy—what does this mean?

In this world of sin, as we choose to come apart from the world's business, work, responsibilities and rest in the Lord our trust in Him grows—but the Sabbath is more than that time to exercise this—we can have confidence in our rest because of what the Sabbath reveals about God—it is this intelligent understanding of the Sabbath that magnifies our growth in godliness

But if the Sabbath is not a delight, if instead we are level four and below and keep the Sabbath because we are:

1. seeking to get a reward or avoid punishment
2. doing our part of the deal with God so we can get a blessing
3. accepted by our church group—part of the remnant
4. avoiding legal trouble, ensuring we do the right stuff at the right time

Then we are not actually benefitting from the Sabbath because it becomes a day in which self is still center, in which we do good, we obey, we avoid legal trouble; but if keep the Sabbath for these reasons and then don't receive what we expect from God, say a blessing, a better job, then we are angry at God feel let down, become disillusioned and perhaps give up on God.

When we understand Design Law we understand the blessings of the Sabbath are primarily spiritual, experiencing the principles of God in our hearts, minds and characters and we love our Creator God who presents truth in love and leave us free.

So, why do we keep the Sabbath, for self, to get something, to avoid legal trouble, or to glorify God by incorporating His principles of truth, love and freedom into our character and celebrating with Him the freedom from guilt, shame, and sin each week, and then remembering all week long what the Sabbath

represents, what it reveals? We do this because it makes sense, because we are persons of integrity, because we love who God is and want to be like Him!

Regarding the Sabbath I have considered there are truths on different levels or layers, from basic truths to more complex truths.

- First truth what day is the Sabbath?
- Second truth what does the Sabbath reveal?
    - God's character and methods of love, God as Creator, His laws as design laws
    - Is the Sabbath the only place these truths about God are revealed?
        - No but the Sabbath is the sign God chose to reveal these truths, and thus stands as God's emblem, sign, flag, mark of His kingdom and government, His methods and principles
    - Can a person learn these truths about God without understanding the Sabbath?
        - Yes, Romans 1:20 God's divine nature is revealed in what He has made so that men are without excuse. This would of course include the Sabbath for the Sabbath was made—and made for man, for us to not only rest, but for us to see and understand its purpose, which brings us to the third truth.
- Third truth what is the purpose of the Sabbath?
    - a gift to us from God for our sanctification—for our cleansing from sin, for our restoration to holiness:
        - "I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy" (Eze 20:11–12 NIV84).
    - to reveal truth and give people the time/place to choose with whom they will align, whose law they will embrace in practice, thus what character they develop
    - can a person learn the truth of God's character, design laws, methods and choose to apply them to their lives and rest each week from their work to honor God, but not have the first truth and thus do so on Sunday?
        - Yes, knowing about the Sabbath in its true light becomes a blessing, but salvation isn't knowing about the Sabbath, salvation is knowing Jesus and trusting Him such that we open the heart and have the Holy Spirit sanctify us such that we practice God's principles of truth, love and freedom, even if we don't know about the Sabbath.
- Fourth truth what is the impact on people to rest on the Sabbath?
    - The Sabbath is a gift from God to assist us in our sanctification a time to choose who we will trust, to choose love for God over advancing self. Thus the Sabbath rest is a time for character transformation as we exercise our choice in who we love, who we trust with our lives, our fortunes, our careers.
    - Does this happen only one day a week?
    - This is why we remember the Sabbath in the setting of the Great Controversy all week long.
        - Consider this quote:

- **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter**. **We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent the principles of His government**. **They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom**. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works. 3TT 20.3

- Thus the Sabbath is a gift to us to give us the opportunity to solidify our characters in love and trust to God and to practice God's methods of truth, love and freedom.
  - But when the Sabbath is perverted through the imposed law lie it becomes a tool of the enemy to harden hearts so much that people actually kill the Creator and run home to observe the Sabbath.
- How do people choose for or against the Sabbath?
  - If a person doesn't appreciate the significance of the first truth—the specific day of the week, but they appreciate the second and third truth and choose God, and trust Him and practice His methods of truth, love and liberty and rest in trust of God on Sunday are they a Sabbath keeper?
  - If a person has the first truth, the right day of the week, but doesn't appreciate God's law as design law and therefore teaches the Sabbath as an arbitrary test of obedience and they don't appreciate the third truth and thus choose to obey out of fear of punishment and support punishing others who disobey—are they Sabbath keepers? Were the Jews who crucified Christ Sabbath keepers?

Love only grows in an atmosphere of liberty—if the Sabbath is a day in which liberty is restricted, in which we are bound by rules, in which we live in fear of deeds—of doing the wrong thing lest we get into legal trouble, then the Sabbath obstructs love and incites fear. This is always what happens when people believe the lie that God's law functions like human law.

The real purpose of the Sabbath is evidence of God's law and methods. This is why the Sabbath is a sign, a flag, a mark, a pennant of God's government. It stands as a sign of the Creator whose laws are design laws, truth, presented in love, leaving people free, no coercion, no inflicted punishment. This is what the Sabbath reveals and represents. We remember it all week long and practice those methods in our lives. And then on Sabbath we choose to disengage from self-advancement pursuits, to surrender our plans or work our agenda into God's hands to trust Him with our lives, to come apart and rest in God.

We weekly choose:

- to put God before ourselves
- to put God before our plans
- to put God before our work, school or whatever else we value.

By making this choice to surrender in trust to God, to rest in Him our faith grows, are characters are transformed and we are renewed in righteousness. All week long we remember God's methods and principles and we look forward to our weekly vacation from the burdens of life and the time we will have resting in our Creator again the next Sabbath.

But if the Sabbath is an arbitrary test, if it is legal, if it is about do's and don'ts then all week we don't look forward to it, it isn't a day of rest and freedom but a day where we are restricted, can't do this, can't do that for fear of a mark on our legal account in heaven that if we don't get the blood of Jesus to erase we will be punished for, punished with eternal death. Thus in the legal system the Sabbath doesn't refresh it stresses.

But let's consider a quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, how do you hear it?

> **Every person has been placed on trial**, as were Adam and Eve in Eden. [When you hear trial, to you hear a legal event, a court room, or do you hear something like the Olympic trials where people are put to the test? What test are they put to in the Olympic trials? Is it a legal test?] As the **tree of knowledge** was placed in the midst of the Garden of Eden, so **the Sabbath command** is placed in the midst of the Decalogue. In regard to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the restriction was made, Ye shall not eat of it ... lest ye die. Of the Sabbath, God said, Ye shall not defile it, but keep it holy.... As the tree of knowledge was the test of Adam's obedience, **so the fourth command is the test that God has given to prove the loyalty of all His people**. The experience of Adam is to be a warning to us so long as time shall last. It warns us not to receive any assurance from the mouths of mortals or of angels that will detract one jot or tittle from the sacred law of Jehovah.—The Review and Herald, August 30, 1898. CTr 355.5

What kind of a test is this? Is this a legal test? A test of rule-keeping? Or is this a test of character, a test of who one chooses to be and become?

Take a moment to consider through design law (how reality functions) God's actual purpose in placing the Tree of Knowledge in the garden. What did He want for and from Adam and Eve? How was this tree necessary for them to fulfill and achieve what God desired for them?

What meaning do you take from the name of this tree – the Tree of the *Knowledge* of Good and Evil?

Do you see it as the tree of data-download, fact assimilation or of *knowing* reality? Do you understand it as the place where Adam and Eve would decide what they would *know*?

What does it mean to *know* something or someone?

Now this is eternal life: that they may *know* you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is knowing God and Jesus merely cognitive – to know facts, information, data? No. In the Bible, to *know* means to have an intimate *experiential* knowledge of something or someone. Think of the

difference between *knowing about* someone from reading a biography and actually *knowing them* as a friend or family member. Or the difference between *knowing about* swimming because you have seen it in the Olympics and *knowing how* to swim.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't a place of theoretical knowledge, cognitive knowledge, or academic knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, and about death being the result of sin. The two had been instructed.

Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. But having mere facts is not what the Tree was about – it was about experience, *knowing by experience*, by choice, either good or evil. Choose to trust and believe God and know good – or choose to believe lies, distrust God, and know evil.

God told them, "It is at this tree you will have knowledge, so choose well; choose not to partake of the fruit and you will know good – you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness. All of this will solidify in your character. So please, my beautiful children, choose to know good! But if you choose to partake in the fruit, you will *know* evil – you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering, and death. Please, my beautiful children, don't choose to *know* evil."

So the same author who wrote the quote about the Sabbath being a test similar to the Tree of Knowledge, wrote the following:

> Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. . . . They were to enjoy communion with God and with holy angels; but before they could be rendered eternally secure, **their loyalty must be tested**. At the very beginning of man's **existence a check was placed upon the desire for self-indulgence**, the fatal passion that lay at the foundation of Satan's fall. [Will they choose love and trust or will they choose selfishness. This is the question. God can create sinless beings, but God cannot create the character of the sinless being. The character, the kind of person, loyal, loving, faithful, true, or deceitful, selfish exploitive, is developed by the being. The Tree was placed there for them to choose what they would know in heart, mind and character, a check, a place to say NO to selfishness and YES to love and loyalty] The tree of knowledge, which stood near the tree of life in the midst of the garden, **was to be a test of the obedience, faith, and love of our first parents**. While permitted to eat freely of every other tree, they were forbidden to taste of this, **on pain of death**.[Why? What happens when one chooses selfishness? Where does life come from? If one severs their connection to God, the source of life what happens?] They were also to be exposed to the temptations of Satan; but if they endured the trial, they would finally be placed beyond his power, to enjoy perpetual favor with God. . . . {CC 13.2}
>
> **God might have created man without the power to transgress His law**; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character**. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being,

> and **would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule**. {CC 13.3} [What was the purpose of the Tree? It was to let them decide what kind of being they would be—for them to test themselves, choose love and trust or choose lies, fear, selfishness and distrust. Is this an arbitrary test with inflicted punishment, or is it the test of reality, of design law, of what they must as sentient beings go through in order to become, by action, by choice, by their individual determination, solidified in love and godliness?]

So what about the Sabbath? It is the same, it is evidence of God's methods and principles and we must choose what kind of people we will be, what methods we will practice. The Sabbath represents the government of God, the government of design law and those who choose to honor God will practice His methods in their lives and remember the Sabbath and what it represents all week long.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us why God created the Sabbath a rest day before anyone was even tired?

Read first two paragraphs, "Even before…" What was the purpose of the Sabbath in a sinless world? Well, while the Sabbath was created before Adam and Eve sinned, was the Sabbath created before or after sin in the universe? After, so does the Sabbath have some utility in dealing with sin in the universe? Is it a special gift or blessing to human beings in a universe where sin exists?

What is Satan's allegation against God? That God is arbitrary, makes up rules, that God's law is imposed and God must punish. How does God reveal that His law is design law?

God created a new world, and the entire planet was a microcosm of the universe. All the various forms of life on the planet living only by giving to others. Receiving energy from the sun, radiating out freely to all, giving life to the plants which give oxygen to the animals which give carbon dioxide back.

Then God created Adam and Eve, human beings in His image with dominion, to govern in love, and procreative abilities to make beings in their image.

Then God said to the universe, "You heard the allegations, you have seen the evidence given, I rest my case. Take 24 hours aside and consider for yourselves and choose—no pressure, no coercion."

What does it say about God, that in a war over His right to rule, instead of using power to force everyone into compliance, He created a day for freedom to think and choose?

Recently a well-known SDA scholar, endorsed by one of the SDA conferences, made a video about the question of Sunday as a day of worship being an issue before Christ returns. He made the case that what Ellen White wrote in the *Great Controversy* and other places about Sunday being a test, or being the mark of the beast, or Sabbath being a test, is likely not to happen. He made the case that this was a conditional prophecy for her day and that she is a classic prophet not an apocalyptic prophet.

A classic prophet is like Micah, one who is inspired with a message for the people of their day, with predictions that would only occur if the people responded properly, but if not they would not occur. In other words, conditional prophecies.

Apocalyptic prophets are like Daniel and John who wrote about future events for the world or all people. This SDA theologian made the case that the predictions about Sunday as a mark of the beast are not going to happen because they were conditional and the followers of Christ in the 19th century failed to fulfill their part to bring about the final events.

As I listened to this person I understood his position, but he had one major flaw in his understanding—he understands God's law as imposed and thus doesn't understand that the two days are symbols of two systems, two laws, two governments: God's law is design law and is represented by the Sabbath which was built, created, designed as a day of rest. Satan's government is imperial, made up rules that require external infliction of punishment and is represented by Sunday which became a day of rest by legislation.

The historic two days of worship within Christianity—Sabbath and Sunday—stand as two banners, signs, flags, marks, pennants that represent two divergent systems of governing. Just as the US Flag—the grand old Stars and Stripes—is a symbol or sign of the United States of America, so these two days of worship are signs of two different systems of governing. However, the flag is not the *reality* for which it stands. The US flag is only a *symbol* of the USA. And a person can wave the flag of America while being an enemy of the US.

And notice how the enemies of freedom have attacked the US flag. The US flag has always been a symbol of the principles of the USA—**freedom and justice for all.** Yet, the enemies of liberty, the enemies of truth, the enemies of justice have gone on a propaganda campaign to make the flag into a symbol of oppression, of intolerance, of exploitation and what has happened in American since the symbol has been attacked? The principles of equality, of liberty, of genuine justice have been undermined in America and we have seen terrible injustice, mobs, violence, restrictions of liberties of all kinds, censuring, inciting of fear, restrictions on free speech, religion, and assembly.

Likewise, Satan attacks the Sabbath, the sign of God's creatorship and the design laws of truth, love, liberty. He attacks it by either reframing it as an arbitrary test of obedience or replacing it with a day legislated and in both cases God's design law is replaced with imposed law in the minds of people and trust in God is undermined and hearts are hardened.

Understanding all of this, we can see that Sabbath is a sign of something larger than a day to go to church upon—it is an evidence of a system of governing to which we adhere and live in harmony with God and His government all week long, not just one day in seven.

Salvation in Christ is about restoring sinners to holiness; it is not about restoring the Sabbath to holiness. And rightly understood, the Sabbath is a "sign" that God makes us holy: "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a **sign** between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that **I am the Lord, who makes you holy**." (Ex 31:13).

We can't be holy only one day in seven, so the Sabbath is a sign of a way of living, a loyalty, an embracing of and transformation back into God's design, to which we live all week long. Further, every seven days, the Sabbath affords an opportunity for us to exercise our trust in God and rest in Him, thus choosing to identify with His kingdom of love.

So Sabbath will always be a sign of God's government—design law, the principles of truth, love and freedom. And Sunday will always be a mark of imperialism, imposed law with imposed punishments. And these two systems will be the test in the end. Those who are sealed of God, of which the Sabbath is a sign, will have the law of God, truth, love, liberty sealed into their characters such that they live out these principles—these are Sabbath keepers—regardless of which day they go to church upon. And those who receive the mark of the beast, will embrace the system of imposed laws, use government and imperial power to coerce and force others regardless of which day they go to church upon.

The lesson talks about the benefits of rest, about how so many people are sleep deprived and in need of physical rest.

Let's talk about this. It is the law of restoration. Once a finite being expends a resource, we must rest and recover in order to have more to spend.

The lesson points out that people are sleep deprived and this is true.

Over 49 million Americans report sleep difficulties impair concentration, more than 18 million report memory problems related to sleep loss and over 40 million Americans report impairments in daily functioning such has work, hobbies, finances or driving. [i]

People with chronic sleep problems suffer higher rates of diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypertension, depression, cancer and die younger than those who get normal sleep. [ii]

A CDC's analysis found that 34% of people sleep less than 7 hours per night, 48% report snoring, 37.9% report unintentionally falling asleep during the day, and 4.7% report falling asleep while driving. [iii]

The US Department of Transportation estimates there are 100,000 accidents, 1,550 fatalities and over 40,000 injuries each year due to drivers impaired by sleepiness. [iv]

Sleep is critical to our health. Are brains are very active and use much energy.
The brain weighs about three pounds, which is 1-2% of the body weight, but uses 20% of the body's energy. This high metabolic activity means it is producing a lot of by-products of metabolism, which need to be removed from the brain cells. The waste removal occurs during sleep. When we are asleep our brain cells contract expelling the byproducts of metabolism from the fluid (cytoplasm) inside the neurons out into the cerebrospinal fluid to be removed from the brain. [v] If we don't get normal

amounts of sleep we interfere with the brain's ability to remove these metabolites. Over time this can contribute to increased oxidative stress and neuronal loss, accelerating the aging process.

This is why infants, toddlers, children and adolescents need more sleep than adults—their brains are assimilating more data and structurally going through much more modification and change and thus they have more byproducts of metabolism to clear and data to assimilate.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, recommendations for sleep by age are [vi]:

- Newborns (0-3 months): 14-17 hours
- Infants (4-11 months): 12-15 hours
- Toddlers (1-2 years): 11-14 hours
- Preschoolers (3-5 years): 10-13 hours
- School-age (6-13 years): 9-11 hours
- Teenagers (14-17 years): 8-10 hours
- Young adults (18-25 years): 7-9 hours
- Adults (> 25 years): 7-8 hours

Memories consolidate in sleep. In two studies college students were randomized into two groups and given made up words to memorize and recall those words immediately after exposure and then twelve hours later. One group was kept awake and the other group got to sleep. Those who slept during the intervening twelve hours not only were able to recall more words than those who didn't sleep, but they were able to recall more words than they did immediately after learning them twelve hours previously. [vii]

But it is not merely the number of hours slept during each twenty-four hour day that is important. Studies also show that the *when* one sleeps is critical to optimum health. Sleeping at night, in harmony with nature's biorhythms—awake when the sun in up and sleeping when the sun is down—is much healthier than working during the night and sleeping during the day. In fact, according to research by Eva S. Schernhammer, M.D., published in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* in January 2015, those who work third shift for five years or more die younger and having significantly higher rates of heart disease than those who do not work third shift; and those who work third shift for fifteen years or more die at higher rates from lung cancer than those who work day shift. [viii] Not only is sleep a physical requirement for life and health, but *when* one sleeps is critical to maintaining ones optimum health and slowing the aging process.

What Is Normal Sleep? Many people think normal sleep is going to bed, sleeping 7-8 straight hours and then waking up. No human brain sleeps this way. Normal sleep goes in stages with multiple awakenings each night.

So it is true that we need physical rest, it is true that people need sleep and many are sleep deprived. But the Sabbath was not given for this reason.

Our physical rest comes each night with sleep. But the Sabbath rest is not for physical rest, it is for mental rest, for decompression from life's stresses, to come apart and unwind, relax and refresh the mind, the heart, the soul in a love relationship with God.

Have you heard of the Blue Zones? Dan Buettner's book? He researched the five areas in the world which have the highest concentration of people living to be over 100, and these are the five zones:

- Blue Zones
  - Ikaria, Greece
  - Nicoya, Costa Rica
  - Okinawa, Japan
  - Sardina, Italy
  - Loma Linda, CA
- What unique about Loma Linda
  - Hetergeneous

And Loma Linda has a high concentration of SDA's. Buettner sought out lifestyle activities that he concluded led to longer and healthier lives and this is what is said on the Blue Zones website about Loma Linda:

> "Find a sanctuary in time to decompress. …Observance of the Sabbath strictly occurs from Friday to Saturday night, giving Adventists a weekly time to focus on family, friends, God and nature." http://www.bluezones.com/live-longer/education/expeditions/loma-linda-california/

So the Sabbath is beneficial, but not for physical rest, for mental rest, to destress, to experience relaxation of the mind and soul, which decreases the stress cascade, reducing inflammatory processes in the body.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "The Hebrew Old Testament…" Do you experience Sabbath as a holiday? I think this is a great way to think about it—a weekly vacation, a day off from all the burdens of life, not just employment, but from laundry, housekeeping, schoolwork.

I have many good Christians as patients who work all week, go to church on Sunday and then Sunday afternoon is filled with housekeeping, laundry, yardwork and they never actually rest. And they are exhausted, burning out, tired.

Taking 24 hours vacation each week is restorative and doing so in a love relationship with our Creator builds our trust in Him. If we understand the evidence of the Sabbath, why it exists, the methods and government of God and choose to honor God by resting on His Sabbath for all these reasons we grow in our wisdom and our characters become more like Christ as we practice God's methods in our lives.

The lesson asks us to read Deuteronomy 31:16 and asks, "What kind of rest is being talked about here?"

> And the LORD said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your fathers, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. (Dt 31:16 NIV84).

What kind of rest? Do you understand the first death experience as a rest? As a cessation from work, as a pause, as a relief, as a mercy, as an artificial state of suspended animation while the plan of salvation is completed?

What is Paul talking about here?

> For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6–8 NIV84).

What happens when a person running a race crosses the finish line? Do they keep running or do they rest?

Is Paul talking about going to heaven right then, or about resting in the grave until the day when the Lord appears and resurrects him?

Do we see this as God's grace at work?

Then do we understand all the deaths of all the people throughout all history thus far are sleep, are this suspended state, are under God's grace in an artificial state waiting for resurrection.

This is critical to understanding history and Scripture. The wages of sin is not sleep, not suspended animation awaiting resurrection. The wages of sin is death, eternal nonexistence. No human being has yet experienced this. All who have died are in a state of suspended animation awaiting resurrection to receive their reward, either eternal life, or eternal death, depending on what they have chosen.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points us to Hebrews four, lets read the first 5 verses:

> Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

> "So I declared on oath in my anger,
> 'They shall never enter my rest.' "
>
> And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."
>
> It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before:
> "Today, if you hear his voice,
> do not harden your hearts."(Heb 4:1–7 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do you explain it? What law lens do we understand it through?

Here is the *Remedy* version:

> 1 Therefore, since the Remedy is still available, and the promise of complete healing and perfect rest still stands, let us be careful that none of us be found to have rejected it.2 For we also have had the good news of God's healing truth presented to us just as they did; but the message of truth had no value to them because they did not believe it nor did they trust the one who gave it.3 But we, who have trusted God on the basis of the truth Christ provided, experience healing and enter that rest, and our minds are at peace. As God has said, "So I granted them their persistent choice and said, 'Since they refuse the truth–the Remedy I freely offer–they will never be able to enter my rest and get well.'" It was not because God's perfect rest was not available–for it had been ready since his work of creation was complete — 4 as the Scriptures say elsewhere regarding the seventh day: "And on the seventh day, God rested his case. He had finished all his work of providing the evidence needed to refute the lies of Satan."5 And yet in another passage he says, "If they refuse the truth, if they reject the evidence I have provided, their minds will never find rest and they will not get well."
> 6 The opportunity to find God's healing and rest still remains, even though those who formerly had the good news of God's healing truth presented to them did not get well or find rest because they refused to believe the truth and trust God.7 Therefore God again and again presents his healing Remedy, and he set a certain day which he called "today," when much later he spoke through David in the same Scripture as before: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds."

THURSDAY

The lesson points to Cain and how he would be a restless wanderer and asks why Cain would never find rest?

Read second paragraph, "When God said…" This is well said.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Music in Member's Section

Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.

Brad wrote:

> I had always wanted to create an album that would tell the bible story that could be used to target believers as well as non believers. I had attempted a few false starts and the idea didn't really go anywhere apart from a few sketchy iPhone recordings.
>
> I then read *Journal of the Watcher* and loved the story and was blown away by the illustrations, this book gave me the context and frame work to get my album idea up and running, and with the covid19 fiasco, the impetus to hurry up and get this idea done.
>
> So my wife and I wrote the songs and started recording the album which took approximately 12 months.
>
> When I read *The God-Shaped Brain*, I came across the word *Hilasterion*, and remember thinking that would make a great album name—that was years ago, funnily reading that word from Tim's book became our album name. Jesus is our Hilasterion who brings reconciliation and makes peace.
>
> So long story short this album had a lot of it inspiration/influence via Come and Reason Ministries. The album tells the story of the war in heaven and finishes with Parousia , the king is coming, divided in 3 section themes 1. Old Testament, 2. Jesus' ministry, 3. Contemporary influence.

SHARING campaign June: *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*
BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

[i] http://www.cdc.gov/Features/dsSleep/index.html

[ii] Institute of Medicine. *Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation: An Unmet Public Health Problem*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2006.

[iii] http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm6008.pdf

[iv] US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. Drowsy driving and automobile crashes [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Web Site]. Available at http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/drowsy_driving1/Drowsy.html#NCSDR/NHTSA Accessed February 10, 2011.

[v] Science 18 October 2013: Vol. 342 no. 6156 pp. 373-377 DOI: 10.1126/science.1241224

[vi] https://sleepfoundation.org/excessivesleepiness/content/how-much-sleep-do-babies-and-kids-need

[vii] Cortex Volume 74, January 2016, Pages 289–296

[viii] http://www.ajpmonline.org/pb/assets/raw/Health%20Advance/journals/amepre/AJPM_Mar15_PR_Schernhammer_FINAL2.pdf

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 2
Restless and Rebellious

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1Co 10:11 NIV84).

As we have said before, Scripture not only records real historic people doing real historic events, but the selection of those people and events serve a larger purpose: to reveal the plan of salvation being played out, God's principles versus Satan's principles and often times serves as object lessons to the Great Controversy.

The lesson title—Restless and Rebellious, does this title fit society today?

Are there lessons from God's Word that instruct us, that are examples to us, that warn us as to why restlessness and rebelliousness come and how to protect ourselves?

What is a synonym for restlessness?

- agitated
- anxious
- disturbed
- nervous
- troubled
- uneasy
- fretful
- unpeaceful

What causes such a state? What takes away our peace, incites anxiety, nervousness, fear, worry, agitation? Perfect love casts out all fear—as soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid. So

- Anything that takes us away from God, out of harmony with Him and His Being design laws for life will cause restlessness and rebellion
- Anything that reconciles us to God restores His love into our hearts removes restlessness and rebellion

Do we have examples in the Bible of how Satan works to injure us, to incite restlessness and rebellion?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Turn to **SUNDAY** and the lesson points us to Israel being restless in the wilderness.

They are complaining about their food, longing for the fleshpots of Egypt. God is providing manna, but they want the food of Egypt—what is the lesson?

- What is manna symbolic of? It is symbolic of Jesus, the bread of heaven
- What are the fleshpots of Egypt symbolic of? All the things of this world that people try to fill their hearts with, to nurture their souls with—wealth, power, excitement, worldly entertainment, pleasures of the senses, toxic relationships—anything but Jesus and God's methods.

So, what caused ancient Israel's restlessness? Hearts that preferred the world over Jesus. Is there a lesson for us today?

And with this restless spirit, not finding themselves satisfied with the things of God, remaining hungry for the things of the world, what happened?

God sent quail—not for one meal, but for an entire month, they had to eat it every meal for a month, until they got sick of it. Why? What is the lesson?

When we insist on rebelling against God, insist on doing things our own way, after God's warnings, what does God do? He lets us have what we prefer and reap what we have sown—why?

Do we see this in society today? God wants us to learn, preferably from studying His Word and applying the truths of Scripture, but if we reject God and refuse His Word and won't learn directly from Him and His instructions, then He sets us free to learn from reality, from what happens when we reject His plan, methods, and design.

So today, do we see that the church is wandering in the wilderness and filling herself with the meat of this world?

- television
- success is getting more wealth, more fame, more clicks, more followers on social media
- God's law works like human laws and we can get justice by imposing rules—we just need the right judges, justices, presidents, senators
- science is superior to Scripture, we evolved from lower life forms or God used evolution to create us
- public schools are just as good as Christian schools, let's give our kids a public education
- there is no objective reality, no objective truth, your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth
- marriage isn't a man and a woman
- transgender women are not really men and should be able to compete in female sports
- if you love people you don't speak things they might find offensive
- if you love people you surrender your freedoms to make them feel safe

And just like Israel we are getting sick and we are suffering.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Turn to **MONDAY** and what is the next lesson we learn from ancient Israel on its way to Canaan?

> Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman (Nu 12:1 NKJV).

Two problems are highlighted here:

Challenging God's messenger and Racism

When we take our eyes off God, when we prefer the methods of the world, we become prideful, we don't accept God's truth and therefore don't accept God's leaders who promote God's truth, jealousy and division arise, including racism.

In society today, do we still teach that the USA was established on the principles of liberty, on inalienable rights given to us by our Creator God, and that the government was set up to restrain the big powers (government, church, aristocracies—big business) from encroaching upon our inalienable rights, and that as long as these godly principles are valued and practiced the USA grows stronger? People unite under these principles despite different ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds.

Consider trying to go to many other countries in the world—Mexico, Guatemala, Russia, China, Japan—and not being a native of those countries see what happens if you try to become a citizen, hold government office, and change the laws? Will you be assimilated, accepted as a Mexican, Guatemalan, Russian, Chinese or Japanese? No—you will always be considered an outsider. But in the USA, what happens when an immigrant comes here legally and gains their citizenship? Are they accepted? Why? Because it is NOT based on race or ethnicity, American culture has historically been based on shared values of liberty and justice for all. We have inalienable rights granted to us by our Creator and all human beings are given these by God and government's role is to protect those rights.

And where did this core values that America is founded upon come from? From the Protestant Reformation, from putting the Bible into the hands of the people and as God's Word was again studied the principles of God were assimilated into hearts and eventually freedoms were established and the US Constitution was written.

But what has happened in America since as we have advanced the values of Black Lives Matter, Critical Race Theory, 1619 Project, Wokeism and the lie of equity? These movements attack the principles of the Reformation. They try and recast our American history under the lie that the government was built on exploitation, abuse, and slavery. No—slavery existed in old European powers that colonized the Americas. The US government was established on different principles to move away from those abusive systems. And it has. But the woke movements of today deny history and are filling minds with lies.

And what is the result? Our society is dividing and fracturing—tribalism. Understand, wherever the principles of BLM, CRT, wokeism are applied the lives of **all** people, but especially people of color get worse.

How did God deal with Miriam and Aaron when they raised the race card? He struck Miriam with leprosy—why? What does it signify? Leprosy is symbolic of sin. Leprosy destroys the pain fibers so that people lose the pain when they are doing something injurious, like touching a hot stove. This is what sin does and especially racism, the idea that people are less because of the color of their skin damages the conscience, warps the character. MLK Jr. had it right, it isn't about skin color it is about character.

The evil we see in society today does not come from white society, it does not come from black society, or Hispanic society. It comes from evil leaders who use race as an issue to divide and they are inspired by their father the devil, just like the leaders who crucified Christ 2000 years ago.

God's striking Miriam with leprosy was to be a lesson that should have taught the people to trust God and to trust the leadership of Moses. Our own national history of slavery and exploitation of people based on race, should have taught us the foolishness and destructiveness of dividing people based on race. But, instead, people are just as slow to learn today as ancient Israel. And today millions are buying into the lies of:

- racism as reparation
- racism as defund the police
- racism as hiring quotas for businesses or admission to schools
- racism as aide to farmers
- racism as white privilege or white rage

This perversity of BLM, CRT and wokeism has metastasized into all forms of identity politics designed to destroy character development, individual application, hard work, and godliness in society, so we have profiling for privilege based on gender, sexual orientation, and race. And all the while the people doing this claim it is white people who are the evil ones.

Understand reality—these attacks on what the CRT and BLM proponents call whitism is an attack on Protestant Christianity—on the principles of the Bible. American was founded by Protestant Christians who reclaimed God's Word as the rule of life and found in God's Word the principles of liberty, of inalienable rights given to us by our Creator that are not to be violated by any earthly power. Those people happened to come from Europe and happened to be primarily white. But if the African people were the ones to have recovered the Bible then they would have been the ones to establish such a society. **It isn't about race at all it is about the principles of God found in the Bible**. But Satan doesn't want people to see that so instead he focuses on the color of the skin of the people who founded the USA rather than the principles upon which the country was established.

The liars and dividers in society try to recast history into a lie to destroy the principles of Christianity—liberty and justice for all—and thereby tear down the unity that sets America apart from all other nations in history.

Just open your eyes and look at what happens, what we call outcomes, reality. God is the God of reality. You cannot get health while violating the laws of health, and so when God's principles are broken, injury and decay always result. Look at the municipalities where these divisive principles are put into practice. You will see every single time a decreasing value of human life, crime soaring, murder rates soaring, homelessness soaring, education falling, the development of godlessness with self-control plummeting.

Stop accepting the lies—be lovers of truth. Don't harden your hearts, turn to God and His methods and love all people, but don't love all methods.

But the Israelites don't learn the lessons and in **TUESDAY's** lesson they return to their distrust of God and listen to Korah and his group and what did they do?

So, let's recap and see if we can put this into perspective for us today:

- The children of Israel are symbolic of the people of God. They were slaves in Egypt. The people of God are slaves in sin. God sent a deliverer to lead them out of slavery. God sent Jesus to lead us out of sin.

- The Israelites were led through the Red Sea; the people of God are led through baptism.

- The Israelites are being led to the promised land—we are being led to the heavenly promised land.

- On the way to the promised land God feeds them manna to nurture, strengthen and prepare them; on the way to heaven God feeds us the bread of heaven, Jesus, the Word of God, to nurture, strengthen and prepare us.

- The Israelites rebel over the manna. They wanted something with spice, better flavor, something thrilling and exciting. Christianity rejected the plain truths of the Word of God, the bread of heaven, and instead chose the meat of Egypt, meaning the methods, principles, and practices of the world and preferred the imposed law method with power over, authoritarianism.

- God let the Israelites have meat until it was coming out of their noses; and God let the church have the methods of the world, imperialism, power over, made-up rules until the church and the world went into the Dark Ages and the people were sick of the authoritarian methods of the world and they turned back to the manna, the Bible and it was translated into the languages of the people and the Enlightenment began. Then the people fled to a new land and established a new form of government to restrict the powers that impose themselves upon the liberties of the

people and the Reformation continued, the people were preparing to enter the heavenly Canaan.

- In the desert on their way to the promised land God not only gave the Israelites manna, but before the 10 Commandments were given at Sinai, every week they received double portion of manna on Friday and they rested on Sabbath. Thus God gave them His weekly Sabbath.

- As the Reformation continued Bible studying Christians led by a Baptist preacher William Miller became convicted of prophecies in Daniel and Revelation that Jesus was coming soon to deliver us from sin and take us to the promised land. Other Christians, believing they were indeed on the way to a new earth, recovered the Sabbath truth and began resting each week according to the Sabbath and sharing the message of Christ's soon return to the world.

- But in ancient Israel, God's messenger and leader Moses was challenged for authority by those who objected to him marrying an Ethiopian/Cushite woman.

    - Christianity is divided by racism, we are not united as one in Christ, but even as the SDA church is officially formed in 1863, the civil war is under way to end slavery. As slavery ends, the Christian world has the opportunity to unite in Christ, regardless of race, but instead it remains divided by race. And we haven't yet entered the promised land.

      But God intervened and Miriam is struck with leprosy, then she is healed. In the USA, the land of the free, the place where the people who are ingesting the bread of heaven, studying the Word of God and no longer embracing the doctrines made up by men, the southern slave-holding states are devastated by the Civil War and the northern states suffer the loss of hundreds of thousands of their sons. But the states recover, race relations improve, equality for all people advances, eventually we have a black president. Race relations are improving, until the last few years where the race-baters and race haters are again advancing an agenda of racial division.

- As ancient Israel is on the border of the promised land, about to enter, the spies bring back a report, 10 discouraging, we can't do it, they are strong, two an encouraging report, a land of milk and honey and with God we will win.

  At this point, Korah's rebellion occurs. Korah and cohorts challenge God's messenger for leadership. In the progression of the Reformation, preparing people to meet Christ, the SDA church sees itself as the next link in the Reformation process. In 1888 a message came to the church through Jones and Waggoner and endorsed by EG White, but the leadership challenged the messengers, rejected the message and sent EG White to Australia. Rather than the people of God entering the promised land, we have been wandering in the wilderness.

Consider this description of the events of Korah's rebellion from the commentary *From Eternity Past* and see what lessons apply for us today:

Korah, the leading spirit in this movement, a cousin of Moses, was a man of ability and influence. He had become dissatisfied with his position and aspired to the dignity of the priesthood. For some time Korah had been secretly opposing the authority of Moses and Aaron, though He had not ventured upon open rebellion. He finally conceived the **bold design of overthrowing both the civil and the religious authority**. Dathan and Abiram, two princes, readily joined in his ambitious schemes and determined to divide with Korah the honors of the priesthood. EP 277.2 [Do we find people of ability both in the church and in civil government who are interested only in themselves, who are working against the principles of God, who will work to divide the church or society in order to get more power for themselves?]

The feeling among the people favored Korah. In the bitterness of their disappointment, their former doubts, jealousy, and hatred returned, and again their complaints were directed against their patient leader. **They forgot that they were under divine guidance**, that the presence of Christ went before them, and that from Him Moses received directions. EP 277.3 [Do we find segments of society who feel life isn't fair, that they have been victimized, that things are against them, that the system isn't just? Do we find the knowledge of God has been rejected by many in society? Are people rejecting the God-led beliefs in the founding of this nation and instead reframing it as a godless nation? And those who believe the lies are easily manipulated and exploited by leaders claiming to take up their cause, to help them, to advance them, to give them justice? Did Korah's leadership lead Israel to a better outcome? What about these leaders of BLM, wokeism and CRT—is society improving, or are the very ones these leaders claim to be helping experiencing the most terrible devastation of their lives and communities as these woke leaders get more power?]

Unwilling to die in the wilderness, they were ready to believe that it was not God but Moses who had pronounced their doom. Although the marks of God's displeasure at their perverseness were still before them, **they did not take the lesson to heart**. EP 277.4 [Unwilling to believe that God and God's designs and principles have any bearing on outcomes in society today people instead blame race, white people, and claim we will never have the utopia of "equity" unless we replace the system of meritocracy, of hard work, with identity equity. We must tear down the flag, the symbol of liberty and justice for all; we must rename the schools, tear down the statues of the great men who advanced the principles of Protestantism, the principles of liberty. It can't be that God's design for families has any bearing on success, no, it must be something else. But what does the data actually show?

From the Institute for Family Studies,

- Black children from two parent homes consistently do better than white children from single parent homes:
  - 36% of young black women from intact families have graduated from college compared to just 28% of young white women from single-parent families.
  - 14% of young black men from intact families have been incarcerated, compared to 18% of young white men from single-parent families.

- 13% of black children in intact families are poor compared to 33% of white children in single-parent families.

Is it racism keeping blacks in poverty, or is it rejecting the manna, rejecting God's Word, God's design for human families and black families replacing fathers with Uncle Sam? No, we must not accept the truth; it can't be breaking God's design for families at work, it must be institutional racism. It can't be that policies proclaimed to help have actually decimated black families and it is the destruction of the family unit that negatively impacts all people regardless of skin color. The data shows, black or white or Hispanic, people have greater success in life when the families are intact and when God's principles are practiced. But, we can't acknowledge Biblical principles so let's call it institutional racism. Let's not turn people back to God, let's not educate them on godly principles, instead let's teach them there is no God and that the system is rigged against people because of color—and the only way to fix this so-called institutional racism is for the government to make laws mandating racism by making preferences based on race—so we will have quotas on admissions to school, not based on ability, achievement, or hard work, but based on race. And anyone who questions the new racism must be called a racist. And just like Israel we continue wandering in the wilderness restless and rebellious.]

He who reads the secrets of all hearts had given His people warning and instruction as might have enabled them to escape the deception of these designing men. They had seen the judgment of God on Miriam because of her jealousy and complaints against Moses. The Lord had declared: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth." "Wherefore, then," He added, "were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" Numbers 12:8. **These instructions were not intended for Aaron and Miriam alone, but for all Israel**. EP 277.5 [We should have learned the folly of racism from slavery and Jim Crow, but we haven't and leftism is bent on repeating it and anyone who questions it is labeled a racist]

Korah and his fellow conspirators were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory. But a temptation, slight at first, had been harbored until their minds were controlled by Satan. They first whispered their discontent to one another and then to leading men of Israel. **At last they really believed themselves actuated by zeal for God.** EP 278.1 [Those who advance principles contrary to God's design laws, contrary to God's methods both in the church and in civil government, will have their minds controlled by Satan and will come to believe that they are doing right, even working for God, while they implement the principles of Satan—imperialism that uses power over others. They will advance their agenda with lies, deceit, manipulation, coercion, censuring, deplatforming, and arbitrary division by race, for they are not following the Spirit of God. For in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, free or slave. When we are united by the Spirit of God, our human biological difference are irrelevant, the only thing that truly divides is character, methods and principles]

They were successful in alienating two hundred and fifty princes. With these influential supporters they felt confident of greatly improving upon the administration of Moses and

Aaron. EP 278.2 [These liars in the church and society are successful in garnering a variety of leaders to their cause and all claim that they will make the church or society better, but it only worsens.]

Jealousy had given rise to envy, and envy to rebellion. And they deceived themselves and one another into thinking that Moses and Aaron had themselves assumed the positions they held, that these leaders had exalted themselves in taking the priesthood and government... EP 278.3

Korah and his associates enlisted the support of the congregation. **The charge that the murmurings of the people had brought the wrath of God was declared a mistake. They said that the congregation were not at fault, since they desired nothing more than their rights**; but Moses was an overbearing ruler; he had reproved the people as sinners when they were a holy people. EP 278.4 [And this is the key. These perverse leaders in the church and society are jealous of those who are successful and they play off the petty jealousies in others to gain support for themselves. They tell the people that the problem is NOT their own lack of self-discipline, their own failure to apply themselves, to live in harmony with God's laws. The problem is the bad leadership of people in power who make rules, who tell you to work harder, who call you to account for sin and crime—that is whitism, racism and must be rejected. We can only really be free if we defund the police, have no borders, open the prisons to violent criminals, while we imprison people who refuse to close their business, or who speak against us. We must burn the flag, we must tear down the institutes of justice. It isn't the fault of the people it is the fault of institutional racism.]

Korah's hearers thought they saw clearly that their troubles might have been prevented if Moses had pursued a different course. Their exclusion from Canaan was in consequence of the mismanagement of Moses and Aaron. If Korah would be their leader and encourage them by dwelling upon their good deeds instead of reproving their sins, they would have a very prosperous journey; instead of wandering in the wilderness they would proceed directly to the Promised Land. EP 278.5 [If only we had more laws giving racial preferences to people of color, had more taxes and reparations, had more equity then we could have real fairness and justice in society, all our troubles will be over, we would have a real promised land. But it is all a lie. Only God's methods, God's design laws function to heal and bring true unity, health and happiness.]

Then consider this from the same author:

"When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: [The following is a quote is written as coming from the angel of the Lord, which you will discover is Jesus as the speaker claims the people as His and He is the source of grace given to the people.] "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over [re-enacting] the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**. I have placed you in your proper position, **which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; [What was EGW advocating? The healing view of the gospel promoted by

> Jones and Waggoner. Righteousness by faith message—which is actual, real, genuine righteousness within the heart/mind of those who trust in Jesus. The rebuilding and healing of our characters when we trust in Jesus—the fulfillment of the day of at-one-ment metaphor, the purifying of the bride, the groom receiving His bride bringing her into unity/oneness with Him, the cleansing of the sanctuary. But church leadership rejected this healing view and chose instead to embrace the false imperial legal view of declared righteousness even though we are not. They rejected the manna and chose the fleshpots of Egypt. This, is, according to the angel of the Lord, like Korah saying "we can't succeed in going into the promised land." And church leaders, who prefer the imperial law view, have been telling Adventists ever since that we can't succeed in experiencing Christ's righteousness, sin is too great, God can't give us power to be victorious in our lives so we will be prepared to stand in God's presence when Jesus returns; these liars claim we can only be declared legally righteous, even though we are not.] but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. **It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people**. [Friends of Come and Reason around the world, realize that when you are told you are not welcome, you cannot teach your Bible class, that you cannot share the wonders of God's love that has so transformed your life—that it is not you they are rejecting but Christ they are rejecting.] **They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness**. I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should heal them. **They have obscured their spiritual eyesight.** [What does this mean? By refusing the truth of God's design law, by holding to Rome's imperial law lie, they have blinded themselves to how reality works and live in a fantasy of confusion and contradictions mirroring this sinful world with a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death which they call justice. And if they persist in teaching this, they become blind and incapable of seeing the truth or leading others into the promised land. And the SDA church has been wandering in the wilderness for over 130 years.] They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word. Lightness, trifling, jesting and joking are daily practiced. They have not set their hearts to seek Me. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: "Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." These words from God I have not dared to disregard."–Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. (To "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie," Nov. 5, 1892.) {3MR 191.2}

Now, regarding what is happening in America today, how do we understand this through the lens of Bible prophecy?

If you haven't read my blog King of the North versus King of the South and Today's End-Time Events I encourage you to do so.

In Daniel 11 the king of the south is symbolized by Egypt and represents the forces of godlessness, atheism, humanism, earth worship, communism. And the king of the north is symbolized by Babylon

and Rome and represents religious imperialism, the Dark Ages church, people who claim a belief in God but will use the power of human might to force their moral agenda on others.

The final movements of this long prophecy are the king the south attacks the king of the north and the king of the north storms out against him and destroys him, takes his wealth, power etc. Are we seeing the attack of the king of the south right now?

- What power on earth today is a power built on godlessness, that actively denies God, oppresses free religion, obstructs Bibles and Bible schools and teachings—communism?
- What power on earth today is one of the most racist countries in history and has committed all kinds of crimes against people of other races and people who continue to believe in God?
- What power on earth today has done gain function research on a corona virus making it easier to infect humans?
- What power on earth today released a bioengineered coronal virus into the human population and then disappeared the doctors who tried to warn the world, stopped in-country travel in and out of ground zero, but kept international travel in and out of ground zero open, refused to let CDC and other world health officials in to investigate, and has lied to the public repeatedly about its origins?
- What power on earth has used its pundits in the media to stir up racial conflict in the USA in order to divide and distract us?
- What power on earth has used its influence over media and tech giants to prevent evidence that opposes the false narrative?
- What power on earth is one of the world's worst polluters and continues to make more coal burning power plants and exploits the planet more than any other, while at the same time working through its operatives in the USA, the UN and global media to get western countries to ruin their economies with all types of so-called green energy solutions?
- What country benefits when the USA is fragmented and divided upon racial issues, has a suffering economy, and higher energy prices?
- This power and all of its puppets and pundits are part of the king of the south making an all-out attack on the king of the north—the principles of Protestantism—freedom and liberty—seeking instead a totalitarian system of a few ruling elites controlling the masses—socialism, communism.
- If I am right about Daniel's prophecy, then religious conservatives are going to reclaim power and crush the forces of the king of the south—BUT HERE IS THE KEY—God's people are not in either group. The Beautiful Land is in the middle, God's people are caught in the middle between these two conflicting philosophies and powers and we must be vigilant not to join either side.

The lesson points us to Numbers 14:11,12 where God threatens to destroy the people and start over with Moses family and Moses intercedes with God.

Read the second paragraph, "This is the moment…" What do you hear? What is the lesson suggested from this paragraph?

"And just as the Lord did then because of Moses' intercession, thus He does for us because of Jesus, because of His death and resurrection and intercession for us."

So, if it wasn't for Moses God would have killed the people? Aren't we glad that God had Moses there to talk Him down, that Moses had more patience, more love, more compassion, more self-control that God. If it wasn't for Moses interceding, God would just of lost it and killed them all. Is this the lesson they want us to learn?

Sadly, most Christians actually believe this. That God is required by law to kill us except for Jesus standing their holding back His anger and wrath.

But, reason through the issues for a minute.

- Does God have foreknowledge or not?
- Was it a surprise to God when Moses pleaded as he did? Did God say, "Oh my, sure didn't expect Moses to care this much. I was positive that Moses would be glad to get rid of these rebellious and irritating people. Well, if I had thought Moses would plead as he is, I certainly would never have even brought up the idea of wiping them out. Hope people don't find out about this, don't want them thinking Moses loves them more than me."
- Or, do we believe God did know exactly how Moses would respond?
- And if God did know how Moses would respond, then did God also foreknow how He was going to respond to Moses' intercessions?
- Then was God ever really going to destroy the people? No!
- Then what is going on? Why did God do it?

What is the bigger story? The plan of salvation, God working to bring the Messiah to destroy Satan and the infection of sin and through His work to heal hearts and minds, restoring humans back to God's design of selfless love.

Who is watching? According to Scripture who longs to look into these things? Angels. So, can you see God saying to His angels in heaven, after all that God has done for Israel, the miracles in Egypt, the parting of the Sea, the manna and still the constant rebellion, could some of the angels have concerns that God's plan just wasn't working? So, God says to the angels, "My methods work, but they take time. Let me show you. Remember Moses 40 years ago murdered an overseer and ran away to protect himself. But after 40 years with me, watch now what happens." And the angels see Moses willing to sacrifice himself to save others. And God looks to the angels and says, "See, my methods work!"

This is the reality, all the penal legal interpretations are lies and pervert the gospel truth.

Read fifth paragraph, "Yet, there are costs…" Read Hebrews 3:7- 4:11 from *The Remedy:*

> "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds as you did in the rebellion in the desert, during the opportunity to

partake of God's cure, where your fathers broke my heart by trying their own remedies and rejecting the truth which I brought and for forty years patiently tried to heal them.

10 That is why I was so angry with what happened to that generation, and said, 'Their minds continually reject the healing truth, and they refuse to practice my ways of health and live.' So I granted them their persistent choice and said, 'Since they refuse the truth–the Remedy I freely offer–they will never be able to enter my rest and get well.'"

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you cling to lies about God and retain a selfish, distrusting mind that turns you away from the living God. But daily build each other up in the truth, as long as there is still time, so that none of you may be blinded, confused, and hardened by the lies about God. We have become partakers of Christ's character if we hold firmly till the end to the confidence we initially had in the truth about God, revealed by Christ. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds as you did in the rebellion."

16 Who were they who heard the message of healing truth but instead rebelled and preferred lies? Were they not all those whom Moses led out of Egypt? And with what was God angry for forty years? Was it not with having to watch his children persistently reject his healing ways and slowly die and fall in the desert? And whom did God tell that they could never get well and find rest as long as they rebelled against the only Remedy if not those who died in the desert? So we see that they were not able to get well and enter into God's rest because they didn't trust him or accept the truth he revealed.

4:1 Therefore, since the Remedy is still available, and the promise of complete healing and perfect rest still stands, let us be careful that none of us be found to have rejected it. For we also have had the good news of God's healing truth presented to us just as they did; but the message of truth had no value to them because they did not believe it nor did they trust the one who gave it. But we, who have trusted God on the basis of the truth Christ provided, experience healing and enter that rest, and our minds are at peace. As God has said, "So I granted them their persistent choice and said, 'Since they refuse the truth–the Remedy I freely offer–they will never be able to enter my rest and get well.'" It was not because God's perfect rest was not available–for it had been ready since his work of creation was complete — as the Scriptures say elsewhere regarding the seventh day: "And on the seventh day, God rested his case. He had finished all his work of providing the evidence needed to refute the lies of Satan." And yet in another passage he says, "If they refuse the truth, if they reject the evidence I have provided, their minds will never find rest and they will not get well."

6 The opportunity to find God's healing and rest still remains, even though those who formerly had the good news of God's healing truth presented to them did not get well or find rest because they refused to believe the truth and trust God. Therefore God again and again presents his healing Remedy, and he set a certain day which he called "today," when much later he spoke through David in the same Scripture as before: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds."

> 8 For if Joshua had already given them healing of character and rest for their minds, God would not have spoken later about another day of rest still to come. There remains then a Sabbath-rest–a rest in the evidence and truth of the character of God–which heals and transforms the people of God; for anyone who rests in the achievements of Christ rests from working to save themself, just as God rested from his work. Let us therefore make every effort to rest in the truth about God as revealed by Christ, so that no one will fall by following the example of distrust and refusal to accept the truth.

THURSDAY

What is the difference between faith and presumption?

- Faith is trust—trust in God and doing what God has instructed; living in harmony with God's designs and principles because we trust Him and follow where He leads
- Presumption—is to presume we know better, doing our own thing, following our own inclinations, presuming them to be what God would have us do—but typically while ignoring the evidences before us of what God has already revealed to us about what He would have us do

Examples:

The children of Israel did not have faith when they refused to enter Canaan at the urging of the two faithful spies.

They did have presumption when God told them they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years and then they tried to enter, presuming they would now do what God had previously wanted them to do.

Other examples?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

Vision for Come and Reason: We have found a building that will work for our ministry and have the building under contract to purchase and are now in the process of doing the various due diligence. If all the inspections, appraisals etc. work out then we will obtain the property and after than have to renovate the interior for our purposes.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

New Member's Section is now open, including a New Discussion, *The Remedy* audio book, *Could It Be This Simple?* audio book, and just added, Stone's Of Eden's new music album, Hilasterion, by Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, They have graciously donated their album to our ministry to share with members those who love this message.

Brad wrote:

> I had always wanted to create an album that would tell the bible story that could be used to target believers as well as non believers. I had attempted a few false starts and the idea didn't really go anywhere apart from a few sketchy iPhone recordings.
>
> I then read *Journal of the Watcher* and loved the story and was blown away by the illustrations, this book gave me the context and frame work to get my album idea up and running, and with the covid19 fiasco, the impetus to hurry up and get this idea done.
>
> So my wife and I wrote the songs and started recording the album which took approximately 12 months.

When I read *The God-Shaped Brain*, I came across the word *Hilasterion*, and remember thinking that would make a great album name—that was years ago, funnily reading that word from Tim's book became our album name. Jesus is our Hilasterion who brings reconciliation and makes peace.

So long story short this album had a lot of it inspiration/influence via Come and Reason Ministries. The album tells the story of the war in heaven and finishes with Parousia , the king is coming, divided in 3 section themes 1. Old Testament, 2. Jesus' ministry, 3. Contemporary influence.

SHARING campaign June: *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 3
The Roots of Restlessness

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The memory text is James 3:16, let's read James 3:16-18 from the *Good News Translation*

> Where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is also disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy. And goodness is the harvest that is produced from the seeds the peacemakers plant in peace (Jas 3:16–18 GNT).

Do you hear a contrast between the principles of the world (the principles of sinfulness) and the principles or wisdom of God?

How would you describe that difference?

Is there a causal relationship between jealousy/selfishness and disorder/evil?

What is evil—in every culture of the world, evil, at its root, is defined the same, regardless of a belief in God or not, regardless of religion or not—what is evil?

Evil is exploiting others for selfish gain. It is not seeking success for self—that is not considered evil (remember the Bible says we are to covet earnestly the best gifts 1 Co 12:31 KJV). Evil is seeking success for self through means that take advantage or exploit others. For instance:

- Cheating in school so you get a scholarship would be considered evil as it advances you through falsehood and takes a resource away from the person who did not cheat and would have received the scholarship had cheating not occurred. However, it is not considered evil to get the scholarship through honest application and hard work even though others who also worked hard didn't get it because you had higher grades.
- Spreading lies about a competitor's product to ruin their reputation so you can gain market share is considered evil. However, making a better product, or working harder in marketing your product which gains market share is not considered evil.
- Passing laws that give advantage to some while denying others the equal opportunity, such as Jim Crow laws, would be considered evil. Creating laws the ensure equal opportunity for all people to apply themselves is not considered evil.

This definition exposes two antagonistic principles—love, which protects others seeks to benefit others, and selfishness or the survival drive which seeks to advance or protect self even at the expense of others.

What is the emotional basis that drives jealousy and selfishness? Fear—fear of death, injury, failure, rejection, not being good enough, not being esteemed enough, fear of inadequacy.

What is it that casts out all fear? Love, from where does such love come?

The fear we are talking about is the fear of sin, of selfishness, it is not the startle response you get when a car swerves into your lane—that is an alert mechanism. It is not the fear of heights, that is a wired warning measure.

The fear that causes evil is the fear of being inadequate, fear of not being good enough, fear of not being loved, of being rejected, being defective, being guilty, shameful, fear of failure, fear of not surviving that leads one to see others as enemies, as competitors, as opponents to be defeated so you can get ahead, rather than seeing others as loved family members who have their own fears, insecurities, weakness and struggles and who need our love, encouragement, support and friendship.

When we experience others through the lens of common brotherhood the various differences become irrelevant and we grow stronger together. Can anyone think of an example from our society in which people from all different cultures and backgrounds and races and religions come together and form friendships, cohesive, life-changing and life-trusting relationships? The US military.

In the US military, units are formed with people of all races, all religious backgrounds, various political views, different beliefs about the environment. But, in training and in combat they unite around their shared and common values—of respect for each other as Americans, the principles of liberty, the value of respecting the other's individuality, and they grow to love the other person. Bonds of real friendship form—the bonds of brotherhood. We call this morale, or cohesion and it is these bonds of love that overcome fear and allow military units to succeed in the face of real life-threatening dangers. It is the only power that consistently overcomes the inherent fear of combat and causes people to put themselves in danger, to sacrifice self and not flee.

If you wanted to ruin a military, undermine their strength, make them less capable of succeeding in their mission and thereby undermine and weaken a nation—what strategy might you use?

- You could equip them poorly
- You could educate and train them poorly
- You could infect them with biological agents to get them sick so they couldn't function
- But you could also infect their minds and hearts with ideas that break down morale and cohesion, ideas that would prevent the bonds of brotherhood from forming.

Is there anything like that happening in both society and the military and if we are not careful in the church today? Yes, Critical Race Theory—this is a corrosive and racist philosophy that undermines unity, cohesion, morale and incites bigotry, prejudice, jealousy, and inflames selfishness.

But in Christ it is not to be this way. Jesus praying to His Father right before His crucifixion, looks through the corridors of time and prays for you and me. He prays:

> I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that **all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe** that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, **that they may be one as we are one:** I in them and you in me. **May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me** (Jn 17:20–23 NIV84).

It is through our unity in Christ, one on common values, love for God and each other, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality—this is how we reveal that we are part of God's family!

Paul wrote:

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus** (Ga 3:26–28 NIV84).

Who do you think is behind a philosophy that divides, increases jealousy, inflames selfishness and undermines love and cohesion?

From where does fear come? Two sources—lies believed break the circle of love and trust—broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness.

So, the first source is believing lies that lead to fear and selfishness. But fear and selfishness lead to acts of sin, acts of seeking to protect self at the expense of others, the survival drives and this causes more fear and more selfishness.

Once we commit an act of sin, we have more fear, fear of getting caught, fear of being punished, fear of being rejected, fear of not being loved and therefore we seek to increase our security, to make our fear go down and if we don't repent, if we don't experience God's love in our hearts healing us so that we seek the best for others, then the only means left to make ourselves feel better is what?

- More lies! We tell ourselves "it wasn't me it was the woman you gave me; I deserved that; it isn't evil; sin is an outdated term; well at least my sin isn't as bad as those priests who molest children; they deserved it…"
- We seek to gain more physical or political or economic power in order to both protect ourselves, be a greater threat to those we fear, and to force others to comply with our views and agree with our lies—all so that we can avoid the truth, because the truth convicts and brings fear to the unrepentant. So, the unrepentant, the evil, need to ban free speech as truth exposes lies; they will seek to censor others because they are afraid of free speech, afraid of those who speak the truth because their lies cannot stand up to the truth. If the liars cannot shout down the truth-speakers, then the liars seek to take away the truth-tellers opportunity to speak; they

remove their channels or remove them by imprisoning them or even killing them. They will seek to remove their influence by labeling them with the vilest allegations—racist, bigot, child-murderer, or, as they did Jesus, crazy or demon possessed—conspiracy nut. The Dark Ages Church did this to all who stood up for truth and so is the anti-God political parties in the US today

- Watch for these methods. Those who don't follow Jesus, who don't practice God's methods will always end up attacking people, they will write blogs about people or make videos about people attacking the messenger with various allegations. They do this because their message can't stand up to the truth. The true followers of God don't do this, they present the truth in love and leave others free. So our ministry attack lies, not liars; we attack falsehoods not falsifiers; we attack selfishness, not the selfish; we attack fear, not the fearful. As Paul said,

  > For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2Cor 10:3-5 NIV84). [We demolish the lies, the falsehood, the pretensions, we do not attack the people. Those who attack others, who accuse others, are not acting as Jesus would act. Recognize it; don't fall into it.}

- But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9 NIV84).

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 10:34-39:

> "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn
>
> > " 'a man against his father,
> > a daughter against her mother,
> > a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—
> > a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'
>
> "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10:34-39 NIV84).

thoughts?

Read second paragraph, "Matthew 10:35-39 is really…" What do you think about this idea that honoring our parents is a legal requirement?

What law lens does it sound like they are advancing?

How many of you honor your parents because it is a legal requirement? How many parents want their children to honor you because it is a legal requirement?

Does making the commandment a legal requirement enhance or undermine God's kingdom? Does it enhance or obstruct the actually honoring of our parents?

If a person hates their parent in their heart, but on the surface acts in ways that appears they are honoring their parent, in order to keep the law, because it is a legal requirement and the law is all about behavior—what actually happens in the heart, mind and character of such a person? They solidify the character of a liar and a fraud. This type of teaching actually injures souls and obstructs the plan of salvation!

Man looks on the outward appearance the Lord looks on the heart. God's primary concern is about the character, the heart, the mind, not the behavior. Behaviors are always secondary, never primary. But the imposed law lie has people focus on behavior, irrespective of the heart.

The lesson also introduces a point that many get confused upon, "if that love would trump the hearer's commitment to Jesus, it required a tough decision."

Can we love anyone, genuinely, with godly love, without God's love in our hearts? No! Fallen humanity is not capable of generating actual love, we can only receive God's love and share that love with others as we are loved by God.

To the degree anyone lives out real love for another, it is *always* a manifestation of God working in their heart via the Holy Spirit, regardless of that person's claimed belief in God or not.

Thus, when we have God's love in our heart and we live out that love, we will never love others in a way that denies God. Any action that denies God under the idea of love is not godly love, it is a counterfeit to love.

The term love has many nuanced meanings. In the Greek there are multiple words for love, but in English we have one word and we confuse the different types of love all the time.

- A person can love their car or love their house or love certain colors or foods. This is not godly love—other-centered love.
    - This is an expression of pleasure, of personal enjoyment or preference in one's experiences in the things of life.

        - This is our hearts affections, what we cherish. It can be selfish or not. God wants us to love life, to experience pleasure and joy in "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8 NIV84). So if we cherish things that draw us closer to God, and it is their connection to God that makes them valuable to us, then such love of things is not evil.
        - But this can also be selfish when these things become a source of our security, our worth, our identity, and we value things over God and people, and when we will deny God and exploit people to get things that we love, that make us feel better, and not to lose them.
    - So we must love God more than things.
- Another type of love is erotic love, these emotions of attraction, of desire to *have* another person physically is not godly love. It is a corruption of God's design in which love seeks to uplift and bring pleasure and joy to another, not get pleasure and joy from another.
    - Physical arousal and attraction are absolutely part of God's design, but when it becomes primary, when it is no longer the pleasure of bringing joy to another, but what one can get for self, then it is not love. And erotic love in our society is not godly love, it is pleasure seeking. And this type of love, of seeking for self, gets exploited selfishly through porn, sexual addictions, prostitution etc.
- Another type of love is, in the Greek *phileo* or brotherly love. This is the love we are to have for one another, our family members, but also our church family and human family—and is the love seen in the bonds of brotherhood in the military.
    - This is very close to godly love, but can also perverted by selfishness, in which people seek to fill a void in their heart through being loved by another human being, rather than God first. Thus they *need* others to "love" them in order to feel good about themselves; they need someone to find them attractive, to want them. The relationship isn't sought to give and uplift and love another, but to get from the other. It can be quite tricky to see because the needy person, in order to get accepted, to get the affirmation, validation, love they crave, will often abase themselves and do all kinds of self-injurious behavior just to be accepted. This is not driven by love for the other, but by fear for self and it is the most destructive counterfeit to love and is called co-dependency. If you haven't watched our lecture on Healthy Love versus Love Addiction, I would encourage you to do so.
    - Chapter 8 of my book *Could It Be This Simple?,* entitled Love's Counterfeits, is about this false-love and the last paragraph in that chapter contrasts the differences between a true love relationship and a dependent relationship. You can use this as a test to examine your relationships to determine if they are operating upon genuine godly love or are a fear-based counterfeit.
        - Godly love casts out fear—dependency is driven by fear and the need to make the fear go away.
        - Love is healing—dependency is destructive
        - Love is freeing—dependency is controlling
        - Love is interested in another—dependency is about self

    - Love is stable—dependency is unstable, chaotic
    - Love is fearless—fear ridden
- Then there is agape love, godly love, the love that cares for another more than self, the love that sacrifice self to protect others. The love that gets out of a foxhole and runs into danger to save a friend. The love of a mother running into traffic to save her child. This type of love is antagonistic to the survival drives, to me-first. This type of love casts out all fear.

So, the lesson's point out the need for hard decisions in deciding on whether we love God or our family. Well, if we practice godly love, loving God first and then apply His love to our actions to others, then all actions toward others will be intended for their eternal good. It is when we allow our feelings, our fear of rejection, our fear of loss, our fear of what another will think, the false belief that we are responsible for what others think, or how they will react to impact our decisions that we find confusion over love for God and others.

When we need others to like us, approve of us, validate us in order for us to function, to feel whole, then we have placed others in the place in our hearts where God should be and will deny God in order to keep attached to the other. Further, we will fail to actually love the other because fear of losing them will cause us to compromising living and speaking the truth in love and setting healthy boundaries.

There is a natural transition from childhood to adulthood. In childhood, the child will naturally listen to and follow the parent, even if the parent is leading against God's will. But, as the child matures, they will go through separation individuation in which their heart, mind, individuality separates and individuates from their parents. They will form their own identity be able to grant their parents permission to think differently, so the adult child can stand for truth and tolerate the rejection of their parent. This is what God wants, for each person to mature and come to know Him for themselves and to have His law written in the heart.

So, Matthew 10:34-39, from *The Remedy:*

> Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family.
>
> "Those who love parental approval more than they love me are untrustworthy of me and the Remedy I bring; and those who love the approval of their children more than me are untrustworthy of me and the Remedy I bring. Anyone who refuses to die to selfishness and follow me — loving others more than self — cannot be trusted by me to distribute the Remedy I bring. Whoever seeks to save self remains infected with selfishness and will die of their unhealed condition, but whoever surrenders self in love to me will experience healing of heart, and will find eternal life" (Matthew 10:34-39 *The Remedy)*

Do we see similar struggles in society today as people have not formed their identities upon God, and thus have a terrible loss of sense of self, and desperately need to be validated by others? They live in fear of rejection, of what others think of criticism and go along with all kinds of distortions in order to be accepted?

MONDAY

Read the first paragraph, "As in the case of aspen…" Is there an expression of sin that is not selfish? Well there are results of sin in the world that are not acts of selfishness, like a person being born blind, or all nature groaning under the weight of sin—but all these results of sin are a result of selfishness even if they are not acts of selfishness.

Is there any sin that is not selfish?

Consider these historic quotes—do you agree or disagree?

> **All sin is selfishness. Satan's first sin was a manifestation of selfishness**. He sought to grasp power, to exalt self. **A species of insanity led him to seek to supersede God**. And the temptation that led Adam to sin was Satan's declaration that it was possible for man to attain to something more than he already enjoyed, possible for him to be as God Himself. **The sowing of seeds of selfishness in the human heart was the first result of the entrance of sin into the world. God desires every one to understand the evil of selfishness**, and to co operate with Him in guarding the human family against its terrible, deceptive powers. **The design of the gospel is to confront this evil** by means of remedial missionary work, and to destroy its destructive power by establishing enterprises of benevolence. WB September 9, 1902, par. 3
>
> There is a great work to be done for many of us. Our minds and characters must become as the mind and character of Christ. **Selfishness is inwrought in our very being. It has come to us as an inheritance, and has been cherished by many as a precious treasure**. No special work for God can be accomplished until self and selfishness are overcome. To many everything connected with themselves is of great importance. Self is a center, around which everything seems to revolve. {Historical Sketches 138.7}
>
> **At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face**. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown. {DA 57.2}

The lesson points us to the story in Luke 12:

> Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
> Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk 12:13–15 NIV84).

Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the rich fool who built bigger barns for his wealth only to die.

There are some very powerful lessons in this story and parable, what are they?

First, what law lens are we reading the Bible through and understanding life through?

Did the man who approached Jesus believe an injustice had happened to him? Did he want justice to be done?

But what law lens did this person seek to get Jesus to use to give him justice? What did he want Jesus to do?

- The man wanted Jesus to make a ruling—what kind of law requires a judge to make a ruling? Human law, imposed law.
- And what kind of law is property law? It is imposed, made up human law.
- And what did Jesus say to him? He was not appointed as judge. He didn't come to administer imposed law, to make legal rulings!

Jesus didn't come to the earth to take up a legal issue, and He uses this encounter to again expose the difference between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. The man wanted a legal ruling, but Jesus said that a legal ruling wasn't what he needed nor what Jesus had come to do.

What was needed? A change to the actual condition of the man's heart. These two brothers cared more for property than they did for one another. Jesus wanted to restore love into their hearts, to bring them out of this world's kingdom that seeks to get for self and into the kingdom of God, which seeks to give to others. He made it plain that it doesn't matter how much earthly wealth one accumulates, if the heart is not healed then all is lost.

This sinful world focuses on self – our rights, our privileges, our inheritance. We want a ruling by someone in authority – a judge, an umpire, a referee, a magistrate, a pastor, a CDC official. We want someone to make a ruling, tell us the answer, to decide for us. But Jesus said He was here to change hearts, not act as judge. He said:

> As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For

> I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it (John 12:47–49 NIV84).

There is a judge, and it is not Jesus. Rather, the judge is "that very word," the truth, reality itself. Sheep are sheep, and goats are goats; wheat is wheat, and weeds are weeds. A judge doesn't make a sheep a sheep or a goat a goat; they are what they are. Reality is the judge. Those who reject the words of Jesus – the truth – retain lies about God; they refuse to trust Him and, therefore, they harden themselves in selfishness and fear. They solidify themselves into evil people who hate love, truth, and freedom.

But those who love the truth that Jesus reveals reject the lies of Satan and are won back to trust in God; they open their hearts and experience the indwelling Spirit and have God's design protocol for life – His living law – written upon their hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10). They are transformed and healed.

Too many people today are jealous of another's possession, envious of someone else's achievements, covetous of some other's station, and they want someone in authority to pass laws to ensure they get what they think is their fair share—and there is a name for this perversity—it is called equity. Equity is the application of external power to arbitrarily force outcomes to be of a certain result, regardless of reality, ability, achievement. Equity is not equality—equity—is the catch phrase of the liars, the jealous, those who are warring against the principles of God's kingdom. Be very clear on this. God is not about equity—God is about equality—God's laws impact all people equally. But people do not choose to live in harmony with God's law equally. You CANNOT get equitable outcomes with unequal actions—equity is a philosophy based entirely on fraud, deceit, and lies.

We must be careful that we are not like this jealous and selfish brother. We don't want to hear Jesus say to us, "You fool!" We don't want to be tricked by Satan, tempted by fear and selfishness, into exchanging the riches of God's kingdom – which is a heart that loves, one that is true, one that respects the individuality and freedoms of others, one that values what God values – for the meager baubles of this world.

TUESDAY

The lesson points to the dangers of selfish ambition and directs our attention to the disciples vying for who would be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom.

Read third paragraph, "Conversion is foundational…" this is well said. Notice what the lesson said, "We experience a transformation of our values and ambitions." This is the heart of salvation—transformation of character, renewal of heart, recreation of the inner person, death to fear and selfishness and arising to a new life of love as Jesus indwells the heart.

This is not legal—it is actual! This is righteousness by faith!

The lesson points out that after 3.5 years with Jesus the disciples were still struggling with this selfish ambition in their hearts and this is a very sad commentary on the human heart.

But, what changed the disciples? What finally broke through and resulted in their heart transformation? Was it:

- Finding the right Bible quotes and reading them? (though there is nothing wrong with memorizing Bible passages)
- Was it a threat of punishment?
- Was it realizing they were in legal trouble for their selfish attitudes?
- Was it a rule—a new commandment, you are to love one another and once they had that new rule it fixed their hearts?
- Was it the truth and love of God revealed at the cross? The truth about God's character and methods of love, contrasted with the methods of the world—fear and selfishness, power over, force, intimidation, versus "Father forgive them they don't know what they are doing."
    - Did the cross convict them? Did the revelation of Jesus cause them to realized that they were harboring the same motives of selfishness that the Jews and Romans acted upon in crucifying Christ? I submit it was the Cross that revealed to them the love of God and the sickness of sin in them, and they wanted the selfishness and fear out of their hearts. They wanted to be changed, they fell down and were converted and their hearts were changed.
- The only power to free us from fear and selfishness is the power of truth and love, the Spirit of God working in the heart to win us with the evidence of truth and the outworking of love.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "A hypocrite is somebody…" Was Jesus trying to publicly shame them? Do you see it that Jesus was seeking to humiliate them, or is this the final act of grace from Jesus for them before His crucifixion? Was this Jesus giving them the strongest presentation of truth, the clearest description of their condition, and the most accurate diagnosis of their problem in order to give them one more opportunity at repentance, healing and salvation?

Also, notice Jesus speaks to them as a group, not to them individually. He is speaking of their methods and describes their actions; thus He is not saying every Pharisee is like this, consider Nicodemus, or Joseph of Arimathea. He is saying those who practice these methods, who act in this way are, and each individual would have to consider whether this applies to them or not. It is not the same as saying, "Pastor Joe, you are a hypocrite…" etc. It was not a personal attack nor an action designed to humiliate or shame, but an exposure of methods designed to convict and lead to repentance and also to stand as a witness down the generations for all people to examine themselves so we don't fall into the same trap.

Let's read Matthew 23, starting in verse 13 from *The Remedy:*

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! [Why did I paraphrase it this way? Most translations have “Woe to you” what is woe? grief, distress, affliction. So, Jesus is saying they will be afflicted and distressed. What law lens? If we have design law we understand that deviating from God’s design only brings pain, suffering, distress, affliction—thus the only future they will have who do this is a miserable one.] Your false teachings obstruct people from being healed and entering God's kingdom of love. You certainly are not healed and do not enter into salvation, but worse still, you actively work to prevent others, who want to be saved, from being healed.

14 Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You con widows from their homes, yet you make public displays of praying long prayers. Unhealed you choose to remain! Your suffering will be most severe. [Why will their suffering be severe? From where does their suffering come? Under Satan’s lie about God’s law the suffering comes as a legal infliction from God upon law breakers. But the truth of God’s kingdom is that breaking God’s law injures those who refuse God’s healing and the only possible result is suffering and death]

15 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You go around the world trying to convert one person, and when you do, you indoctrinate them so deeply into your false penal system that they become twice as much the child of lies and selfishness as you are.

16 "Misery is yours, you irrational and unthinking teachers! Unbelievably, you say: 'If anyone swears by the temple, it doesn't count; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, then they are bound by the oath.'17 You make no sense at all! Think about it: Which is truly most important–the gold, or the temple that makes the gold holy?18 Another of your sayings is: 'If anyone swears by the altar, it doesn't count; but if anyone swears by the gift on the altar then they are bound by the oath.'19 You don't understand the simplest truths! Think about it: Which is truly most important–the gift, or the altar that makes the gift holy?20 Don't you get it? The one who swears by the altar swears by it and everything on it.21 And whoever swears by the temple, swears by it and by the One whose dwelling place it is.22And oaths sworn before heaven are promises made before God’s throne; and the One who sits on it knows the true intent of the heart. [Do you see the contrast between imposed law and design law? The religious leaders embraced the lie that God’s law is imposed, made up rules like humans make. And just like lawyers always do they find loopholes, or applications that are inconsistent or even contradictory. Jesus is making it plan that God reads the intent of the heart—it doesn’t matter what you swear by, the attitude of the heart is what matters and not ritual, no oath, no place, or material can change the heart. It is about reality of character or heart, not public pretense or proclamation.]

23 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You keep rules, such as proudly paying a pre-tax tithe and even giving a tenth of the herbs in your garden, but you fail to do what actually matters–to live in harmony with God’s Law, which is his design for life. You fail to ‘do what is right because it is right.’ You are not

merciful but judgmental and critical, and you cannot be trusted to protect those struggling with sin. You should have lived lives of love for others, without neglecting the simple instructions of God.24 You are truly irrational and unthinking teachers! You are so focused on keeping the rules — such as dietary laws — that you fail to understand that their purpose is to promote health. You're so confused that you actually think it would be a virtue to die of starvation rather than eat something not on the 'approved' list.

25 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You work so hard to make yourselves look good on the outside, but the inside–the heart–is full of selfishness, arrogance, and greed.26 You truly don't understand anything about God's kingdom! The mind, the character, the heart — they all must be cleansed first, and then the outside will also be clean.

27 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You are like highly polished burial vaults: they look beautiful on the outside, but inside are nothing but the bones of the dead, and everything that defiles.28 You are just like that. On the outside you appear to people as good and righteous, but on the inside you are full of lies, selfishness, and evil. You are great counterfeits!

29 "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You go to great lengths to give praise and honor to God's spokespersons and church leaders of the past.30 You say, 'If we would have lived back then, we would never have rejected God's spokespersons or joined those who killed them.' 31 By such claims you condemn yourselves, because you acknowledge such actions are wrong, yet by your actions today you reveal you are the true descendants of those who murdered God's spokespersons. You're just like them32 and your sins pile on top of the sins of your forefathers! [In the SDA church, how many leaders say if they would have been at the 1888 GC they wouldn't have rejected the righteousness by faith message, while they go right on teaching the penal/legal lie of declared righteous even though we are not!]

33 "You slippery serpents! You brood of venomous vipers! You think you can cure yourselves with your own snake oil?34 It's because of your false remedy — your penal legal trickery — that I am sending my spokespersons, instructors and Bible scholars, some of whom you will attack, kill, and crucify; others you will beat–some physically, some verbally–right in church, running them out of town with beatings and the most vicious gossip.35 The pure and holy lives that have been sacrificed through history — from Abel, all the way through to Zechariah the son of Berekiah, who was murdered right in church, at the altar — testify the truth to you.36 But the sad truth is that this generation will reject all this evidence.
37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you sick and hard-hearted people who have rejected the Remedy, killed God's spokespersons, and stoned those sent to you with the cure! How my heart has longed to pull you to safety, like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me.38 Look around: I leave your house to you abandoned without Remedy, and infected without cure.39 For I tell you plainly, when you see me next, you will say: 'He is the One sent by God to reveal God's true character and provide the Remedy.'"

THURSDAY

The lesson rightly points out that overcoming restlessness always begins with Jesus! And asks us to read John 14:1-7:

From *The Remedy:*

> "Don't let fear and doubt trouble your hearts. Put your full trust in God and trust me too. 2 In my Father's home, there is room for all who want to be there; if this were not true, I would have told you. I am going there to direct all my Father's resources who are not only preparing heaven for you, but also preparing you for heaven.[Do you think I have introduced something unintended by Jesus or is this truth that Jesus intended?] 3 And when all things are ready, I will come back and take everyone who has been brought back into unity with the principles of heaven to be there with me, so that we may all be together. 4 You now know the way to the place where I am going."
>
> 5 Thomas was confused and said, "But Lord, we don't know where you are going, or how to get there, so how can we know the way?"
>
> 6 Jesus answered gently, "I am the Way back to my Father, I am the Truth revealing my Father's character and the principles upon which life is based, I am the Source of all life. I am the Bridge, and no one comes to the Father except through me–because all truth revealing the Father has been provided by me. 7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well, for the Father and I are One. From now on, you do know him and have seen him, for I am the Father's thoughts made visible and audible."

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: We have found a building that will work for our ministry and have the building under contract to purchase and hope to close in the next week or so, then we will have to do renovations.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so. We also are resistant to going into debt, so we are quite cautious and have already turned down a couple of options because the cost would have required significant debt.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the right property and bless the process that any resources we use will be spent wisely and most economically.

NEW RESOURCE SOUTH AFRICA: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

It is our prayer that this will be a blessing to many to enlighten their minds to see the truth about God.

Special Baker Books has made the digital version of ***The God Shaped Heart*** available for a short time for $1.99 for either Kindle readers on Amazon or Nooks at Barnes and Noble.

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SHARING campaign: We have just completed a 12 month sharing campaign and want to thank all of you for requesting our resources and sharing them in your community. If you get any feedback on the impact on how the resources are received, please email us and let us know.

We are now pausing our sharing campaign to focus on closing on a property and then renovating it. Our plan is to continue free give aways on a quarterly basis. We have some new products in the development pipeline.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 4
The Cost of Rest

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph, "David saw…" The lesson brings up two kinds of laws: Human imposed laws—David, the king, didn't have to follow the rules that governed everyone else—i.e. the law of the land, but he was not above God's law, what does this mean?

- Why isn't David above God's law?
- Is it because God sent Nathan to confront Him, God is keeping a record and God knows and God won't let David get away with it?
- Why did God send Nathan? Was it to enforce the law?
- Or was it because David was already suffering and didn't know it and God sent Nathan to save David, to heal David, to bring David to repentance?

The lesson is quite correct in pointing out the difference between human law and God's law. These two law types are the root difference between God's government and Satan's government. The two types of law are the key to rightly understanding the Bible, God's methods, character, principles and actions. When we replace God's law with Satan's imposed law lie, then we misunderstand the Bible and misrepresent God.

Read the next paragraph, "Indeed, the law is there as a protection…" Was David's only problem that Bathsheba got pregnant, the affair became public knowledge, and this caused the problems? If Bathsheba had not gotten pregnant, no one found out about the affair, his family didn't rebel then would David have gotten away with it?

What is the problem with committing adultery—is it a legal problem or does the action itself do something to the adulterer? What does it do?

From my book *The God-Shaped Heart* p. 241-249:

> **King David**
>
> Consider the lessons from the life of King David. Early in his life, he experienced incredible victories over a lion and in single combat with the giant Goliath. Yet later, he suffered crushing defeat with Bathsheba and Uriah.
>
> - How could David have such singular victories with the lion and Goliath only to fail so horribly with Bathsheba?
> - Was the defect in David's character that was revealed in his actions with Bathsheba not present within him when he faced the lion and Goliath?

- Or was that defect there, in his heart, at those earlier times in his life but simply not yet fully exposed and therefore not yet removed?
- What was the most significant difference about the situation David faced with the lion and Goliath when compared to Bathsheba?
- Would objective reality with the lion and Goliath provide David with confidence in his own human ability to defeat them, or were both those situations beyond David's innate ability to handle?
- Were they the types of situations that would almost automatically cause David to look outside of himself for help, to seek another power to overcome, to not trust in himself and thus turn to God? In those situations David did indeed trust in God and not in his own strength.

Throughout much of David's life, he found himself in situations when his own human strength was not sufficient for the task—not only with Goliath and the lion but also a bear, years of running from Saul, and in combat with enemies. Each of these situations instinctively caused him to reach out to God for help. As the old saying goes, "There are no atheists in foxholes."

But when David saw Bathsheba bathing below his balcony, he was in a different place. David was now king. He was in a position of authority, power, apparent control, safety, security, and wealth. He was a beloved and popular ruler. Perhaps David thought he could handle it. He didn't need God for this. This situation was in his ability to manage. (This is likely the reason God instructed him not to take a census, because David would be tempted to believe his strength was in his spearmen, infantry, bowmen, and cavalry and forget his true strength had always been in God.) But this is when David's hold on God collapsed. This is when selfishness took control of David's heart.

- Did the selfishness manifested in David when he took Bathsheba suddenly originate at this point in his life for the first time?
- Or was this selfishness always within David, but it wasn't until this time, when trials, challenges, and tribulations seemed in the past, that David was most vulnerable to its corrupting influence breaking out into the open.
- What was necessary for David to be saved? To be reborn, to die to self, to have a new heart and right spirit re-created within—to be healed in the inner man!
- When do you think this ultimate conversion experience happened for David? Wasn't it after his failure with Bathsheba, after Nathan confronted him?

It was then that David finally understood that he had a terminal condition of heart with which he was born and that he could not change. He needed God to heal and transform him from within. **His action with Bathsheba wasn't the problem, it was the manifestation, the outward symptom of a problem deep within that, if not removed, would ultimately destroy him.** When David realizes his true condition, he doesn't seek a legal solution. He doesn't perform rituals. He finally understands reality and writes Psalm 51. Reading this psalm through the lens of design law, David's amazing wisdom comes into stunning clarity.

[1]*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.*

From where do you think David wants his sin blotted out—recorded history or his heart, mind, and character? [if David wanted his sin blotted out of recorded history, then he sure didn't get that prayer answered since it was recorded in Scripture for every generation to read about.]

[2]Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

He realizes something is wrong within his heart that needs purifying.

[3]For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
[4]Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

He acknowledges his condition is terminal and that he cannot run from it; no matter where he goes he carries his sinful self there. God's diagnosis of his terminal condition is perfectly accurate.

[5]Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

He realizes this problem has been within him his entire life. He was born this way, infected with fear and selfishness.

[6]Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

He understands that what God wants is to heal what is broken in his heart and mind.

[7]Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

He acknowledges that only God has the healing solution. Only the Creator can re-create him back to God's original intent. [And using the symbols of the sanctuary service here is evidence that the sanctuary service was just symbolic of cleansing the heart and David understood that that old system didn't save but merely taught the deeper lessons.]

[8]Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
[9]Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

He is asking to be renewed, to have the crushing guilt and shame taken out of his heart, to be glad again, and to have fear and selfishness blotted out of his character so that he can one day see God face to face

[10]Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

He again acknowledges his need and desire for God to heal his heart, change his motives, and renew his mind so that they operate upon other-centered love.

[11]Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

He acknowledges God's presence is where he wants to be, and only the Holy Spirit can fix what is broken inside and enable him to stand in God's presence.

[12]*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

He asks for the joy of healing and strength to stay compliant with God's treatment plan.

[13]*Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.*

He acknowledges the responsibility and privilege to share God's remedy with others dying of the same condition.

[14]*Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*

He specifically requests to have his heart healed from murder, from willingness to kill another child of God, and knows such freedom results in rejoicing and praise. [He isn't asking for merely the guilt to go away for the murder, but to remove the motives that led him to murder.]

[15]*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.*

He acknowledges that his natural heart cannot even praise God, but all praise is the outflow of God's healing love transforming him.

[16]*You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*

He recognizes that rituals are meaningless, and God doesn't want them.

[17]*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

He realizes God wants the healing and restoration of his children back into harmony with him—his design of love—his protocols of life.

[18]*In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem.*

He asks God to make his helpers effective in revealing the truth and distributing the remedy to the world.

[19]*Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

He understands that if Israel rightly represents God, then the rituals will be effective teaching tools to help people open their hearts and minds to experience the genuine remedy—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

All through Scripture the message is the same. Humankind is infected with fear and selfishness (sin), which is deviant from God's design for life and is a terminal condition (dead in trespasses and sin). God is working through Christ to heal each person, restoring in them God's heart of love! This is what God is seeking to achieve in each of us—complete transformation of heart.

The Question Legal Theologies Cannot Answer

Design law, love in the heart, heals and removes confusion and misunderstanding, but imposed law injures and obscures. If you have friends stuck in imposed-law constructs, ask them this question: When did sexual relations between David and Bathsheba no longer constitute sin for David? This question has no right answer for those operating at level four and below. Every answer they provide is flawed. The following are typical level four answers:

- When he repented. But isn't repentance turning away from one's sinful behavior? Did David turn away from Bathsheba or to her?
- When God legally forgave and pardoned. Does that mean if a person today has a sin problem, for example, adultery or pornography, that once they ask God for forgiveness they can continue with ongoing adultery or pornography and it is no longer sin?
- When David married her. Is God's law superseded by human culture and tradition? Is polygamy not a violation of God's law even when local customs accept it? If today a Christian moved to a country where polygamy is legal, would it be acceptable to have more than one wife? Or would it still violate God's law to do so?

Sinful humanity (and level four thinking) looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). The issue is not primarily the behavior but the motivation of the heart. The relationship between David and Bathsheba was sinful when it was motivated by selfishness in the heart. It was selfishness that caused David to commit adultery. It was selfishness that caused David to murder Uriah—and all of this was sinful.

However, after David was confronted by Nathan, he had a true change of heart motive. He died to self, love replaced selfishness in his heart, and he wrote Psalm 51. With a heart that genuinely loved others more than self, David's motivation was no longer to exploit Bathsheba for his own pleasure but instead to heal and restore to her what his selfishness had taken from her. And what had he taken from her? By his adultery and the murder of her husband, David had taken her name, reputation, station, livelihood, property, and home, and she likely would have ended up homeless and perhaps a prostitute. David had also taken away the one who loved and cherished her, the one who adored her and poured love into her life. The only way, in that society, that David could restore to her what he had taken was to marry her and genuinely love her.

This is real repentance, not merely turning away from a behavior but turning away from the selfishness in the heart and living a life of love. The penal theologies, based on level four

thinking and focused on the bad deed, would have added injury to injury by demanding that David turn his back on Bathsheba and abandon her to a devastated life. But love heals, love restores.

Those at level four also misunderstand the death of the child from David and Bathsheba's first pregnancy. The imposed-law view alleges this story is another example of God punishing sin—God killing the infant to punish David. Not so! We must remember Israel at that time was functioning in the role of God's actors to display God's plan to heal and restore from sin (1 Cor. 4:9; see chap.10 above). David, as king, was on center stage. The eyes of the world have been reviewing his life for millennia. The child that failed to survive (who was born with some condition that was not consistent with life, some congenital defect that caused death) was the product of selfishness. This is an exact object lesson: selfishness does not bring life; selfishness violates God's design for life and results in death. However, when love rules in the heart, then life, health, and wisdom occur. After David's heart was transformed, he and Bathsheba had a child born of love—Solomon—blessed with the wisdom of God!

MONDAY

The lesson asks why Nathan told a story to David before confronting his sin? It was a communication tool to help bring David to conviction, to get past David's own fear-based defenses and denial.

Why does David say his sin was against God? Because David betrayed God. God had been faithful to David. God had:

- delivered David from Saul
- given David victory over Goliath
- delivered David from the lion and bear
- protected David in multiple combat operations
- chosen David to be king and given David the country
- given him health, wealth, power, fame, intelligence

And David was God's representative and David misrepresented God, betrayed the trust God placed in Him in this situation. David's first loyalty and responsibility and friendship was to God and David only sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah because he first walked away from his loyalty to God.

TUESDAY

The lesson title is **Forgiven and Forgotten?** Read first paragraph, "After David had…" When does God extend forgiveness, before or after repentance?

Does God need Jesus in order to extend forgiveness to forgive us from His heart?

If Jesus didn't die would God have an unforgiving attitude, would He refuse to forgive us?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Does Jesus' death do something to get God to forgive us?

Another way to ask it, which came first, God's forgiveness or Jesus' death?

If God forgives us without Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, then why did Jesus have to die for our salvation?

Let me be clear—**Jesus' death as our Savior, as our substitute, was an absolute requirement to save human beings from sin**—yet it was not a requirement to get the Father to forgive us.

So, again, if God forgives without Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, and yet we couldn't be saved without Jesus' death, then why did Jesus have to die?

Because salvation is not legal issue, Jesus death wasn't needed for forensic, legal reason because sin is not a legal problem. Sin is a problem with our state of being—namely we are out of harmony with God and God's design laws for life. We are dead in trespass and sin. In other words, we have a terminal condition and salvation requires a remedy to that condition. It requires the remedy be procured and that trust be established so the dying will take the remedy.

Thus, Jesus' death was necessary to destroy the lies of Satan about God and restore us to trust, and also to procure the remedy that heals us—which is a perfect, sinless, mature human character built upon the operational application of God's law by a human intelligence—Jesus. Jesus is our second Adam, the One who, with human abilities, was tempted in all points like us but without sin and who through the application of His power of choice destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light by restoring God's design law of love back into the humanity He assumed.

So, forgiveness—God forgives all, all are forgiven by God. But, all to not accept God's forgiveness. The kindness of God does not cause all to repent, all do not open their hearts to receive the forgiveness and love of God to be reborn, to partake of Jesus, to be recreated in heart, to have God's law written upon their hearts; so even though God forgives everyone, those who refuse to accept are not healed and remain in a state of unforgiveness. These would be evidenced in those who crucified Christ. Jesus forgave them, yet they didn't respond to His forgiveness and thus they remained, in heart, mind, character, unforgiven—hardened, selfish, eternally lost. thoughts?

So, understand, in God's kingdom forgiveness is about reality, about God being a forgiving God, but a God of truth and while God forgives all from His heart, God does not deny the sinner the ability to reject that forgiveness and remain unforgiven.

What about forgetting? Does forgiveness mean forgetting?

> "I, even I, am he who blots out
> your transgressions, for my own sake,
> and remembers your sins no more." Isa 43:25

"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more." Heb 8:12

What do these texts mean? Is this talking about memory erasure or something else?

- Can our angels read our Bibles? Do they know about David's sin with Bathsheba? How can they if it has been forgotten in heaven?
- What about in the new heaven and Earth, will we know each other? Will we know our mothers and fathers and spouses and children?
    - So consider when David, Bathsheba and Uriah are talking and up walks Solomon and says "Hi Mom!" What happens then?

- Misunderstand the judgment –
    - Under imposed law the judgment is judicial and sin are bad deeds that we do and the record of the deeds must be erased and memory must be purged so no one knows because if people knew they wouldn't trust us, or wouldn't like us and we would live in fear and insecurity so the penal lie teaches that the texts mean memory erasure.
    - Under design law though we realize that the deeds are the symptoms of sinfulness in the heart and mind and that sin is erased from the character, selfishness is purged from the heart, evil is eradicated from the mind, but we all remember the history of how we suffered in our own lives from sin before Jesus healed us and we are thankful for this.
        - It is like having a child with cancer—while they are sick we must focus on the cancer and make all the interventions necessary to put the cancer into remission. But once they are well, permanently well, we don't have to think about the cancer any more. But do we forget the doctor who cured her?
    - Mary Magdalene anoints Jesus feet
        - "those forgiven much love much"
    - Imagine being nominated to serve in children's department and someone says….
- So how do we understand those texts about not remembering?
    - Analogy of child who fibbed coming home "here comes that little liar…"
- One can safely "forget" ONLY when reconciliation has occurred

Consider this historic quote:

> Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. **Satan's own works have condemned him**. **God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated**. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created. . . . **The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness** that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. With all the facts of the great controversy in

view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." {Mar 346.2}

WEDNESDAY

In the middle of the lesson we read, “When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God’s presence (Gen 3:8). Why do you think David’s request, even after his sin, is so different?”

Was David’s response to his sin different than Adam and Eve’s? No, it wasn’t. Adam and Eve ran and hid because they were afraid, covered themselves with fig leaves and tried to make excuses.

David, when Bathsheba told him she was pregnant, ran and hid and tried to cover his sin with more sin, trickery, get Uriah to sleep with her, then murder.

But God came to Adam, gently, bringing Adam to realize God wasn’t his enemy and Adam repented and looked for the Savior.

God sent Nathan to David with a parable, which brought David to repentance and his heart was changed and he looked forward to the Savior.

So, there is no difference. Our natural selves always react to sin with fear—fear of punishment, death, reprisal, rejection, shame, guilt and we always seek to cover it up ourselves, to make excuses, to blame others.

It is only in relationship with God, experiencing God’s grace, God’s love, that the fear is overcome, that we open the heart and experience the Spirit renewing us with the motives of Christ.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “Probably the most natural…” What happens if we forget our past mistakes, our past stumbling, our past sins?

Multiple different philosophers have expressed this idea in a variety of ways: “Those who don’t know history, or forget the past, are doomed to repeat it.”

Is this true? Why is this true? It is only true because of design law, and the problem of sin—the law of sin and death, fear and selfishness.

It is not true that doing an experiment with certain chemicals in a lab, that if you lose your notes, forget the combination of steps, that you are doomed to repeat the exact same experiment. It is not true that if you forget the specific route you took on a long journey cross country, that if you travel again you are doomed to take the exact same route.

What is true is the law of God and what deviations from God's design law bring, the law of sin and death—every time because it is how reality works.

If we forget the principles of God, of truth, love, liberty, then in every case over time intolerance arises, abuse occurs, societies divide with elites rising to control assets, governments, religions and the masses are exploited and taken advantage of. This is what Satan's methods do—every time. History is clear, Satan's form of government is rulers who use power to dominate, control, take from others and inflict punishments upon those who don't comply. All kingdoms of this world are Satan's. God's kingdom is not of this world and operates upon design law, love, truth, liberty.

- Satan's form of government is opposed to God's. God is creator—Satan is a created being. God's law is design law; Satan's is imposed rules. God rules by love; Satan rules by fear and selfishness. God sacrifices self to uplift others; Satan sacrifices others to exalt himself.
    - Satan says he will ascend to the throne of God and rule over Isaiah 14
    - Jesus, who did not think equality with God was something to be grasped humbled himself into the form of a servant all the way to the cross in order to uplift others
- When Satan took Jesus to the mountain and tempted Jesus with the kingdoms of the world, how many kingdoms did Satan claim were his and did he offer to our Messiah? All of them—understand all the kingdoms of the world are Satan's. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were my followers would fight."
- Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of power over, of imposed law, of made up rules, of enforcement, of coercion, of dominance, which throughout all human history has always resulted in a few ruling elites dominating over and exploiting the masses.
    - The Pharaoh's of Egypt
    - The Shoguns and then emperors of Japan
    - The emperors of China
    - The emperors of Rome
    - The Kings and Queens and Popes of Europe
- There have always been, in every culture, three primary powers that form coalitions to exploit the masses:
    - The government
    - The religious leaders (shamans, priests, popes)
    - The aristocracy—big money, big business, shipping magnets, land owners
- These are the principles of Satan, but something happened that eventually led to a new form of government and **that was the Reformation**. The Word of God was put into the hands of the people. As God's Word was studied, the principles of truth, love and liberty took root in human hearts again. The Enlightenment occurred. God's design law principles for life were applied—the law of exertion—if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it. So, people began to value hard work, then education, moral principles, and above all liberty, autonomy, self-governance.
- These Protestant principles led to the formation of the first government in human history built to promote both religious and civil liberty. The US Constitution and bill of rights was

specifically designed under the belief that human beings have certain inalienable rights endowed to us by our Creator and the purpose of government was to restrain other powers and people from encroaching upon these rights.
    - Thus the US government was established to give power to the people and restrain:
        - the government itself—no search without warrant, no tax without representation, to restriction of movement, or commerce etc.
        - the religious powers—people were to liberty of conscience
        - the aristocracies—big business
- This created the first country which purposely sought to establish and advance the principles of liberty and justice for all—which are godly principles that came directly out of the Reformation. Satan hates it and these principles have been under attack from the beginning.
- Today we find that the United States is about to completely reject these principles and begin practicing all the same exploitive powers of all human governments throughout history—and this is part of the Bible's end-time warning to the people of God
- The opponents of liberty and justice, those who want to strip away our inalienable rights and establish a ruling elite will do so by claiming they are advancing some form of justice, it might be:
    - justice for the environment
    - justice for people of color
    - justice for the unborn
    - justice for the weak and vulnerable
- But their methods will not be the methods of God, which is truth, presented in love, leaving people free, which converts the heart. They will not use government to restrain powers from encroaching inalienable rights, they will do just the opposite, they will use governmental powers to force their way, violating our inalienable rights while claiming they are only seeking justice, or equity. It is Satan at work, see it for what it is.
    - They will not unite, they will divide. They will lie, they will manipulate, they will accuse, they will silence, deplatform, censor, intimidate, riot, arrest, cheat, commit fraud. And any who stand up for truth, for openness, for actual equality as free moral agents, being created in the image of God, will be accused of being racists, or some other hater.
- They will divide people into classes that don't exist in God's kingdom in order to incite conflict and undermine unity—divide and conquer. In God's kingdom there is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, we are all one in Christ. When Jesus returns there are not many denominations, there are sheep and goats and they are divided based on character—what methods to they live. Do they love others or do they exploit others and in so doing each person decides for or against Jesus. As you have done it unto one of the least of these you have done it unto me.
    - In the USA it was built in which people united on these principles of liberty and justice for all—but now it is being divided.
    - Understand the USA is unique as a nation in all history—all other countries are tribal, they are racist, they are divided by ethnicity—but only in the USA were the principles of liberty and justice for all, a meritocracy, ability, character valued and what mattered. Anyone could succeed if they applied themselves and worked hard—but all of that is

being denied and people are being taught a fraudulent system of values that is an attack on the Bible and the principles of God.

- God permits these events to unfold so that every person can decide, what law to they prefer, what methods they will practice, what God they worship—the God of love whose laws are design laws, or the god of this world, imperial, imposed rules, punishing god?

The difference this time though, is that when the USA finishes its denial of the lamblike principles of civil and religious liberties, when it speaks like a dragon and pursues justice through more inflicted rules and coercive pressure, there will be nowhere left on earth for the righteous to flee to establish a new government based on liberty.

Understanding this we see why those who seek to destroy the USA, the land of liberty, are so persistent in their attempts to tear down our history, to replace it with lies. It is why they:

- relabel the land of the free as the land of the enslaver
- relabel communism as socialism
- must rename college and sports teams
- Tear down statues of American heroes
- Remove names of the founders from schools and districts
- Reframe the flag from a symbol of liberty and justice for all to a sign of abuse and enslavement
- Change the date of the founding of the USA to a time before the USA was founded, they want people to believe the USA was founded by the colonies that we went to war to free ourselves from, to the European colonial powers that brought slaves here. But it requires a denial of reality, when slaves were brought here the USA didn't exist—how conveniently they forget that.
- Change the language and make you stop speaking words like mother—we must call mothers birther persons, or husband and wife, we must say partner; we can no longer use pronouns of male or female.

It is essential for the forces of evil to succeed that they destroy truth, destroy the record of history so that Satanic forces can arise and reenact the same abusive policies that take away liberty, undermine thinking, corrupt development, destroy individuality, and obstruct God's plan to heal hearts and minds.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW RESOURCE SOUTH AFRICA: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Special Baker Books has made the digital version of ***The God Shaped Heart*** available for a short time for $1.99 for either Kindle readers on Amazon or Nooks at Barnes and Noble.

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE, requires a sign in, and will contain member's only content:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum is now available to members.
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.
- **New Music** Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they

have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members
- If you have ideas to add to the member's section let us know

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 5
Come To Me

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Before we get into the lesson for this week, some of my recent comments have stimulated some concerns that I feel I need to be address publicly. I am going to read an email I received this week that is representative of some of the concerns and then address those concerns. But before I do, this topic is a hard topic, it is often emotional, visceral and can lead to division rather than unity. The only way we can successfully explore the concerns is with humble hearts filled by the Holy Spirit with a willingness to follow truth wherever it leads.

Our goal at Come and Reason Ministries is first and foremost to glorify God, to speak well of our Creator, to reveal His character and methods of love in the most winsome and accurate way possible, to apply His methods to our lives and in doing so to help people learn to discern, to develop their God given reasoning powers to think for themselves, to grow up into the full stature of sons and daughters of God. To this end, we frequently seek to not only reveal God's character, methods and principles warring against the prince of darkness throughout Scripture and history, but to explore how this battle enters into every phase of human experience.

Many years ago, I read the following paragraph from the book *Education* and it became a philosophy for me, something that I have strived to achieve and a method that we at Come and Reason Ministries apply:

> The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. **He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme,** of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. **He should understand the nature of the two principles** that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to **trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation**. He should see how this controversy **enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. Ed 190.2

This is why I consistently teach from Scripture focusing upon God's design laws, providing examples from Scripture and history, but I also frequently seek to apply these principles to what is happening in our world today—because the conflict enters into every phase of our lives.

But, unfortunately, speaking about events in our own hearts, our own churches, our own cities and countries, can sometimes be misunderstood, can sometimes allow people to believe that I have stopped teaching the gospel and become a political activist. To the degree that my comments lend themselves

to being viewed as advocating for some political interpretation I regret this and I will seek to do better to be clear that I do not advocate for political parties, that my comments are intended to demonstrate the two antagonistic principles active in every phase of human experience.

So let me say this clearly and plainly. I do not now, nor have I in the past advocated for any political party or politician. I do advocate for principles of God's kingdom and have written about how God's principles and Satan's principles of government are interacting in every phase of our experience, as the quote above said we should do. I explored this my blog Why Satan Hates the US Constitution.

The same author who wrote the book *Education* wrote the following in the book *The Great Controversy,* she applies God's principles to history, demonstrating how the two antagonistic principles really do enter into human governments and where the USA fits into this:

> "And he had two horns like a lamb." The lamblike horns indicate youth, innocence, and gentleness, fitly representing the character of the United States when presented to the prophet as "coming up" in 1798. Among the **Christian exiles** who first fled to America and sought an asylum from **royal oppression and priestly intolerance** were many who determined to establish a government upon the **broad foundation of civil and religious liberty**. Their views found place in the Declaration of Independence, which sets forth the great truth that **"all men are created equal" and endowed with the inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."** [Notice the difference here between equality and equity. Equality is equality of moral worth, endowed by God with the same value as human beings, the same rights of life, liberty of person to pursue happiness. The design laws of God apply equally to all. But none are promised equal outcomes, equal talents, equal abilities, equal roles, equal income, equal happiness—no. Outcomes cannot be given, only liberty, opportunity, governments can seek to restrain the abusive powers from encroaching upon our individual liberties. Equity turns this upside down, it seeks to undermine liberty and encroach upon opportunity by forcing outcomes upon people based on some factor that is irrelevant to the position—such as skin color, or gender rather than merit, talent, ability, achievement.] And the Constitution guarantees to the people the right of self-government, providing that representatives elected by the popular vote shall enact and administer the laws. **Freedom of religious faith was also granted**, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. **Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity**. [These are the outworking of God's law of liberty. The secret to the USAs power and prosperity. So if you are an enemy of the US, an enemy of individual development, what would you need to attack and undermine? Republicanism and Protestantism, which is religious and civil liberty.] The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. **Millions have sought its shores**, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth (*The Great Controversy*, p. 441). [Why do millions seek to come to the US, still today, this week a milestone in illegal immigrant arrests was made over 1 million arrests at the southern border in the first six months of this new administration—but why are so many flocking here if the USA is the most racist, abusive, intolerant country in the world? Why are they not flocking to China, or Venezuela? This is the

difference between evidenced based thinking and declarations and claims. Those who don't know how to think for themselves believe what others tell them, but those who understand evidence realize that the reason people do flock here is because of the principles of liberty established as foundational to our government and which are under attack.]

Is this author of the *Great Controversy* being too political or is this author describing two antagonistic principles and how they are battling through human history? Do we see these principles under attack in our society today? We will unpack this more in a moment.

In another blog, The Law of Liberty and Society Today I describe one of God's design laws, the law of liberty. I describe how love requires freedom, that whenever freedoms are taken away love is damaged, rebellion is instilled and if freedom isn't reestablished over time the constant domination of others results in the slow erosion of individuality, the ability to think and reason and people become shadows of those who wield power.

In another blog, BEWARE: THE CURRENT CLAIM OF "INSTITUTIONAL RACISM" IS REALLY AN ATTACK ON CHRISTIANITY I document God's principles as described from Scripture, His design for humanity that 1) God created us with individuality, our own identity and ability to think and reason that we are to develop by exercise and this requires liberty, freedom of conscience and choice 2) God created families with fathers and mothers and that love for each other starts in the family and is how God built life to operate 3) God created nature and His laws are the protocols upon which nature operates thus God created science, the true investigation of evidence that is testable and reproducible and reveals truth and 4) God designed humans for useful labor and gave Adam and Eve work in a sinless world, that we only gain strength through exercise, and that failure to engage in useful labor is damaging to human character.

After describing these Bible principles, I quote word for word from a chart from the National Museum of African American History and Culture, posted in the Smithsonian Institute. It states: "White dominate culture, or whiteness, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States." And then goes on to describe what it perceives to be the standard practices of whitism: 1) Rugged Individualism 2) Two parent family structure 3) Emphasis on Scientific Method 4) History [European-centered] and 5) Protestant Work Ethic.

What this reveals is that what is happening in America today is an attempt to attack the principles of God, the principles of the Bible, by labeling these very principles as racist, as whitism.

So, putting together what we have read so far, there are two antagonistic principles at war in human history. God's principles of truth, love, freedom, the equality of all people as children of God warring against Satan's principles of lies, selfishness and coercion, people are merely animals evolved from lower life forms. We war against Satan's lies about God, including those that try and reframe the principles of Republicanism and Protestantism as whitism. They are not.

The same author who wrote the book *Education* and *The Great Controversy* described the dangers of letting others do our thinking for us, when we believe based on authority rather than discerning the truth for ourselves; when we believe base upon who said it rather than the evidence, whether it be the pastor, the conference president, the pope, the governor, a CNN or FoxNews anchor, the CDC, the NIH, or whomever; when we believe based on authority, rather than being able to evaluate evidence for ourselves, we damage our minds and she says we become unfit for heaven.

It is like a person who takes math a class but instead of learning how to work problems, they simply memorize the answers given by the teacher. Even if they have the right answers, they still have no ability to solve problems. This is happening in society today, people don't know how to solve problems, how to differentiate between proclamations, claims, declarations and actual evidence. Listen to what this author says from 2T 129:

> If we mistake the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God we are led astray by the foolishness of man's wisdom. Here is the great danger of many in -----. **They have not an experience for themselves**. They have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves, **with unprejudiced, unbiased judgment, questions and subjects that are new and that are ever liable to arise**. **They wait to see what others will think**. If these dissent, that is all that is needed to convince them that the subject under consideration is of no account whatever. Although this class is large, it does not change the fact that **they are inexperienced and weak-minded** through long yielding to the enemy, and **will always be as sickly as babes, walking by others' light, living on others' experience, feeling as others feel, and acting as others act. They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others; they are merely shadows of those whom they think [are] right. Unless these become sensible of their wavering character and correct it, they will all fail of everlasting life**; they will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days. [We are in the perils of the last days. The lies and propaganda are intense. Millions are demonstrating how they have not developed the ability to discern and believe based on authority of the office rather than truth and evidence and millions are being deceived] **They will possess no stamina to resist the devil, for they do not know that it is he**. Someone must be at their side to inform them whether a foe or a friend is approaching. **They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned. They are not wise in those things which relate to the kingdom of God.** Neither young nor old are excusable in **trusting to another to have an experience for them**. Said the angel: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." A noble self-reliance is needed in the Christian experience and warfare. 2T 129.2

Do we see this in society today? Do we see millions believing what they are told, rather than differentiating evidence from the spin, the interpretation of evidence given by others? Just a week ago I posted a blog, Your Mind and Media Manipulation—How to Protect Yourself in which I unpacked the difference between facts and interpretation of facts and how the media often presents things just the opposite of what the facts actually reveal.

This is critical because our decisions are only as good as the information upon which they are based. If you want to control people then you prevent them from having accurate information, you keep them

ignorant. This is what all communist and totalitarian governments do. This is what the church of the Dark Ages did by locking away Scripture. But God is the God of truth, truth always heals and frees—which is what happened when the Bible was translated into the language of the people and they started reading it—the Reformation which led to the US Constitution and the principles of liberty, equality and justice for all.

Those who operate upon God's methods don't seek to silence opposition voices, they want the opposition because lovers of truth will become more efficient and presenting the truth. But liars will be exposed. And liars will seek to silence and to misinform.

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

> "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." (as cited in Padover, 1939, p. 89) ". . . whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that, whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them right." (as cited in Padover, 1939, p. 88) https://www.varsitytutors.com/earlyamerica/jefferson-primer/jefferson-education-franchise

Consider the education of the populace and what is happening in our schools. It is not surprising that those who seek to destroy Republicanism and Protestantism want to tear down history and replace it with a false narrative. It is not surprising that they insist on graduating from one grade to the next individuals who cannot read or do basic math, and those who cannot reason. And why they attack those who suggest that we require competence to advance students to the next grade with slurs of racism and whitism.

In the 2T quote above, the author talks about people not having an experience for themselves, or relying on others to give them an experience. I frequently get the argument about personal experience from people of color. Some will cite their experiences with racism and suggest that I don't have their experience therefore I am not able to speak on this issue.

Consider from the same author another quote about experience:

> As I have before stated, you, my sister, rely upon experience. Your experience decides you to pursue a certain course. **But that which many term experience is not experience at all**; it is simply habit, or mere indulgence, blindly and frequently ignorantly followed, with a firm, set determination, and without intelligent thought or inquiry relative to the laws at work in the accomplishment of the result. 3T 68.3
>
> **Real experience is a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits.** [What is real experience? It is careful experiments, problems solved in a variety of ways, with a mind free from prejudice, bias, opinion, habits, preconceived ideas in order to observe what is actually happening—how reality works. It is the outworking of God's design laws in reality in contrast

> to Satan's imposed laws] **The results are marked with careful solicitude and an anxious desire to learn, to improve, and to reform on every habit that is not in harmony with physical and moral laws**. The idea of others' gainsaying what you have learned by experience seems to you to be folly and even cruelty itself. **But there are more errors received and firmly retained from false ideas of experience than from any other cause, for the reason that what is generally termed experience is not experience at all**; **because there has never been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principle involved in the action**. 3T 69.1

This perspective is based upon design law, testing how reality works. And we have a recent example from society of false experience, of setting aside reality and design law. Those of us who know design law predicted something and sure enough the evidence supports our predictions. We predicted that the BLM movement to defund the police would result in worsening crime and harm to communities. But the BLM group claimed that their experience taught them that police are bad, abusive, white supremacist and the source of violence upon people of color, that if we only get rid of these enforcers of white power then communities of color would thrive, would improve, and abuses and exploitation would stop.

But, those of us who understand Scripture, who understand God's design laws, understand that crime isn't a racial issue, it is a sin issue and sin is in the heart of all human beings, and that when restraining powers are removed from the wicked then crime surges, that the malevolent will seize the opportunity and the powerless and innocent will suffer.

And what has happened in communities where police have been reduced? Soaring crimes of all kinds, not just violent crimes, but destruction of property, rampant stealing and shoplifting resulting in stores closing in communities, which injures the residents who now have to travel farther for basic needs. And what people have suffered the most? People of color. This is reality, it is completely predictable for those who understand God's design laws. The so-called experience that police are the problem isn't reality, police, in general, make communities better, despite the occasional officer who betrays their trust and commits crime themselves and needs to be removed. It is now so obvious that even the current president has come out for more police. Understand reality—if black lives really mattered to BLM, they would never have advanced the defund police movement. BLM doesn't care about black lives, they care about power and about undermining the principles of Republicanism and Protestantism. But because they have titled themselves with "Black Lives Matter" those who have never trained themselves to look at evidence, those who have no individuality, those who rely on someone in authority to tell them the answer, hear the label "Black Lives Matter" and believe the organization is actually beneficial to people of color—what a grand deception.

Let me say it this way, BLM is like the Marlboro Man—the Marlboro Man was a depiction that was purposely designed by tobacco executives to suggest that you can have better health, vitality, strength, and manliness if you smoke Marlboros but the reality is that cigarette smoking destroys health. Likewise, BLM is designed to suggest better lives for black people, while the principles advanced by BLM destroy the lives of all people but especially people of color.

Now, having said all of this, I want to read an email I received this week and unpack it. It is a disturbing email, but a serious email that expresses a real problem we, God's children, are confronted with and I believe that we must take these concerns seriously and answer the questions. This email is one of a several correspondences I have received over the last month or two expressing similar ideas.

> *Dr. Jennings, you often laud the principles the U.S. was founded upon. Yet you fail to acknowledge the continual pervasive presence of principles of white supremacy embedded in the U.S. constitution. There is no greater evidence of satanic influence (lies and selfishness) than white supremacy. It is clearly why Donald Trump was elected. It is why Mr. Trump correctly asserted that he could shoot someone on 5th Avenue and not lose supporters, and it clearly continues to be the dominant controlling influence in the Republican Party. Your unwillingness or inability to address this is as telling as Adventism's unwillingness or inability to address the truths you clearly articulate about God's principles and design laws. All of the kingdoms of this world, including the United States, are the kingdoms of Satan. You have been dog whistling and tacitly supporting this ideology. Are you capable of objectively acknowledging this self evident truth? How can asking America to live up to the principles she espouses be racist? Are you capable of repudiating white supremacy without equivocation?*

I can't tell you the sadness I feel when I read or hear feedback like this; it breaks my heart.

To the writer—as a Christian—I love you. I am sorry for any injustice, racial or otherwise, you have experienced in your life. I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity, I have nothing in myself to commend myself to you or anyone else. It is only by God's grace, by Jesus in me that there is anything of value in me. I cannot right any wrongs you have suffered, but I can point you to Jesus who can.

I don't know the person who wrote this—Is the writer black or white, I don't know, but I want us to be united in Christ. Can we be? Only if we both have Christ in our hearts, only if we both die to the methods and ways of this world, only if we both embrace and practice the methods of God.

Let me address his concerns specifically.

First, I have been saying for a long time, and have written in multiple places, that ALL the kingdoms of this world are Satan's and all of them operate upon the principles of imposed law and therefore do injustice. So thank you for reminding us of this. I have written that the lamblike principles of religious and civil liberties established in our Constitution are going to be repudiated and that, just as the Bible teaches, the beast with lamblike horns will speak like a dragon. I describe this in my blog series The Six Powers of Satan and How to Overcome Them Part 2 and Babylon the Mother of Harlots: It's Time to Come Out I am citing all of these blogs as evidence that I have been teaching these truths for a long time, because the author of the email seems to be unaware that we hold this position. So I am not merely claiming that I do, I am providing historic evidence of doing so.

In my blog King of the North versus King of the South and Today's End time Events I describe how Satan has two grand forces at work throughout history, the forces of the King of the South which is godlessness represented by Egypt and includes paganism, evolutionism, humanism, secularism,

communism opposed by the King of the North which is religious imperialism represented by both Babylon and Rome, and are those who believe in God but use the power of the state, might and force, to coerce people to comply with their religious views. And how the beautiful land, God's people, are in neither of these two group. Satan pits these two forces against each other, but God's people are caught in the middle and Satan tries to get God's people to pick one of these two sides when both are his. We see this battle in society today. Wokeism, leftism, socialism, greenism, BLM, transgenderism, all of this is part of the godless king of the south movement and it is pushing its agenda strongly, attacking the forces of the king of the north and, if we understand Daniel 11 correctly, the king of the north, religious imperialism, is going to storm out against the king of the south and destroy him. And God's people are in neither of these two groups. I have been saying this all along.

So I have not been dog whistling for the GOP or the political right. I have been advocating for the principles of liberty, for truth, for individuals to think for themselves, to learn to discern, to be able to tell the difference between actual evidence and interpretations, to apply God's design laws to the problem and come to godly solutions.

But I understand why some feel like am advocating for the right—when you stand on the left and someone calls you to the middle—you are necessarily being pulled to the right. And when you stand on the right and someone calls you to the middle you are necessarily being pulled to the left. When I have written and advocated for equality for gay people, to treat them equally under the law and to love them like Christ, I have been accused of advocating for the left. But I am not. I am advocating for the living application of the design laws of God in how we live.

Now let's talk directly about racism. It is a real problem, but before we can talk about it, we must define it. If we use the same word but assign different meanings to the word then we are no longer talking about the same thing and we misunderstand each other.

In other areas I have given concise definitions to help clarify confusing issues:

- Spiritualism—the pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason
    - We can see spiritualism in any form, astrology, voodoo, Tarot cards, palm reading—it is all the same, seeking knowledge without evidence and without reason
- Legalism—a preoccupation with law and legal standing
    - whether legalism of works, or sacrifices, or indulgences, or vicarious legalism of legal records getting expunged in courtrooms in heaven. It is still all legalism.
- Racism is a preoccupation with race. It is using race as a factor in decision-making instead of ability, character, talent, achievement, merit, accomplishment etc.
    - With this definition we can identify racism wherever it manifests, whether white supremacy, Japanese/Chinese racism, German/Slavic racism, or white inferiority/black supremacy—the false guilt that drives race-based decision-making today. At its root racism is all the same, using race as a factor to demarcate and differentiate rather than objective measures of character, ability, talent, achievement, merit.

If we take a Biblical worldview then we understand that there is one race—the human race and that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, that there is no one righteous, no not one; and we are all suffering from the same condition of sinfulness and in need of the same Savior. What matters is not ethnicity, but character. In a Biblical worldview there are only two groups, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tears, the saved and the lost. So, as Paul wrote,

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Ga 3:26–28 NIV84).

We are either in Christ or we are not. Those who are in Christ the outward appearances don't separate us. But if we remain worldly, then outward appearance is supremely important. **It is the ungodly who look at the outward appearances**, just as Scripture says:

> "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1Sam 16:7 NIV84)

So, to the emailer—I am sorry for your hurt, for whatever wrong you have experienced in this world—but Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33 NIV84).

In this world we will experience injustice, because all the kingdoms of this world are Satan's. It is only in Christ that we find health, life, peace, joy, and unity. I want to be united with Christ, One with Him in love for God and others. In order for us to overcome the world, to overcome fear, selfishness and racism, we must have God living in us. It requires we become united in God's methods, principles and ways.

What is it that separates people? What is it that causes the greatest division? What is the most significant obstacle between people being united? Is it our skin color, or is it our hearts and minds?

If we both have Jesus in our hearts and love others more than self, will our skin color be a problem? But if we have hurt feelings, jealousy, a sense of life being unfair, a feeling of being disadvantaged, a sense of being taken advantage of, of not being valued, of being misjudged, of being diminished based on our race, and we look to the kingdoms of this world to make it right, to fix the problem, to get the right laws, right judges, right enforcement will we ever be united? **Never—this is Satan's grand trick, incite real injustice and then trick people into pursuing justice through Satan's laws, Satan's kingdoms, Satan's methods which only incite more injustice and cause more division.**

We at Come and Reason Ministries stand for equality of all people as children of God. We want to see all things in heaven and earth reconciled together under one head, Jesus Christ. We seek to advance the good news of God's kingdom that, when brought into hearts, unites all of us into one family, the family of God. We are one people—children of God—who have the same principles or laws of God written into our hearts and thus we mature in character to be like Jesus. And this unity cannot be accomplished through legislation and imposed human laws.

Anything that undermines God's design of love, unity in Christ, equality of all people as children of God is evil and we oppose it.

Thus we oppose racism in every and all of its forms, because racism divides. And of course we oppose white supremacy—but saying this in society today is like saying we oppose cigarette smoking—which we do. There was a time when people didn't know the dangers of cigarette smoking—worse when doctors prescribed it for lung disease, as a treatment to make one healthy. But today, only people with impairments in thinking, mentally deranged individuals, think cigarette smoking is healthy. Likewise, there isn't anyone in society that I know, who actually thinks white supremacy is okay, or advances white supremacy. This is why I don't often say it, because it simply is understood, like smoking, to be wrong—it is common knowledge.

- What are the principles of the Bible in regard to race and how we treat each other?
- What are the principles of BLM, CRT and wokeism—are they the same as Bible principles?
- Racism is a preoccupation with race, of using race as a criteria for decision-making instead of ability, competence, character, achievement etc. do we find the principles of racism being practiced, endorsed, institutionalized, and advanced in society today? Where?

Martin Luther King Jr. said,

> Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that (*Strength to Love,* 1963)

Understand reality—we cannot get rid of racism by practicing racism. If we make race a criteria in our decision-making, our policy making, or admissions to schools, our priorities in awarding government contracts, our practice for corporate advancement then we are only perpetuating racism, not eliminating it.

We cannot drive out racism from hearts, minds and society by screaming racism or by practicing race-based hiring practices as a means of correcting historic racism—that only perpetuates racism. The only way to eradicate racism is to love people in Jesus, to practice God's methods in our lives, and to create equal opportunity for individual ability, hard work, merit, talent and achievement to differentiate. **No matter how well-intentioned, corrective race-based practices are by definition racist and perpetuate racism**.

Jesus said,

> How can Satan enter into a person, and by entering, get rid of Satan? Think about it: It would be like using water to get rid of wetness (Mark 3:23 *The Remedy*).

Martin Luther King Jr. knew this and famously said,

> I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

In God's kingdom, it is about the quality of each person's heart, mind, and character. This is what really matters: Is a person like Jesus in his or her heart—or not? The color of one's skin is irrelevant.

Understand this reality: Human governments can *never* resolve racism, because at its core, racism is a heart problem, not a behavior problem, and no laws imposed by governments can instill love in the heart.

Yes—governments *can* and *should* remove laws that are racist (Jim Crow Laws, for instance) and ensure that the laws that are passed treat all people equally. **But as soon as the government moves from treating all people equally under the law to advancing policies that favor one racial or ethnic or gender group over another then the government has institutionalized racism.**

And those who are godless will always do this because the godless don't care about uplifting people, the godless want power and they purposely craft policies to exploit the masses for their own empowerment.

So we, as Christians, must not be duped into joining any of these political forces, we must stand on the principles of God, which are His design laws, which are freedom for all, because love only grows in an atmosphere of freedom.

From the Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms chapter 19:7-13:

> The design law of God is perfect,
> restoring one's life.
> The principles of the Lord are constant,
> imparting wisdom to those without it.
> The prescriptions of the Lord are right,
> bringing happiness to the life.
> The protocols of God are brilliant,
> enlightening the mind.
> Worship of the Lord heals
> and is everlasting.
> The decisions of the Lord are always correct
> and completely righteous.
> They are more valuable than gold,
> even much refined gold;
> they are sweeter than honey,
> even from the honeycomb.
> They teach those who serve you how reality works —
> in living in harmony with them there is great benefit.
> Who can identify every defect in their heart?

Heal everything — even what I cannot see.
Change my heart — refrain me from selfish choices;
don't let selfishness control me.
Then I will be spiritually healthy,
free from deviations from your great design.

SUNDAY

Read Matthew 11:28-30:

> Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV84).

The lesson asks us what rest? How does Christ give us this rest?

Is this physical rest? Is it rest for our souls, for our internal struggles, rest from fighting to survive—not just survive on earth, food and shelter, but to survive the weight of shame and guilt that sin brings? Is it that we need rest from our own fears, insecurities, and selfishness?

How do we get this rest?

The lesson states in the first paragraph that "Jesus does not curry favors; He puts the finger where it hurts…" What do you understand this to mean?

What law lens do you understand it through?

When a person has appendicitis and goes to the ER, does the doctor put their fingers on the abdomen? Does the doctor put their finger where it hurts? Why?

Is Jesus speaking in ways to draw attention to where the problem is? Why?

What is the first step in saving a sinner? Isn't it that the sinner must recognize their condition, be convicted of their sinful state, be convinced that they have a problem and that they cannot fix it themselves? And then, that there is a Savior who can remedy the problem for them?

So, is Jesus trying to harm or seeking to heal?

But what will patients often do when the doctor probes a wound? They will instinctively push the doctor's hand away—why?

Do we do this with the Holy Spirit, with Truth, with godly people in our lives?

With this in mind, Jesus seeking to awaken them to their need, their problem, the lesson points out that Jesus tells them it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Sodom than for these people. Why?

Notice Jesus' words, "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:24 NKJV).

What does this mean? What law lens are you hearing this through? More tolerable, what does tolerable mean? Other versions use the word bearable. What does bearable mean? Is it inflicted or is it something that naturally occurs?

What would cause these people to have more to bear in the judgment than Sodom a city so wicked that God destroyed it?

What causes the suffering? It is unremedied sin in the heart, mind and character—and those who have had the greatest opportunity to repent, who have had the greatest truth that they have refused will have the greatest guilt to bear.

So, from *The Remedy NT* starting in verse 20:

> Because the people in the cities where Jesus performed most of his miracles refused to turn away from selfishness and accept the Remedy, he pronounced the unavoidable result:[21] "Korazin, your suffering will be great, and Bethsaida, your agony will be horrible! If the evidence and miracles that were presented to you would have been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have humbled themselves, rejected selfishness, accepted the Remedy, and been restored to love.[22] On the day each person faces ultimate truth, Tyre and Sidon will have less guilt and agony to bear than you.[23] And you, people of Capernaum, will you soar into heaven? Oh no! You will shrivel up and decay into the depths. If the miracles performed in you were done in Sodom, that city would still be here today.[24] On the day each person faces ultimate truth, Sodom will have less guilt and agony to bear than you." (Matthew 11:20-24 REM)

In the fourth paragraph the lesson states, "Jesus' ability to give rest is based on His divinity and His oneness with the Father."

What do you think about this? What does it mean? The assumed part of the sentence needs to be recognized. Yes, Jesus' oneness with the Father is key—but so is His oneness with us. It was that Jesus was fully human AND fully divine. It was Jesus by restoring God's character, God's methods, God's design laws for life back into the species human while fully revealing the truth of God's character to us that He is able to give us rest.

Here is an historic quote:

> **The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God**. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. **Yet He was God in the flesh.** When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth. 1SM 244.1

Praise God that "Christ Jesus:

> 6 Who, being in very nature God,
> did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
> 7 but made himself nothing,
> taking the very nature of a servant,
> being made in human likeness.
> 8 And being found in appearance as a man,
> he humbled himself
> and became obedient to death—
> even death on a cross! (Php 2:5–8 NIV84).

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Christ saying to us, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Mt 11:29–30 NIV84).

What is a yoke? What does it do?

A yoke is not a bridle, it is not a bit, it is not designed to compel or to force or to inflict pain. What is the function of a yoke? It shares the load!

Jesus is saying that we are to yoke up with Him, to join forces with Him, to be united with Him and He will help us carry the load and only with His yoke can we succeed!

What is the yoke that joins us to Christ, that relieves the burdens of life, that lifts the weight, that energizes us, invigorates us, gives us life and makes life easy? The law of love!

It is the yoke of love, love for God and love for others that joins our hearts and minds to Jesus and relieves us of fear, guilt, shame and the need to force our way. The duties of life become joys as we carry them out in love.

This is from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> **The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden,** proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan's ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to **His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating.** He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service. The yoke of service Christ Himself has borne in humanity. He said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." John 6:38. Love for God, zeal for His glory, and love for fallen humanity, brought Jesus to earth to suffer and to die. **This was the controlling power of His life. This principle He bids us adopt.** DA 329.3

This is design law—it is how God built life to operate. We cannot grow, develop, advance through being idle, through lack of exercise, through allowing others to solve our problems, fulfill our duties, do our work. It is for our health, wellness, development that we are each given burdens of life to fulfill and we are to unite with Christ in carrying out these responsibilities in life.

Practices and protocols that remove life's responsibilities from people destroy character, undermine health, wellness and inflame selfishness. People who are not united with Christ, working with the yoke of loving service in life, will be yoked with great burdens of this world that crush them.

From the same author who wrote *The Desire of Ages*:

> But **instead of taking the yoke of Christ**, [which is the yoke of God's law of love which motivates us to live lives of loving service] how many bind **upon their souls a galling yoke, a grievous burden**. Many wear a load of care, worldly perplexities are accepted, worldly customs are followed, worldly fashions practiced, and their character is marred, their life made a weariness. **Jesus would have them lay aside this yoke of bondage, and take upon them his yoke of love**, that they may learn to be meek and lowly in heart. The weakest soul, wearing Christ's yoke, bearing his burden, may become strong in his grace, and he will find the yoke easy, the burden light. ST January 19, 1891, par. 5

In the middle of the second paragraph the lesson states, "Both the Father and the Son are working unitedly to save humanity."

This is well said—this is exactly right. The Father and Son are one, united in love and purpose to eradicate sin and save sinners.

TUESDAY

The lesson talks about meekness, which is the opposite of pride and arrogance. Meekness doesn't place confidence in self, but in God.

But the lesson rightly points out that the meek are not doormats, they are not pushovers, they don't compromise principle to be liked or to make others happy with them. They stand firm in the face of opposition because their focus is not on self, it is on God and on love and truth.

Those who are doormats, who allow others to bully them into compromising are not meek in the Biblical sense, they are fearful, and frequently needy of other's approval and give in to avoid being rejected. This is not selflessness, it is a form of selfishness, but the selfishness of self-doubt and fear of rejection rather than arrogance and pride. But self is still in the center.

The truly godly meek have Jesus in the center. They don't seek to gain attention for self, but seek to uplift God and Jesus to make them the focus.

Read the last two paragraphs, "Jesus' humanity and meekness… What is the problem with this description? What law lens is being advanced? Is this how God's government works, or this fallen human law and government projected onto God?

What is a better way to describe the reality of what Jesus and the Father have done to save us and why they had to do it?

WEDNESDAY

Read second bold section near the bottom, "In Galatians 5:1…" What are the two yokes referred to here? How does Christ set us free?

One is the yoke of love, God's design law of love, the other is the yoke of the law of sin and death, the yoke of fear and selfishness.

How does Christ free us from the law of sin and death?

From *The Remedy*

> Christ has set us free from selfishness, free from fear, free from ignorance about God — free to be his friends. So stand firm in the truth about God as revealed in Jesus, and don't let yourselves be duped back into a system of rituals and works motivated by fear and selfishness. (Galatians 5:1 REM)

THURSDAY

Read the last paragraph, "The immediate context…" How does love function?

To love others means that we seek to do what is in their best interest, even when they might want something else. In order to do this, we must not only have loving concern for the other person, but we also must understand God's design laws, how reality works, what the problem is—and then, when appropriate, use our ability to act in harmony with God's design laws to bring healing influence to others.

If you're hiking with your spouse and she falls and breaks a leg, and you need to splint her leg, but doing so will cause more pain, would it be an act of love to splint the leg? Would it be loving to have surgery even if that caused pain? And when it is time for physical therapy and your spouse cries from the pain, is it an act of love to do her exercises for her?

What if it is not a broken leg, but a broken heart—she has been traumatized in the past and is hurting—is it an act of love to focus on merely relieving her pain, or to focus on healing the emotional wound even if the work to heal it is painful? What if she gets angry and accuses you of attacking her—is it love to accept the accusation and apologize for trying to help?

Once there is brokenness, there are no pain-free options. The path of love is to bring healing, even though the healing interventions are painful. Unfortunately, many people focus merely on the immediate experience and instead of seeking to heal, seek to relieve the pain or discomfort and, thus, actually harm. Love understands design law and reality and acts to heal and restore even if it is painful.

So love doesn't act by doing what feels best, but what is best.

What happens when we love the organization more than the people?

Do we sacrifice people in order to protect the institution? Would organizations protect child molesters in order to protect the institution's name and reputation even if it means other innocents might get harmed?

Might individuals get disfellowshipped in order to protect the institution?

Might someone be crucified in order to protect the nation?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW RESOURCE SOUTH AFRICA: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Special Baker Books has made the digital version of ***The God Shaped Heart*** available for a short time for $1.99 for either Kindle readers on Amazon or Nooks at Barnes and Noble.

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 6
Finding Rest in Family Ties

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Because we didn't get to lesson 5 last week, I want to share just a couple of high points from lesson 5 and then go into lesson 6, and especially because lesson six is about families and these principles apply to our family relationships.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Christ saying to us, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Mt 11:29–30 NIV84).

What is a yoke? What does it do?

A yoke is not a bridle, it is not a bit, it is not designed to compel or to force or to inflict pain. What is the function of a yoke? It shares the load!

Jesus is saying that we are to yoke up with Him, to join forces with Him, to be united with Him and He will help us carry the load and only with His yoke can we succeed!

What is the yoke that joins us to Christ, that relieves the burdens of life, that lifts the weight, that energizes us, invigorates us, gives us life and makes life easy? The law of love!

It is the yoke of love, love for God and love for others that joins our hearts and minds to Jesus and relieves us of fear, guilt, shame and the need to force our way. The duties of life become joys as we carry them out in love.

This is from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> **The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden,** proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan's ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to **His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating.** He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up **the duties of service**. The yoke of service Christ Himself has borne in humanity. He said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." John 6:38. Love for God, zeal for His glory, and love for fallen

> humanity, brought Jesus to earth to suffer and to die. **This was the controlling power of His life. This principle He bids us adopt.** DA 329.3

This is design law—it is how God built life to operate. We cannot grow, develop, advance through being idle, through lack of exercise, through allowing others to solve our problems, fulfill our duties, do our work. It is for our health, wellness, development that we are each given burdens of life to fulfill and we are to unite with Christ in carrying out these responsibilities in life.

Practices and protocols that remove life's responsibilities from people destroy character, undermine health, wellness and inflame selfishness. People who are not united with Christ, working with the yoke of loving service in life, will be yoked with great burdens of this world that crush them.

From the same author who wrote *The Desire of Ages*:

> But **instead of taking the yoke of Christ**, [which is the yoke of God's law of love which motivates us to live lives of loving service] how many bind **upon their souls a galling yoke, a grievous burden**. Many wear a load of care, worldly perplexities are accepted, worldly customs are followed, worldly fashions practiced, and their character is marred, their life made a weariness. **Jesus would have them lay aside this yoke of bondage, and take upon them his yoke of love**, that they may learn to be meek and lowly in heart. The weakest soul, wearing Christ's yoke, bearing his burden, may become strong in his grace, and he will find the yoke easy, the burden light. ST January 19, 1891, par. 5

LESSON 6
SABBATH

The lesson states in the last paragraph, "Family relationships often are complicated and painful, leaving us restless, hurt, and carrying loads of emotional baggage that we, in turn, off-load on others."

Have you had some family relations that were painful, and hurt you and left you with baggage? I think everyone has.

What are we to do when we have someone in our family—an adult—who is acting in ways that are harmful, injurious, painful, hurtful to others, someone who doesn't shoulder responsibility for themselves, someone who pursues the easy road not the healthy road and despite much resources provided they still haven't matured, haven't grown up, haven't learned self-governance, personal responsibility?

1. Assess their capacity—their innate ability to grow and mature. If they are like my aunt Sandy, mentally handicapped, and don't have capacity then it would be wrong of us to expect more from them than they are capable of achieving. But within their capacity, we absolutely should expect them to achieve up to what they are capable. So my aunt was able to become a person who was helpful, would make her bed, do her own hygiene, do simple chores around the

house, volunteer at the Samaritan Center under supervision. But she required external oversight and supervision her entire life. But love sought to help her grow to the fullest extent she was capable of achieving. And she loved Jesus, she loved going to church, and she loved people.

2. Love provides people opportunity for development—this would include:
    a. during childhood—love, affection, security, food, clothing, shelter and appropriate boundaries and discipline
    b. education/instruction followed by opportunity to apply and feedback and re-opportunity to learn and apply
    c. eventually love sets free those who have capacity to self-govern even if they don't develop or use that capacity and then allows them, when of appropriate age, to reap the results of what they have chosen. Consider the story of the Prodigal Son.
3. Love sets boundaries—with everyone—love decides on who enters the inmost affections of our hearts and circles of trust and this is based on the trustworthiness of the other person, not on how they are related to us. While we may love a child deeply, we may not be able to let them into our circle of trust if they have proven themselves untrustworthy.

MONDAY

The title of the day's lesson is Dysfunction at Home and focuses on Abraham and Sarah and the conflict that occurred with Hagar and then with Isaac and Esau and Jacob and then with Jacob's children.

What lessons in family governance, family leadership, family dynamics do you learn from Abraham's family?

Why do you think the stories of Abraham's dysfunctional family are recorded?

These are lessons to us to teach us the reality of the two antagonistic principles contending for supremacy in the hearts and minds of all human beings since Adam's sin.

These Bible stories reveal that without God's love working in our hearts then fear and selfishness (sin) corrupts us and we will betray and exploit others, even those closest to us—our own families. These stories reveal the unavoidable results of sin—which is anti-love, selfishness and fear, the survival drives.

These stories document that sin destroys, not God, and how that destruction happens. Further they reveal that the only solution to sin is God's law of love, God's methods and principles applied to the life.

Joseph's brothers allowed their fear, selfishness, and jealousy to take control of their hearts, minds, and actions. Had they truly loved Joseph, they would have celebrated him and rejoiced when their

father honored him. But they loved themselves more. So they sold him as a slave and misled their father into believing Joseph was killed by wild animals.

Joseph suffered terrible injustice. Injustice from his brothers. His human rights were violated. He was not treated as an individual, but as property. He was taken by slave-traders and sold in a slave market to Potiphar.

There is no question that what happened to Joseph was wrong; it was sin; it was unjust. Yet, Joseph had no ability to stop it. He could not control the choices of others. Joseph had to decide, how he would, in governance of self, deal with the injustice:

- Would he become resentful, bitter, hateful?
- Would he fantasize about getting even with his brothers?
- Would he pray to God to take vengeance upon the Egyptians?
- Would he seek to sabotage and injure those who treated him as a slave?

- Or would Joseph surrender his life to God?
- Would he seek God's presence, God's methods, God's law, God's purpose in his life?
- Would he trust God to right his wrongs and would he refuse to become bitter, angry, and let selfishness corrupt his character?
- **Would Joseph, in the face of injustice, become corrupt or would he become more just, more righteous through living out God's methods in his life?**

Joseph chose to trust God and apply God's methods to himself. And how did Joseph treat Potiphar? Joseph was faithful, loyal, reliable, diligent, true, dedicated, honest, and carried out all of his *slave* duties with integrity. This is incredible. It is anti-culture, anti-worldly, anti-human justice.

Why would Joseph do this? Potiphar was an Egyptian. He wasn't a member of Joseph's family. He wasn't a descendant of Abraham. He wasn't a worshipper of Yahweh. He was a pagan, an idol worshipper, but worst of all—he was a slave owner! He must be a corrupt person and certainly buying Joseph and owning him as a slave makes Potiphar undeserving of Joseph's loyalty—right?

Was Joseph loyal to Potiphar because Potiphar deserved it, or was Joseph loyal because Joseph deserved it, because of who Joseph was—a loyal subject of the Creator God who sought to honor God by living out God's law of love in the face of injustice?

One of Satan's biggest traps in this world is to incite real injustice and then get people to seek justice through the application of Satan's methods, Satan's laws, Satan's principles of inflicted punishments and retaliation—because they deserve it. It is right, Satan says, for us to be angry, resentful, bitter, to harbor fantasies of suffering toward our enemies. It is right in the world's system to use whatever means necessary to ensure those we decide are bad get what they deserve.

So, it is just to riot, to destroy other's properties, to shoplift, to disrupt traffic, to drag people out of their cars and beat them, to lie, to falsely accuse, as long as it advances our social justice, then it is right and just to behave this way—oh how Satan rejoices.

But Joseph didn't seek to undermine his slave master. Yet despite Joseph's high moral standard, his faithful and loyal service, he suffers more injustice. Joseph is accused of sexual assault and imprisoned for crime he did not commit. What an outrage, falsely accused, falsely imprisoned after years of loyal and faithful service. Certainly now it is right and just for Joseph to be resentful, angry, bitter and to seek justice.

But how did Joseph respond? Did he become bitter, angry, hateful? Did he seek to retaliate? Did he fantasize about getting even? No, he lived out God's law of love in governance of himself and trusted God with the outcome. And eventually, through God's miraculous interventions, Joseph is elevated to the second most powerful position in the world—second only to Pharaoh himself.

And once Joseph had real power, what did he do? Joseph had the authority to right all past injustices against him. He could have punished Potiphar's wife and Potiphar if he wanted. By today's world's standards it would have been just and right to put them in prison or fine them or make them pay reparations. Why didn't Joseph do it, he had the power?

What would have happened to Joseph, to his heart, mind and character if he practiced the methods of this sinful world in seeking justice? What kind of person would Joseph have become had he harbored resentment, anger and bitterness and longed to retaliate, had he sought to make Potiphar and his wife pay or later sought to make his brothers pay?

What happens to the hearts of people in society today when they focus on past wrongs (real wrongs just like Joseph or imagined) either to them or to their ancestors and they hold to anger, bitterness, resentment and seek to use the governments of this world to make others pay? That is Satan's goal to corrupt character through embracing his methods of justice!

Do you see how all the kingdoms of this world are Satan's and that using human governments to inflict punishment to make others pay only spreads sin, causes more hatred, division, conflict, impairs the gospel from advancing and corrupts character?

If Joseph would have applied the philosophy of today's world and rebelled against Potiphar in overt or covert ways—say had the affair with his wife. What would have been the likely outcome? Joseph would most likely have been executed. And then he wouldn't have been there to protect his family during the famine and Satan would have succeeded in terminating the family line that would bring the Messiah.

God cannot win His cause through people whose hearts harbor resentment, anger, bitterness, a desire for retaliation, people who long to inflict punishment on others or seek to force reparations. God can only win his cause through people who trust Him and allow Him to eliminate fear, selfishness, anger, bitterness, jealousy and the desire for retaliation from their hearts and minds

and restore His love, His character within so that we love our enemies as Christ loves us. This is the only way forward and the social justice movements of the world are traps of Satan designed to inflame selfishness, incite division, cause more hostility between people and corrupt character—all under the name of justice so people can feel good while they do injustice. It is the exact same trap of the Dark Ages Church, burning people at the stake in order to save them.

Only God's laws of love, truth and liberty heal and unite, only as we trust God with our lives, our futures, the outcomes and stay faithful in governing ourselves in harmony with His principles can we overcome Satan and the powers of this world.

As I was thinking about Joseph, about the threats from society, government, the abuses and injustices he suffered and how today we are faced with threats that are designed to incite fear, to inflame our desire to protect self, to use the survival mechanisms of this world, I read Psalms 27:1-6 in *The Remedy*:

> *The Lord enlightens me and heals me —*
> *Why should I be afraid? The Lord keeps me safe —*
> *Why should I be afraid?*
>
> *When selfish people attack me and try to destroy me,*
> *they will stumble and fall.*
>
> *Even if surrounded by an entire army,*
> *I will not be afraid;*
> *even if the army attacks,*
> *I will trust the outcome to God.*
>
> *There is one thing I desire from the Lord;*
> *one thing my heart truly wants:*
> *to be part of the Lord's family and live in his house all my life,*
> *to gaze upon his beauty,*
> *to have him as my teacher.*
>
> *He will shelter me from danger;*
> *he will keep me safe in his home*
> *and will establish me, secure, on the immovable Rock.*
>
> *My character will rise above the selfish enemies around me.*
> *With joy I will offer my heart as his temple;*
> *I will sing — yes! — I will sing praises to the Lord.* Psalms 27:1-6 REM

We like Joseph, when faced with injustice must decide, whose methods will we practice, whose principles will we advance—those of this world or those of Jesus Christ? And by choosing Jesus and His methods our characters grow to be more like Him!

So what are the principles we are to apply in our own families—that we can see in the life of Joseph?

- Healthy **relationships** require healthy people and healthy people are in governance of themselves
    - Joseph didn't have authority over what his brothers did; he didn't have authority over what the slave traders did; he didn't have authority over what Potiphar or his wife did or what Pharaoh or his cup bearer did. And he certainly didn't have authority over what God did. Joseph only authority over what he did in governance of self. Would he trust God? Would he surrender his life to God? Would he trust God with outcomes? Would he, in his own heart and mind and practice the methods of God? Would He forgive those who wronged him? Would he let fear and selfishness control his decisions, or would his love for God and others direct his actions?
        - Consider his decision with Potiphar's wife—how was Joseph's decision and outworking of love?
        - Was his refusal of Potiphar's wife an action of love for God?
        - Was it an action of love for Potiphar?
        - Was it an action of a healthy self-love—protecting his own integrity, heart, mind, character?
        - Was it action of love for Potiphar's wife? How? What would happen to Potiphar's wife's character if she carries out her adultery? So, if Joseph loves Potiphar's wife, like Jesus, does Joseph collude with actions that sear her conscience, harden her heart and corrupt her character?
        - But if Joseph is motivated primarily with fear and selfishness to protect Joseph and get whatever Joseph can get, or perhaps with anger and resentment at Potiphar for being a slave and wants to get back at Potiphar, what action would Joseph take?
    - Healthy relationship require healthy people—and healthy people are in governance of self—so Joseph demonstrates healthy self-governance. Did that mean his relationships were all healthy relationships? Why not? Because others were not healthy!
        - Understand this critical point—you cannot have healthy relationships with others if you yourself are not healthy if you do not live out God's principles and methods in your own life. But even when you do, you cannot have healthy relationships with others who are unhealthy!

- Healthy **relationships** require healthy people and healthy people are in governance of themselves
- Healthy people own their shortcomings
    - The unhealthy, unconverted, immature, blame others, deny, distort, project, but don't look in the mirror and seek to own their own problems and through God's grace overcome them.

- If we want healthy relationships we must deal with our own selves first and ensure we are owning our own shortcomings and through God's grace working to overcome them. We must stop trying to blame our spouse or children or parents for our problems
- Adam – it wasn't me it was that woman….

Healthy **families** require healthy parents and

- healthy parents are in governance of themselves and practice God's methods and principles
  - Abraham brought conflict into his family by surrendering his decision-making to Sarah and violating God's methods and principles in taking Hagar. It was NOT Sarah's decision with whom Abraham slept—it was Abraham's. But Abraham surrendered that choice seeking to placate and appease Sarah, seeking to accommodate her, seeking to make her happy. And worse he sought it through a pagan custom that violated God's design, methods and plans.
  - Healthy parents will work together, will seek unity, will seek to find agreement—but at the end of the day, each person must govern themselves in accord with their own conscience and not surrender their decision making to their spouse.
  - Questions about this?

Healthy **families** require healthy parents and healthy parents are in governance of themselves, practice God's principles and

- set healthy boundaries and enforce the boundaries they set:
  - never set a boundary they are not willing to enforce
  - Spelling B analogy
  - Boundaries provide structure and safety & security
  - Baby born cries, unless wrapped tight….
  - Same rules which say you can't go out into the street in the child's mind says the street can't come in to harm them. But what if you never enforce your boundary? No security, increased fear and acting out and undermined trust

Does setting healthy boundaries apply only to parents and children or to all relationships?

Read fourth paragraph, "Some cultures emphasize…" What is the relationship between personal commitment and corporate or community commitment?

Can there be community or corporate commitment without personal commitment?

Can corporations or institutions be saved or only people?

Can corporations love?

I have heard a lot about corporate repentance growing up. People refer to Daniel's prayer as an example of this in Daniel 9. However, as I reread Daniel 9 with design law in mind my view of this

passage has changed. Daniel's prayer is not about corporate salvation, because corporations are not saved, only people are saved. Daniel's prayer is about corporate mission—about Israel being put back on the field, getting off the bench, of God fulfilling His purpose to bring the Messiah through Israel and complete the plan of salvation to save people. That is the focus and that is the answer Daniel gets from His prayer. God gives him the vision that through the remnant of Israel, God's promise in Genesis 3:15 of the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head would come. That the promise of the Seed of Abraham who would save the world would come through this remnant. That is it. There is nothing in the process that says corporate Israel will be saved, only that corporate Israel would fulfill its purpose of being the avenue for the Messiah, and also protecting the Scriptures and teaching tools given to them.

So, in regard to corporations today, such as Come and Reason Ministries, it is the people who are saved and the corporation is only as effective in carrying out God's purposes as the people who make up that corporation are. It is as we commit ourselves to God and work in harmony with His methods and principles and follow His leading and trust Him with outcomes that God is able to use our corporation and the resources He has blessed us with to fulfill purposes for Him.

And what do we see as God's purpose for His people at this time in human history?

To present the final message of mercy to the world—the truth of His character and methods of love in the setting of the message of the 3 angels!

Read the last paragraph, "To find rest…" What do you think of this idea that God has only children no grandchildren? What does it mean? It means we cannot pass along salvation to our children, each person must accept Jesus for themselves, to die to selfishness and be reborn as a child of God.

But does that mean we cannot pass along advantages and disadvantages to our children and grandchildren?

The commandment says that sins pass down 3-4 generations—what does this mean?

This is an outworking of design law—God created Adam and Eve with the ability to procreate beings in their image. This means that as they lived their lives and through life experiences changed themselves they would have children with characteristics similar to them.

This is not just the genetic sequences that code for things like height, eye color, skin color, shape of the face, structure of the hands, the various physical characteristics. No, we also pass along the epigenetic instructions telling the various genes how to express themselves.

Our choices in life change us epigenetically and we pass along to our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren either advantages or disadvantages through molecules that attach to the DNA.

In my lecture The Developing Brain, which is on our website and the link is in the notes, I give many scientific examples of this and explain it in detail.

Here are some comments by one of the founders of the SDA church, written back in the 19th century, before the discovery of DNA, before the discovery of epigenetics, and some historically scoffed at these insights, but science has proven them to be exactly correct.

- **The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children**. In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations.... {1MCP 139.1}

  Through the indulgence of appetite and passion their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations. **Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil**. {1MCP 139.2}

- **The physical and mental condition of the parents is perpetuated in their offspring**. This is a matter that is not duly considered. **Wherever the habits of the parents are contrary to physical law, the injury done to themselves will be repeated in the future generations**. . . . {AH 172.1}
- **A genuine conversion changes hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong.** --Lt 105, 1893. (6BC 1101.) {1MCP 145.4}

  - Studies document that:
  - Pregnant mothers with negative thinking patterns, pessimistic, critical, depressigenic thought patterns, alter the developing brain of their children increasing the risk of depression in them later in life
    - (Am Journal of Psychiatry 2013; 170:434-441).
  - If mothers are highly stressed during pregnancy their stress hormones cross the placental barrier and alter, epigenetically, the braking mechanism of the fetal brain and child is born less capable of calming themselves, more irritable, anxious and socially impaired than that child would have been if mother was not highly stressed during pregnancy
    - Medina, J. Psychiatric Times, April 2010, p. 16
    - https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/transgenerational-transmission-of-resilience-after-catastrophic-trauma
  - What one eats alters their epigenetics and this passes along and what one eats while pregnant alters the gene expression of the fetus
    - Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, DOI: 10.1073/pnas.0806560105
    - Biology Published 2008 https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Jacob-and-the-Spotted-Sheep%3A-The-Role-of-Prenatal-Backon/194ef71dd0af81f87cebdeda41ac64a85bc44a74
    - Eur J Hum Genet. 2006 Feb;14(2):159-66.
    - http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16391557

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in trauma survivors epigenetically alters the genes controlling resilience and stress response restoring the brain function back to pre-trauma activity, i.e. restoring health.
  - Biological Psych, Vol 74,(1) Dec 2013 p. 793-800

So while we cannot pass along salvation, we can pass along healthier equipment that enhances the ability to make healthy choices.

TUESDAY

Read bottom green section, "There are many groups…" Why does healthy God-like love not accept ourselves as we are?

But does healthy God-like love devalue us or consider us worthless or wormlike?

Why or why not?

From where does our value and worth originate or come? The lesson says it comes from outside of ourselves, if they mean by that that God is the source of all creation and everything that exists was created by Him and ultimately has is source and worth in Him, then of course this is correct.

But if they mean that we have no worth as individuals in ourselves because we are sinners would that be correct?

Or do we have worth in who we are because we are God's creation, human beings created in the image of God to be temples for the Spirit of God. So we have inherent worth as humans regardless of any good we have done, it is built in by God in our creation.

But, does that inherent value or worth, which God demonstrates in that "while we were yet sinners Christ die for us" mean that we are healthy or good or righteous? No—we have worth in who we are, creations of God, but we are sick in sin, terminal and dying and our worth won't change that.

So, love looks in the mirror of God's design law and acknowledge there is something wrong with us, something we did NOT choose that will kill us unless remedied. And God so loved the world, valued us so much, that He sent His only Son so that whoever trust Him He will heal, cure, and restore to eternal life.

So, I see worth and righteousness as different things. We have inherent worth has human beings, but we are still terminal and have no righteousness within us, nothing good in ourselves or any ability to restore us to goodness or godlikeness—all of our goodness is a gift received through Jesus via the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph, "Our relationships are miniature reflections…" What are the two antagonistic principles raging in the Great Controversy?

- love versus selfishness

What are the primary methods of these two principles?

- love operates on truth and liberty
- selfishness operates upon lies and coercion

What is the principle emotions of the two?

- love operates on desires to benefit others, for the welfare of others, compassion, and joy in the welfare of others
- selfishness operates on fear of loss, fear of rejection and lust or longing to protect or get for self, which brings relief and pleasure. So it operates on the pleasure principle, what feels good.

Do we see these two principles at war through human history?

Do we see them coming to a final confrontation in the world today?

Why do so many people prefer the methods of Satan, lies and coercion of others?

Because they are motivated by fear and selfishness. Fear is a powerful motivator, when people are afraid they will sacrifice principles to feel safe. They will give up liberties, they will lie, deceive, cover up, blame others, allow others to take the fall for them.

So, Satan is described at the end of time as a roaring lion—a lion's roar doesn't actually harm, it incites fear. And when animals are afraid they respond with:

- Freezing—they stop doing what they would normally do, stop gathering nuts, stop building their nests, stop their service for others—we are afraid, we stop ministry, stop meeting, stop choir practice, stop visiting shut ins, we freeze when we are afraid.
- Flight—the animal who hears the lion's roar if it doesn't freeze, then may flee, run away, seek to hide, seek to avoid the threat. So many when they hear fear messaging today are seeking to run away, to hide, to avoid the conflict. Just be silent, don't speak up, don't stand for truth, don't resist the liars, just hide in the crowd.
- Fight—or if cornered, if freezing doesn't work, if fleeing doesn't work, then when cornered animals will fight. How many Christians are being tricked into fighting, but not fighting with the weapons of God, but fighting with the weapons of the world. Paul said,
    - "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (Co 10:3–5 NIV84).

- We are to fight with truth, love and liberty, presenting the truth about God and His methods in love, but leaving others free. We are not to seek to take control of governments to force our way, but we are to present the corruption of Satan's methods that people use to take away liberties of others all in order to make themselves feel safe.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: Good News—we are now the owner of the property at 4922 La Collina Way, Collegedale, TN

It is a two-story building with over 14,000 square feet. We will occupy the first floor, which is a little over 7000 square feet. But before we move in, we need to do renovations to prepare for our classes and ministry production. We will have a theater studio that can seat up to 130 people, so we can record and broadcast programs with a live audience. We will have a kitchen, so we can have regular potlucks. There's also a large, ready-to-use room that we plan for children, so parents can come to our class while their children have a meaningful program and time for them.

The next step in the process is to get contractors to bid on the renovation, choose one, and get the space prepared for our occupancy.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public, so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so.

So, please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us to find the contractor and bless the process, so that the resources you bless us with will be spent wisely and most economically to further increase the outreach of this ministry.

NEW RESOURCE SOUTH AFRICA: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Special Baker Books has made the digital version of ***The God Shaped Heart*** available for a short time for $1.99 for either Kindle readers on Amazon or Nooks at Barnes and Noble.

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 7
Rest, Relationships, and Healing

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I received this email this week:

> *I just want to thank God for your ministry. I recently discovered it as I was searching online for more 'meat' to the sabbath school lesson study discussions. I was weary of the humdrum and prayed about something more substantive. And! Come and Reason appeared in the search. It has been less than 6 months. I am learning about God in a better view than before. I like this God better! This way of thinking about what God has revealed in His word is more consistent with who He is. May God continue to make your ministry fruitful to the building up of His kingdom!*

And I also received this email this week:

> *Dear Dr. Jennings and C&R Team,*
>
> *Our family has been so blessed by your ministry, books, seminars, and weekly Bible studies. We were particularly touched by the latest study which focused on today's events and your loving response to a troubling email you received.*
>
> *I write to you today with a heavy heart requesting prayer for my current situation at work. You see, I am a Federal employee at a medical clinic, and have just received notice of the National mandate that we must receive the COVID vaccine within 8 weeks or face unemployment. I knew this day may come, but am still concerned nonetheless as I have a health condition that I feel would worsen if I were to take this experimental shot. I had hoped to use my talents in this job and retire with benefits, but it looks like that may not be an option. Pray for me and my family as we seek His wisdom and guidance in these uncertain times. Thank you and*

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> *God bless you and your team for what God is doing through you at this critical time in earth's history!*

What is your reaction to this?

Do you only hear a medical problem, an employment problem, a political problem, or do you see the issues of the Great Controversy at play?

Two weeks ago I read this quote from the book *Education:*

> The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. **He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme,** of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. **He should understand the nature of the two principles** that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to **trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation**. He should see how this controversy **enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. Ed 190.2

Do you see that the two antagonistic principles are front and center over this issue? Do you see how right now, how we handling this situation we are deciding our characters, our methods, the principles we prefer and align with?

We are entering into the very final movements before Christ returns. The battle is heating up, and I want to be prepared, and I want you to be prepared.

We are being placed into positions in which we are being asked to make a decision—to decide what we will do in governance of ourselves—take an experimental injection or not, wear mask or not, attend church or not, visit family or not—and how we will treat others, what principles will we practice?

But upon what are we to base our decision? Each of us are trying to decide, what is best, what is right, what is truth. But which rationale, ideas, beliefs, conclusions, options are we ourselves able to directly validate or confirm? In

other words, isn't it the case that we are being asked to make a decision based on who we trust?

- Do you trust the government? The CDC, the NIH, the health department?
- Do you trust politicians either left or right?
- Do you trust media personalities either left or right?
- Do you trust popular opinion?
- Do you trust your doctor? How many doctors do you know that have personally done research on viruses, and then specifically on COVID 19 and have themselves confirmed what they are reading in the various medical outlets? I have not.
- Are doctors ever wrong—even when the majority agree?
    - What about on the majority view when Pasteur presented germ theory?
    - What 100 years ago when doctors prescribed tobacco as a treatment for lung disease?

How did doctors come to leave the wrong idea behind?

What method was used to lead out of wrong conclusions into right ones?

And this takes us to the heart of the Great Controversy, the war between Christ and Satan that began in heaven.

In heaven when Lucifer started his rebellion were the angels able to do primary research and uncover evidence to confirm who was telling the truth, Lucifer or God? Did the angels have to decide who they would trust?

And we face the same battle for our minds today, a question of who we can trust.

But what decision do you make when you can't do primary research and uncover the evidence for yourself?

If you have time, you wait and see, allow things to unfold and the truth eventually reveals itself. But if you don't have time, if you are forced to make a decision then…

Examine the methods—if people genuinely want the truth and are pursuing truth what attitude do they have and what method to they employ when questions arise, when data come up that question the accepted narrative?

Historically in medicine products get approval for use in America by doing double blind placebo-controlled studies that demonstrate effectiveness and reveal various side effects, risks or negative outcomes. But it is understood that the study population is always a narrow population, it doesn't represent the wide range of genetic and physiological differences found in the population as a whole, and thus it is understood that once a product enters the larger population new side effects or problems may emerge that were not seen in the studies.

Historically, medical standards encouraged reporting of complications or harm suspected to be caused by various treatments. Standard medical practice has been scientific, loving and pursuing truth, evidence, facts and when such reports were made they were recorded and actively investigated to confirm or refute, by evidence, the concern. This is a healthy and mature approach to any question—truth loses nothing by investigation.

There have been multiple products over the years that have come to market only later to be either removed because of unknown serious problems emerged, like death, or they receive a new black box warning about risks not initially understood.

Doesn't the approach of being open to the evidence and following it where it leads sound reasonable? Doesn't it give you greater confidence when concerns are met with a willingness to investigate and uncover what is true?

Who would not be willing to do this? Wouldn't it be a those who know their position is false, that their product has a problem, and the truth will expose them?

There have been products like this that have come to market; Zyprexa is one of them. A very effective antipsychotic, but known by the company to increase DMII and obesity, the company purposely misrepresented the data and worked to obstruct investigation and lied about the signals doctors were seeing in their patient populations and resisted research to determine the facts because they already knew the facts.

When you either know there is a problem, or suspect there is a problem, or have it good now and believe any investigation will only expose problems, then you really don't want the truth and facts to come to light, then you don't encourage investigation and inquiry. The manufacturer plead guilty to a criminal charge and paid a $1.42 billion dollar settlement.

We see the same methods of refusal to investigate evidence when it comes to the COVID vaccine.

- Research has come out with evidence that the COVID-19 spike protein, which the injections stimulate the body to produce, have been demonstrated to bind to heparin binding proteins, which in the brain increases the accumulation of beta-amyloid proteins (Alzheimer's disease), Tau proteins (Alzheimer's disease), alpha-synuclein (Parkinson's and Lewy Body disease), prions (spongiform disease). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006291X2100499X

  This research suggests that the vaccines could lead to neurodegenerative changes and dementias. What would be the godlike, ethical, moral, response? Would it be to actively investigate? Would it be to inform the public and give them the option of waiting for more information on this or is the godlike response to suppress this information and not inform people before they get an experimental injection? Perhaps this will turn out to be a false signal and the vaccines don't contribute to increased neurodegenerative changes, but until we know shouldn't people be informed and given the option? Why withhold the evidence and push the vaccine?
- Over 12,000 deaths from the vaccine have been reported in the VAERS database in 7 months, which calculates into approximately 1 in 13,000 risk of dying from the vaccine—assuming those numbers are not depressed. Should people be informed of these numbers and given the option to take it or not? What is the godlike approach? What about for children who have essentially no risk from the disease, should they be required to take the shot where 1 in 13,000 may die?
- When pathologists who have spent the last 16 months examining blood samples of COVID recovered people report that:

  - "*A natural infection induces hundreds upon hundreds of antibodies against all proteins of the virus, including the envelope, the membrane, the nucleocapsid, and the spike. Dozens upon dozens of these antibodies neutralize the virus when encountered again. Additionally, because of the immune system exposure to these numerous proteins (epitomes), our T cells mount a robust memory, as well… T cell memory to those infected with SARSCOV1 is at 17 years and running still*." Whereas the vaccine triggers the body to make the spike protein and the immune system to only create antibodies to the spike protein.
    - What would be an honest, ethical, and truth-loving response? Should we actively investigate? If this is true wouldn't this be easily verifiable? And if it is verified and true would it give millions of recovered individuals comfort, reassurance and reduce fear? And would recovered individuals need to worry about re-exposure and mask wearing or getting vaccinated? Why the refusal to verify or refute this? Why coerce recovered individuals who have antibodies to get the experimental injection? https://www.dailyveracity.com/2021/07/19/cdc-vaccine-deaths-pass-10000-as-efficacy-of-the-jab-plummets-data-suggests-those-naturally-infected-do-better-than-the-vaccinated/
- Other physicians, who have seen increased vascular problems in their vaccinated patients became concerned that the spike protein produced from the mRNA vaccines were binding to the body's smallest blood vessels and triggering micro-clots with subsequent vascular and cardiac problems, one physician began doing d-dimer blood studies and found that 62% of his patients who had had the vaccines had this micro clotting problem. https://principia-scientific.com/doctor-heart-failure-from-mrna-jabs-will-kill-most-people/
  - What is the healthy, godlike approach? Is it reasonable to investigate, to determine if this is real or some false signal, some other non associated problem this doctor is finding?
- July 25, 2021 the New South Wales, Australia, health department released figures on the COVID hospitalizations:
  - 141 in hospital
  - 43 in ICU

- 18 on ventilators
- 60 under the age of 55
- 28 under the age of 35
- of the 43 in ICU 1 in their teens, 7 in their 20, 3 in their 30
- **all but one has been vaccinated**
- https://rumble.com/vkba8x-update-from-sydney-all-new-covid-hospitalizations-involve-vaccinated-indivi.html
- Do you remember warnings that the vaccine might cause anti-body enhancement that makes one more susceptible to bad outcomes if infected? This happened in previous corona virus vaccines in the animal studies. Is this happening in humans? Should we investigate?
- Should people be warned of the possibility and given liberty to decide whether they take the injection or not?

What is the ethical, truth-seeking, approach to these and many other problems that doctors are finding? Wouldn't it be to actively investigate, see if this is real, reproducible, documentable, or some artifact, something unrelated? Why isn't it being investigated? Why aren't people being told the potential risks? What does it mean that officials suppress such medical data and don't actively investigate it and instead attack those who present these concerns?

And why the hard push to force the injection on everyone right now? Is there a crisis? Are hospitals overwhelmed right now? 164 million Americans have been vaccinated, estimates of up to 100 million people have recovered from COVID—meaning together the vast majority of the population is protected. Why the push, the mandates, the coercion, even on people who have recovered and have documented antibodies?

Why the persistent slanted and fear magnifying media coverage—like telling people only how contagious the delta variant is over and over again, but always leaving out that it is much less virulent than the original virus—meaning mild disease and very little chance of a bad outcome.

I am not saying any of these concerns are proven, what I am demonstrating is that normal medical ethics and godly principles of investigation and truth-seeking are not being followed by the pro-vaccinators. Why?

Why did the director of the CDC get on national news and tell people that children are dying at a higher rate from COVID than from seasonal flu, when the CDCs own data, published on their website, is exactly the opposite, children die at a much higher rate from seasonal flu than from COVID. And the government has never recommended mask mandates for seasonal flu, or forced vaccination for seasonal flu, which is more lethal to children than COVID.

So, while I can't do primary research myself. I can spot the methods being employed by the pro-COVID vaccinators. And the method of the pro-vaccinators are not the methods of standard medical ethics, nor the methods of truth and liberty.

This is part of the Great Controversy, impacting our minds, setting us up for the great final deception.

Satan has no truth on his side, so he cannot appeal to evidence and truth. He must use other methods. Of course he uses lies. But more than just falsehood, he depends on the authority of office, position, proclamations, claims, declarations, and trust in someone else to tell you're the answer to get others to believe and follow without investigation or evidence.

In religion this manifests with ideas like "just believe" "have faith" "If you have faith you don't need evidence" "feelings are reliable and you can trust them" "the Bible said it I believe it that settles it" and "he's the pastor, priest, rabbi, mullah, or pope—who are you to question?"

In society today it is, "the CDC says, Dr. so and so says, the NIH says, the New England Journal says."

And this approach, appealing to the authority of office, is not creating a new lie, a new deception. Believing the experts is now the definition of "following the science." When many news outlets and politicians say follow the science or we follow the science, they don't mean actual scientific evidence, they mean expert opinion. And those who don't believe the so-called experts are called science deniers. Yesterday in *Psychiatric News*, which is a professional medical newspaper, there was an article entitled *Anti-Vaxxers and Water Witches: Mistrust of Science and the Limits of Reason*. The article stated the following about those who don't want the vaccine:

> The common thread in these personal vignettes is, of course, a deep-seated denial of science and a mistrust of scientific *experts*—a word that is nowadays pronounced with a kind of dismissive hiss. Indeed, experts in epidemiology and infectious disease, such as Anthony Fauci, MD, are not merely doubted by a substantial proportion of the public—they are threatened with bodily harm for advocating vaccination against COVID-19. **It is easy to explain away such science denial** as the result of mistaken information and biased reasoning… https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/anti-vaxxers-water-witches-mistrust-of-science-limits-of-reason?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=07302021_PT_BIO-21-PSD0303_eNL_BioXcel&eKey=dHJqNzc3QHlhaG9vLmNvbQ==

Don't accept the person in authority and you are a science denier.

But you can tell whether the person in authority is advancing truth or not, is a lover of truth or not, because if they are not on the side of truth they will use Satan's next method when anyone challenges them with evidence or presents truth that exposes their position as false.

They will seek to silence the voices of opposition—shout them down, label them heretic, fire them, retract their articles (not rebut the article with evidence-based scholastic evidence), cancel their engagements, de-platform them, imprison them and even kill them. This is what happened to God's Bible prophets, the Reformers and is what is happening today to any who seek to merely bring the truth to light.

If the vaccines are really safe and effective, asking questions and pursuing evidence will only confirm that. But the fact that these methods are employed by the pro-vaccinators suggests they have something to hide.

Satan also uses the methods inducement, bribes, payoffs, giving you some reward for doing wrong, but if you don't take the payoff then you are threatened with something painful. The classic *Godfather* approach, take the bribe or have your legs broken.

Satan used all these methods on Christ:

- He tempted Jesus by lying; presenting himself as an angel from heaven when he was not, and by misquoting Scripture to try and deceive
- He offered Jesus a bribe—all the kingdoms of the world
- He inspired the religious authorities to denounce him and allege His miracles were done by Satan's power—seeking to "deplatform" Him
- and ultimately he used coercion and threat, violence, at the crucifixion

God's methods are truth, presented in love, leaving free. These are the methods of God's people.

Listen to this historic quote—do you agree?

> "Christ seldom attempted to prove that truth is truth. **He illustrated truth in all its bearings, and then left His hearers free to accept or reject it, as they might choose. He did not force anyone to believe**."
> Evangelism, 171.1

Should we also practice this method? Only in religion or in all avenues of life?

What methods do you see being practiced by the proponents of the experimental injection?

- Do they want honest and open investigation of the evidence?
- Do they want to leave people free?
- Do they seek to censor people, to restrict information, to silence?
- Do they use incentives to bribe people to get the injection—gift cards, free meals, bonuses etc.?
- Do they use threats, lose your job, can't go to school, can't travel, can't shop, can't worship, can't visit family, lose your license, lose your business, arrest?

But, some will email me and protest. They will say the government simply wants to save lives. They will ask how can I be so insensitive, they will ask if I want to kill people!

But this is a false argument. Doctors who asked questions about Zyprexa or any other treatment, voicing concern that it may be causing harm are not

seeking to harm, but to protect their patients. My questions are not designed to kill people, just the opposite, my questions are designed to save people—and this includes saving people from both temporal illness and death, but even more importantly save them eternally, save their minds from being corrupted by destructive practices.

The methods being employed by the pro-vaccinators are not the methods of God. They are not actively pursuing the truth.

And to be clear, you can be pro-vaccine and still be godly, because you use godly methods to advance it. You present your understanding, rationale, and reasons in love but leave others free. You don't coerce or bribe others to do what you want them to do. The specific action isn't the primary concern; it is the methods. And I am warning against the prevailing mainstream culture, which is not grounded in the scientific method or the principles of the Bible. How many Christians are falling into this Satanic spirit—and are willing to practice beastly methods to get people injected?

I am neither for nor against the vaccine—you must make that decision for yourself. But I am for truth, love, and freedom, for applying the methods of God in every activity of life, including how we address the COVID crisis.

The methods being employed—notice again, I'm not saying the experimental injection itself; I'm saying the methods being employed—the deceit, authority, bribery, coercion, and threats to get people to take this treatment are beastly. **If you go along with these methods now and support them being used on others, you are embracing the methods of the beast and are actively preparing your mind to accept them again when the next issue comes along that is presented as necessary to save lives**.

Jesus does not work this way.

Only those who have developed the ability to discern, to think for themselves, to examine evidence, to practice God's methods, and have not surrendered their minds and thinking to others will be able to handle the final deception soon coming upon the world.

There is a well-known process to get good people to do evil. Psychologist Philip G. Zimbardo, PhD, describes the steps necessary in order to get good people to do evil. This comes from an article written back in 2004—long before COVID:

1. Provide people with an ideology to justify beliefs for actions.
    - We will die if we don't take this action
    - The only way to stay safe is to do this
    - We must do this to save lives
2. Make people take a small first step toward a harmful act with a minor, trivial action and then gradually increase those small actions.
    - Socially distance
    - Limit visits with friends and family
    - Wear masks
    - Stop going to church
    - Close businesses
    - Get an experimental injection
    - Punish people who won't get the injection
3. Make those in charge seem like a "just authority."
    - The CDC, Dr. Fauci, the NIH, health department are to be trusted, they are the just authority
4. Transform a once compassionate leader into a dictatorial figure.
    - Anyone, including your compassionate doctor, who doesn't want to get the injection wants to kill people
5. Provide people with vague and ever-changing rules.
    - Wear masks don't wear masks
    - Fully vaccinated don't need masks/fully vaccinated need masks
    - Vaccines are effective; being vaccinated doesn't prevent reinfection
6. Relabel the situation's actors and their actions to legitimize the ideology.
    - There are the vaccinated and the unvaccinated—the vaccinated are those who love others and want to protect life, the unvaccinated are selfish, don't care for others, and are willing to kill people
7. Provide people with social models of compliance.
    - Look if you get the shot you can travel, go to work, don't need to mask everywhere, can go out to eat, compliance makes life easier, you can keep others safe, you will be good and righteous
8. Allow dissent, but only if people continue to comply with orders.

- Of course you can voice your complaint as long as you get your shot and wear your mask

9. Make exiting the situation difficult.
    - If you don't get your shot you can't travel, you can't go to college, you will lose your job, you will be a danger to others and thus you must be punished.
    - https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct04/goodbad

These steps are well documented to lead people to join groups that will do harm to others. Do we see these methods being employed today?

But that is not all. Have you heard of deindividuation? It is the process of a person losing their individual identity and surrendering their mind and actions to the group—it is part of the process that leads to mob mentality and groupthink. It is described by social psychologists in classic lynch mobs and genocide.

Social psychologists have researched factors that lead to deindividuation, the loss of identity. When this happens people feel less personal responsibility; they surrender responsibility to the group and are less compassionate, will exploit and hurt others more easily, will more readily break rules and act in anti-social ways. And what is one factor that has been demonstrated to consistently contribute to deindividuation? Anything that hides your identity—so online avatars lead to people more willing to verbally act in unkind ways online, to join online mobs to bully and hurt others.

But in person, anything that hides the face—so mirrored sunglasses lead to more willingness to hurt others, but wearing masks has an even bigger effect. This is why the KKK used masks, it is why antifa uses masks, it is also why mask wearing by the populace is counterproductive to good social order and leads to more conflict, breakdown of compassion, decrease in love and increased willingness to hurt others as well as increased anxiety and mental health problems.

Studies of groups find that when we identify with a group, dress similarly, march together, chant together, sing together, that physical and athletic performance is improved shortly after the group experience. This is why military units train

together, dress alike, march together, sing cadence together. They become a more effective force together than just a group of individuals.

However, when military units have to function in chemical or biological warfare zones where they have to wear masks, their effectiveness is severely compromised and the wearing of masks contributes to the highest level of psychiatric casualties.

Then why didn't KKK mobs or antifa mobs become ineffective when they wore masks? Because their mob became a group identity *without any significant opposition or threat*. Had an unmasked, organized and trained military unit shown up to combat any KKK or antifa mob you would see that group disintegrate and flee the field almost immediately.

This also goes to team sports, unified and cohesive they perform better, divided and fractured they fall apart. It goes to national resolve, the spirit of the nation.

What impact do you think it will have on children in schools for another year? Will they lose their sense of self, become more programmable, less capable of developing their own identity, more willing to surrender to the group? This is the overt and stated goal of those pushing woke policies—they want to break down individual identity and enhance group think.

The biblical, godly method is to present the truth in love and leave others free. We do NOT coerce, compel, force or seek to override a person's individuality. We seek to enhance and develop individuality and self-governance.

We are lovers of truth, we want to have truth, facts, evidences presented to correct us and lead us into ever-increasing reality based understandings of life. So we don't seek to silence dissenting voices, we are willing to engage in conversation with those who disagree with us. But those who either don't have truth, don't love truth, or don't have the ability to discuss the truth, instead will resist advancing truth and seek to silence dissenting voices.

Read memory text: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:5 NIV84).

What does this text say to you?

Why was Joseph not angry with his brothers?

Did Joseph forgive his brothers?

When did Joseph forgive his brothers, before they arrived in Egypt or only after he tested them?

Was Joseph's testing of his brothers to determine whether Joseph would forgive them or not?

What was the purpose of the testing of the brothers?

Did Joseph hold any attitudes, beliefs, choices, that led or enabled him to forgive his brothers? What were those?

Did Joseph's belief and trust in God enable him to forgive?

Did Joseph's belief in God give him a worldview, a perspective on events that helped him let go of resentment, bitterness and hate?

Did believing in God and the promises made to Abraham, help Joseph embrace a larger purpose than just himself?

Did Joseph still see himself as part of Abraham's family, as part of the of Israel, as a member of the group that God had called to fulfill His purpose?

Does it make a difference in conflict resolution if we see the other side as being within the same group as us or whether we see them as outside of our group?

Does this impact us today as well? What happens if we stop seeing ourselves as part of the same group as others, but see others as outside our group?

Let's look at history:

- Protestants and Catholics—when they viewed each other as heretic, evil, apostate, as an enemy of God what was the result? When they see each other as fellow human beings and part of the Christian family how do they treat each other?
- Same question for Christians and Jews or Jews and Muslims?
- What about historic tribal divisions in Africa, in Europe, in the Americas?
- This is why a common enemy unites previous opponents—because the new common enemy puts the previous opponents into the same group.
- Group identity can form on many levels—tribe, race, language, religion, etc. Historic nation states formed along tribal, racial and language lines, with religion used by the leaders to control the people—the shamans, witch doctors, priests, popes etc. The USA was different, it was formed on a common set of values—a belief in a Creator who endowed all human beings with inalienable rights and the purpose of government was to restrain the abusive powers of the government, religion and aristocracies from violating individual liberties. Thus group identity was not on race, or religion, or tribe, but upon the principles of civil and religious liberty—one nation under God with liberty and justice for all—the group united on shared values!

I am reading a very interesting book recommended by one of our online listeners Dr. Terry Utt, entitled *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff, Jonathan Haidt.

- Lukianoff is a graduate of American University and Stanford Law School. He has described himself as a "pro-choice liberal" and an atheist.

- Jonathan Haidt is an American social psychologist, Professor of Ethical Leadership at New York University Stern School of Business, and author. His main areas of study are the psychology of morality and moral emotions.

I share their backgrounds because I want you all to understand, this is not political, these writers are not right-wing conservatives. What I teach in this class are God's design laws and methods, these are eternal truths that transcend denominations, nations, races, political parties.

In their book these two political liberals do an excellent job of describing three lies, they call them untruths, that are ravaging college campuses and society in general and have become dominant with the igen or generation Z, which is the group that began college in 2013. The three big lies or untruths are:

- What doesn't kill you makes you weaker
- Always trust your feelings
- Life is a battle between good people and evil people

They identify from ancient wisdom writings—Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, Plato etc. common truths that all the great sages agree upon and then demonstrate that the three core untruths popular and taught on campuses today are opposite ancient wisdom.

- What doesn't kill you makes you weaker
    - Truth—what doesn't kill you makes you stronger—the idea being that we only grow through challenges, through overcoming obstacles, through the painful and difficult experiences in life. This is an outworking of one of God's design laws—which one? The law of exertion. Can you think of a Bible text that supports this idea?
        - "we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character" (Ro 5:3–4 NIV84).
    - So accepting the lie has led to concepts of avoiding things that are difficult, trials, obstacles, emotionally upsetting things. We must be safe, we need safe spaces, places where our ideas won't be challenged, where our concepts won't be exposed as flawed, where words won't upset us. We must remove names from buildings, or statues, or books, we must change names of teams because these are insensitive and hurt us and it isn't safe to be in a society that would injure us in this way. And what happens to minds and characters when the lie is accepted? Destruction of minds and characters, people get weaker, they don't get stronger.

- Always trust your feelings
    - All the great sages have taught that emotions energize but are not to be trusted as emotions can lie. Can you think of a Bible text that supports this?
        - When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire” (Jas 1:13–14 NIV84).
    - When people accept this lie then if they feel hurt the other person has assaulted them. And anything that hurts is aggression, words are violence and it is okay to use physical violence to stop the speech of others because their words hurt us and are violence. Facts, evidences and truths don’t matter, only our feelings matter.
        - They create falsehoods like this: Words that offend cause stress; stress increases inflammatory factors in the body which causes physical harm; thus offending words are acts of violence. What is wrong with this thinking? Replace words causing stress with anything else—such as your boyfriend or girlfriend break up with you causes stress, stress causes physical harm, therefore a breakup is an act of violence. Or, making a poor grade on an exam causes stress, stress harms the body, therefore if a teacher gives a bad grade it is an act of violence against you. Or being held accountable for sin, being brought to conviction, this causes stress and stress harms the body therefore the Holy Spirit convicting of sin is an act of violence.
- Life is a battle between good people and evil people
    - Throughout human history the sages have described that there is a battle between good and evil occurring *in every human heart*. But the new view is there isn’t a battle between good and evil as principles, methods, motives of our hearts—there are only good and evil people. Thus, if someone disagrees with your view, challenges your beliefs and hurts your feelings, they are evil and evil must be destroyed.

They cite several studies on how humans divide into groups, and that it doesn’t matter how people get divided into groups, once they are divided into groups

they begin thinking of “us versus them” and they treat people in the “us” category better than the “them” category. Studies have demonstrated that it doesn’t matter if people are divided by a coin toss, or by guessing the number of dots on a page full of dots, once they are divided into groups, people that are not in their group are treated worse than those in their group.

Other research using fMRI scans evaluated brains of people who were watching videos of other people having their hands touched either by a Q-tip cotton swab or pricked by a needle. When the hand being pricked by the needle was labeled as belonging to a person who had the same religion as the one watching, the area of the watcher’s brain that handles pain showed larger spike of activity than when the hand being pricked was labeled as belonging to a person of another religion.

But what is interesting is that when groups were arbitrarily assigned, like by a coin toss, the same differences in response occurred in the brains of the watchers when a hand being pricked was from someone in other group.

I find the book quite compelling in its description of what has been happening in society the last 8 years or so. They do a good job of documenting the seeds for this going back to at least the 1960s and how it roots are in Marxist philosophy but shifting the focus from money to power. It creates two groups, the evil are those with power and the righteous are those without power.

And, in what is being taught in colleges today, power isn’t about actual power such as being in office, controlling assets, being wealthy or even being physically strong—no having power in this new philosophy is defined as being of the same identity as the historic powerholders—heterosexual, white male, which immediately equates with being evil. Being virtuous, or righteous is defined as having identity of the historic disenfranchised—specifically non-binary sexual orientation, black, and female.

It doesn’t matter whether you are a former black president of the United States living in a $14 million dollar mansion in an exclusive neighborhood—you are disadvantaged and powerless and therefore righteous. And if you are a heterosexual white male, working as a day laborer living in a trailer and on Medicaid and food stamps to provide for your family, you are empowered, privileged and therefore evil.

This is the philosophy of BLM and CRT and it divides society and undermines the principles of Christianity. This is the exact opposite of what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did.

Reverend King appealed to common-humanity principles in his appeal for change in society. He appealed to the great principles of Protestantism established in the Declaration of Independence in order to overcome racism and bring unity to society.

Dr. King appealed to shared morals and identities. He constantly referred to the family and its value. He called all human beings brothers and sisters, recognizing we are all members of God's family. He advanced the unifying principles of love and truth. He said:

- "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."
- "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."
- "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note…Even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of the creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

Do you see how Dr. King, in seeking equality, did so by advancing the principles of Christianity, of the common values of children of God? Do you see that Dr. King recognized that the founding of the United States was based upon the principles of God and that they needed to be supported and advanced not denied and overturned?

What is happening in society today is an assault on truth, it is an assault on love, it is an assault on health, wellness, development, individuality. It is an assault on hearts and minds designed to divide and destroy.

Joseph had suffered real injustice at the hands of his brothers and Potiphar, but he remained true to God; he embraced God's principles; he practices God's law

of truth and love; he did not seek revenge; he remained part of the group, part of Abraham's descendants and sought to heal and reconcile with his brothers. Thus Joseph forgave his brothers.

If Joseph rejected God would he have been as likely to forgive?

Who was the primary beneficiary of Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers?

Who would have been the first person injured if Joseph had refused to forgive? And how would Joseph have been injured?

What about today? Are the lessons we are learning about injustice and forgiveness only applicable to ancient people, or do those same principles hold true today?

Christ divided people into two groups—the wheat and tares, sheep and goat, righteous and unrighteous—how is that different that the corruption we are seeing today?

Here is the difference:

Righteous	**Unrighteous**
Uses methods of God	Uses methods of Satan
Are honest	Are dishonest
Loves all people including enemies	Loves only those in one's group
Gives to help all humans	Gives to self and one's group
Divides based on character	Divides based on externals/race sex
Is healthy/lives in harmony with life	Is unhealthy and causes death
Uses power to heal and restrain	Uses power to coerce, kill, harm
Leaves others free	Takes freedom from others

SUNDAY

The lesson points out that Joseph had real power and could have taken revenge upon those who wronged him—why didn't he?

Would Joseph have been wrong to punish his brothers? Why or why not?

What would have happened in the heart and mind of Joseph had Joseph refused to forgive his brothers? What about had Joseph take the path "I will forgive once they have been punished appropriately" and then he inflicted some punishment upon them?

Does forgiving people mean we let them get away with abuse and exploitation?

The lesson rightly points out, "Practicing biblical principles in our relationships will not mean that we ever can or should accept abuse." Why not?

If we accept abuse who gets injured? Everyone—we get injured, those who witness (like children in the home) get injured, and the abuser gets injured.

Who has the most serious injuries when abuse is inflicted?

- Who has the most serious injuries when Jesus was beaten and crucified—Jesus or those who abused Him?
- What about when Stephen was stoned, Stephen or those who stoned him?
- What about when we are mistreated?

Why is it that the abuser never gets away with it?

When we fail to understand the nature of sin—that it injures and damages the sinner, when we instead falsely think that sin is a legal problem, then we can falsely believe the sinner will get away with their abuse unless caught and punished. Some unload this to God holding out for the day when the future legal judgment happens and God punishes them as much as they deserve, but that view creates a barrier between the victim and God and prevents true healing of the heart of the victim. It leads to more intolerance and sets people up to pursue social justice through more human laws and human governments—i.e. joining with the beast of Revelation.

Read fourth paragraph, "We have all been bought through Jesus' blood, and legally we are all His. Anyone who is abusive is attacking Jesus' property."

Does this comfort you?

How do you hear this idea? What is the implication? If Jesus didn't die for us, are we not His? We are only His because of the price He paid?

And what is that price? To whom is it paid? Why is a price necessary? Is it a legal price, the lesson seems to suggest it is, what kind of law is that?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Joseph had forgiven…" This is an excellent insight.

When we are wronged by others, we have to decide, will we apply God's methods to our own lives in order to heal, or will we infect our hearts with lies, Satan's methods of hate, anger, revenge, bitterness and only get worse?

Read third paragraph "All communications…" Why didn't the brothers find rest, peace, more happiness, joy?

What if they asked Jesus to pay their legal sin-debt to the Father for selling Joseph into slavery—would they have peace then? Why or why not?

What happens to people who try to deal with their sins through legal means? Did the Pharisees in Jesus' day try to deal with their sins through legal means? And what happened to them?

Do you see how the legal penal model cheats people from salvation and obstructs healing of heart and mind?

What about the idea of "paralyzing fear of God's retribution"? What is this about?

- Is the problem with sin what God will do to you for it or what sin does to you?
- If God were simply to get some anger management classes and refuse to use His infinite power to exact retribution upon sinners—what would happen to unrepentant sinners? Would they live forever? Would they

> have health and happiness? Is Satan right that sin doesn't harm, only God harms for sin?

Jesus said to Nicodemus that only those who are born again can see the kingdom of heaven. But, the Bible says that when Jesus returns that every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him—how is it that only the born again see the kingdom of heaven, but the unrepentant see Jesus coming in glory?

When Jesus comes again, some see a loving Savior, but others see a fearful punisher—and are terrified and beg the mountains to fall on them and hide them. Is what people see different because Jesus uses miraculous powers to present Himself differently to the two groups—or is what people see different because of their own minds, hearts, attitudes, characters, beliefs?

In other words, those who know Jesus for who He is rejoice and see a loving Savior, but those who have believed Satan's lies about God don't see the truth, the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of love. What they see is an imperial dictator who makes up rules and punishes rule breakers and they fear retribution.

So what about retribution? What law lens do you see it through?

> Upon the slothful servant the sentence was, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents." **Here, as in the reward of the faithful worker, is indicated not merely the reward at the final judgment but the gradual process of retribution in this life. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world: every power unused will weaken and decay. Activity is the law of life; idleness is death**. [What law is being described? What kind of law is this? Is it design or imposed? And according to this author it is the same in the spiritual as the natural world. And she describes this reaping of destruction from violating God's design laws as retribution.] "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Corinthians 12:7. Employed to bless others, his gifts increase. **Shut up to self-serving they diminish, and are finally withdrawn**. He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give. **He is consenting to a process that surely dwarfs and finally destroys the faculties of the**

soul. COL 364.1 [What is destroying the soul? Is it an outside infliction or the natural result of sinfulness?]

Let none suppose that they can live a life of selfishness, and then, having served their own interests, enter into the joy of their Lord. In the joy of unselfish love they could not participate. **They would not be fitted for the heavenly courts**. [Why? What unfits them? Is it that they didn't get the right legal price applied to their account? Or is it they didn't have selfishness replaced with God's law of love in their hearts and minds?] They could not appreciate the pure atmosphere of love that pervades heaven. The voices of the angels and the music of their harps would not satisfy them. To their minds the science of heaven would be as an enigma. COL 364.2

And then consider this quote from *The Great Controversy:*

God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. [which is what? In harmony with His character of love and methods as Creator, which means design law] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. **The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being**. {GC 541.2} [What do you hear? Is this an infliction of external punishment, or the application of design law? What power, it says the power and authority of the divine government—what power do you think power like human governments or like the Creator God of love? Does you keep in mind while reading things like this other quotes like this one from *The Desire of Ages: "*God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these principles is

the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**." {DA 759.1} So what power? The power of love and truth! But how can love and truth punish? Keep reading…]

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. [Can God get this by threatening and then inflicting external punishment on people who would otherwise not reap it? No! Imperial/imposed law violates the law of liberty and coerces and forces and thus destroys love. He can only get this by leaving people free!] He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. **And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes**. [What does God want? Our love and trust—and how is that achieved? So, you see Satan's power of lies to get us to conceive of God as a being other than love, a dictator who inflicts pain and suffering, which undermines our ability to love and trust God. This is what penal substitution theology does.] {GC 541.3}

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies**." [Wait, love your enemies is the principles upon which God executes justice and punishes sin? How does that work? Only by design law!] **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited**. [What does this mean? Executes justice—what is justice, doing what is right, and what is right? Is it right to give people the freedom to choose? Is it right to let people reap what they have chosen after repeated attempts to win them to love and trust? And when does God let them go to reap what they have chosen, when they are still healable/savable or when they have destroyed within themselves the faculties that respond to truth and love? And how is it good for the wicked for God to do this? Because, if God did not let the wicked go, did not let the wicked who are hardened in sin die, then God would create, by His power, a place of torment and God

would never do this. Thus, for mercy, for love, for the best for the wicked, He executes justice, the right thing for them and sets them free from Him the only source of life.] **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character**. [What are the laws of His government? Design laws and you can't force people to love you, or enjoy goodness and purity] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided**.[decided by who? a judge in heaven or each person decides their own destiny?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why can't they enter God's presence? Is it because God doesn't want them there, God is angry and wrathful and hasn't had the price paid to Him for that unrepentant sinner? No, it is because of their condition!] Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become **fixed in their characters.** [Fixed by who? How did it become fixed? What law caused it to become fixed?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? **Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish**. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless **streams of light flowing** upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--[what does that light look like? From where does it come? Do you

integrate texts like these: “the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” (Dan 7:9-10 NIV84) “for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” (Heb 12:29 NIV84)? Is this fire harmful? Do the righteous get injured by it? Why not? What about the wicked, why do they experience pain in this fire? From where does the pain come, from the fire or from unremedied sin?] could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no**; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction,** that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What is being described? Do you integrate texts like “They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” (Rev 6:16 NIV84)? What kind of law? What is the reason? Is God acting justly? He is executing justice?] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God**. [Who decides the fate of the wicked? What does it mean voluntary with themselves? It is what they want, is it right and just on God’s part to grant them exclusion from heaven? What kind of law?] {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [Why are they lost? Who made them incurable? Is this just on God’s part? Is it an infliction that their condition does not bring upon them?]{GC 543.1}

TUESDAY

The title is forgive and forget—what do you think about this?

Does forgiveness mean forgetting?

> "I, even I, am he who blots out
> your transgressions, for my own sake,
> and remembers your sins no more." Isa 43:25
>
> "For I will forgive their wickedness
> and will remember their sins no more." Heb 8:12

What do these texts mean? Is this talking about memory erasure or something else?

- Can our angels read our Bibles? Do they know about David's sin with Bathsheba? How can they if it has been forgotten in heaven?
- What about in the new heaven and Earth, will we know each other? Will we know our mothers and fathers and spouses and children?
    - So consider when David, Bathsheba and Uriah are talking and up walks Solomon and says "Hi Mom!" What happens then?

- Misunderstand the judgment –
    - Under imposed law the judgment is judicial and sin are bad deeds that we do and the record of the deeds must be erased and memory must be purged so no one knows because if people knew they wouldn't trust us, or wouldn't like us and we would live in fear and insecurity so the penal lie teaches that the texts mean memory erasure.
    - Under design law though we realize that the deeds are the symptoms of sinfulness in the heart and mind and that sin is erased from the character, selfishness is purged from the heart, evil is eradicated from the mind, but we all remember the history of how we suffered in our own lives from sin before Jesus healed us and we are thankful for this.
        - It is like having a child with cancer—while they are sick we must focus on the cancer and make all the interventions

necessary to put the cancer into remission. But once they are well, permanently well, we don't have to think about the cancer any more. But do we forget the doctor who cured her?

  - Mary Magdalene anoints Jesus feet
    - "those forgiven much love much"
  - Imagine being nominated to serve in children's department and someone says….
- So how do we understand those texts about not remembering?
  - Analogy of child who fibbed coming home "here comes that little liar…"
- One can safely "forget" ONLY when reconciliation has occurred

Consider this historic quote:

> Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. **Satan's own works have condemned him**. **God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated**. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created. . . . **The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness** that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." {Mar 346.2}

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Luke 23:34:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

And then asks what we learn about forgiveness from Jesus' example?

Did Jesus forgive them? Did He have authority to forgive sins? Did Jesus have to get some of His blood presented to Himself so He would forgive?

Does the Father need Jesus' blood presented to Him for the Father to forgive?

The lesson states in the bottom paragraph, "The Cross is the best example of what it cost God Himself to forgive us."

What are your thoughts about this?

If we define forgiveness as the entire process of restoring a sinner to eternal life and healing the heart and mind—then this is true—we learn what it cost God to heal and save.

But if we mean by forgiveness the typical definition of the word today, either personal pardon, not holding a grudge, not seeking revenge, or legal pardon, either way, then this is not true. The cross was not necessary for God to pardon and the sin problem wasn't legal in nature so didn't need a human law court legal ruling.

What the cross demonstrates is the what it cost God to as the Bible says:

- destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil
- destroy death and bring life and immortality to light, and,
- destroy the devil's work.

In other words, the Cross reveals the high cost to God to cure the sin problem, heal sinners, defeat Satan and eradicate sin from the universe and none of this was legal in nature.

God gave His personal pardon or forgiveness without price, without payment, but that personal pardon did not restore sinners or cure the problem, only Christ's life as a human could do that.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

The lesson states, “While it may not always be wise to restore relationships, this does not mean that we cannot forgive.”

Does forgiveness mean restored trust? Why or why not?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Vision for Come and Reason: We are now the owner of the property at 4922 La Collina Way, Collegedale, TN

This property is two stories with over 14,000 square feet. We will occupy the first floor a little over 7000 square feet. But before we move in we need to do renovations to prepare for our classes and ministry production. We will have a theater studio so we can record and broadcast programs with a live audience. We will have a kitchen so we can have regular potlucks. We plan on a children's room so parents with younger children can come to our class while the children have a children's program.

The next step in the process is to get contractors to give us an official bid for the renovation, choose a contractor and get the space renovated.

NEW RESOURCE SOUTH AFRICA: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 8
Free to Rest

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Last week I explored how events in our world are teaching people to practice the methods of Satan in their lives, preparing them to accept those same methods on a new issue or topic.

I examined the methods of lies, the use of office or authority to proclaim a position rather than demonstrate the evidence and pursue truth, of accusation, of calling those who challenge a position heretic or science denier, of inducements/bribes/payoffs and coercion, force intimidation and how all of these Satanic methods are used by the pro-vaxxers and not those asking for more evidence and urging caution.

I said we want to be truth seekers, investigate the evidence. And I am happy to report that on one of the points that I presented last week turns out to be a misstatement. I have been informed that the health official in Australia that said all but one of the hospitalized patients had been vaccinated, meant to say all but one was unvaccinated. This is beautiful, it is exactly how the lovers of truth are to work. Thank you to those who emailed to bring us this clarification.

On another point, I mentioned that pathologists who have spent the last may months examining blood samples of COVID recovered people report that:

> "*A natural infection induces hundreds upon hundreds of antibodies against all proteins of the virus, including the envelope, the membrane, the nucleocapsid, and the spike. Dozens upon dozens of these antibodies neutralize the virus when encountered again. Additionally, because of the immune system exposure to these numerous proteins (epitomes), our T cells mount a robust memory, as well… T cell memory to those infected with SARSCOV1 is at 17 years and running still*." Whereas the vaccine triggers the body to make the spike protein and the immune system to only create antibodies to the spike protein.
> https://www.dailyveracity.com/2021/07/19/cdc-vaccine-deaths-pass-10000-as-efficacy-of-the-jab-plummets-data-suggests-those-naturally-infected-do-better-than-the-vaccinated/

After class last week I came cross new research in an article dated July 28, 2021, which documents that this is, in fact, true. According to JAMA Network, in an article entitled "Überantibodies From Recovered COVID-19 Patients Could Spur New Therapeutics and Vaccines," recovered individuals had developed multiple different antibodies to COVID-19 and that "two of the antibodies were 'ultrapotent' at tiny concentrations across all 23 of the variants the scientists tested, including the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 (alpha), B.1.351 (beta), and B.1.617.2 (delta) versions."
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2782673?guestAccessKey=f93a08a1-db6e-428d-

86d7-3935e87bd31d&utm_source=silverchair&utm_campaign=jama_network&utm_content=covid_weekly_highlights&utm_medium=email

Then on Wednesday night another article came across my desk, entitled: **Long-term Persistence of Neutralizing Antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 Following Infection.** The data shows that there are effective antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 13 months post infection—as far out as people were able to be tracked thus far. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-021-07057-0

Yet a report came out this week from the CDC, a survey of citizens in Kentucky that states that those recovered from COVID but remain unvaccinated have twice the reinfection rate of the vaccinated and urged the recovered people to get vaccinated. There is something wrong here—it doesn't add up. It doesn't make sense with our understanding of all other illnesses, it doesn't make sense with the hard science antibody data I just presented.

Understand, this isn't simply about COVID or its treatment—it is about your mind. One of the mechanisms used to get people to surrender thinking, to become passive, to accept authority, to go along with rules that restrict liberty is to incite fear and then present conflicting data, ever changing rules, and keep you in a sense of uncertainty where you feel like you can't figure it out so you will turn to the government, the authority to tell you what to do. Psychologically, it will make you feel safe to follow the rules even if those rules are harming you and your family and our society.

Then one of our board members had a family member send them a link to an article, entitle: **Fact Check-No evidence that Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine causes Alzheimer's disease**

The article's opening paragraph states, "As of this article's publication, the COVID-19 vaccine manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech has not been shown to cause Prion diseases or neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS). Experts say a paper circulating online does not provide legitimate evidence otherwise." They go on to reference an article that was published by someone they say is a known anti-vaxxer and suggest this to undermine the concern as anti-vaxxer fears.
https://www.reuters.com/article/fact-check-no-evidence-that-pfizers-covi/fact-check-no-evidence-that-pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-causes-alzheimers-disease-idUSL1N2MZ382

If you remember I referenced an article that found that the spike protein which is on the virus and the study looked at COVID recovered pts and the impact the spike protein had, and I pointed out that this very same spike protein is produced by the vaccines; and this spike protein binds to heparin binding protein in the brain increasing the accumulation of various proteins associated with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Lewy Body, spongiform disease. So, this was sent, does this refute what I presented?

I present this not to argue the medical facts, but to demonstrate how to reason and think, how to differentiate what is being said.

- The article I referenced was published *after* the one linked above.

- The author they identify who they say is an antivaxxer is not the author of the paper I referenced—but even it was the fact someone is an antivaxxer doesn't mean what they say or present is false. The evidence and facts stand or fall on their own and need to be examined on their merits.
- The **Fact Check-No evidence that Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine causes Alzheimer's disease** article did not provide evidence that the vaccines are safe, they only state that the vaccines have "not been shown to cause…." Not being shown to cause the problem is not the same as not causing it; it means that the evidence is not yet in to know because such neurodegenerative changes take time to manifest and be shown. So it is true that the vaccines have not been shown to cause these conditions, but it is not true to say that they are known not to cause these conditions. We don't know yet. It very well may turn out that they don't cause these problems, lets' hope they don't, but the truth at this time in history is, we don't know, it is a possibility based on real scientific facts.
- The point of the article I referenced was that the spike protein produced by the vaccines is the same spike protein that was shown in the recovered pts to bind to heparin binding receptor in the brain, they state "we have shown that the SARS-CoV-2 S1 RBD binds to a number of aggregation-prone, heparin binding proteins including Aβ, α-synuclein, tau, prion, and TDP-43 RRM." https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006291X2100499X
- So, my point was that there is scientific evidence of potential risk that these could cause these neurodegenerative changes, and that it warrants investigation to prove it or disprove it and that standard medical ethics require that we provide this information before an experimental injection be giving to warn of possible but yet unproven negative outcomes.

So thank you to all who reached out with the information to clarify or question this.

I received the following in a letter this week:

> *Good Morning Tim,*
>
> *I hope this note finds your, your family and all the Come and Reason Team doing well. I've said it before but will say it again, my husband and I are so grateful you listened to God's call and became his spokesperson with this vital end-time message! We've been so blessed because of it and thank you so much for all the resources you and your Come and Reason Ministry provide us.*
>
> *I found this little 'gem' this morning in a devotional written by EG White called* Our High Calling *and thought I'd share it with you and your team. It speaks so clearly to design law I think, the law of worship to be specific. I am finding myself, too often, looking down instead of up. In our current world's environment I can often be distracted by shadows and there are plenty of them today!*
>
> *As I write to you this morning, it is early and the sun is just beginning to rise and I am anxious about the rumored announcement that President Biden may be making today mandating all federal employees get the vaccine or weekly testing. He has already mandated that all VA*

employees get it so I won't be surprised if he does the same for federal employees. I live in a state governed by a very left leaning liberal who will, I know, follow suit and mandate vaccines for all state employees. As I work for the school district I will be included in that mandate. My husband and I have been preparing for this even as we could see the writing on the wall that it was a possibility, but none the less, we were hopeful that it wouldn't happen.

We've been keeping it in prayer too and have been impressed that if/when I lose my job, it will be the sign we need to sell our home in town and move onto some property we've purchased. The Lord is always faithful and gives us all we need at exactly the time we need it so we are at peace with this decision. He has brought people into our life who have discernment like we do so we have a small network started of support for when times get really bad, i.e. food shortages, monetary collapse. We are all willing to pull together and share our skills, knowledge etc. and support one another.

I never thought that I would be on the side of the 'radicals' as the mainstream thinkers call us. I've always been a quiet, 'you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone' person but I find myself being 'pushed' out of that comfort zone into one that puts me in a position to be more outspoken. I don't think it's a bad thing for me but it sure can add to my discomfort! on the upside, it gives me lots of opportunity to share God's design laws with people! Well, I best go and look forward to the day when I can sit down with you and really share all that has happened to us because you were faithful to God's call. It won't happen here on earth probably, but there's always heaven!

God bless you Tim, you and your ministry are in our prayers.

This is the 'gem' from *Our High Calling:*

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Isaiah 5:20. OHC 26.1

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If there were no light, there would be no shade. But while the shade comes by the sun, it is not created by it. It is some obstruction that causes the shadow. So darkness emanates not from God, but is the result of an intruding object between the soul and God.... Disregard of the light that God has given brings the sure result. It creates a shadow, a darkness that is more dark because of the light which has been sent.... If a man withdraws himself from light and evidence, and yields to Satan's seducing arts, he himself draws the curtain of unbelief about him, so that light cannot be distinguished from darkness. **More light and evidence would only be misunderstood by him. The greater the evidence, the greater will be the indifference**. This will lead the deceived soul to call darkness light and truth error. OHC 26.2

Satan is constantly working to lead men to deny the light. It is but a step from the straightforward path to a diverging one, in which Satan leads the way, and where light is all darkness, and darkness light.... It is a dangerous thing to open the heart to unbelief, for it drives

> the Spirit of God away from the heart, and Satan's suggestions come in.... We must ... avoid the first admission of doubt and unbelief. OHC 26.3
>
> "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7. God destroys no man. Every man who is destroyed will destroy himself. When a man stifles the admonitions of conscience, he sows the seeds of unbelief and these produce a sure harvest.... OHC 26.4
>
> "They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Proverbs 1:30-33. OHC 26.5

Then I, in my devotions came across this, written back in 1902, in the Australian Union Conference Record, August 1, 1902:

> And those also who are dead in trespasses and sins demand our service. The man who is wholly absorbed in his counting room, the man who finds pleasure at the gaming table, the man who loves to indulge perverted appetite, the frequenter of the theatre and ball-room, [we could put the Netflix junkie, the PlayStation and Xbox addict] put eternity out of their reckoning. The whole burden of their life is, What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? They are not in the procession that is moving heavenward. They are led by the great apostate, and with him will be destroyed. All around us are souls perishing in their sins. Every year thousands upon thousands are dying without God and without hope of eternal life. **The plagues and judgments of God are in the land**, and souls are going to ruin because the light of truth has not been flashed upon their pathway. AUCR August 1, 1902, par. 3 [What are the judgments of God? Remember the same author wrote the judgment of God don't come directly out from Him, but when people refuse Him, His healing, protection, and warnings and insist on going their own way, He sets them free and no longer protects them from Satan's attacks and the plagues come out from Satan. Do we understand viruses are not from God? Viruses are strands of either DNA or RNA code that can infect cells and redirect the cell's machinery to produce more of the virus—me,me,me and more of me! This is the physical outworking of selfishness. If something isn't done to stop it then it kills the host, and ultimately the virus will die if another host isn't found to infect. God did not create viruses to injure and harm His creation any more than Microsoft or Apple create viruses to infect their operating systems. No, enemies create viruses. Viruses are because of sin. The immune system is part of God's kingdom, and the immune cells sacrifice themselves to save the host. The current COVID virus exists why? Because human beings, in a country of God-denying evolutionists, thus not under the direction of the Holy Spirit, engineered it, and then released it. God does not stop people from rebelling from Him, but whenever this happens injury and harm comes. Is the world currently suffering under a plague?]
> **The heart of God is moved. Souls are very precious in His sight**. It was for this world that Christ wept in agony; for this world He was crucified. God gave His only begotten Son to save sinners, and **He desires us to love others as He has loved us.** He desires those who have a

knowledge of the truth to impart this knowledge to their fellow-men. AUCR August 1, 1902, par. 4

Now is the time for the last warning to be given. There is a special power in the presentation of the truth at the present time; but how long will it continue?—Only a little while. If ever there was a crisis, it is now. AUCR August 1, 1902, par. 5

What shall we say, what can we say, to arouse those who know the truth, both ministers and lay members, to a sense of their responsibility? How can they be led to feel the burden of imparting to others the truth God has imparted to them? O that they were awake to the purposes of God and to their individual responsibility! Then would they use every gift, every talent, in the work of giving to the world the truth for this time. The number of laborers would greatly increase, and the work would grow in influence and extent. God's people would be light-bearers, shining amid the darkness of this degenerate age. AUCR August 1, 1902, par. 6

God has given all something to do. **Those who are willing to work in self-denial and self-sacrifice will find their place**. **But those who seek only a safe and easy place need to be converted**. [How many today are advancing the philosophy of safe-spaces, of avoiding hard truths, of silencing anyone who speaks words that causes conviction of sin, that makes them uncomfortable? Yes, all such people who seek an easy place a safe place need to be converted!] **Until their hearts are renewed, their purposes changed, God has no use for them in His work.** By an unreserved consecration we are to prepare ourselves for His service. Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, regarding the churches in some particular place as their special care. And our churches should not feel jealous and neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear fruit to His glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object,—the saving of souls. AUCR August 1, 1902, par. 7

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on rest from physical sickness, sometimes when our bodies are unwell, when we have tests pending, or diagnosis looming, we can lie awake at night worrying.

What has been helpful for you to find peace when facing health problems?

What is not helpful?

I received this letter in the mail from Bill Swinney, a 98-year-old WWII veteran, and wanted to share some excerpts.

A lot of wisdom packed into a few words. The overall theme is living in harmony with God’s design. You can’t have health in violations of the laws of health, mental, physical or spiritual. Very insightful.

The lesson focuses our attention on the paralytic let down through the roof, whom Christ healed, but first forgave his sins.

Read fourth and fifth paragraphs, "For the paralytic…"

The lesson does an excellent job of pointing out how the fallacy of human imposed law system with its need to blame, accuse, judge, punish, infects our thinking along health issues, but is it only health issues? What about sin issues?

Isn't the problem with sin the exact same thing, it violates God's design laws for life, damages the sinner and will result in death without God intervening to heal and restore?

Read bottom green section, "When someone gets sick…" thoughts?

Let's answer the second question first, why is it helpful to understand the cause of sickness? To help heal and to avoid repeating the injuring or getting sick again if one gets well.

With that in mind, what are the reasons people have health problems today?

- Sin in the world—the world is infected with Satan's principles and all nature groans under the weight of sin. Because of this there are all kinds of physiological abnormalities that have nothing to do with individual sin, yet things are not functioning as God designed. People can be born blind, deaf, with congenital heart problems, with genetic problems like muscular dystrophy etc. The disciples asked Jesus, who sinned that this man was born blind him or his parents, and Jesus said neither. We must not attribute all illness or physical handicaps as a result of sin.
- But does that mean all illness, physical handicaps or disabilities are always a natural result of sin in the world and never due to individual sin or choices to violate God's law? What about a person who commits adultery and gets a sexually transmitted disease? Could their disease be a result of sin? What about a person who commits adultery and feels guilt and shame, doesn't repent, begins lying and deceiving to cover their sin and they experience more fear, anxiety, activating stress pathways, gets ulcers, hardening of the arteries and dies of a heart attack? Or, they cope by using alcohol or drugs to try and avoid the guilt and use dirty needles and get HIV infected would this be a result of their sin?
- Can we tell if someone is suffering from a sexually transmitted disease if they committed sin or not? No! They may have had an unfaithful spouse who brought them the disease. They may have gotten it in a blood transfusion. They may have been sexually assaulted etc. etc.
- Other reasons people suffering from physical problems? They are victims of the sins of others—trauma, or poison, or toxins in the environment
- Accidents, negligence, or unforeseen consequences are another reason people suffer
- What about aging even if someone lives a perfectly healthy life—what happens to all of us over time? Is this normal in God's design? Understand that from God's perspective all die

young, God designed humans to live eternally. Thus, the aging and decay we see is a result of sin ravaging us despite our best lifestyles. However, this first death is not the death of sin, it is the mercy, the artificial state of grace that God permits in order for the plan of salvation to be carried out.

MONDAY

The lesson points out that often times we don't consider an illness until we have symptoms and then many times people believe the symptoms are the problem and seek only symptom relief instead of treating the actual illness.

Can you think examples like this? Perhaps lung disease due to smoking and rather than quitting smoking, the person wants medicine to help their lungs, or oxygen but they continue to smoke?

In psychiatry one of the places I see this most commonly is with the emotion of anxiety. Anxiety is almost always a symptom of some other problem. Anxiety to our minds is like pain to our bodies. Pain is designed to tell us something is wrong—if you feel pain somewhere in your body, hopefully your first thought isn't "I have a pain disorder" and your first action isn't "I need pain meds." Hopefully, your first thought is "What is wrong that is causing the pain and what is needed to fix that problem so the pain will go away?"

- Is it a thorn?
- Is it a cavity?
- Is it arthritis?
- Is it a fracture or sprain?

With anxiety it is the same way, the first thought should be what is causing the anxiety?

- Rarely it is a physical cause. A person with hyperthyroidism can present with panic attacks. If one doesn't consider why is this person having panic, what the anxiety is a symptom of, and instead merely diagnosis panic disorder and gives anti-anxiety meds, the person will not get well. In fact they could die from complications of untreated hyperthyroidism. But this is rare.
- If someone is holding your head under water, what do you experience before you pass out? Panic. Sometimes people have panic because they find themselves in circumstances with too many problems, responsibilities, deadlines, bills, and they feel like they are drowning.
- Sometimes it is a result of historic trauma that caused both brain and mind changes—impacting how we process life experiences—through a threat matrix instead of a security matrix.
- Sometimes it is because of failure to have the life experiences needed to prepare the brain to manage life stress. Children who are neglected don't develop the same top-down love pathways that calm the fear circuits.
- Sometimes anxiety is due to unhealthy thinking patterns
- Sometimes it is due to not having a relationship with the Lord
- Sometimes it is due to filling the mind with fear inducing messages
- Sometimes it is due to real world problems being handled without the Lord

So, whatever the problem, mental, physical, spiritual—getting to the root and resolving it is absolutely the best approach.

TUESDAY

Read first three paragraphs, "Based on data…" This is well said, Major Depression or Clinical Depression is a physiological brain/body problem with multiple contributing factors.

The lesson goes on to focus on Elijah and his depression after Mt. Carmel and how he ran away. Strictly speaking, from a modern diagnostic approach, Elijah would not be diagnosed with Major Depression, but with an adjustment disorder with depressed mood.

Both conditions would have a person feeling depressed, despondent, perhaps hopeless, discouraged, fearful, perhaps suicidal—but the adjustment disorder is a person facing a situational stressor that overwhelms their coping. It is sudden, and if the stressor is removed, they almost immediately improve and the depression resolves.

The person with clinical depression, or Major Depression, has alteration in brain function and ability to function in life across the domains of life, like appetite, sleep, concentration, energy, thinking, that persists for a minimum of two weeks. Even if there is a situational stressor, removing that stressor does not resolve the depression.

Let's talk a little about Major Depression, what it is, what contributes, and what you can do to help protect yourself or lifestyle and Bible principles that are documented to have anti-depressant benefit:

When someone is depressed they have alterations in normal brain circuitry function:

- The Prefrontal Cortex, where one thinks, reasons, plans, is under active so a person in a state of depression would have a more difficult time concentration, problem solving, handling stressors. So they get overwhelmed more easily, don't engage, withdraw, are more moody, irritable, get overwhelmed more easily.
- The orbital cortex, where one normally experiences a conviction of wrong doing, if one were doing something wrong, is overactive in depression so people will often feel a sense of guilt, or inadequacy or not being good enough.
- The Anterior Cingulate Cortex, where we experience a sense of empathy, compassion and also where we choose, is under active. So people who are depressed will feel emotionally distant from people, isolated, disconnected and also have a difficult time making decisions.
- The amygdala where we experience fear, apprehension, warning, alertness is over active so people will often experience anxiety, worry, dread, and inability to relax with sleep disturbance
- The nucleus accumbens where we experience pleasure and reward is under active so even when good things happen people in depression don't feel any reward.

This leads to negative and worried thought patterns, irrational looping on fears and over value on possible negatives and undervaluing the positives, which only fuels the neurocircuitry imbalance.

This imbalance leads to increased inflammation in the body, with elevated cytokines which interfere with synaptic signaling so people will experience fatigue, malaise, concentration problems, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, aches and pains all over their bodies.

This state leads to changes in the brain altering how genes are expressed and proteins that keep the brain healthy, called neurotrophins, are turned off in depression and certain brain regions can thin, this includes both the prefrontal cortex—where we reason, think, problem solve, have self governance, and also the hippocampus where new learning takes place.

All treatments for major depression reverse this process, turn one of the neurotrophins BDNF, and eventually reverse the circuitry imbalance.

Anything that pushes one toward the circuitry imbalance would push one toward depression; anything that incites bodily inflammation can also push one toward depression.

This is where the lifestyle and spiritual factors come in.

What types of thought patterns will disrupt brain circuits?

- Denial, refusing truth, believing lies
- Unresolved guilt
- Resentment, bitterness, grudge-holding

These thought patterns decrease normal PFC function, increase orbital function, contributing to worried thoughts with increased amygdala activity, with increased sense of anxiety, fear, worry, and thus increased inflammatory cascades.

What resolves this circuitry disruption if caused by these factors?

- Truth replacing lies
- Repentance and reconciliation—particularly with God, not necessarily with others
- Forgiveness—forgiving those who have wronged us

Do you see one reason depression is so high in the world today? Our world today is becoming ever more godless, ever more worldly and justifying the need to punish the wrong doer, seeking so-called justice through human law systems, which is the opposite of God's system. These imposed laws and punishments only cause more injustice, cause people to hold on to wrongs, to fantasize about seeing their wrong doer punished etc. Or, the wrong doer denies their wrong or justifies and defends their wrong and doesn't repent.

But another factor is anything that increases inflammation in the body can increase the risk of depression so:

- Study of 9000 adults examining amount of fast food and junk food consumed (pizza, hamburgers, doughnuts, croissants, candy, cakes etc)
- Those who ate junk food 40% higher rate of depression that those who did not
- Any amt increased risk, dose dependent curve. *Public Health Nutr.* 2012;15:424-432

- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug Abuse
- DM type 2 increases risk 24%
- Chronic pain

I won't talk about medications today, other than to say, antidepressants work—not for every person, but for millions they work and are life-saving. In addition to anti-depressants, there is Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, FDA approved non drug treatment for depression that gives magnetic pulses across the scalp directly to the brain activating the PFC and moving the neural circuits back toward their non depressed state. Also, 10,000 lux light therapy, works for many people. If used it is most effective before 7 a.m. and 18 inches from the face. It can trigger mania in bipolar patients and usually works in a couple of days.

Other interventions—resolving guilt, forgiving the wrong doer, finding peace with God. Surrendering outcomes to God.

Truth based therapies, like CBT, are documented to restore the brain circuits back to their non-depressed activity and have antidepressant activity.

Social connectivity, being with friends, family, socially interacting is anti-depressant and social isolation increases depression.

- Exercise
    - Increases insulin sensitivity
    - Turns on BDNF, Vascular GF, Nerve GF
    - Increases endorphins, enkephalins, DA
    - 2017 AJP Article 33,908 followed for 11 years
    - 1 hour per week of leisure time exercise
    - Reduced Depression occurrence by 12% Harvey, S. et al., Exercise and the Prevention of Depression: Results of the HUNT Cohort Study, AJP, Oct 3, 2017 https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2017.16111223

- Plant based diet
    - 41 studies, 20 longitudinal. Evaluated various diets, Mediterranean diet, the Healthy Eating Index, the Alternative Healthy Eating Index, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, and the Dietary Inflammatory Index.

- Four studies involving 36,556 adults, adherence to a Mediterranean diet, had a 33% decreased risk of depression.
- At the other end of the spectrum, eating a pro-inflammatory diet high in fat, sugar, and processed food was linked with higher depression risk, according to data from 5 longitudinal studies involving 32,908 adults. Lassale C, Batty GD, Baghdadli A, et al. Healthy dietary indices and risk of depressive outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. Molecular Psychiatry. 2018 September 26;[Epub ahead of print].

Nutrients that are anti-depressant—this is not exhaustive, but some:

- L-methyl folate
- omega 3 Fatty acids
- Vit D
- N-acetyl cysteine

Sleep:

- OSA – Cognitive impairments, mood disorders and loss of gray matter which reversed with treatment
- Sleep disorders double the risk of depression
- During sleep the brain cells contract expelling metabolic waste and increasing clearance from brain, including beta amyloid
    - American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, Vol. 183, No. 10 (2011), pp. 1419-1426. doi: 10.1164/rccm.201005-0693OC
    - *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol 16, p 1709
    - Science 18 October 2013: Vol. 342 no. 6156 pp. 373-377 DOI: 10.1126/science.1241224

Altruism—volunteering

- Adults who volunteer (after accounting for variables such as education, baseline health, smoking, etc.)
    - Live longer, have less illness, less disability, less depression, less dementia and live independently longer than those who did not. Post, S. *Altruism and Health Perspectives from Empirical Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007: p. 22, 26).

Worshipping a God of love—studies show that regular worship and meditation on a God of love activate the anterior cingulate cortex, calms the amygdala and works to restore the brain circuits back to their non-depressed state.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "When Elijah finally…" This again is the dysphoria of situational problems. A crisis came, emotions are strong, physical fatigue impacts, choice is made, but afterward the mind

judges the choice to be less than ideal, even wrong and one feels guilt and disappointment with because they didn't do what they believed was best. Why?

Typically because some feeling dominated the moment—whether fear, or lust, or anger—but typically our poor decisions in real time, which result in guilt are based on some feeling taking control.

If you remember last week we discussed the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff, Jonathan Haidt. And they identified three untruths which have dominated college campuses and are spreading across the nation to the destruction of all of us, and the second untruth that many accept today is *always trust your feelings.*

Feelings can lie and in fact Satan tempts us through our feelings. Feelings are not facts, feelings are not truths. But in society today, Satan's deceit is so pervasive that many have come to label feelings as truth—this is my truth, when in fact they are talking about feelings. It is quite destructive.

Read third paragraph, "That can be a painful…" What is described here? Seeing ourselves as we are can be painful—why?

Is seeing reality harmful? Then why is it painful?

Is it necessary for our eternal salvation for us to see the truth of ourselves? Why? Then would Satan want to have people see themselves as they are? It depends—if Satan can get a person to see their own shortcomings in an environment and mindset that is without hope for healing—then yes he would want that because it will lead to nihilism, hopelessness, depression, destructive behaviors and even suicidality.

But, if we see our true condition under the umbrella of God's love and grace, knowing Jesus and knowing He can heal us—then we don't become despondent and hopeless we surrender to Jesus and become reborn into the kingdom of God—and Satan definitely doesn't want this.

So, what strategies will Satan employ to prevent people from conversion, which requires they know some aspect of the truth about God and their condition.

- Lie about reality
    - no God, no sin, just evolved from lower life forms so whatever you find in yourself it is part of nature and is good
    - there is a god but it is a punitive legal god who is the source of pain and suffering legally inflicted to punish sin—and all the negativity and destruction that comes from the fear, guilt and legal solutions
    - there is no god just energy in the universe and we recycle through endless cycles of life until we finally develop ourselves along the path of the light, the good, the moral and eventually enter nirvana. In this worldview, whenever we are faced with some truth about ourselves that causes stress and anxiety we meditate, emptying our minds until

we experience the peace that comes from calming our amygdala, but we don't ever confront the inherent selfishness by surrendering to Jesus and being reborn with a new heart and new motives.

- Seek to avoid reality of one's own condition through denial, blame, accusation, justification of whatever sin they may have committed, it is someone else's fault
- Seek to self-medicate through alcohol, drugs legal or illegal all designed to take the feeling of conviction away
- Distract self through entertainment
- Invest in diabolical or destructive purposes
- Invest in a purpose that might be good but employ Satan's methods to achieve it, this gives a false sense of earned goodness, working and fighting for a higher purpose while one is still destroying their character

The lesson points out that sometimes depression can be so bad that people will think about death and suicide.

EGW wrote many years ago, commenting on Job's struggles in the book *Prophets and Kings*:

> Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; **days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life**. It is then that many lose their hold on God and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief. **Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves**, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being. PK 162.1

Let's talk about **Suicide: Risk and Prevention**

The major risk factors for suicide are:

- genetics
- mood disorder (major depression)
- pessimism
- misreading social cues
- impulsivity
- impaired learning.

Fifty percent of suicide risk is genetic, meaning suicide risk is inheritable and does run in families. This does not mean that a person is predestined to die by suicide if they have family members who have died by suicide, but they do have an increased risk for it. This risk can be mitigated by awareness and purposeful interventions to prevent or treat the other factors that increase risk, thereby reducing suicide risk even in those who have genetic vulnerability. There isn't a specific gene that increases the

risk; instead, it's the interaction of hundreds if not thousands of genes. Thus, even though the genetic risk is well documented, a specific genetic test is not available.

Depression
People with a history of recurrent major depression have a 13-fold increased risk of suicide. Major depression is the most important and treatable risk factor for suicide. Many people believe that suicide risk goes up because of some stressful life event while failing to realize that many of the stressful life events are the *result* of major depression that is not being treated.

When people are depressed, they are more likely to:

- socially isolate, be unavailable, be easily overwhelmed, and thereby experience relationship problems and breakups
- call in sick to work, have impaired job performance, and thereby lose their job
- fail to pay bills either because of lost work and can't afford to, or lost attention to life's responsibilities, and thereby lose their car or home or have creditors calling

So, the life stressors people attribute as the cause of suicide may, in reality, be due to underlying depression that is not being treated.

Studies show that not all people with depression experience suicidal thoughts, but those who have a **pessimistic mindset** in addition to being depressed are the ones at increased risk. Even when the depression is treated and remits, those at higher risk for suicide continue to manifest a pessimistic outlook on life compared to depressed people who are not suicidal.

The point here is that hope and hopefulness in the face of depression and real-life stressors reduces suicide risk, whereas pessimism increases the risk.

In my experience suicide is almost always thought about when a person experiences some type of pain, whether mental, emotional, physical and lose hope of escaping the pain and suicide becomes the exit door to their suffering. Thus, if hope of escape from the suffering, a legitimate treatment or path forward that will deliver the person can be provided and they embrace the hope, generally suicidal thoughts remit.

Research documents four factors, occurring simultaneously, that work together to drive suicidal behavior. Those four factors are:

- Recurrent major depression
- Misreading social cues
- Impulsivity/reactivity
- Impaired learning

Brain studies reveal that when given standard tests that require them to determine emotional states by looking at faces, those at high risk for suicide misread the faces in ways that incite fear, hurt,

rejection—which is a dysfunction of dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain where we reason, think, and problem solve.

Further, those at increased risk demonstrate impaired response inhibition—the ability to pause, think, and make a wise choice. When given a choice of receiving $50 immediately or $300 in 30 minutes, those at risk for suicide take the $50 right away, whereas those at low risk for suicide wait the 30 minutes. This is impairment in response inhibition, the ability to stop an impulse and wait for a better opportunity.

People at high risk also demonstrate impaired learning from previous events. We have all experienced situations in which something stressful has occurred, inciting anxiety, fear, and worry—but eventually, the problem passed. People at low risk for suicide are able to learn from such events so that when new stressors occur, they are able to remember that things will get better, the stressor will resolve, and life will improve. But people at high risk fail to learn this, and each new stressor is experienced with overwhelming fear and often hopelessness.

It should be noted that all of the above risk factors are worsened by alcohol and drug abuse. Such substances increase mood disorders, damage thinking and learning circuits, increase impulsivity, and often contribute to increased life stress (financial, relational, and legal problems).

Interventions
What are the factors with proven efficacy in reducing suicide?

- Removing the means—removing guns and lethal pills from home
- Treating depression with psychotherapies and medications; both reduce suicide
- In-school education about risks and warning signs and ways to get help
- Limiting media reporting and coverage of suicides
- Alcohol- and substance-use treatment

THURSDAY

In the second paragraph states, “Entering into God’s rest has to do with healing—with slowly unlearning negative though patterns and destructive habits. God does not rush healing.”

This is well said. Why does it take time to win a person to trust? Why can’t God simply use divine power to overwhelm resistance and heal a person’s heart?

A person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still.

Genuine healing of the heart, mind, soul, character requires the complete and full participation of the individual. We must, as Paul says in Romans, be fully persuaded in our own minds. We must choose the truth, choose to trust, choose to align ourselves with God. We don’t have the power to fix, heal, transform ourselves, we have the power to choose and in choosing God, choosing truth, choosing to

trust we open the heart to God and receive divine enlightenment for further growth but also power to carry out and live the truth we have chosen in humble surrender to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Resource South Africa: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 9
The Rhythms of Rest

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:3 NKJV).

Read first paragraph, "Who can imagine…" What does the Sabbath mean to you?

Have you experienced the Sabbath as a day "to be" rather than a day "to do" OR "not to do"?

Is the Sabbath relevant to our world today? How?

Does the world need rest? What kind of rest does God offer through the Sabbath?

Was the Sabbath made for man or man for the Sabbath?

The Sabbath was made—it had a beginning, at the end of Creation week—meaning the Sabbath did not exist back when Lucifer rebelled in heaven.

Why is this important—especially to SDAs who value the Sabbath?

SDAs have taught that the final conflict will involve the Sabbath in contrast to Sunday—SDAs have held this up as a test issue, a demarcation issue—but is it possible that SDAs have not accurately presented how and why these two days are involved and have thereby missed the real issue?

Consider these comments from one of the founders of the SDA church—and let's keep in mind the question of the Sabbath and how it fits in.

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the **law of God.** Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (*The Great Controversy* 582)

> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be** holy, just, and good, complete in itself. It cannot be repealed or changed. To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (*Prophets and Kings* 625)

> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the *last great conflict* of the controversy between truth and error**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle **not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. (*Prophets and Kings* 625)

If the last great conflict between truth and error is just the completion of the longstanding battle over God's law which has always been and always will be, then how does the Sabbath fit in since the Sabbath did not exist in heaven when the conflict over God's law began?

How did angels in heaven, before Lucifer rebelled, view God's law? Historic Adventism saw it this way:

> But in heaven, service is **not rendered in the spirit of legality**. **When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** (MB 109.2)

What kind of law *cannot* be weakened or strengthened, has always been, and will always be, and is in force but unthought of? None other than the design-laws upon which reality is built to exist! Imposed rules, like *humans* make—which require external enforcement—must be posted, beings must be informed or instructed about them in order to hold them accountable. But not design law.

Consider again the example of Isaac Newton telling his friends about the law of gravity, might they respond with "Wow, never thought there was a law, its just how things work."

So, what did Satan do to attack God's law in heaven? From the book *The Desire of Ages* the author describes:

> **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would **be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned**. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761.4

What kind of law requires God to inflict punishment for disobedience? Imposed law. This is the foundation of the long-standing conflict over God's law: is God's law the type of law that requires Him to inflict punishment or is God's law design law, the protocols of life that requires Him to heal the damage done to the sinner, lest if He does nothing, they die from taking themselves out of harmony with life?

How did the Sabbath become a sanctified day, a day set apart from the others? The Sabbath was *made* this way—i.e. by creation. Thus the Sabbath represents design law, truth, love, liberty.

How did Sunday become a day of religious observance? By legislation, by human enactment, thus it represents the system of imperialism, or Satan's view of law.

And throughout the history of the Christian church, how has Sunday been treated? By legal restrictions and legal enforcement.

If we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, requiring judicial oversight and infliction of external punishments and death by God—what kind of god is that?

Understand, Satan's original lie in heaven is that God's law requires God to punish rule-breakers. This represents God to be a being other than love, a being who is the source of pain, suffering and death, a dictator, power-monger, and one who cannot be trusted. Thus rebellion spreads and love and trust are destroyed.

The final issues will revolve around the question of law and authority. Those who value Satan's view of law and justice will use Satan's methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement to get people to comply with their views. This is the beastly system of Revelation.

But God gave us a sign to help us remember His design laws:

> I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. (Eze 20:11–12 NIV84).

The one who embraces God's design laws lives in harmony with God's laws, the laws upon which life is built. And the Sabbath was given as a sign that God is the one who makes us holy or sanctifies us. What do you understand this to mean?

Do you understand it to mean: The Sabbath is a sign to God and other people that we are obeying the right rules so God can recognize His obedient children and legally account us righteous in heaven?

Or consider this scenario, is this how you understand the Sabbath as a sign: You are a prisoner of war, or you are trapped behind enemy lines, and you see someone flying the American Flag (if you are a US citizen) if you are Australian, you see the Australian flag, or British you see the Union Jack. When you see the flag what does it do for you? If this was like the old westerns and you see the flag and hear the bugle charge of the cavalry, what would you experience? Would you be encouraged? Would your hope surge?

So, do you hear God saying to us: "Remember my Sabbath—it is not a day for you to perform, to earn my grace, for you to work either for your livelihood or for your salvation, in fact it is a day for you to rest. It is my gift to you—it is a sign from me to you that I built right into time so it can never be taken away. It is my sign to let you know that when you trust me I will heal you, save you, deliver you from sin, restore you to righteousness by returning you to harmony with my eternal law of love that life is built to operate upon. When the devil's forces are raging at the end of time, when the governments are beastly, when freedoms are being encroached—Remember my Sabbath—I will heal and save you and am coming back soon!"

Is this how you hear the promise that the Sabbath is a sign—one God has given to us, not one we are to give to God?

Can you see these two methods of governing—imperialism versus design law, involved in the Sabbath Sunday question? Is this the only place you can see these two systems at war? Can Satan advance his beastly system without specifically pursuing Sunday legislation, but by using the same methods on another issue?

> Be sure the Sabbath is a test question and how you treat this question places you either on God's side or Satan's side. The mark of the beast is to be presented **in some shape** to every institution and every individual.--Ms 6 1889, p. 6. (Written Nov. 4, 1889.) {3MR 189.2}

How is the Sabbath a test question and the mark of the beast to be presented in ***some shape*** to every institution…Is it merely which day of the week, or is it what the days symbolize, what the days signify in regard to God, his character and method of governing versus Satan, his character and method of governing?

Does Satan care if a group of people worships on Sabbath as long as they worship him? Was Satan disappointed with the Jews who crucified Jesus because they wanted Him off by sunset in order to keep the Sabbath?

The two days represent two systems, God's character, methods and government of love versus Satan's system of lies, imposed rules and coercive enforcement—it is the two laws, the two methods, the two governments and thus God who is love versus Satan who is selfish.

Those who embrace God and His character and law of love, open their hearts in trust and are sealed—but what does that mean? They have their hearts and minds settled into God's methods, character and principles in how they live and treat others via the work of the Holy Spirit. They have the law written on the heart and mind:

- "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were **marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**…" (Eph 1:13 NIV84).
- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30 NIV84).

The lost are marked as beastly when Satan's law and methods are solidified into their characters in how they treat others.

> The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands**. **To receive this mark means to come to the**

> **same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** {RH, July 13, 1897 par. 5}

What decisions and ideas? That God's law is imposed law, that justice requires enforcement of law, and the practice of those methods upon others.

Thus the issue in the end, of which **the two days stand as signs**, is the issue of God's law of love, versus Satan's imposed law construct; God's rule of love versus Satan's rule of fear and selfishness; **God's design laws versus worldly imposed laws. It comes down to the methods one practices, and by practicing those methods one chooses which God they worship and what character they develop**, and the two days are symbolic of two systems.

> In striking contrast to the wrong and oppression so universally practised were the mission and work of Christ. Earthly kingdoms are established and upheld by **physical force**, but this **was not** to be the foundation of the Messiah's kingdom. **In the establishment of his government no carnal weapons were to be used, no coercion practised; no attempt would be made to force the consciences of men. These are the principles used by the prince of darkness for the government of his kingdom. His agents are actively at work, seeking in their human independence to enact laws which are in direct contrast to Christ's mercy and loving-kindness.** {RH, August 18, 1896 par. 2}
>
> **Prophecy has plainly stated the nature of Christ's kingdom. He planned a government which would use *no force*; his subjects would know no oppression**. [no arrests, no detainments, no imposed punishments, no force] The symbols of earthly governments are wild beasts, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God…{RH, August 18, 1896 par. 3}

Here is the formula for Satan's methods:

- Lies that when believed break the circle of love and trust—
- This incites fear and selfishness—survival drives
- This results in seeing more threats which increase fear and the need to protect self
- which results in using power, might, force to control, compel, coerce or destroy others in order to make self feel safe
- Do we see this happening in the world today with COVID19
    - real virus but lie after lie has been told and continues to be told
    - increasing fear
    - with increased survival drive

In normal medical research when an investigational treatment is given and someone dies shortly thereafter, what is the response?

- Autopsy—is there evidence the death was related to the treatment or not

- We have over 12,000 deaths reported to VAERS from the vaccine—why haven't any funds been directed toward autopsies to actually discover if these deaths are caused by the vaccine or not? Is it because the government already know they answer and they don't want the evidence?
- One pathologist has done a few autopsies on those who died after receiving the vaccine. He has the tissue samples that reveals that the spike proteins from the injections are found bound to mitochondria in cells across the body, lung tissue, brain, heart and other tissues causing inflammation and leading to death; and he shows the path slides of actual individuals who have died from the vaccine documenting spike proteins causing inflammation across the body's organs. Is this just artifact in the few individuals he autopsied or is it something that is actually occurring in larger groups? What is the ethical and moral approach? Why is the government not pursuing this? https://rumble.com/vkopys-a-pathologist-summary-of-what-these-jabs-do-to-the-brain-and-other-organs.html
- Animal studies document that after injecting the spike protein it rapidly crosses the blood brain barrier and binds to brain cells of the animals https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33328624/ Putting this together with the previous research I presented in lesson 7 and 8 that the spike protein in the brain increases accumulation of other toxic proteins that cause Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Lewy Body, and spongiform diseases, and the autopsies revealing that spike proteins are bound to brain cells—should we warn people about the potential risk before they get vaccinated?

One pathologist reports that after vaccination a shift in normal immune cells occurs where CD8 lymphocytes are not functioning normally. These cells keep chronic infections like herpes viruses in check, but also monitor and kill cancer cells in our bodies as they arise. He reports a 10-20 fold increase in uterine cancers in his lab in the last 6 months since the roll out of the vaccines. Is this because our ability to fight cancer is impaired by the vaccines? He doesn't know, but the science is there to suggest this could be happening and needs real investigation.

Understand something very clearly—most politicians are not interested in the health of their citizens, they are interested in power. I won't go through all the human experimentation done on people in America by the US government, whether LSD trials, or the syphilis experiments on black men.

Let's just remember what happened in the USA regarding tobacco use. I am old enough to remember a decades long debate in this country whether tobacco caused cancer and heart disease or not. This debate raged through society and the medical community. Doctors had historically prescribed tobacco for disease, evidence began to emerge that it caused disease. This information was not met with enthusiasm—in fact it was actively fought against.

There were scientific papers published denying any relationship of tobacco and cancer—of course these studies were funded by the tobacco industry.

Tobacco advertisements used to be on TV in America, but the US Congress eventually passed a law to ban them—why do you think that was? Do you think our politicians became concerned for the health of the people, and recognizing the dangers of tobacco took action to protect us? No! It was the tobacco industry using their lobby in congress that got the politicians to ban tobacco ads—why? Because the

anti-tobacco forces were spending dollar for dollar on anti-tobacco ads on TV and were having a major impact, so they decided to get the ads banned from TV and went to billboards and other media targeting kids with things like Joe Camel. Understand, politicians in general, don't care about our health—they care about power.

Do you think any political forces could be using COVID to advance their power and control?

There is a debate happening in society, what is the best way to handle COVID. The majority of people want to be healthy, want to be safe from infection, but the information is confusing and often times conflictual. The politicians use this to garner more power by inciting fear and obstructing actual solutions that would resolve the problem.

UNDERSTAND THIS: The politicians don't want you to be less afraid, because then they lose your willingness to comply with restrictions on your liberty! So they suppress information that would resolve this crisis.

Let's reason through some things happening so you can understand and see how your mind is being manipulated and how those who value Satan's methods of governing are trying to get you to embrace as righteous his methods of coercion and control over others.

Let's examine something we all have a lot more familiarity with—the seasonal flu, influenza. For as long as any of us can remember there has been an annual flu vaccine that is produced—why?

- Why a new flu vaccine every year?
- Because the flu virus mutates, and the previous vaccine is ineffective against the new strain. Such viral mutation is normal and expected.
- As viruses replicate, various errors in replication occur, which cause new strains to emerge. When the mutation alters the antibody binding cites, the new strain is "resistant" and the previous years' vaccines are ineffective.
- The COVID vaccine causes the body to produce antibodies to the spike protein—a single site on the virus, whereas the unvaccinated recovered have much broader immunity with antibodies to multiple sites on the virus, which have been demonstrated to be effective against *all* variants.
- According to JAMA Network, in an article entitled "Überantibodies From Recovered COVID-19 Patients Could Spur New Therapeutics and Vaccines," recovered individuals had developed multiple different antibodies to COVID-19 and "two of the antibodies were 'ultrapotent' at tiny concentrations across all 23 of the variants the scientists tested, including the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 (alpha), B.1.351 (beta), and B.1.617.2 (delta) versions." And other studies document that the recovered individual maintains long-term immunity.
- The vaccines, however, target the spike protein and nothing else, causing selective pressure, leading to the rise of variants including the Delta variant—resulting in the current vaccine being less effective. Yet, instead of acknowledging this, the medical "experts" are blaming the unvaccinated.

- What would you say if during the next influenza season we promoted the flu vaccine from four years ago? Yet that is what is happening with COVID right now when experts continue to promote an original vaccine for a mutated virus.
- This is what is happening with the delta version and other versions of the COVID virus—they are mutations of the original SARS2 virus, but we are giving the vaccine for the original version and it simply isn't as effective against the mutated versions.
- What increases the likelihood of mutations arising? Vaccines which target one area of the virus but not others.
- People who have naturally recovered from COVID infection have a wide range of antibodies targeting multiple sites on the virus and the virus cannot mutate multiple sites at once thus the naturally recovered are the least likely to contribute to the rise of new variants than the immunized.

- But what are we being told? We are being told that it is the unvaccinated that are driving the rise in the delta version and new infections and that we can't be safe until everyone gets vaccinated. This is medically wrong, scientifically wrong.
- Evidence for this? A small fairly-closed society, the island of Gilbratar with around 35,000 people have administered enough vaccine doses to vaccinate 116% of their population—meaning more than every person getting two doses of the vaccine. And they had an outbreak of new infections in July. https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/gibraltar/
- A study of Cleveland Clinic employees found that "Not one of the 1359 previously infected subjects who remained unvaccinated had a SARS-CoV-2 infection over the duration of the study." https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.06.01.21258176v2

Not only is the general media misinforming us—but the professional medical media is also misinforming us. This week I received an email with a link to an article on MDEdge entitled: "As COVID resurges, vaccinated Americans rage against holdouts"

The article opens with:

> The rising anger among vaccinated Americans comes as health officials are reporting huge spikes in new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Meanwhile, only about half of all Americans fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The article goes on to cite President Biden's vaccine mandate for federal workers, then various other politicians calling for mandates, it cites how various hospitals and businesses are requiring it.

Then the article says:

> Experts say the 90 million unvaccinated Americans are most at risk from COVID and have helped the new Delta variant gain a foothold and spread, posing a risk of "breakthrough" cases even in vaccinated people.

Yet, this is just the opposite of what is likely happening, it is the vaccinated that are driving the rise of the delta version, whereas the unvaccinated recovered are not. Haven't you heard of all the vaccinated getting reinfected? The vaccines provided narrow limited immunity.

Then they interview a person who has been vaccinated and who believes it is the unvaccinated that are making everyone unsafe. He says:

> "In the interest of public safety, I believe the government and private businesses need to [make] life difficult for the unvaccinated… They should not be allowed to dine at restaurants, ride public transportation, attend concerts, or broadly be in spaces with large concentrations of people without passing a COVID test at the door.

The article goes on to identify Christians as the largest group of holdouts who are resisting the vaccine.

The entire article, in a medical news website, is a misinformation propaganda piece designed to split society into two groups, inciting fear of one group, identify that group as enemies of the state and justifying the use of force, coercion, and mandates, restrictions of liberties.

Do you agree with this sentiment? Are you willing to join forces with the government to utilize methods of coercion, force, intimidation on others to violate their conscience?

My friends—we are in perilous times

Remember Sabbath and Sunday stand for two systems of governing, truth, love, liberty—the Sabbath, versus lies, imposed law, coercion—Sunday. Can we only recognize beastly methods on worship days, or can we see the same beastly methods with other issues, the willingness to coerce others to comply, not with where they take their body on Sabbath or Sunday—i.e. to church or not, but with what they put in their Spirit temples?

I am going to read some EGW quotes about Sunday law enforcement but replace Sunday, Sunday laws, Sunday enforcement with COVID, COVID laws and COVID Enforcement.

> There are many, even of those engaged in this movement for **[Vaccine]** enforcement, who are blinded to the results which will follow this action. They do not see that they are striking directly against **religious liberty**. There are many who have never understood the claims of the Bible **[laws of life and health]** and the false foundation upon which the **[COVID vaccine]** rests. .LDE 126

> When our nation shall so abjure [renounce] the principles of its government as to enact **[Covid vaccine enforcement],** Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery. [popery wasn't about differences in theology, popery was about authoritarian rule, the use of the state to

compel and coerce enforcement to its dogmas—the inquisition, the imprisoning, burning at the stake etc.]--5T 712 (1889). {LDE 128.2}

Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the papacy. By a national act enforcing the **[vaccine mandates]** they will give life and vigor to the corrupt faith of Rome, **reviving her tyranny and oppression of conscience**.[this is the issue, tyranny and oppression of conscience on any issue of conscience]--Mar 179 (1893). {LDE 128.3}

Satan puts his interpretation upon events, and they think, as he would have them, that the calamities which fill the land are a result of **[the unvaccinated].** Thinking to appease the wrath of God these influential men make laws enforcing **[mask wearing, business shut downs and vaccination**].--10MR 239 (1899). {LDE 129.4}

When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their **[Spirit temples, enforcing experimental vaccination]**, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the **[their Spirit temples pure]**, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land, and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin.--7BC 977 (1888). {LDE 133.5}

Those who promote a god who acts like a Roman emperor, who imposes law, who inflicts punishment, who coerce consciences are actively promoting the system of the beast—even if they worship on the Bible Sabbath!

Some of us may find ourselves called before courts, governing bodies, or other organizations to stand up for God's principles at this time in history.

As I was preparing for class this week I came across another quote and found it compelling:

I have been surprised at being asked by physicians if I did not think it would be more pleasing to God for them to give up their medical practice and enter the ministry. I am prepared to answer such an inquirer: If you are a Christian and a **competent physician**, you are qualified to do **tenfold more good as a missionary for God than if you were to go forth merely as a preacher of the word**. I would advise young men and women to give heed to this matter. **Perilous times are before us**. The whole world will be involved in perplexity and distress, **disease of every kind will be upon the human family, and such ignorance as now prevails concerning the laws of health** would result in great suffering and the loss of many lives that might be saved. Counsels on Health 503.3

While Satan is constantly doing his utmost to take advantage of men's ignorance and to **lay the foundation of disease by improper treatment of the body**, it is best for those who claim to be sons and daughters of God to avail themselves while they can of the opportunities now presented to gain a knowledge of the human system and how it may be preserved in health. Counsels on Health 504.1

Did you know that:

- Plant based and pescatarian diets reduce moderate to severe COVID outcomes by 73%? https://nutrition.bmj.com/content/early/2021/05/18/bmjnph-2021-000272
- "individuals with Vitamin-D deficiency were 80% more likely to acquire COVID-19 infection as compared to those who have sufficient Vitamin D levels" https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7973108/
    - What increases vitamin D levels? Appropriate amounts of sunshine. One of the 8 natural remedies.
- Did you know that research shows that:
  "Oxytocin (OXT) carries special functions in immunologic defense, homeostasis and surveillance. It suppresses neutrophil infiltration and inflammatory cytokine release, activates T-lymphocytes, and antagonizes negative effects of angiotensin II and other key pathological events of COVID-19. Additionally, OXT can promote γ-interferon expression to inhibit cathepsin L and increases superoxide dismutase expression to reduce heparin and heparan sulphate fragmentation. Through these mechanisms, OXT can block viral invasion, suppress cytokine storm, reverse lymphocytopenia, and prevent progression to ARDS and multiple organ failures" https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33513400/

  And what increases natural bodily oxytocin? Social connections, being with people you love and who love you. Touching others, hugs, massage, holding hands, joining together in groups to worship. Anything that increases human connection and bonding.

  So what undermines oxytocin? Social distancing and wearing masks, which increase fear, and fear activates stress pathways that increase inflammation and undermine the body's ability to fight infections.

- Did you know that alcohol use interferes with lymphocyte response times and increases vulnerability to infections? https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1097/01.ALC.0000127104.80398.9B
    - yet what did the government determine was one of the essential businesses to stay open during COVID lockdowns?

So the government, claiming it wants to protect people and save lives, then why has the government:

- kept liquor stores open when alcohol interfere with the immune system
- why hasn't the government and medical societies actively advocated to avoid alcohol consumption to improve immune defense?
- required people to socially isolate and wear masks which interfere with normal bodily immune response and increase vulnerability to infections
- suppressed peer reviewed outcome based studies that demonstrate an 84% reduction in hospitalizations and deaths when therapeutics are used and instead have told people to stay at home until you can't breathe and then come to the hospital when you are near death?
    - https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0924857920304258
    - https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2773108

  - Here is a link to a very informative document from the American Association of Physicians and Surgeons for both lay people and physicians: https://faculty.utrgv.edu/eleftherios.gkioulekas/zelenko/aaps-Guide-to-Home-Based-Covid-Treatment.pdf

    https://faculty.utrgv.edu/eleftherios.gkioulekas/zelenko/index.html

    https://vladimirzelenkomd.com/zelenko-treatment-protocol/

- not secured the southern border and just in the last month allowed over 200,000 illegal migrants to enter the country, tens of thousands infected with COVID, none were vaccinated, and then shipped them at government, meaning at tax-payer, expense to states all over the country without the knowledge or agreement of the states—think about it. If the government was actually serious about stopping the spread of COVID would they ship tens of thousands of infected people who illegally entered this country around the country? And if they really thought the vaccine was lifesaving and effective, why aren't they giving it to all these unvaccinated as they enter before they dump them in US cities?

But more than all of this, they created an experimental injection, get emergency use authorization for something with no long-term safety data and then **vilify conscientious people who want to live in harmony with God's principles for their lives as enemies of the state and seeks to get you to join forces to compel, pressure, coerce those who are not yet fully persuaded in their minds to take the experimental injection**.

We are to live out the principles of God; to live in harmony with God's designs. **Understand, right now our characters are being tested**: Whose laws are you going to embrace and practice in governance of yourself—are you going to embrace the beastly system of imperialism and coercion, or God's design laws of truth, love and liberty?

SUNDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "God stooped and began…"

What was the pinnacle of creation week on earth prior to Sabbath rest?

Humankind—and in the creation of humankind when was that completed? With which individual?

In God's creative pattern as demonstrated in Genesis, how did it progress?

Which substance was the better substance from with which to create, mud or a sinless living being?

So, what is the pinnacle of creation, the crowning act? Wouldn't it be Eve?

Is this why after sin men have consistently sought to dominate women?

But, in truth, is Adam complete as a human being without Eve—in God's design? And is Eve, complete as a human being without Adam?

In the beginning, God created sinless perfection. Adam and Eve were created as equals, with neither one to rule over the other, but to live in the perfect harmony of other-centered love.

One Christian writer put it this way:

> God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided "an help meet for him" – a helper corresponding to him – one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 46).

Adam was made in God's image, and God is love. Adam could not advance, develop, or experience the fullness of Godlike love without someone for him to serve, to love, to give of himself to uplift. Eve was created as a "helper" to Adam – to help him experience and grow in Godlike love as he gave of himself for her good. And Eve was to receive this love and have it flow back to Adam in loving service for him. Thus, in unity with God, the three reveal and represent the Triune perfection of Godlike love.

Equality in God's design is the equality of moral worth – the equal need of both male and female to be united as "one" in other-centered love, and the equal treatment of God's design laws upon both. God purposely did not make them equal in abilities, but with complementary abilities that when united in godly love would expand, ennoble, develop, and elevate both partners beyond that which either one could experience or achieve individually. It is in this unity of love that humanity flourishes and becomes truly godlike. Thus, Satan hates this God-designed unity of equal partners in other-centered love and seeks to destroy it.

MONDAY

The lesson is about the rest we have in the weekly Sabbath that God created in Eden.

The seven day weekly cycle is a powerful evidence of creation. There is no naturalistic evolutionary explanation for the 7 day weekly cycle, the day measured by Earth's rotation on its axis, or months measured by moon rotating around the earth, and the year earth rotating around the sun. The week has no cosmological basis, yet every society has the 7 day week, even those that don't come from Judeo-Christian background. Why?

Evolution cannot explain it, the Bible does.

Every time in history when societies try to implement different arrangements they fail.

There is an article in Chronobiology International; The Journal of Biological and Medical Rhythm Research, entitled: Seven-day human biological rhythms: An expedition in search of their origin, synchronization, functional advantage, adaptive value and clinical relevance. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07420528.2016.1236807

The article documents a 7 day weekly biorhythm found throughout many plant and animal species in nature including humans. What are your thoughts about this?

Is it evidence for God? The creationist would say yes, it certainly fits. But the evolutionist will take the same evidence and argue that these are natural rhythms that the ancient writers incorporated into their descriptions about creation, just like days months and years.

This is the difference between evidence and declaration—the evidence is there for people to see, but the evidence can be interpreted through the lens of the Bible or the lens of godlessness.

THURSDAY

Read second and third paragraph, "Because Sabbath means celebrating…" What do you think of the idea that Sabbath keeping does not begin on the seventh day?

Consider this quote:

> **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter**. **We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent the principles of His government**. **They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom**. **Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day** they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. **Every day** their light will shine forth to others in good works. 3TT 20.3

So if it is to be an every day thing what does that mean? Doesn't it mean true Sabbath observance is not legalistic, it isn't about the day, but about the government, about the law itself, about the methods and principles? And thus those who embrace the methods of Satan, imperialism, rules, enforcement on the seventh-day Sabbath are actually Sabbath breakers.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason Ministry is now the owner of the property at 4922 La Collina Way, Collegedale, TN

This property is two stories with over 14,000 square feet. We will occupy the first floor a little over 7000 square feet. But before we move in we need to do renovations to prepare for our classes and ministry production. We will have a theater studio so we can record and broadcast programs with a live audience. We will have a kitchen so we can have regular potlucks. We plan on a children's room so parents with younger children can come to our class while the children have a children's program.

The next step in the process is to get contractors to give us an official bid for the renovation, choose a contractor and get the space renovated.

Please keep us in your prayers that the Lord will lead us use resources wisely and most economically.

NEW RESOURCE SOUTH AFRICA: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon: We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping! You might have trouble finding it at first because it's new and doesn't have any reviews yet. Reviews are paramount in helping others search for and find items on Amazon. If you search "God is Love Stephanie Land" you should be able to find it. For a limited time, we are offering it on Amazon for only $10, which is cheaper than it is currently being sold on our ministry website. If you purchase it through Amazon, you can leave a "verified purchase" review which will help to get the book to populate when people do a search. The more reviews the better!

NOTES: my notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

Website Member's Section: Apply to become a member with special access to exclusive content on our website for FREE! Apply now. but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum is now available to members.
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.
- **New Music** Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members
- If you have ideas to add to the member's section let us know

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 10
Sabbath Rest

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

The lesson this week is again about the Sabbath. It emphasizes that this is the only commandment that tells us to Remember—what is it we are to remember when we remember the Sabbath?

- God as Creator
- God as Deliverer
- God as Healer and Sanctifier

When you consider the Sabbath what does it mean to you? How has the Sabbath been a blessing to you?

- A day of rest and recovery
- An evidence of God as Creator so a source of encouragement and hope and confidence in God
- An evidence of liberty, that God never coerces
- A weekly vacation from life's burdens
- A time with family, friends and God
- A reminder that we were created in God's image and didn't evolve from lower life-forms, which confirms our identity as beings with moral worth and inalienable rights given to us by our Creator
- Proof that Satan lied about God and God's government and law—how? If God were the kind of god Satan alleged, imposer of rules and punisher of rule-breakers, then would God have created a day of freedom to think, or would He have enforced His law with punishment?
- An evidence of how God governs, truth, presented in love and leaving free—design law—a sign, flag, reminder of God's methods that we are to practice in our lives.
- Others?

The seven-day weekly cycle is a powerful evidence of creation. There is no naturalistic evolutionary explanation for the 7-day weekly cycle, the 24-hour-day is measured by Earth's rotation on its axis, months are measured by moon rotating around the earth, and the year is measured by the earth rotating around the sun. The week has no cosmological basis, yet every society has the 7-day week, even those that don't come from Judeo-Christian background. Why?

Evolution cannot explain it, the Bible does.

Every time in history when societies tried to implement different arrangements they failed. Why? Because the 7-day weekly cycle was built into Earth's reality by the Creator of Earth.

There is an article in Chronobiology International; The Journal of Biological and Medical Rhythm Research, entitled: Seven-day human biological rhythms: An expedition in search of their origin, synchronization, functional advantage, adaptive value and clinical relevance. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07420528.2016.1236807

The article documents a 7-day weekly biorhythm found throughout many plant and animal species in nature including humans. What are your thoughts about this?

MONDAY

The lesson points out that the Sabbath is also evidence that we have freedom only with Jesus, only under God's government. How? Because only in harmony with God's design laws for life do we have real freedom, every violation of God's law enslaves us in some way.

- violate the laws of health, lose health and lose freedom
- violate the moral laws and don't repent, experience shame, guilt, reap real-life consequences, and lose ability to reason and think accurately—lose liberty
- I have an entire blog describing various laws of God and how Satan uses these laws to enslave and destroy us https://comeandreason.com/how-satan-uses-gods-laws-against-us/

How does the Sabbath fit in?

The Sabbath is evidence of creation, of design law, of freedom to think and choose, of how reality works. True Sabbath observance is only done by those who have God's law written in the heart and thus live out the law all week long.

The Sabbath is a sign and evidence of God's principles, in contrast to imperialism, or imposed laws like humans make. The Sabbath calls our attention to nature and the laws upon which nature operates—design laws. Consider this quote:

> Christ's purpose in parable teaching was in direct line with **the purpose of the Sabbath. God gave to men the memorial of His creative power, that they might discern Him in the works of His hand. The Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator**. [What do we learn about God by observing His creation? Certainly we can learn God is powerful to create everything by His word. But is that the only lesson? What other lessons? What about design law, laws that the universe is built to operate upon, that none of them can be changed without destroying creation. And how do God's laws work? What principles are revealed in God's laws? What about love, do we see love built into nature? Is there anything arbitrary built into nature? Should the Sabbath teach us that God is a judicial ruler who inflicts punishment, or should the Sabbath teach us just the opposite? When we study nature what do we learn about the ways and means punishment happens for violating the laws of nature or health? It is never externally inflicted, it is inherent. External intervention is required to save, heal, those who have injured themselves.] And it was because He desired us to do this that

> Jesus bound up His precious lessons with the beauty of natural things. On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature. **We should study the Saviour's parables where He spoke them**, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love. COL 25.1
>
> **And Christ has linked His teaching, not only with the day of rest, but with the week of toil. He has wisdom for him who drives the plow and sows the seed**. [Notice the Sabbath commandment is connected not just with rest but also with labor, six days **you shall work** but rest on the seventh. God gave Adam and Eve useful labor in Eden, before sin. Useful labor teaches reality, design law, cause and effect, sowing and reaping. It builds character, wisdom, determination, integrity, self-discipline. The Sabbath embraces is the law of exertion—if you want something stronger you must exercise it—and the law of restoration—after a finite being expends energy we must rest and recover; and the Sabbath embodies the law of worship—by beholding we become changed, and the law of love putting God first in our lives as well as the law of liberty, truth presented in love leaving others free. We are to remember the Sabbath and thus remember God's design laws, the character of God and live out His laws al week long. What happens if we create policies and actions to undermine useful labor for those capable of it—say universal basic income? Is it a Bible principle that the capable should be compensated if they do not work? If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Th 3:10) This is another example of the wisdom of the world is foolishness, it is violation of God's design laws and destroys, but all under the umbrella of compassion or concern—what a deceit.] In the plowing and sowing, the tilling and reaping, He teaches us to see an illustration of His work of grace in the heart. **So in every line of useful labor and every association of life, He desires us to find a lesson of divine truth…** COL 26.1

So God created during 6 days and rested on the 7th and gave the Sabbath as a sign or evidence of His design laws and methods of truth, love and liberty. It was all perfect, but something went wrong—what?

Is there another law at work in the world today opposed to God's law?

> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the **law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death**. (Ro 8:1–2 NIV84).

What is the law of sin and death and where did it come from? It is the law of survival of the fittest, kill or be killed, it is the opposite of the law of love. It is the law upon which viruses operate, me, me, me and more of me. God did not make viruses, they are corruptions of God's design introduced by an enemy to cause harm.

What did Christ say about the weeds being planted in the field of wheat? An enemy had done it.

Who is the enemy? What is taught by the parable?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider this historic quote:

> **Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system**. **Satan planted these seeds** when he tempted Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge which meant disobedience to God. **Not one noxious plant was placed in the Lord's great garden**, but after Adam and Eve sinned, poisonous herbs sprang up. In the parable of the sower the question was asked the master, "Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" The master answered, "An enemy hath done this" (Matthew 13:27, 28). **All tares are sown by the evil one. Every noxious herb is of his sowing, and by his ingenious methods of amalgamation he has corrupted the earth with tares**. 2SM 288.2 [this includes every disease, every pathogen, including viruses]
>
> **Then shall physicians continue to resort to drugs, which leave a deadly evil in the system, destroying that life which Christ came to restore**? Christ's remedies cleanse the system. **But Satan has tempted man to introduce into the system that which weakens the human machinery, clogging and destroying the fine**, beautiful arrangements of God. **The drugs administered to the sick do not restore, but destroy**. Drugs never cure. Instead, they place in the system seeds which bear a very bitter harvest.... 2SM 288.3

Before you get upset—we must understand this in the context of when it was written, identify the principle, and then apply the principle being described and not interpret what is said in a false light.

This next quote is from a medical student inquiring from EGW what constitutes drugs. Note the list of what was referred to as drug medication in her day:

> "From our study of the Testimonies and the little work, How to Live, we can see that the Lord is strongly opposed to the use of drugs in our medical work....Several of the students are in doubt as to the meaning of the word '**drug**' as mentioned in How to Live. **Does it refer only to the stronger medicines as mercury, strychnine, arsenic, and such poisons,** the things we medical students call 'drugs,' or does it also include the simpler remedies, as potassium, iodine, squills, etc.? We know that our success will be proportionate to our adherence to God's methods. For this reason I have asked the above question." 2SM 278.3
>
> Your questions, I will say, are answered largely, if not definitely, in How to Live. **Drug poisons mean the articles which you have mentioned.** The simpler remedies are less harmful in proportion to their simplicity; but in very many cases these are used when not at all necessary. There are simple herbs and roots that every family may use for themselves and need not call a physician any sooner than they would call a lawyer. **I do not think that I can give you any definite line of medicines compounded and dealt out by doctors, that are perfectly harmless.** And yet it would not be wisdom to engage in controversy over this subject. 2SM 279.1

So do you see that her comments were quite right, that the so-called drug medications of her day were poisons, the injured the system and doctors were being trained to give them.

Are there any meds given today that are perfectly harmless? No—it is always a risk/benefit analysis—always.

Does this mean that in all circumstances, medicines that could injure a healthy person should never be given to the sick?

The following is from a letter from EGW's son, Willie:

> "One time while we were in Australia, a brother who had been acting as a missionary in the Islands, told mother of the sickness and death of his first-born son. He was seriously afflicted with malaria, and his father was advised to give him quinine, but in view of the counsel in the testimonies to avoid the use of quinine he refused to administer it, and his son died. When he met Sister White, he asked her this question: '**Would I have sinned to give the boy quinine when I knew of no other way to check malaria and when the prospect was that he would die without it?' In reply she said, 'No, we are expected to do the best we can.**'"—W. C. White letter, September 10, 1935.—Compilers.]—Counsels on Health, 261 (1890).

So what do you understand the principle EGW is advocating?

The ethical principle of *Primum non nocere*, which is Latin and means "first, do no harm." It is the principle of non-maleficence; it means that our interventions should not inflict injury, harm, or worsen the outcome. It often means that it is better to do nothing than to act in ways that add injury, cause harm, or worsen the condition. It is the principle of weighing the potential risk against the potential benefit. It is the principle that the cure must not be worse than the disease.

It is all about restoring to health, healing. Thus one must weigh the risks against the benefits and make an informed decision. But this requires accurate and complete information. Our decisions are only as good as the information upon which they are made.

Thus, if we are lied to, or have critical information withheld, then our ability to make informed decisions is undermined.

Who is to make the decision for your medical treatment and my medical treatment, what medicines we take into our bodies?

We are in a war for hearts and minds. The methods of God are truth, love, liberty. Present the truth, live the truth—which is love lived out—and leave people free to decide.

But the methods of Satan are lies that incite fear and fear results in survival drives that cause people to seek to control others to make themselves feel safe, and if others cannot be controlled, then they must be punished and eventually eliminated.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

I read the following in the prologue to a sci-fi novel this week entitled, *Battleground* by Joshua Dalzelle. It was published in June 2019. It is from the perspective of one of the characters:

> "What I learned during this time is that, for the most part, people don't truly hate each other. It is the governments that sow discord, encourage people to distrust and fear those who come from someplace else. **Large groups are easier to control if you give them two things: something to fear, and a solution to protect them from it. With those two things, people are willing to turn over control of much of their lives to the government.**"

Has this ever happened in history? Is it happening today? Is this a method used by those who seek political power?

How is it others can manipulate you? Are we, each of us individually, right now under the influence of some political force or power other than Jesus? Are we currently having our minds influenced and directed by forces other than the Holy Spirit?

Let's test it for a moment. Consider how you react to any of the following statements. And imagine, I came in without preamble, without setting this up as a test—and just came out and said these things as positions I believe are true. Consider your reaction if I did that.

- Global warming and climate change is a scam—it is a false narrative designed to manipulate you.
- Hillary Clinton was one of the most honest politicians ever and we would have been better off if she had become president.
- Donald Trump was a brilliant leader and the world would be better off if he could be the president of the world.

Did any of these comments cause you to react with anger, hate, hurt, frustration or any strong emotion? Then it is evidence you are being manipulated.

Governments manipulate by creating narratives designed to incite either fear or hate and then provide a proposed solution you can embrace if you empower someone or some group.

What is the solution to protect yourself from such manipulation?

- Jesus! Fix your eyes on Christ, remember God's kingdom is NOT of this world.
- Do not buy into the lie that God's kingdom is of this world.
- Do not accept the lie that you can get justice through human governments.
- Do not look to human governments, media, etc. for truth—you can look to them for information—but that information needs to be filtered through a discerning mind who understands the principles and methods of God.
- Do not form your identity upon human standards—know who you are as a child of God.
- Do not look to others to make you feel good, to "fit in" to feel part of something so you can feel loved or accepted. Look to Jesus to fit into His kingdom, to hear Him say, "well done thou

good and faithful servant." Those who look to human groups for acceptance are vulnerable to manipulation and abandoning of the truth.

- Have God's law written upon your heart—and this is the law of love:
    - Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Mt 22:37–40 NIV84).
- Do not buy into the lie of us versus them—all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It is only by the grace of God that we are able to live better than the worst sinner in the world.
- When we accept the lies and embrace either fear or hate we impair the prefrontal cortex and become less capable of thinking. But when we love it calms the fear circuits and activate the thinking circuits and enables us to have better discernment of truth, to think more clearly, to be less vulnerable to manipulation and deception. **This is another reason we are to love our enemies**—because in so doing we free our minds from manipulation. Loving our enemies not only aligns us with God and His character, methods and laws, but frees our minds to think, reason, comprehend truth and not be drawn into the schemes of Satan.
- When we love and have solidified our minds on God's truths and we know Him personally, we embrace His methods and we understand and practice God's design laws, we are further protected and enabled to discern truth from error. The mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern right from wrong Heb 5:14.

We are being manipulated today more than ever, we must unplug from the world's multiple narratives and put Jesus and His kingdom of love first in our hearts and minds.

I have been very concerned for you our listeners—I have received numerous emails over the last month or two from people thanking us for our exploration of God's laws and methods in relationship to current events. But I have also received emails from those who say they can't watch us anymore because they perceive us being too political and not spiritual, from getting away from the Bible.

This really saddens me, for we live in the world, but are not to be of the world. How are we to live out God's law in the world if we don't apply His methods to our day-to-day decisions?

So this week, I was reading in a book called *The Great Controversy* and came across some pertinent passages for today. And instead of me just applying the two antagonistic principles at war, I will read some excerpts from this book and hopefully this will satisfy both groups—continuing to demonstrate God's principles to us today, but because it is coming from another author, perhaps those who think I am not being spiritual will recognize this is the spiritual battle for our times. We are starting in the chapter entitled "Liberty of Conscience Threatened,"

> Romanism [this term means imperialism, use of imposed law and enforcement to coerce conscience] is now regarded by Protestants [Protestantism is the principle of religious liberty, present the truth in love and leave others free. Thus, we have here the two antagonistic principles, the two laws at war, imposed human law, versus God's design law. It is not about rival churches or about specific doctrines but about the underlying laws, governments and

methods employed.] with far greater favor than in former years… [Meaning that Protestants are now coming to believe that imperialism is righteous and we can get justice through imposed law.] **The time was when Protestants placed a high value upon the liberty of conscience which had been so dearly purchased**. They taught their children to abhor popery [authoritarian ruler coercing people] and held that to seek harmony with Rome would be disloyalty to God. But how widely different are the sentiments now expressed! GC 563 [Liberty of conscience is the heart of Protestantism, yet Protestants, having never fully rejected imposed law and have forgotten the abuses and coercion of conscience in the Dark Ages and are now aligning themselves with forces to do this to others.]

It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. [How? By getting us to accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, therefore God must use power to externally enforce His law and punish law-breakers, and therefore it is righteous for us to coerce, compel and enforce law upon others.] His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin. [Would divine law include the laws of health?] **At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love.** [How? Again, by getting people to accept the human-law construct as God's. Thus God's laws can be modified, changed, updated, replaced, and if we get legal dispensation from the church, or get a legal payment made by Jesus to God in heaven then we can keep on in sin because sin doesn't actually harm, it is God that harms us for it, but Jesus took the punishment from God for us so God won't harm us now.] The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is **embodied in systems of religion** and expressed in modes of worship. **Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God**. [By promoting justice through imposed laws and forced obedience.] By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe **human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity;** and horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. GG 569 [And Christianity teaches today that a human sacrifice was needed to present to God a legal payment to secure His favor.]

It is not without reason that the claim has been put forth in Protestant countries that Catholicism differs less widely from Protestantism than in former times. **There has been a change; but the change is not in the papacy. Catholicism indeed resembles much of the Protestantism that now exists, because Protestantism has so greatly degenerated since the days of the Reformers**. GC 571 [Remember we are speaking of imperialism, imposed law, forced obedience Romanism, versus liberty of conscience Protestantism. What has changed is that Protestantism is becoming more and more enthralled with imposed law and the lie that justice can be achieved through imposed law and forced obedience—compelling the consciences of others. Do we see this happening right now?]

If the reader would understand the agencies to be employed in the soon-coming contest, he has but to trace the record of **the means** which Rome employed for the same object in ages past. [This means look at the methods employed, not the specific doctrine it was employed to advance.] **If he would know how papists and Protestants united will deal with those who**

reject their dogmas, let him see the spirit which Rome manifested toward the Sabbath and its defenders. GC 573 [Again, the author is telling us to look at the METHODS employed regarding how it treated those who valued the Bible Sabbath, not specifically the Sabbath itself.]

Royal edicts, general councils, and church ordinances sustained by secular power were the steps by which the pagan festival attained its position of honor in the Christian world... [What methods? Proclamations, imposed rules, legislation, authority of office, backed up by coercive enforcement. This is what we are to be watching for. Romanism, overruling conscience on any subject by edict, authority of office—perhaps an executive order, law and punishment.] GC 574

The royal mandate [or executive orders] **not proving a sufficient substitute for divine authority**, Eusebius, a bishop who sought the favor of princes, and who was the special friend and flatterer of Constantine, **advanced the claim** that Christ had transferred the Sabbath to Sunday. **Not a single testimony of the Scriptures was produced in proof of the new doctrine**... GC 574. [What is the method of Satan here? Since the imposed law, the mandate—are we hearing anything about mandates today—lacked sufficient evidence to support it, it was advanced through a CLAIM. In other words, Eusebius, a doctoral church historian and theologian, gave his ***expert opinion*** that this was true. He claimed it, declared it, used the authority of position and office. Are we seeing this happening in society today? Proclamations being advanced with expert opinion but without reproducible testable evidence, in fact, much of the opinions are contrary to the evidence. I give one example of this, an interview on cnbc with Scott Gottlieb, MD, former FDA commissioner and now on the board of Pfizer. He is asked if the vaccines offer better immunity than natural immunity and he says "we do believe that the vaccines offer a broader compliment of immune protection than natural immunity…" You can hear this at 4:20 into the interview https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvT1tPA4XM4

According to JAMA Network, in an article entitled "Überantibodies From Recovered COVID-19 Patients Could Spur New Therapeutics and Vaccines," recovered individuals had developed multiple different antibodies to COVID-19 and "two of the antibodies were 'ultrapotent' at tiny concentrations across all 23 of the variants the scientists tested, including the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 (alpha), B.1.351 (beta), and B.1.617.2 (delta) versions." And other studies document that the recovered individual maintains long-term immunity.

A study of Cleveland Clinic employees found that "not one of the 1359 previously infected subjects who remained unvaccinated had a SARS-CoV-2 infection over the duration of the study."

But it is a lie, it is a claim, it is the authority of office that contradicts all the actual scientific, testable, reproducible evidence. We see the exact same methods of Romanism, of authority of office, of claims denying the evidence being used today as during the Dark Ages. This is what

we have been warned against. What did the Dark Ages, beastly church, do after it made claims, proclamations for compliance and mandates?

Later it was decreed that rich men should **be punished** with the loss of half of their estates; and finally, that if still obstinate they should be made slaves. The lower classes were to suffer perpetual banishment…GC 574 [What methods are employed? Are we seeing calls today to use financial punishment, loss of employment, restrictions of liberty for those who won't do what the authorities tell them to do in governance of their own self and the maintenance of their own health?]

Later the pope gave directions that the parish priest should admonish the violators of Sunday and wish them to go to church and say their prayers, **lest they bring some great calamity on themselves and neighbors**... GC 575 [And this week the pope admonished Christians to get the vaccine lest they bring some great calamity upon themselves and their neighbors. No respect for conscience. No willingness to present evidence to persuade. Instead, obfuscation, threat, intimidation, control, force. https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/08/18/1028740057/in-a-message-to-americans-pope-francis-says-getting-vaccinated-is-an-act-of-love]

In NYC right now if you don't have your vaccine passport you cannot buy or sell, you cannot go into a grocery store, restaurant, department store, theater, business or any building with three walls and a roof, other than a hospital or clinic. In Washington state health-care workers, including physicians are being mandated to take the vaccine—why if it is so healthy are so many health-care workers not taking it?

This is beastly—it is coercive. It is based on a lot of false information to incite fear and take away liberty.

Understand, getting the vaccine or not getting the vaccine has no bearing on your salvation—but it very well may have a bearing on your health. There will surely be people in heaven who have taken this vaccine and there will surely be people in heaven who have refused it. **The vaccine itself is not a salvation issue.**

But, the methods you are willing to employ in getting others to take it will have a bearing on your salvation. If you are willing to coerce, manipulate, pressure, compel, punish others who won't get it, using state, corporate or other powers to pressure people to violate their consciences you are practicing beastly methods. You are choosing which law you prefer and what character you are developing.

God is permitting this to happen right now so that every person is confronted with two antagonistic methods, principles and laws. The law of love, truth, freedom, and the law of deceit, fear, selfishness, survival and coercion.

Open your eyes—wake up. This is a worldwide event, every nation in the world, every person in the world if being faced with this. The pro-vaxxer forces in the world are using all of Satan's methods and rejecting the methods of God. **The question is not primarily about the vaccine—it is about the methods.** In some parts of the world they are literally holding people down and forcibly injecting them against their will. Is this godly? In other places they are arresting doctors who try and treat COVID infected people in the early stages to prevent hospitalization. Why? Because early treatment reduces hospitalization and death by 85%. I provide the links to this research and protocols in my blog COVID and the Death of the Independent American Physician.

We have online followers who work for Adventist Health system and have been told that they either get the vaccine or they will be fired from their job. Really? What is the rationale? What method are you employing? Is it that you want to ensure your staff don't get sick and leave their post, in other words it is a force-retention rationale? If so, then how does that work if you are willing to fire them and reduce your work force?

Is it you fear transmission to patients and getting them sick? But hasn't it already been documented that the vaccinated get reinfected and can transmit the disease, so if that is the reason, the vaccine doesn't prevent transmission.

So again, what is the rationale for compel experimental medical treatment on people who do not want it? Do you exempt all who have recovered at a bare minimum?

From the next chapter in *The Great Controversy,* entitled "The Impending Conflict,"

> **Satan works through the elements** also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. **He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature**, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows... **It is God that shields His creatures** and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer. **But the Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah;** and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would—**He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care** from those who are rebelling against His law and teaching and forcing others to do the same. **Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard**. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them… GC 589.2
>
> **He will bring disease and disaster**, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In **accidents and calamities** by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, **in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power**. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. **He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence**. [Viruses are not from God, they are Satan's work] These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast... GC 589.3

And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils… GC 590.1 [Yes, it is the unvaccinated, those who are not convinced in their own minds. Those who want to follow the dictates of their conscience in governing their spirit temples, they are the dangerous ones. They are harming us, they must be punished, they must be forced to be injected with an experimental agent. And why must they be forced? Because the truth is not on the side of the vaccinators. There is no long-term safety data, they don't have any actual scientific evidence that these are safe, Worse the actual evidence shows they are not effective and are dangerous, actually kill some people. So the truth is not on their side, they must employ the methods of lies and coercion just like the Dark Ages church.]

Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people **is the same** that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. **He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow**. And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish **he charged upon the loyal angels**. The same policy of deception has marked the history of the Roman Church. It has professed to act as the vicegerent of Heaven, while seeking to exalt itself above God and to change His law. **Under the rule of Rome, those who suffered death for their fidelity to the gospel were denounced as evildoers; they were declared to be in league with Satan**; and every possible means was employed to cover them with reproach, to cause them to appear in the eyes of the people and even to themselves as the vilest of criminals. **So it will be now. While Satan seeks to destroy those who honor God's law, he will cause them to be accused as lawbreakers, as men who are dishonoring God and bringing judgments upon the world**. GC 591.1

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. **Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God**. GC 591.2

If you are an SDA leader of any institution, church, conference, hospital, school—recognize where you are in history. This is the point in history you have professed you were preparing for your entire Adventist life. You stand before the onlooking universe and they are watching—to whose kingdom are you going to be loyal? Are you going to stand with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, with Elijah, with Joshua who told the people "Choose you this day whom you will serve!" You, SDA leader are right now choosing which God you are serving by the methods you employ in the treatment of your employees, students, and church-members.

The principles of God NEVER violate conscience, never compel, never coerce—it is truth, presented in love and leaving people free.

SDA leader wake up and recognize your responsibility is to the people not the corporation, not the organization, not the institution. It is NOT better for one man to die than the nation—don't fall into the trap of sacrificing people to save an organization. Your responsibility is to God and to stand for God's

methods and principles to carry out God's methods in the fulfillment of your duties, in how you treat others.

SDA leader—reverse your course—cease and desist from all vaccine mandates. Provide letters of religious exemption to any member who wants them. Do not abandon God's people at this time—fulfill your responsibilities. Be like Esther, for who knows if you were not put in your position for a time just like this.

Just consider the witness we could have—consider if every SDA institution worldwide right now stood up for the principles of truth, love and liberty—stood up and opposed coercion, mandates, intimidation, stood in direct opposition to the methods of the beast—right now today the world could be lighted with the glory—character of God, the gospel could go to the world as the entire world would be confronted with the two laws, the two methods, the two governments.

SDA church— Don't be like the Jews who 2000 years ago missed their opportunity—stand up, awake, don't miss your opportunity lest Jesus raise up the rocks to cry out and bring in others who will stand up for His kingdom of truth, love and liberty.

For those of you under threat of losing your job. Pray, pray for God's wisdom and intervention. Pray for courage to live your convictions. Who knows how God may use your witness to open the eyes of others to the difference between His law, kingdom and methods and that of the beast. Who knows how many your standing for truth in love will reach. But understand that hospitals, or any business, cannot function if they terminate everyone who refuses the vaccines. They are using intimidation, to make you afraid. They are trying to get you to comply under fear, or resign. But don't do it. You are in the right, they are in the wrong. So with grace, kindness, love, firmly refuse the injections and make them fire you. If you resign, you have no recourse, but if they fire you they open themselves up to huge liability and there will be many lawsuits that will cost them a lot of money.

Understand again—this isn't ultimately about getting or refusing the injection, it is about the methods you will employ in how you treat others! We are marking ourselves in heart, mind and character of the kinds of people we are, whose law we have embraced by how we treat others.

But I want to also say, that there are groups out there that are not helping the cause of God when they focus on the physical instead of the character. They are putting out videos suggesting it is the mark of the beast to get the vaccine. They make fantastical inferences that within a certain arrangement of bonds in our DNA we can find God's name YHWH written there, if we apply the number where these bonds occur to the Hebrew alphabet—as if God's true name, which no one knows is Hebrew. As if God and angels speak Hebrew, as if Hebrew was the language of Adam in Eden. But they go on to claim that these vaccines are designed to erase the name of God from our DNA and put Satan's name there so Satan can set himself up in God's temple etc.

This is superstition, it is crazy talk, it is not Biblical and it undermines and obfuscates the true message for this time. Have nothing to do with it. The seal of God and the mark of the beast both have to do

with our character, the law of God internalized into our hearts and minds and how we function. God's living law of love, truth and liberty, versus fear, selfishness coercion, imposed rules etc.

The lesson asks us to read Romans 6:1-7, this is from *The Remedy:*

> What then should we say about this amazing healing plan? Should we spread the infection of distrust and selfishness and cause more devastation and destruction so that the power of God's healing solution may be more fully displayed? Absolutely not! We have taken the antidote, and the infection of distrust and selfishness has been purged from our hearts and minds. How then can we choose to be reinfected with distrust of God and practice selfish methods again? Or don't you realize that all of us who were immersed into union with Christ Jesus were immersed into selflessness and have died to self-centeredness? We symbolically demonstrate that we have joined him in dying to self by being buried in water, in order that–just as Jesus rose from the dead, displaying the life-giving glory of the Father–we too may live a new life, displaying God's glorious character.
>
> If we have joined him in dying to self, we will absolutely join him in his resurrection and in new life! For we know that when our old selfish hearts and fear-ridden minds trust God and surrender to be crucified with Christ–the infection of selfishness is purged, and our hearts are no longer controlled by Satanic principles, as anyone who dies to selfishness is free from Satan's methods, principles, and control.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the application of the Sabbath rest to every person under your governance—if you have strangers visiting, afford them the Sabbath rest. If you have animals, servants, all should be afforded a Sabbath rest.

What is the lesson, what are we to learn about this? Why is this important? What impact does it have on us?

Should we enforce the Sabbath on others imperially? Or should we not require work of others on Sabbath, but leave them free to labor if they choose?

Should we, if we had the reins of government, pass laws to make it illegal to work on Sabbath to ensure everyone benefited from Sabbath rest?

If we believe that working on the Sabbath injures people, shouldn't we pass laws to protect them from self-injury of working on Sabbath?

Why would we not do this?

What is the Biblical principle of Sabbath observance?

> "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Ro 14:5 NIV84).

What happens in the heart of those who are forced to do something they are not persuaded to do?

Is this only true regarding religious things—what about other activities in life?

What happens to people who are forced into an addiction recovery program by threat of imprisonment—if they never become persuaded that they have an addiction and never become persuaded that they need recovery?

What about people getting forced medical treatment of any kind?

Is it godly to force this upon people? Do we force Jehovah's Witnesses to take life-saving blood transfusions—why not?

What happens in the minds, hearts and characters of the people who believe it is righteous, it is godly, it is necessary, to pass laws to force people to take medical treatments?

If we go along with such behavior are we becoming more like Jesus or more like the beast?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on how the Sabbath can become legalistic with all kinds of rules and regulations—how the Jews in Christ's day burdened in with silly and restrictive rules that made it the most burdensome day of the week that everyone dreaded and were eager for it to pass.

Have you ever experienced the Sabbath in this way?

How can we avoid this?

What actions have you taken to make it the most celebrated and joyful day of the week?

THURSDAY

The Sabbath as a sign—we have talked about this many times, so share with me, how you understand the Sabbath is a sign, how is it a sign, a sign of what, what purpose is it, how are we benefited by it?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 11
Longing for More

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

We are living in perilous times and I have been inundated with emails and phone calls of all kinds since our last class, listeners, nurses, doctors who are under threat of losing their jobs if they don't comply with mandates. Others who express frustration at me for not just talking about the SS lesson and instead taking time to talk about COVID.

Friends—is it not the two antagonistic principles entering into every phase of human experience that EGW wrote about in *Education?* I want Jesus to come. I want people to be ready to meet Him. I want the final message of mercy to go to the world and this issue has the attention of every person on the planet and calls every person on the planet to decide what methods they will use in how they live and treat others. Has there been any other issue in our lifetime that reached a far and wide as this?

I received this email this week:

> *Dear Come and Reason Ministries:*
>
> *If possible could you give some encouragement?*
>
> *It seems during Sabbath Lesson Time, there is presentation of End Time Fear. Now that I am thinking Evil is more Powerful than God, that you don't really believe what you're saying as you are expanding your ministry, now that evil is to fall on us at any second. Before I am so fearful to come out of my home because the Government is about to come get me.*
>
> *I realize Adventists have heard this end of the world stuff all their lives; and are used to it and mostly ignore it, and still go on living life; not all of us have the courage to just keep living life even now the End Is Near.*
>
> *I do understand your need to get the end time message out, however if you could also offer, hope, also teaching God is more powerful than evil, that too is a message. God's word continually says: Fear Not. Do Not be afraid: I am with you until the end. We need to work on our relationship with God.*
>
> *Because it doesn't matter if it is the end of the world or just the end of a human life; a relationship with God is most important.*

Thank you for your recommendation—it is helpful and I will work on this. For many of us, when we see these events, we understand them in the context of the metaphor that Jesus used of a pregnant woman going into labor. When the labor pains begin most pregnant women and their families, even though they know it will be painful, also are excited and happy because they know that "delivery" is at hand. Thus, the hope is inherent in the pains that come because we know what the result is—delivery from sin and being taken to heaven in new immortal bodies to be with Jesus! But if a pregnant woman went into labor not realizing she was pregnant, then only fear and terror. So too, those who don't understand the what is happening, the times in which we live and don't have a saving relationship with Jesus will be very fearful.

Luke's record of Jesus's description of the end time events Jesus says, "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Lk 21:28).

So, our hope is not in ourselves, our bank accounts, our church institutions, and our hope is not in our governments. Our hope is in Jesus Christ. He will never leave us or forsake us.

A couple of historic quotes that give encouragement:

> **In the hour of greatest need when discouragement overwhelms the soul, then it is that Jesus comes very near**. The hour of man's necessity is God's opportunity. He sees our danger and provides help for us. Unseen by us, he saves us from the foe. RH April 18, 1907, par. 4
>
> **None need abandon themselves to discouragement and despair… There is hope for you in Christ**. God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. **He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free.** MH 249

But as a means to spread the gospel, the good news, to bring the light of heaven to all people, Jesus needs people who trust Him and can lean upon Him for strength **in the face of trials**, difficulties and stresses. He necessarily allows events to unfold so that the people of God, who refuse to conform to the methods of the beast, the methods of imperialism, coercion, control, will give witness to truth, love and liberty. These witnesses will be called before counsels and leaders to say NO! to the coercion of their consciences and reveal a higher understanding of reality. We are living in that time in history and God is calling for His saints to stand up and lift up our heads, to keep our focus upon Him because He is drawing near to empower us to give the true witness about His design laws of truth, love and liberty so that the good news about Him will go to the world and Jesus will come soon!

SUNDAY

The lesson points us 1Corinthians 10:1-11, which recounts the children of Israel going through the Red Sea and their time in the wilderness:

> "These things happened to them as **examples and were written down as warnings for us**, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it**. (1 Co 10:11–13 NIV84).

Do you find hope is this passage?

Hebrews 13:3-5 encourages us with this words:

> "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" (Heb 13:5–6 NIV84).

We are not abandoned, we are not cast off. But Satan is like a roaring lion, inciting fear to get us to choose to run away, to doubt, to let go of God. It is then, when the fear gets the most intense that we are to cling to Jesus, spend more time in prayer, more time in the Word, less time focused on the threats and more time focused on our Savior.

Remember Hezekiah when the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem—he had the singers sing praises to God and God delivered them. We must keep our eyes focused on Christ and praise the beauty of His character of love. This praise goes beyond song, though. We are to give this praise by glorifying God in our lives, by living out His methods in our character, this is the praise we are to give.

So Paul reminds us that ancient Israel is an example to us that God will not forsake us or allow temptations to be more than we can bear, but always provide a way for us if we trust Him!

Then Paul goes on to say the following in chapter 11:

> If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," **then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake—the other man's conscience,** I mean, not yours. **For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?** If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? **So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God**. (1 Co 10:27–31NIV84).

What is being described here? Consider this—was Paul giving them an Old Testament Bible study or was Paul using the Old Testament to bring out God's principles and truths that were to be applied to the problems they were dealing with in their day?

If Paul were transported by God through time and stood here among us today and was able to teach us—would he primarily do an Old Testament Bible study, telling us about how God dealt with things in the past, or would he be using those truths from history as examples to teach us how to apply God's

methods and principles in our lives today? In other words, would he focus on the realities of our current situations and apply God's principles to them?

We are to live out God's principles in our lives—our first loyalty is to God, to present ourselves to God in the best condition, for the greatest usefulness in His cause, which means we live in harmony with His methods to maintain our greatest health.

We cannot win God's cause or fulfill God's purposes by practicing Satan's methods.

Paul is talking about foods offered to idols here. Saying that in his spiritual understanding an idol is nothing but inanimate stone, wood, or metal and can do nothing to the quality of the food and therefore, he can eat it without any problems. But, if he was with someone who *believed* in the idol and told him the food was offered to an idol and eating it would cause the other person to now believe Paul's health, wisdom, strength, vitality, energy, were coming from the blessings of the idol, that this would introduce falsehood into the mind of the other person and Paul, in good conscience, could not participate in colluding with this lie. So while the idol can do nothing to the quality of the food, **the belief in the idol** can do something to a person's mind and character.

For Paul this issue wasn't about the quality of the food itself, but the spiritual impact the belief about idols has on hearts and minds. That doesn't mean there are not fact-based discussions of nutrition and health to be had, it just wasn't the point of this Bible passage.

Paul is focused on a higher principle than physical nutrition—**whatever we do, wherever we do it, we do it to glorify God**. Each one of us must decide, under the dictates of our own consciences, what is best in how we govern ourselves and how we honor God with our lives. And we must leave others free to decide for themselves—persuade with evidence—absolutely, but we never compel others to comply with our beliefs.

In this case the focus was on food, but it was not about nutrition or physical health, it was about worship—pagan worship, allowing false ideas into the mind. Standing up for the truth about God in the context of eating—not allowing our food to introduce false beliefs that obstruct the gospel, is one action in governance of self that each person must decide for themselves..

Does this mean that Paul takes no position on the physical aspects of our health and the use of our bodies?

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed **by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Ro 12:1–2 NIV84).

Presenting our bodies to God is an act of worship and is connected with the renewing of our minds. Anything that undermines our physical health necessarily diminishes are ability to carry out the Lord's

duties. Physical illness also makes it harder to think, focus, and undermines resolve. So maintaining our physical health puts us in the best physical position to cooperate with God for the healing of our minds.

What does it mean to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice? Does this have anything to do with the health message? Who is to decide for whom what someone puts in their body?

If you are an SDA leader who won't give a religious exemption to your parishioners who have a conscientious objection to getting the COVID vaccine—let me ask you this:

Would you give your members a religious exemption if they were required either by government or employer to do any of the following:

- Eat a piece of pork?
- Drink one glass of alcohol containing wine?
- Smoke one cigarette?

Now, of the following, which has the *potential* to do more harm to one's body, the spirit temple?

- Eating a piece of pork?
- Drinking one glass of wine?
- Smoking one cigarette?
- Or getting the COVID vaccine?

And if a person has a conscientious objection to each of them, what happens to their minds if they are coerced to do comply with an action that violates their conscience? Why would you support such an action?

Why would you give letter of conscientious objection for the first three that pose no risk of health harm at all, but you wouldn't for the one action that has the potential to kill them? Why wouldn't you support them in their decision as to which risks they want to take, how they honor God with their bodies? Why won't you stand by them as they decide what the Holy Spirit convicts them to do?

Certainly, someone will suggest it is because the first three actions impact only themselves, while the COVID vaccine is designed to benefit others. So even though the vaccine has risks, one might argue, that because it may benefit others it is righteous to compel compliance for the sake of stopping disease and benefiting others. Keep this in mind as we explore further this question—we will come back to it and expose that this reasoning is a trap of Satan.

Consider this historic quote from *The Desire of Ages*:

> **In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammeled**. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or **to prescribe his duty**. **God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions**. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters

> **where principle is involved**, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Romans 14:12, 5. **In Christ's kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner**. The angels of heaven do not come to the earth to rule, and to exact homage, but as messengers of mercy, to co-operate with men in uplifting humanity. DA 550.6

Class have you been confused with all the data around COVID? Let's be gracious to our church leaders, our community leaders, our local health officials, those who are willing to compel others. For the vast majority, I believe they really want to do what is right, and I am sure most are making the decisions they truly believe are the right or best, and many are confused by the debate and plethora of data. I know doctors who are confused by all of this so it is a virtual certainty that non-medical people—our church leaders will be confused. There are several reasons for all this confusion.

1. There is an **active misinformation campaign** going on; purposeful falsehoods have been put out by government agencies and professional medical outlets including peer review journals; active censuring of information is obstructing a free, honest and open debate which is critical for good decision making and for truth to be win the day. Suppression of evidence allows for lies, misunderstanding and confusion to persist. But, this alone would not be sufficient for the church leadership to be confused as they are. The misinformation campaign is occurring in conjunction with several other practices that the church should be protected from, but instead the church is complicit in promoting.
2. **Authority-based decision-making**. Too many people have practiced authority-based decision making—meaning they have learned to trust some person with a higher degree or education or training to tell them the answer, rather than developing by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong (Heb 5:14).

   Remember this historic quote—consider it in light of what is happening today:

   > **If we mistake the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God we are led astray by the foolishness of man's wisdom**. Here is the great danger of many in -----. They have not an experience for themselves. **They have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves**, with unprejudiced, unbiased judgment, questions and **subjects that are new** [like COVID] and that are ever liable to arise. **They wait to see what others will think**. If these dissent, that is all that is needed to convince them that the subject under consideration is of no account whatever. Although this class is large, it does not change the fact that they are **inexperienced and weak-minded** through long yielding to the enemy, and will always be as sickly as babes, **walking by others' light, living on others' experience, feeling as others feel, and acting as others act**. They act as though they had not an individuality. **Their identity is submerged in others**; they are merely shadows of those whom they think [are] right. Unless these become sensible of their wavering character and correct it, **they will all fail of everlasting life**; **they will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days**. They will possess no stamina to resist the devil, **for they do not know that it is he. Someone must be at their side to inform them whether a foe or a friend is approaching. They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned.** They are not wise in those

> things which relate to the kingdom of God. Neither young nor old are excusable in trusting to another to have an experience for them. Said the angel: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." A noble self-reliance is needed in the Christian experience and warfare. 2T 129.2

This surrendering our thinking to some authority is a longstanding problem in religions. Jesus was criticized for not having been educated by the rabbis. Our ministry has been criticized by the penal/legal theologians because I don't have a degree in theology. The idea being, we must defer our thinking to the theologians to know what is theologically right or not. This is false. This type of thinking is part of Romanism, or popery, that a person in authority can decide what is right and make a mandate that others must adhere to. The principle of Protestantism is that we are the priesthood of believers, we have been given by God our own unique individualities, with minds capable of development and learning. We are to reason things out for ourselves and Paul explicitly states in Romans 14:5 that **every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind**. We don't get persuaded by authoritarian claims and threats, but by convincing evidence. But when truth does not support the one in charge, they must resort to coercion.

But this reliance on expert opinion is exactly how medicine is working today and how COVID decisions are being made. The policies are based on expert opinions masquerading as science, not actual reproducible science that is persuasive. This is why they must use mandates and threats. Typically mandates and coercion is only needed when one doesn't have persuasive evidence—like the Dark Ages church, like those who teach a penal/legal model of salvation and like those who are mandating the COVID vaccines, the lockdowns, mandated masks—none of these positions are based on reliable reproducible evidence of long term safety or efficacy and thus they must rely on coercion and force.

3. Third reason is **selective evidence**. Historic problems in theology arise when people use proof texts, here a little and there a little, rather than integrating all the inspired record into a cohesive whole. Likewise, with the COVID situation much confusion exists because people will take one study, or one piece of data and make a policy or position on it without balancing it with the rest of the record and with godly principles and common sense. For instance, not counting the cost of injury to children to close schools and focusing only on avoiding children being infected with a disease that causes them essentially zero risk.

4. Fourth **forgetting principles because of focusing on facts**. If our church leaders would recognize and prioritize the principles of God, the design laws of God, truth, love and liberty, recognizing that God never compels, never coerces, but leaves people free to decide, then they would be protected from making decisions that violate conscience. But when they focus on medical facts only, they can be led to embrace methods contrary to God's methods to advance a good medical goal.

5. Fifth reason **failure to use the integrative evidence-based approach**. The fifth reason people are having problems in deciding what is right on the COVID issue, in addition to misinformation, trusting others to tell them what to think, using limited pieces of the evidence, and unprincipled decision-making, is that they have not embraced and integrated God's truths and principles from the inspired record to the COVID question.
    a. The Bible teaches us that truth is revealed in three threads harmonized—Scripture, Science and nature, and life's experiences
    b. EGW wrote:
        i. **The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life**. {COL 125.2}
        ii. Rightly understood, both the **revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature**. {Ed 130.3}
    c. When we separate the three threads we have problems—science alone historically leads to godlessness, experience alone to mysticism or nihilism, and Scripture alone to a lot of bad theology and division in the body of Christ.
    d. COVID has revealed a new problem when we use science divorced from Scripture—and that is we develop practices that are imbalanced, unethical, and coercive. In other words, if we use science without Scripture we can pursue a good goal by using Satan's methods and ultimately cause more harm. Here is wisdom the SDA church should be advancing, but it is not:
        i. "**The truth for this time** embraces the whole gospel. **Rightly presented,** it will work in man the very changes that will make evident the power of God's grace upon the heart. **It will do a complete work and develop a complete man**. **Then let no line be drawn between the genuine medical missionary work and the gospel ministry. Let these two blend** in giving the invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready." **Let them be joined in an inseparable union, even as the arm is joined to the body.** Counsels on Health 516
    e. The SDA message was to be a message built on design law that integrates the reality of our total person, physical, mental, spiritual all aspects operating upon design laws and only in harmony with God and His methods is life and health found. Instead, the church rejected design law at the 1888 GC and embraced the imposed law lie and not only has taught a fraudulent legal salvation in which God is the source of inflicted death who must be paid the blood of a sinless human sacrifice not to kill us, but has also divorced the gospel from the medical work. Because of the law of worship—we become like the God we worship—when an authoritarian god, who imposes laws and imposes punishments for law-breaking is worshipped, people become more authoritarian. Thus, it is not surprising that many SDA leaders think it is righteous to use authoritarian measures on others—mandates, coercion—as long as it is for a good cause—like saving lives.

       Thus, the church, in addition to to teaching a fraudulent legal plan of salvation rather than the healing reality that restores people to godlikeness, is vulnerable to being

> coopted by false-medicine and false-science and practicing the methods of the world upon its employees, students and members as leadership joins with the systems of the world to coerce consciences of people and advance **practices that are not needed by the vast majority of those who honor God with their entire beings**.

I am going to unpack for you the integrative evidence of protection and health benefits that the SDA church has been blessed with and could be taking to the world but isn't, and demonstrate how in rejecting these principles and joining with the governments to enforce mandates they are not only injuring their own characters but advancing the kingdom of God's enemy.

> **God has put it in our power to obtain a knowledge of the laws of life. This knowledge has been placed within our reach for use**. We should employ every facility for the restoration of health, taking every advantage possible, **working in harmony with natural laws**. Counsels to the Church 306

You are all familiar with the 8 natural remedies:

What does science reveal regarding the natural remedies in relation to COVID and prevention of hospitalization and death?

- Plant-based or Pescatarian diet reduces hospitalization by 73%
- Sunshine raises vitamin D levels and vitamin D levels between 50-100 reduce COVID infections by 80%
- Fresh air—even the governments EPA website states: "Ensuring proper ventilation with outside air can help reduce indoor airborne contaminants, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and other viruses. However, by itself, increasing ventilation is not enough to protect people from exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19."
    - One doctor estimates that fresh air reduces transmission of COVID 70-80%
- Temperance—avoiding harmful substances—like alcohol, which the government deemed an essential business during lockdowns.
    - Even the WHO states "Alcohol has a deleterious effect on your immune system and will not stimulate immunity and virus resistance."
    - In a comprehensive article entitle "COVID-19 pandemic and alcohol consumption: Impacts and interconnections" researcher write: "In recent years, conclusive evidence has been gathered that alcohol increases the risk of infectious diseases, especially HIV infection, tuberculosis, pneumonia with germs resistant to treatment and difficult to eradicate… The association between bacterial and viral lung infections and ethanol dependence is supported by multiple pathophysiological mechanisms:

      - reducing the number of T lymphocytes - by preventing proliferation and by altering cell turnover;

- favoring a pro-inflammatory status through an increased level of proinflammatory cytokines, such as tumor necrosis factor alfa (TNF α) and interleukins 1 and 6 (IL-1, IL-6);

- decreases the function and number of NK (Natural Killers) cells responsible for removing infected or malignant cells;

- disturbance of macrophage functions in the lung alveoli;

- damage to the respiratory ciliated cells which plays an essential role in filtering pathogenic microorganisms.

- Other research documents that acute alcohol consumption impairs lymphocyte response for the next 24 hours after consumption.

Now, what is the risk of harm from eating a plant-based or pescatarian diet, getting consistent fresh air, sunshine to keep your vitamin D levels up and avoiding alcohol? ZERO risk of harm and several of these factors alone reduce risk of infection, hospitalization and death by more than the vaccines—who knows the benefit of doing them all, I couldn't find this measured.

What is the benefit of the vaccine? Pfizer reduces risk of COVID, hospitalization and death by around 42% and Moderna and Johnson/Johnson by around 67%. But these benefits of the vaccines are waning with every mutation. And what are the long-term health risks of the vaccines? Unknown, but there are short term health risks from these that are well documented.

So here we have lifestyle measures that studies indicate have greater protection than the vaccines while the vaccines add risks that the lifestyle measures do not. Why is the church silent on this? Consider the opportunity the church has if it were to advance the principles of God at this time?

But this research focuses only on the physiological benefits. As Christians, we are interested in more than just the body, we are interested in the soul the spirit, eternal life, restoring people to unity to God. Thus, we are interested in the methods practiced and the character one develops.

I have provided the links to the documents demonstrating the efficacy in the natural remedies in preventing COVID transmission, hospitalizations and death. Let's assume for a moment that all if this is verified and all agree such actions do provide these benefits—why then are we NOT advocating for governmental or employer mandates that require:

- every person to eat a plant-based or pescatarian diet?
- raising health insurance premiums on all who do not have their vegetarian diet passport?
- ban on all alcohol products until COVID is resolved?
- all people must open their windows and ventilate every building 3 times per day
- all people must walk outdoors in the sunshine 15 minutes a day and get vitamin D levels checked and levels up to 50-100 range?

Would you support mandating these behaviors because we could save lives if we did? Why not? And these intervention have no risks associated with them.

Then why are Christians supporting vaccine mandates that have less benefit than the natural remedies and carry more risk and more cost? **Again, this isn't about the vaccines—it is about the methods.**

I received another email this week.

> *Dear Dr. Jennings: I am so thankful for your ministry and have become increasingly distressed over the increasing mandates and loss of our liberties since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020. I am a Public Health Nurse in my 49th year of nursing practice, but I have known since day 1 of this pandemic that we were being indoctrinated with lies, misinformation, and distortions over a virus with a 99% or greater recovery rate. I realized very quickly that this is not about public health, but instead is a real-life battle between good and evil over hearts and minds. Sadly, many have decided that the government knows best and have given up their freedoms to breathe clean fresh air, spend time with friends and family, and have control of their own bodily autonomy.*
>
> *I retired from CA State service as a Nurse Consultant in 2013. I then decided to go to work for Placer County as a Public Health Nurse on a part-time basis. When Covid hit, all public health nurses were mandated away from their regular jobs to do case investigations and contact tracing for Covid + patients. I did this probably a month when I came to realize that what I was doing by locking down people in quarantine or isolation was pure evil. I told my boss I was going to stay home unless they had a need for me to do my regular duties in California Children's Services (CCS). Of course they called me back right away and told me that I wouldn't have to do Covid duties any longer, and to please come back to my regular CCS job. So I did, and I continued to watch them abuse full-time PHNs mandating them to do full-time case investigations, and Covid testing in facilities, hotels, homes, and testing sites, in addition to their regular duties. I kept waiting for the restrictions to ease, but they only ramped up. Some people worked from home, but when they came to the office, it was staggered so there were fewer workers on site. Masking was mandated while indoors, and if people shared an office, they were split apart, sometimes at great distance from others in their own program. I finally quit this job in Jan, 2021 when they put me on quarantine, saying I had been exposed to a person who had tested + for Covid.*
>
> *The insanity at _____ SDA Church, as you can imagine, has been to close the doors for many months since the beginning of the pandemic, then open with masks and social distancing, along with temperature checks at the door, then close doors and hold services in a tent outside this summer with masks and distancing, to now open church with mask mandates that will probably never end. This, I understand, is coming from the Northern CA Conference, who will not deviate from government mandates. I have been attending a Sunday Church in Rocklin for nearly a year now, as they were the only church in the area to open their doors since Spring of 2020, in defiance of the governor's mandate to stay closed. I will never return to the SDA Church where I have been a member for nearly 50 years. I didn't leave my church. My church*

left me. Now Adventist Health is mandating the Covid-19 Vax for all of their healthcare workers. Some of their staff had a protest in front of Rideout Adventist Hospital in Marysville on Aug. 13, so my son-in-law, Abel and I joined them.

I really appreciated your last Sabbath School Lesson on Sabbath Rest, along with your blog on loss of the independent physician. I fully agree with you and I cannot understand Adventists, or anyone else who is willing to wear masks, take experimental vaccines, or be subject to any other government mandates, because compliance means giving up your God-given freedoms. We know the persecution will continue and prophesy is being fulfilled. I look forward to your SS lessons each week, as I need that support, assurance, and the truths and guidance applicable to these challenging times we live in.

May God continue to bless you and your ministry.

This is an email from Australia:

Dear Dr Tim, staff and Bible class members
Thank you so much for your incredible ministry.

We have been following you for about 3 or 4 years and we love your Bible study class , Dr Tim and its members. Previously I've written to you saying this class 'feels like home'. You don't dodge the elephants in the room so to speak.

Dr Tim thank you for speaking out about the vaccine. We pray for your protection daily.

I have just learnt that vaccination will be mandatory for all teachers come October. I have been ill with Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome (CIRS) and Lyme but was hoping to return to high school teaching in some capacity as I love teaching and the comradery/community. So I am very saddened and concerned. Both Covid and the vaccines have made people with these diseases very sick.

One of our friends just resigned from his nursing job after ten years of faithful service because of mandatory vaccination. He is no longer able to provide an income for his young family.

This is happening around the world in many places. Could you guys please pray we would stand strong in Jesus strength, and in His endurance and His faithfulness. Lord have mercy
Thank you and God bless you all xxx

How many of you heard that the government approved with full approval the Pfizer COVID vaccine this week? How many believe this is true and if you get the Pfizer vaccine you are now getting an FDA fully approved vaccine and no longer an experimental injection?

On August 26, 2021 the President of Loma Linda University, whom I have great respect for and whom I view as a very godly man seeking to promote healthy principles, put out a public letter advocating for

the COVID vaccines in which he wrote that the "Pfizer's vaccine is now approved by the FDA for general use." This statement reveals why we must not let others do our thinking for us. Many of us would hold great confidence in the recommendations of the president of such a prestigious institution and who has impeccable medical and public health degrees. Yet, our decisions are only as good as the information upon which they are based. And by writing this statement, he reveals he is basing his opinion on misinformation. If we have misinformation, then even with good motives and intentions we can make unhealthy decisions.

I had a patient call me Wednesday because her GI doctor told her that now that the FDA has fully approved the Pfizer vaccine she needs to get it. But it is a big con, a fraud, a deception, a trick purposely crafted to make it appear that the Pfizer injection available in the USA is approved when **you will still be getting an experimental injection**. Let me explain and then I will read from the FDA documents themselves.

- The FDA issued an approval to Pfizer's subsidiary's BioNTech's product branded *Comirnaty.*
- The original Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that received emergency use authorization had its emergency use authorization extended or continued.
- The approved product *Comirnaty* was approved without any new studies, but relied on the same studies as the EUA injection.
- Further, with all previous vaccines, the process to get full approval the FDA required an external advisory committee to review all the data, risks, benefits and confirm the FDAs position that the product was safe, effective, and with reasonable risks. In this case, the FDA decided that because there was no concerns about risks with the experimental injections there would be no need for an external advisory committee review, so they waived it.
- There was no efficacy studies of the approved product against the delta variant.
- But most egregious of all, the FDA made a slight of hand ruling, stating that the approved vaccine **can be used interchangeably** with the original experimental emergency use Pfizer product.

So, they approve a product with no new data by bypassing the normal external advisory review and no testing against delta. Fully approved vaccines, by US law, can be mandated. And fully approved vaccines have certain liability protections for the consumer. Meaning if you get the approved vaccine and are injured you can sue and have access to the vaccine compensation funds.

Now comes the evil part, the deceit, the trick, the purposeful crafted manipulation to exploit you and protect the big pharmaceutical corporations.

This approved product *Comirnaty* is not available in the US, so the FDA–here comes the slight of hand watch for it—wrote an internal note that the approved version and the emergency use version can be used interchangeably**, but with different legal status**. Meaning, with the FDA approval of the new product employers can now mandate you to take the vaccine because it has been approved, but because it isn't available they can substitute the unapproved experimental UEA version. And if you take the EUA version and have a bad outcome you cannot sue, you cannot file worker's comp, you

cannot get reimbursed for damages. You take all the risks with no liability for the manufacturer, the government, the employer, the doctor, the pharmacy etc.

Here is the FDA language:

> The licensed vaccine has the same formulation as the EUA-authorized vaccine and the products can be used interchangeably to provide the vaccination series without presenting any safety or effectiveness concerns. The products are legally distinct with certain differences that do not impact safety or effectiveness.
>
> https://www.fda.gov/media/150386/download

This adds a new level of evil—not just mandating someone take a medical treatment for a condition they don't have, but deceiving them into believing the treatment has been approved, is proven safe, has minimal risk, and that they have some liability protection while actually giving them something that hasn't been approved, which isn't proven safe, and for which the company has no liability. This ruling allows for the legal forcing of people to take risks with no liability upon the manufacturer who is making billions of dollars or those who require it as part of employment.

Is Adventist Health Systems going along with this? It appears, from the information I have at this time, that they are—this is evil. And SDA leaders should know better, and would know better had they embraced the integrative evidenced-based approach which requires harmonizing science with Scripture and living out God's principles in how we live our lives.

God never coerces the conscience and as a people we need to stand up at this time in history for the kingdom of truth, love and liberty.

But even if you get the product that has received the FDA full approval, is it reliable? Can we trust it to be safe?

In a study published in the JAMA entitled **Postmarket Safety Events Among Novel Therapeutics Approved by the US Food and Drug Administration Between 2001 and 2010** researchers found

- 222 novel therapeutics were approved, and there were 123 postmarket safety events involving 71 products that required FDA action.
- Manufacturers needed to add 61 black box warnings to call attention to serious or life-threatening risks.
- Three products were withdrawn from the market.
- Drugs used to treat mental illness and drugs that **went through an accelerated approval process** had a higher number of "events," the study found.

Another historic deception that Satan has used throughout human history is the idea of exchanging eternal life for temporal life.

- Daniel, the three worthies, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Jesus, the Apostles, the martyrs through history all had their temporal lives threatened—they could save their temporal lives if they gave up their eternal lives.
- In the Dark Ages this was also practiced, but consider, who was giving up their eternal lives—Jerome, Huss, Tyndale—who died as martyrs or those who killed them?
    - And from the perspective of the persecutors, why did they do it?
    - Were the persecutor's mindset—"We know we are evil. We know we are wrong. We know we are on Satan's side and we need to kill the righteous and lose our eternal souls"?
    - No, they thought they were doing right—and what were they thinking they were trying to do? Save lives, save people from apostacy, heresy etc.
- And today, we have this same theme—people are willing to use Satan's methods of deceit, coercion, threat, control, in order to save temporal lives from COVID, **but in using these methods many are throwing away their eternal lives!**

These are real spiritual issues. Satan is seeking to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Only those who have developed by practice the ability to discern for themselves, who have internalized God's design laws into their hearts, who integrate, as far as possible, all the evidences and truths God has provided and who trust God will be able to resist the deceptions being practiced.

So what are the spiritual elements at war during the COVID pandemic:

- Truth versus lies (it isn't about COVID it is about the methods. If we lie in one place we develop the character of a liar. If we don't reason, don't think, don't discern but trust others to tell us we atrophy or God-given individuality. Thus as EGW said in *Education* the two antagonistic principles enter every phase of human existence.)—and multitude of lies have been told here are a few:
    - The virus was a natural wild virus that mutated on its own
    - There was no gain of function research
    - It did not come from a lab in Wuhan
    - Dr. Fauci and the NIH was not involved with the gain of function research funding
    - Mask wearing diminishes viral transmission
    - Mask wearing decreases your risk of hospitalization and death
    - There are no effective therapeutics or treatments
    - The vaccines are proven safe
    - COVID is a virulent disease
    - Saving lives is the most important factor in decision making
    - Six feet of distance must be maintained to avoid transmission
    - Ivermectin doesn't work and is dangerous
        - Metanalysis of 15 studies revealed evidence of an 86% reduction in COVID infection
        - FDA came out this week warning against Ivermectin—why? Because people were using veterinary doses and taking higher than human dosages and having side effects—thus they warn against using it for COVID, not because human meds at human doses don't work, but because veterinary doses cause side

effects. And why are people taking animal products? Because the FDA and its mindless minions obstruct people from getting safe human formulated dosages.
    - Hydroxychloroquine doesn't work and is dangerous
        - Two studies were published earlier in Lancet and NEJM that claimed this were dangerous, both studies later retracted because the information was fabricated.
        - Hundreds of peer review studies show it is effective in early treatment of COVID
    - You should not treat it until you get short of breath
    - Vaccines provide the best protection against COVID 19
    - We, the government, want to stop the spread of COVID 19—that is why we open the southern border bring in over 200,000 illegal aliens tens of thousands infected, actively ship them around the country to communities without permission or notice.
    - We, the government, want to stop COVID but we don't put out any early treatment protocols that are published in peer review journals as universal guidelines.
    - The vaccines don't cause deaths in anyone
    - Heightening fear by distorting the data—New COVID cases are presented without the high recovery rates to create a false sense of terror
    - Deaths are not age stratified—for instance, have you been getting messaging that your children are at risk from this because of all the positive cases? There are 72 million people under age 20 in the USA and how many have died from COVID? Somewhere around 260—this is not a pandemic of the young. Your children are not in danger of a virulent disease.
- Declarations/proclamations/claims versus evidence
- Coercion versus liberty
- censuring versus freedom of speech and expression
- Accusation on reputation rather than addressing the evidence
- Greed/mammon/money—don't discount the impact of greed and money
    - The same people who funded the gain of function research are many of the ones who developed the vaccine technology, are many hold the patents or stock in the vaccine companies, and are the ones who are making billions on the vaccines and are the ones who are obstructing any evidence that would undermine the need for the vaccines.
- Satan's government—authoritarianism over versus leaving people free to decide for themselves
- Fear versus love

Finally on this question there is the risk/benefit analysis. Just consider how your decision-making has been impacted by the false-narratives, the censored and highly biased media propaganda campaign that has conditioned you to believe that we must, in order to save lives, shut down schools, mask kids, mask adults, shut down business, shut down churches, force an experimental vaccine upon people and more.

Why, if you think any of this is reasonable, is the justification for doing it—to save lives right?

Then would you support, on the same principle of the necessity to save lives—but with even more certainty than all these COVID interventions, mandates for the following:

- Universal governors on all vehicles, except emergency vehicles, that will restrict speed to 25 mph? Why not? We would with 100% certainty save millions of live worldwide every year from dying in auto-accidents if we did this? If you are unwilling to do this does that mean you don't love your neighbor? That you are callous and a sociopath who wants to kill people?
- Ban all fast-food restaurants, sodas and tobacco products—and mandate plant-based or pescatarian diet? We know with 100% certainty that if we did this we would save millions of lives, and reduce all kinds of chronic diseases and improve quality of life and health. If you don't want to do this does that mean you don't love others and want to see more death? Why would you be unwilling to mandate this knowing it would save lives? And we would also do something else with this action, what? We would seriously reduce the need for billions of dollars of pharmaceuticals to be sold every year to treat chronic conditions. Have you ever considered that there are people in our society that don't want true health, they want chronic sickness that they can treat with a pill or annual injection that will make them billions? A news report just announced that the government is going to approve the third injection at 6 months rather than 8 months.

Do you realize how your normal lifelong skill of assessing risks and benefits, the cost of an intervention has been undermined by the media and false-narratives—this is a spiritual war going on, seeking through fear to get you to surrender your mind to some external authority and to employ Satanic methods of coercion upon others to force them to do something against their conscience.

God's people do NOT use Satan's methods to advance His kingdom. We are to come out of Babylon and stand apart.

The lesson also asks us to read Hebrews 8:5:

> They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." NIV84

Is a copy, shadow, pattern—the reality?

If you see the blueprints to a building, is that a copy, shadow or pattern? Is that the same as the building?

Can God use symbols, metaphors, similes, parables, types to teach more than one thing at a time? Can there be multiple truths woven together in the same symbol or type?

Think about the Come and Reason Logo—the symbol of our ministry. It represents our ministry but within the symbol there are different things represented:

- The ministry as a whole
- The Bible as our foundation

- The heart and mind
- The C and R that form the heart/mind as we come and reason together from God's word a flame comes forth, the Holy Spirit that enlighten and empowers
- But the flame also represents our witness, our lives that shine forth in the darkness, we are lights to lighten the world

Does God's little theater teach multiple truths and have multiple threads that are simultaneously true and woven together?

The Sanctuary symbolism, the little theater teaches at least the following:

- Jesus Christ—destroy this temple and in three days He will raise it again. The entire structure teaches us about Jesus:
    - Jesus is the sacrificial lamb
    - Jesus is the High Priest
    - Jesus is the Lamp—the light that lightens the world
    - Jesus is the showbread, the bread of heaven the truth of God that we internalize
    - Jesus is the wine—the perfect character of love that we ingest
    - Jesus sinless life is the blood carried in the vessels that brings life to us and cleanses from sin
    - Jesus is the fragrance of God the incense
    - Jesus is the pure gold
    - Jesus' righteousness is the pure white robes
    - Jesus is the way through the veil to atonement with God
    - Jesus is the lid to the ark that reconciles and restores the universe to unity or oneness thus Jesus is the at-one-ment
- The plan of salvation
    - Human beings are apart from God spread throughout the four corners in the world represented by the tribes of Israel
    - God's people, represented by the Levites, are witnesses, and go out to bring the people into the body of Christ, the church, or in the metaphor to the temple
    - The brazen altar represents the unconverted hearts that receive Christ, the sin offering sacrificed upon it and the blood poured out at the base
    - The golden altar represents the converted heart—it is in the holy place, representing the church with the lampstand, the word of God and Christ the living Word, and the Showbread and wine. The heart of the converted prays to God and incense burned on the golden altar.
    - The ark in the most holy place represents the universe reconciled to God again—the Shekinah represents the Father, the angels the angelic heavenly host, the box represents the saved sinners who are covered in gold, the righteousness of Christ and who have partaken the manna-the word of God the truth, and been won to trust and opened their heart and had the living law of God written upon their hearts (represented by the 10 Commandments), and though they were dead in trespass and sin they came to live and bore the fruits of righteousness (represented by Aaron's rod that budded).

- Our own hearts and minds, our bodies our Spirit Temples
    - Jesus said that unless we eat his flesh and drink His blood we have non part with Him. The flesh of the sacrificial animal represents the words of truth, which are also represented by the unleavened bread. We are to ingest the truth, lies are dispelled, as flesh or bread taken into the body become building blocks to our physical bodies, so truths taken into the mind become building blocks to our beliefs, schemas, worldviews and wins us to trust. In trust we open the heart and God pours His love into our hearts, we receive the life of Christ, the character of Christ represented by the blood. And it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.
- The Corporate temple, the church and body of Christ
    - Each of us are living stones built together into a house for the Lord, thus the temple also teaches God's plan for the heavenly sanctuary, built out of living beings who have been fitted for heaven.

Here are some historic quotes to consider:

> The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. {3MR 231.3}
>
> Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. {3MR 231.4}
>
> This world is God's workshop, and **every stone** [every person] **that can be used in the heavenly temple must be hewed and polished until it is a tried and precious stone, fitted for its place in the Lord's building**. But if we refuse to be trained and disciplined, we shall be as stones that will not be hewed and polished, and that are cast aside at last as useless. – {ML 268.3}

It may be that much work needs to be done ... , **that you are a rough stone**, which must be squared and polished before it can fill a place in God's temple. You need not be surprised if with hammer and chisel **God cuts away the sharp corners of your character** until you are prepared to fill the place He has for you. No human being can accomplish this work. Only by God can it be done. And be assured that **He will not strike one useless blow. His every blow is struck in love, for your eternal happiness**. He knows your infirmities and works to restore, not to destroy. – {ML 268.4}

A character polished after the similitude of a palace ... may shine in the courts of the Lord forever. – {ML 268.5}

The trials of life are God's workmen, **to remove the impurities and roughness from our character**. [cleansing of the sanctuary] Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. **But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple.** Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace." {MB 10.3}

Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. **But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act. We are to bring to the foundation material that will stand the test of fire—gold, silver, and precious stones, "polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12)**. To those who thus build for God, Paul speaks words of encouragement... : "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." ... **The Christian who faithfully presents the word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God He will be honored as a wise builder.—**The Acts of the Apostles, 598, 599.

Are the events right now happening in the world placing people in situations where they have to decide what methods they will employ in how they treat others? Will this impact their character development?

MONDAY

The lesson points to the importance of the shed blood of the sacrificial animal and asks what was its importance and that it was necessary for our atonement.

What do we understand this to mean?

What law lens do we read this through?

If imposed law then sin is a legal problem and justice requires inflicted punishment and thus someone has to die the death penalty inflicted by the ruling magistrate. Jesus didn't do any sin that would legally require Him to die, so He could be our substitute and have our sins applied to His account and God could punish Him in our place and thus at the Cross God killed Jesus for our sins and the blood represents that legal payment that we can claim to our account and if we do God declares us to be righteous even though we are not.

Do you see the lie after lie after lie in this view? Can you name some of them?

- sin is a legal problem
- God's law functions like human law
- sin requires punishment
- sin can be transferred from one person to another
- it is righteous and just to punish an innocent for the crimes of the guilty
- sin doesn't actually harm God harms you for it
- God is the source of death—thus Eastern philosophies that teach the eternal existence of good and evil, life and death are true as in this model death comes out from God as an inflicted punishment upon those who would otherwise live if God didn't act to kill them
- God declares things to be one way when they are actually another, thus God is not entirely truthful
- others?

This view is so corrupt it keeps people trapped in a form of godliness with no power to heal and save. Worse, because of the design law of worship, people who hold this view and worship such a god become like that god and they become willing to use force and power on others. This is what we read about in the Great Controversy last week when the author described how Protestantism has become more and more like Romanism—in that they have forgotten the principle of freedom of conscience and believe justice can be obtained through external law enforcement.

So what is the purpose of the shed blood? Why did Christ have to die?

We have multiple resources on our website that explores the various atonement models, here is one of them: https://comeandreason.com/pol-09/

TUESDAY and THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 4:1-11, I am going to read it from *The Remedy:*

> [1] Therefore, since the Remedy is still available, and the promise of complete healing and perfect rest still stands, let us be careful that none of us be found to have rejected it.[2] For we also have had the good news of God's healing truth presented to us just as they did; but the message of truth had no value to them because they did not believe it nor did they trust the one who gave it.[3] But we, who have trusted God on the basis of the truth Christ provided,

> experience healing and enter that rest, and our minds are at peace. As God has said, "So I granted them their persistent choice and said, 'Since they refuse the truth–the Remedy I freely offer–they will never be able to enter my rest and get well.'" It was not because God's perfect rest was not available–for it had been ready since his work of creation was complete — [4] as the Scriptures say elsewhere regarding the seventh day: "And on the seventh day, God rested his case. He had finished all his work of providing the evidence needed to refute the lies of Satan."[5] And yet in another passage he says, "If they refuse the truth, if they reject the evidence I have provided, their minds will never find rest and they will not get well."
> [6] The opportunity to find God's healing and rest still remains, even though those who formerly had the good news of God's healing truth presented to them did not get well or find rest because they refused to believe the truth and trust God.[7] Therefore God again and again presents his healing Remedy, and he set a certain day which he called "today," when much later he spoke through David in the same Scripture as before: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds."
> [8] For if Joshua had already given them healing of character and rest for their minds, God would not have spoken later about another day of rest still to come.[9] There remains then a Sabbath-rest–a rest in the evidence and truth of the character of God–which heals and transforms the people of God;[10]for anyone who rests in the achievements of Christ rests from working to save themself, just as God rested from his work.[11] Let us therefore make every effort to rest in the truth about God as revealed by Christ, so that no one will fall by following the example of distrust and refusal to accept the truth.

Why did they not enter that rest?

What about us today? Have we entered that rest? What would prevent us?

They saw enemies and didn't trust God to provide a solution?

So what was Satan's strategy to defeat the people at that time? To get them to focus on the threat rather than God as their source of strength.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

On **Saturday, September 11** we will have **two lessons and no Q&A session** after. Lesson 13, The Ultimate Rest, will begin at 9:30 AM. We will begin the first lesson in *Present Truth in Deuteronomy* at 10:35 AM.

We will ***not*** have Bible Study Class on Saturday, September 18 as the team will be in Orlando, FL sharing free materials at the AACC (American Association of Christian Counselors).

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping!

NOTES—my notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 12
The Restless Prophet

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Many of you will be relieved to know that in this lesson we will not be talking about liberty of conscience related to COVID vaccines or spending time on that issue. But because of emails demonstrating that what I have been trying to achieve on this issue has been misunderstood by some, I need to clarify what has been the focus of our ministry over the last few weeks.

Some have thought that I have not been focusing on the Bible or the gospel. This following is a portion of a response to one of the listeners:

> And what is the message for this time? Is it not the message of God's character that results in the sealing of the saints into the character of God? And how does that happen--by first knowing God and second choosing to apply God's law, methods, principles to our lives in how we treat others. If we claim cognitive knowledge of God's character but still practice the methods of Satan then we develop the character of Satan. So, how do you think the final message of God's character that transforms people goes forward? It is by living out of God's principles of truth, love and liberty in how we treat others. The COVID issue, with lies, coercion, accusation, silencing, fear peddling etc. is one of Satan's end time attacks on God's people to get them to choose to "save lives" by the application of Satan's methods thereby allowing them to think they are doing a godly work while they ruin their character and misrepresent God with the application of Satanic methods. Reading EGW more widely, especially about the final events right before Christ comes, and we discover she describes events will unfold that will put people into positions that will require them to act out/live out the true principles they cherish thereby solidifying their characters into either Christlikeness or satanic. I believe the COVID mandates are part of this end-time issue by getting people to choose to coerce and compel other people's consciences rather than presenting truth in love and leaving them free.

> The COVID issue is a worldwide issue. And the church, with all its institutions, has the opportunity to present the true gospel by standing up for the principles of God--truth, love, liberty--respecting conscience, opposing coercion of conscience on this issue. Could you imagine if the SDA worldwide church, schools, hospitals, clinics, missions all of them actively opposed coercion on this issue (not oppose promoting the vaccine with evidence and liberty but oppose the methods of imperialism) that attention of millions perhaps billions would be drawn to the church. People would inquire, "who are these people" the opportunity would be given to present God as Creator, His design laws (health message) and the principles of love which always leaves free. And Jesus in describing the end when separating the sheep from the goats said the differentiating factor was how they treated Jesus in the person of others, "as you have done it unto the least of these you have done it unto me." Thus, it isn't just the theological construct one holds of God it is also living out the love of God in how we treat others, meaning truth presented in love, leaving others free. So, this issue is setting the world up, as they practice coercing others for a "good cause" to "save lives" then those methods become accepted into their hearts, their characters change and they will accept them again on the next issue.

So we will step back from the application of God's methods in regard to this issue and focus on the material in the lesson today.

SUNDAY

Jonah ran away from God's call—why?

Read the fourth and fifth paragraphs, "Historical and archeological records…" The Assyrians were enemies of the people of Judah and Israel. Israel had already fallen, the people were dispersed, and terrible atrocities were perpetrated upon the descendants of Israel.

What would have been a normal attitude of the Israelites toward the Assyrians after such atrocities?

Have you been watching the news the past two weeks about Afghanistan? Bombings, shootings, reports that ISIS K and the Taliban have put aside their differences until all

infidels, meaning Christians, have been hunted down and killed. As you see these reports, what is your attitude?

Do we understand Jonah may have had a negative attitude toward the Ninevites?

What do we learn from Jonah's experience that is important for us today at this time in Earth's history?

What did God want from Jonah? Did God want Jonah to hate the Ninevites or love them? But these people were cruel to Jonah's people—surely the God of justice would want to punish them for their crimes, right? Surely, Jonah was right to run away until God saw the righteousness of getting the Assyrians to pay reparation, right?

Or was there something wrong with Jonah that Jonah didn't want to take this message of repentance to Nineveh? Could it be that Jonah didn't fully understand reality? That Jonah didn't fully comprehend the sin problem, that Jonah was seeing things through a human, worldly lens and not through God's perspective?

What does sin do to sinners? What happens to people who are cruel to other people?

So, if someone is cruel to you and yours what happens inside of them? From God's perspective, if you are in a saving relationship with Jesus and someone treats you badly, what does God want in that situation?

Does God want us to be useful in some way for Him, to somehow present a saving message to the very ones who mistreated us?

Is that what we want to do if someone mistreats us?

- If you are gay and you have been denied services, or mocked, or belittled, or beaten up, what is your natural desire toward those who have mistreated you and what would God have your attitude and actions be toward those who have mistreated you?
- If you are black and you have been falsely arrested, accused, denied work, mistreated, discriminated against, what is your natural desire toward those who have mistreated you and what would God have your attitude and actions be toward those who mistreat you?

- If you are white in society and have experienced reverse discrimination, denial of promotion through what you consider woke policies what is your natural desire toward those who have mistreated you and what would God have your attitude and actions be toward those you determine have wronged you?
- If you are a vaccinated in society what is your attitude toward those who are unvaccinated and what would God have your attitude and actions be toward the unvaccinated?
- If you are an unvaccinated who has been pressured, fired, denied travel, or wronged in some other way, what is your attitude toward those who have mistreated you and what would God have your attitude and actions be toward those who wronged you?

Do we find a lesson for our lives today in the story of Jonah?

Did Jonah, as a Jew, have reasons to harbor negative feelings toward the Assyrians? Could Jonah have developed biases and prejudices—were these totally the fault of Jonah, or could they have been the result of wrongs done to Jonah's people and perhaps Jonah himself?

Do we see one of Satan's strategies here? How does Satan advance His kingdom? Isn't by inspiring people to do real wrongs to other people which offends and incites bitterness, hatred, and if possible retaliation?

What is the solution? If you experience real wrongs, is the best solution to seek retribution—inflicted punishment to make the perpetrator pay the proper price? If external punishment is used, will it result in the highest level of peace, love, joy and friendship?

What is needed to bring lasting peace? What are God's methods to deal with wrongs?

Have you heard "an eye for an eye and the whole world will go blind"?

Can we advance God's cause by seeking retribution on those who have done us wrong?

What about "justice" through state power, can we advance God's kingdom by using the power of the state to punish wrongdoers? If we get congress to fund a war and invade

another country and do it legally, a "just" war. Will this result in advancing God's cause?

What about laws to compel and force people we disagree with to do things our way—we are not talking about restraining people from overtly harming another, but requiring them to behave the way we want for instance:

- Jim Crow laws restricted blacks and allowed discrimination based in law and enforced by government, these laws coerced and compelled blacks to behave in certain ways in society—these laws were wrong and righteousness required they be removed.
- What about laws that prevent same sex couples from having the same civil liberties and legal privileges in society as married heterosexual couples? Is creating laws that give individuals the freedom to have civil unions or marriages under the law the same as requiring people to marry?
- What about laws that require people to participate in the wedding of someone else—bake cakes or do flower arrangements or photography? Is there a difference between restraining people from obstructing someone's wedding and forcing people to participate in the wedding?
- What about laws that obstruct the government and others from interfering with your religious practice, in other words, freedom of religion, is that the same as laws that require people to attend church, or to rest on a certain day of the week?

In the Bible human governments only use power righteously to restrain those who would harm others. Whenever governments cross the line to advance their morals by forcing the consciences of others, they abuse their power and advance Satan's kingdom, because they will violate liberty, do injustice, incite rebellion and divide society into hostile and warring factions—very much like we see happening in the world today.

So, we are talking about Jonah—he lived in a time when he experienced real atrocities done to his people and terrible violence and abuse and then he received a message from God to go to these very same people and call them to repentance—to warn them that if they don't change they will be destroyed.

Consider the implications, if the people genuinely repent what would that mean for Jonah? Wouldn't it mean some of these people will be in heaven—Jonah could have them as neighbors for all eternity.

Consider our situation—someone as done real wrong to your or your people—enslaved them, gone to war against them, imprisoned them, lied, discriminated, stolen from you or your people.

What would be your response if God came to you and said, "I want you to go to those people with a message of my love, call them back to me, call them to repentance so you can live eternally with them"?

What did Jesus say?

> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:43–48 NIV84).

Why did Jesus say this?

What is perfection in this passage? It is about task performance, or is it about love? And what law did Jesus highlight in this passage as an example of God's law? The laws of nature, design laws, these laws do not discriminate but treat all the same—these are not imposed rules, and cannot be achieved by legislation.

What determines who ends up in heaven? Will our relationship with Jesus have anything to do with it?

Will people who end up in heaven be friends with Jesus and become like Jesus in heart attitude, in love for God and others, and in character in how they live and treat others?

Will every person, in their own lives, have to decide for or against Jesus? But how will this happen in places like Afghanistan now that all the Christians are being killed, or in places like China which has cracked down on Christians?

It is by each person being faced with circumstances in which they must decide what law they apply to their own heart in how they treat others. There are two antagonistic

principles at war for every heart and mind—God's design law of love, truth, liberty and Satan's law of sin and death, more commonly known as the survival drives of fear, selfishness manifested in the world in imposed law and coercive enforcement.

Everyone will make a clear choice as to which methods they practice in the treatment of others. And it is the world's unfolding events that bring people to the critical decision point. As the world continues to globalize, as governments increase their coercive pressure, as liberties are removed, as lies increase, as fear and selfishness magnify, and as crisis after crisis occurs, governments will add to their laws and increase their demands, pressure, and control.

As this happens, every person will be faced with the choice of whether they live out God's law or the law of sin and death.

As we enter into the last moments before Christ returns, God permits events to unfold in such a way that each and every person will face a choice for Jesus—but not in an evangelistic way, not primarily in the form of an altar call or a profession of faith. No, the choice each person makes for or against Jesus is when each person chooses the principles and methods they prefer and practice regarding how reality actually works, especially in how they treat others.

Will we:

- Love others more than self and, therefore, present the truth to others, in love, while leaving them free to decide for themselves; sacrifice ourselves, our resources, and our safety to help, protect, and shelter others?

Or will we:

- Love self first by withholding truth for fear of rejection, retaliation, arrest, firing from our job, censuring; spread falsehood, coerce others, support governments that violate individual liberties, use force; report others who don't comply to the government; refuse to shelter others, protect others, and help others?

It is in how we treat others that we choose whose law we embrace—God's or Satan's; this is how every person chooses either to accept or reject Jesus in the last days, even those in far remote places who have never heard the name Jesus, for our Savior said:

> When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and

> he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

And notice Jesus doesn't separate the people based on race, or nationality, or culture, or creed, or denomination, Jesus separates people based on what law they live out in the way they treat others, and thereby how they treat Him:

> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'
>
> Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me**.'
>
> Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'
>
> Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me**.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46 NKJV).

Yes, every single person will choose—either to love others or not. As events unfold, we will be faced with more threats, more anxieties, more fear, and we will be tempted to retaliate, to use force, to kill or be killed as a means of protecting self. But the saved of God are described in Revelation with these words, "They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).

For the translated, those who are ready to meet Jesus, love has cast out fear. They don't have a death wish, they are not suicidal, they love life, but they don't fear death—they would rather die than break their love for God and others.

This is not a power we can conjure. It is not a force of will. This power is the power of love transforming the soul, it is the power of God to cast out al fear, it is the power of Jesus living in the heart. It is the result of the cleansing of the Spirit temple by the indwelling of Christ. This is a supernatural work that occurs only by a living trust relationship with Jesus. It is the result of coming back into a true knowledge of God, by worshipping the Creator, by beholding Him and being transformed by His presence.

Consider this quote from the book *Ministry of Healing:*

> Like our Saviour, we are in this world to do service for God. We are here **to become like God in character**, and by a life of service to reveal Him to the world. In order to be co-workers with God, **in order to become like Him and to reveal His character, we must know Him aright**. We must know Him as He reveals Himself. MH 409.1
>
> **A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education** and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation. **It is this alone that can make us like God in character**. MH 409.2
>
> This is the knowledge needed by all who are working for the uplifting of their fellow men. **Transformation of character, purity of life, efficiency in service, adherence to correct principles, all depend upon a right knowledge of God.** This knowledge is the essential preparation both for this life and for the life to come. MH 409.3

And the author goes on to quote Scripture where Jesus is the revelation of God to us. If we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. In Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead.

Thus we fix our eyes on Christ. If we want to be victorious over fear, to love like Jesus loves, to love our enemies, we must unplug from the world and connect with Jesus; we must reject human justice and embrace God's justice; we must stop advancing human governments and advance the government of God.

What does this look like?

> Christian de Chergé was a French Catholic monk and the Trappist prior of the Tibhirine monastery in Algeria. With the rise of radical Islam in 1993, Father Chergé knew that his life was in danger. But instead of leaving Algeria, Father Chergé chose to stay and continue his witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. On May 24, 1996 Father Chergé was beheaded by Muslim radicals. Anticipating his death, Father Chergé had left a testament with his family to be read upon the event of his murder. The testament in part reads:
>
> *"If it should happen one day — and it could be today — that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to encompass all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church, my family, to remember that my life was given to God and to this country. I ask them to accept that the One Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I ask them to pray for me: for how could I be found worthy of such an offering? I ask them to be able to associate such a death with the many other deaths that were just as violent, but forgotten through indifference and anonymity.*
>
> *My life has no more value than any other. Nor any less value. In any case, it has not the innocence of childhood. I have lived long enough to know that I share in the evil which seems, alas, to prevail in the world, even in that which would strike me blindly. I should like, when the time comes, to have a clear space which would allow me to beg forgiveness of God and of all my fellow human beings, and at the same time to forgive with all my heart the one who would strike me down.*
>
> *Obviously, my death will justify the opinion of all those who dismissed me as naïve or idealistic: 'Let him tell us what he thinks now.' But such people should know that my death will satisfy my most burning curiosity. At last, I will be able — if God pleases — to see the children of Islam as He sees them, illuminated in the glory of Christ, sharing in the gift of God's Passion and of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to bring forth our common humanity amidst our differences.*
>
> *I give thanks to God for this life, completely mine yet completely theirs, too, to God, who wanted it for joy against, and in spite of, all odds. In this Thank You — which says everything about my life — I include you, my friends past and present,*

and those friends who will be here at the side of my mother and father, of my sisters and brothers — thank you a thousandfold.

And to you, too, my friend of the last moment, who will not know what you are doing. Yes, for you, too I wish this thank-you, this 'Adieu,' whose image is in you also, that we may meet in heaven, like happy thieves, if it pleases God, our common Father. Amen!"
–Father Christian de Chergé

http://brianzahnd.com/2015/02/last-testament-beheaded-christian/#more-4442

I want to love my enemies like this, but I know it is not natural to my heart. I know that I need the grace of Jesus, I need a supernatural work. I am far too easily pulled into feelings of resentment or anger and this is a trap of Satan.

I want us all to see Jesus more clearly, to focus upon Him, to know His love and to be transformed, so that when the trials come, the threats, the enemies attack the love of God will overflow us and extinguish the fear and we will be like Jesus and love even our enemies.

It is my view, that as the end-time events unfold, there will be two classes of people—those who have God's law of love written on their hearts so that in action, in deed, in function, they love God and others, versus those who have fear and selfishness established as the law of their life and they live out those methods in how they treat others.

We will be faced with a choice, do we love our enemies, pray for those who spitefully use us, or do we harbor hate, resentment, bitterness and seek to use power, including the legal power of the state, to punish and force others to comply to what we think is right.

Every person will decide. God help us because I know I cannot love my enemies in my strength. I want to, I want that kind of love, but I know how infected I am with fear, with selfishness and I know it will only be possible through a supernatural work in me.

It is through our daily practices, preparing ourselves through worship and time with Jesus that we develop the trust, the faith, the relationship with God so that when faced with such circumstances we are capable of receiving the power to love our enemies.

We will all ultimately live out the law that we have embraced and cherished. Consider this quote from *Conflict and Courage:*

> Each actor in history stands in his lot and place; for God's great work after His own plan will be carried out by **men who have prepared themselves to fill positions for good or evil.** In opposition to righteousness, men become instruments of unrighteousness. But **they are not forced to take this course of action.** They need not become instruments of unrighteousness, any more than Cain needed to. . . . {CC 371.2}
>
> **Men of all characters, righteous and unrighteous, will stand in their several positions in God's plan. With the characters they have formed,** they will act their part in the fulfillment of history. In a crisis, just at the right moment, **they will stand in the places they have prepared themselves to fill**. Believers and unbelievers will fall into line as witnesses to confirm truth that they themselves do not comprehend. **All will cooperate in accomplishing the purposes of God**, just as did Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod. **In putting Christ to death, the priests thought they were carrying out their own purposes**, but unconsciously and unintentionally they were fulfilling the purpose of God. {CC 371.3}
>
> God looks into the tiny seed that He Himself has formed, and sees wrapped within it the beautiful flower, the shrub, or the lofty, wide-spreading tree. So does He see the possibilities in every human being. **We are here for a purpose. God has given us His plan for our life, and He desires us to reach the highest standard of development**. . . . {CC 371.4}
>
> He desires the youth to cultivate every power of their being, and **to bring every faculty into active exercise**. . . .[law of exertion] **Let them look to Christ as the pattern after which they are to be fashioned**. [law of worship] The holy ambition that He revealed in His life they are to cherish--**an ambition to make the world better for their having lived in it**. [the law of love] This is the work to which they are called. {CC 371.5}
>
> You want now to . . . **so relate yourself to society and to life that you may answer the purpose of God in your creation**. [level seven moral development, understanding friend of God who loves God and others, lives in harmony with God's design laws and carries out in their lives God's purposes for their lives.] {CC 371.6}

So Jonah had character issues to work out for himself, is this a lesson for us?

MONDAY

The lesson points out that while Jonah was in the belly of the fish, he prayed to God and specifically focused his mind on the Lord's holy temple.

The lesson asks why would Jonah focus on the temple?

What is the significance of the temple in this context?

What is the purpose of the temple?

The temple was given by God as a teaching tool to teach truths about the sin problem and God's solution for it. There are multiple truths and have multiple threads that are simultaneously true and woven together.

So Jonah looking to the temple was looking for salvation for deliverance, temporal perhaps, but most certainly eternal deliverance. What do we learn about God's plan of salvation by looking at the temple?

The Temple/sanctuary/little theater teaches at least the following:

- Jesus Christ—destroy this temple and in three days He would raise it again. The entire structure teaches us about Jesus:
    - Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb
    - Jesus is the High Priest
    - Jesus is the Lamp—the light that lightens the world
    - Jesus is the showbread, the bread of heaven the living Word of God made flesh that we internalize
    - Jesus is the wine—the perfect character of love that we ingest
    - Jesus sinless life is the blood carried in the vessels that brings life to us and cleanses from sin
    - Jesus is the fragrance of God the incense that draws us to God
    - Jesus is the pure gold of sinless perfection

  - Jesus' righteousness is the pure white robes of godly character
  - Jesus is the way through the veil to at-one-ment with God
  - Jesus is the lid to the ark that reconciles and restores the universe to unity or oneness thus Jesus is the place and means of reconciliation and restoration—the mercy seat
- The plan of salvation
  - Human beings are apart from God spread throughout the four corners in the world represented by the tribes of Israel
  - God's people, represented by the Levites, are witnesses, and go out to bring the people into the body of Christ, the church, or in the metaphor to the temple
  - The brazen altar represents the unconverted hearts that receive Christ, the sin offering sacrificed upon it and the blood poured out at the base
  - The golden altar represents the converted heart—it is in the holy place, representing the church with the lampstand, the word of God and Christ the living Word, and the Showbread and wine. The heart of the converted prays to God and incense burned on the golden altar.
  - The ark in the most holy place represents the universe reconciled to God again—the Shekinah represents the Father, the angels the angelic heavenly host, the box represents the saved sinners who are covered in gold, the righteousness of Christ and who have partaken the manna-the word of God the truth, and been won to trust and opened their heart and had the living law of God written upon their hearts (represented by the 10 Commandments), and though they were dead in trespass and sin they came to live and bore the fruits of righteousness (represented by Aaron's rod that budded).
- Our own hearts and minds, our bodies our Spirit Temples
  - Jesus said that unless we eat his flesh and drink His blood we have non part with Him. The flesh of the sacrificial animal represents the words of truth, which are also represented by the unleavened bread. We are to ingest the truth, lies are dispelled, as flesh or bread taken into the body become building blocks to our physical bodies, so truths taken into the mind become building blocks to our beliefs, schemas, worldviews and wins us to trust. In trust we open the heart and God pours His love into our hearts, we receive the life of Christ, the character of Christ represented by the blood. And it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.
- The Corporate temple, the church and body of Christ

- Each of us are living stones built together into a house for the Lord, thus the temple also teaches God's plan for the heavenly sanctuary, built out of living beings who have been fitted for heaven.

Here are some historic quotes to consider:

> The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. {3MR 231.3}

> Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. {3MR 231.4}

> This world is God's workshop, and **every stone** [every person] **that can be used in the heavenly temple must be hewed and polished until it is a tried and precious stone, fitted for its place in the Lord's building**. But if we refuse to be trained and disciplined, we shall be as stones that will not be hewed and polished, and that are cast aside at last as useless. – {ML 268.3}

> It may be that much work needs to be done ... , **that you are a rough stone**, which must be squared and polished before it can fill a place in God's temple.

You need not be surprised if with hammer and chisel **God cuts away the sharp corners of your character** until you are prepared to fill the place He has for you. No human being can accomplish this work. Only by God can it be done. And be assured that **He will not strike one useless blow. His every blow is struck in love, for your eternal happiness**. He knows your infirmities and works to restore, not to destroy. – {ML 268.4}

A character polished after the similitude of a palace ... may shine in the courts of the Lord forever. – {ML 268.5}

The trials of life are God's workmen, **to remove the impurities and roughness from our character**. [cleansing of the sanctuary] Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. **But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple.** Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace." {MB 10.3}

Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. **But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act. We are to bring to the foundation material that will stand the test of fire—gold, silver, and precious stones, "polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12)**. To those who thus build for God, Paul speaks words of encouragement... : "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." ... **The Christian who faithfully presents the word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God He will be honored as a wise builder.—**The Acts of the Apostles, 598, 599.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the success of Jonah's message, that the people repented, then asks, "What does it mean to truly repent of our sins?"

Is there a difference between repentance and confession?

Is repentance in any way connected with justification?

Is repentance needed for salvation? Is justification needed for salvation?

What leads us to repentance?

> "God's kindness leads you toward repentance" (Romans 2:4 NIV84).

So it is the truth about God, His character of love manifested to us in Christ that leads us to repentance—and what is repentance?

What of these description?

> No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. **The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin. It is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct**. Holiness is wholeness for God, entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven. From Heaven with Love 369.2

> The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31. **We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.** SC 26.2

> Christ is the source of every right impulse. **He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin.** Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts. SC 26.3

So repentance is a gift from God to us, it is a change in heart, it is a result of coming to Christ, it is a result of experiencing God's goodness as manifest in Christ, and salvation is not experienced without it.

It is an outworking of the Spirit of truth and love, bringing truth and love to enlighten the soul to the horror of sin, the reality of the sickness of fear and selfishness and the beauty of God and His character, methods and principles of love. That truth impacts the soul to surrender to Christ longing for a new heart and right spirit, we have dissatisfaction with the things of the world and long to be more and more like Jesus. We are therefore reborn, with new heart motives. This is genuine repentance and it is setting the heart right with God again, it is the justifying of the individual sinner with God, putting the heart that is at enmity back into love and trust with God again.

This is different than the justification of the species achieved by Jesus as our substitute.

When Adam sinned, not only was he as an individual out of harmony with God (at enmity with God), but the entire species was also out of harmony—because every human is descended from Adam and born infected with fear and selfishness. After Adam and before Jesus, there were no sinless human beings—none. Jesus became human to remedy that situation, to become the connecting link to heaven, the one human being in which God's design law of life was perfectly lived out, thereby restoring harmony with God's design law into the human family.

In so doing, Jesus became the new head of a renewed and cleansed humanity—our second Adam.

In the person of Jesus Christ, the species human was justified—set right, put right—with God. He became human and was tempted in all points just like we are, yet He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). In the human life experience of Jesus, He accomplished something real, something no other human could, something objective: He developed with the use of *only* His human abilities a perfect, sinless *human character,* thereby restoring God's design law of love back into the species human. In the person of Jesus, the human race was put right with God—we were justified.

> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect,** he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8, 9 NIV84).

Wait … wasn't Jesus always perfect?

He was always sinless, yes, but Bible perfection means maturity of character and character cannot be created, it must be developed by the choices of the sentient being.

Jesus developed, as a human, a perfect, mature sinless character, restoring God's law of love into the species human. In so doing, He as our substitute set the species human right with God; i.e., He justified the species and became our remedy to sin, the source of salvation for all who follow Him.

When we are won to trust, we open the heart and receive the indwelling Spirit, who takes the character of Christ and reproduces it in us, such that "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20 NIV84). This is true biblical justification.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

> God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this **in order to demonstrate that he is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to **demonstrate his righteousness**. In this way **God shows that he himself is righteous** and that he **puts right everyone** who believes in Jesus (Romans 3:25,26 GNT, emphasis mine).

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Jonah's concern with self, fear of what others would think of him, fear of being considered a false prophet and thus he was angry when Nineveh didn't get destroyed.

At its root, what was Jonah's problem? His primary motive was self; his primary focus was self; his primary concern was self.

It wasn't merely that he was tempted with selfishness, it was that he focused upon himself; he did focus upon love for God, concerned about God's reputation, concerned about God's heart—the pain God would experience to lose all His children in Nineveh, and Jonah didn't have love for the people of Nineveh. If Jonah loved the people of Nineveh like you love your children what would his response have been when they repented and God spared them?

So, this illustrates that God was not only working to save the people of Nineveh, but also to heal and restore Jonah, to bring Jonah to the point of realizing that he still had a serious residual infection of fear and selfishness in his heart that needed removal.

What lessons do we learn from this to apply to our lives today?

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read the book of Jude, this is from *The Remedy:*

> 1Jude, an ambassador and representative of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,
> To those who have responded to God's call — who are being transformed by God's healing love and nurtured by Jesus Christ:
>
> 2May you continue to grow in the abundance of God's mercy, peace, and love.
> 3My dear friends, I have longed to write to you about God's healing plan (his Remedy in which we share), but instead, I must write to warn you to defend the truth about God as revealed by Jesus — this precious truth that is the foundation of our faith and the secret with which we have been entrusted.4Scripture from long ago tells that those who reject this truth remain terminal and cannot be healed. Such people have slipped in among you and are attempting to twist the truth about God. These people, even though they purport to be believers in God, are actually godless because they have rejected the truth about God's true character and principles, and instead, teach a powerless gospel that misrepresents God, fails to transform lives, and denies that Jesus Christ is our Lord and the source of our healing and restoration.
>
> 5So let me remind you–even though you are well aware of these facts–that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt to be his partner in teaching the truth about God and distributing his healing Remedy throughout the world. Unfortunately, God found it necessary to put into the grave those who rejected him and worked to stop his plan.6And the angels who rejected the truth about God chose to leave heaven and have become so settled into lies about God that no amount of truth and love can reach them; their minds are bound in darkness, and they are awaiting the final Day when the diagnosis of all will be revealed.7In a similar manner, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah rejected the truth about God,

and their minds became so settled into lies about him that they were beyond healing: they gave themselves over to sensual indulgence and perversion. They stand as evidence of what will happen to all those who reject the truth about God and are exposed to eternal fire.

8In the very same way, these infiltrators create imaginary fantasies about God and the universe. They abuse their bodies, reject divine authority, and make fun of holy beings.9But even the archangel Michael, when he raised Moses from the dead, did not slander the devil who tried to stop him and claim Moses for himself. Michael merely said, "Stand aside; you have no right or authority here."10Yet these infiltrators make fun of truths they don't even comprehend; they reject reason, and instead, like animals, do whatever they feel by instinct, thereby destroying the capacity for knowing truth, and causing their own destruction.

11Oh, how sad–how terribly sad and horrible it will be for them! They have chosen, just like Cain, to reject truth and go with passion; they have sought, like Balaam, to reject beneficence and seek riches for self; they, like Korah, have rejected humility and sought to promote themselves in power and authority. 12These people are festering cankers at your fellowship meals, claiming to be Christian but seeking only to get the best for themselves, trying to get attention and recognition, or gorging themselves without regard for anyone else. They are like clouds without rain–useless and blown around by the wind; they are like leafless, fruitless trees, uprooted and completely dead.13They are like the waves of the sea — tossed in any direction their feelings are surging; their lives are turbulent whirlpools of shame. They are like the lost stars of heaven on their way to eternal nothingness and darkness.

14It was Enoch — the seventh descendant of Adam — who prophesied about people like this: "Be aware, the Lord is coming to earth with millions of his holy angels15in order to bring about the accurate diagnosis of all things–to bring all selfish beings face to face with their own terminal condition, with the pain and suffering they have caused, and with all the lies about God they have told."16These people are complainers, faultfinders, criticizers, always making excuses for themselves and blaming others; they only care about themselves and constantly follow their own selfish desires; they brag about themselves and use flattery to manipulate and exploit whomever they can.

17But, my dear friends, remember what the ambassadors of our Lord Jesus Christ warned us would happen.18They said, "In the last days, there will be people who laugh at truth, make fun of godliness, and prefer to follow their own passions, lusts, and desires."19It is people like these who cause factions to form, who split families in two, who break congregations apart–and they have come in among you. They follow their own base instincts and feelings, for they have rejected God's Spirit.

20But you, dear friends, as you talk to God — with your minds enlightened by the Holy Spirit — continue to build your characters and relationships upon the holy truth about God and on his methods and principles.21Continue to be conduits of God's love as you allow the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to heal you and bring you back into full unity with him and give you life everlasting.

22Be merciful to those who don't understand and who live in doubt;23don’t stand idly by when you see others destroying themselves in ignorance and selfishness, but proclaim God’s healing Remedy and rescue them from burning up their lives in sin. Be kind and patient with sinners, but hate the selfishness that covers them like putrid, germ-saturated clothing.

24To him who is able to heal you completely so that you can stand in his glorious presence with perfect character, rejoicing when we meet him face to face,25to the only God — our Savior through Jesus Christ — be all glory, majesty, power and authority from before time began, and now, and forevermore! Amen.

FRIDAY

read and discuss question 2

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

On **Saturday, September 11** we will have **two lessons and no Q&A session** after. Lesson 13, The Ultimate Rest, will begin at 9:30 AM. We will begin the first lesson in *Present Truth in Deuteronomy* at 10:35 AM.

We will ***not*** have Bible Study Class on Saturday, September 18 as the team will be in Orlando, FL sharing free materials at the AACC (American Association of Christian Counselors).

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping!

NOTES—my notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 3Q Rest In Christ: Lesson 13
The Ultimate Rest

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "Have you ever felt…" We all recognize we are in a war—a cosmic war—but it is not only a war between Christ and Satan, Christ and Satan stand at the head of their two forces.

What is the core issue in the war?

Do Christ and Satan stand at the head of two opposing governments, two opposing systems, two types of law and rulership? And does choosing participation in either side impact us? Do we become like either Christ or Satan depending on whose side we identify with, methods we practice, and who we ultimately trust?

And what does that reveal about whose government is actual supreme?

Why do we become like either Christ or Satan? Is it a legal process or literal, transformational—by beholding we are changed? This is the law of worship. We become like the God we admire and worship; when we trust Jesus we open the heart and the Spirit enters bringing new motives, new desire, new insights, new strength and we act on these new insights, motives, desires with new strength and are transformed. But if we choose fear and selfishness then those attributes solidify in our characters and we become like Satan, eventually destroying the very faculties that are sensitive to truth and love—meaning the lost eventually move past healing and transformation, no amount of truth or love has any redeeming impact upon them anymore.

This is reality and thus, even in the war God's supremacy is revealed. Satan cannot win, because Satan cannot create, Satan cannot sustain life, Satan cannot heal and restore, Satan can only break, destroy and kill. There is nothing legal going on, it is all actual.

Read second paragraph, "Life, then, is really…" We absolutely agree that the war is more than a human war, that there is a cosmic war, that there are angel armies involved, that God's Spirit is at work, that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12 NIV84), meaning there are non-human forces operating outside of our space-time continuum—in some aspect of time or space we cannot see or move in and out of—but does this mean there is warfare still going on in heaven, in God's dwelling place, where Gabriel and the loyal angels live? Or does it mean, that the heavenly beings are engaged in the war but the only place warfare is happening now is on Earth?

Prior to the Cross we have evidence that the war was still being waged in heaven—in the first chapter of Job, Satan goes to heaven and launches a propaganda campaign against God, spinning facts to try and undermine trust in God and recruit more angels to his side. The war was still being waged amongst the angels in heaven.

But is that still happening today?

Consider these insights:

> **From the first the great controversy had been upon the law of God**. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, **that His law was faulty**, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. **In attacking the law** he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author. In the controversy it was to be shown whether the divine statutes were defective **and subject to change**, or perfect and immutable. PP 69.1 [What kind of law is subject to change? So Satan's attack from the very beginning is that God's law is not design law, it is merely rules made up and enforced with external power, thus undermining the character of God, making Him be viewed as a dictator, and thereby undermine trust in God and turning angels and humans away from God.]
>
> **To the angels and the unfallen worlds** the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. **It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished**. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. DA 758.2 [How do sinless beings share in the fruits of Christ's victory? How do they benefit from Christ's life, death, and resurrection? Did they need the cross? Yes, was it for a legal payment? What was it for?]
>
> **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds.** The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion… DA 758.3 [Christ was the truth, the Word made flesh, the living embodiment of God, the One who the fullness of God dwelt bodily. And what did Christ reveal in His human life? How did Christ respond to injustice? How did Christ wield power? From whom did Christ demand worship? Whom did Christ compel and coerce? Whom did Christ inflict punishment upon? Whom did Christ accuse? Do we see a different character lived out by Jesus than by any other human? Do we see a different law lived out? Do we see a different method of governing? Is this a lesson for us today?]
>
> **God could have destroyed** Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; b**ut He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. DA 759.1 [This is one of the most important truths ever to be revealed and one for which all the saved will embrace and practice. Truth and love are the prevailing powers of God's government. God wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship and this

cannot be achieved by legal means, by legislation and the infliction of punishment, by compelling and coercing. In fact, those means lead to more rebellion. All compelling power is found in Satan's government, the Lord never does this.]

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, [By having God's law of love written into hearts, where beings are settled into truth, love, liberty and are genuine friends of God, who would rather die than betray Him or live out of harmony with God's design] and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given **for Satan to develop the principles** which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe…. DA 759.2 [What are Satan's principles that needed to be developed so their corruption and destructiveness could be revealed? The rule of law, imposed law, coercion, force, the governments of this world!]

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the **unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted**. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken**. DA 761.2 [What broke the last link of sympathy? It was the revelation of truth—Jesus revealing God's character, methods, principle and Satan revealing his. Why was Satan's work restricted to this earth after the cross? Was there a force shield? What kind of war is it? It is a war of ideas, of lies versus truth and the battlefield is the hearts and minds of intelligent beings. So, when the intelligences in heaven were settled into the truth about God, when all sympathy for Satan was lost, there were no minds or hearts willing to listen to Satan anymore, none of his ideas, distortions, lies, innuendos, or propaganda had any impact on heavenly beings anymore. Thus, his work was restricted to the hearts and minds of the only beings in the universe who still believed him, valued him, think like him and will follow him—human beings.]

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. **The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy**. [What else was there? Wasn't the issue only about who was telling the truth, who they needed to trust? No—it isn't enough to be eternally secure to believe Jesus is telling the truth, we must also **understand why this is so**. It isn't enough to be secure to believe your math teacher knows the answers to the problems, in order to be secure one must know how to do math, we must mature to be able to discern right from wrong, to not only love and trust God, but to be understanding friends of God.] The **principles at stake were to be more fully revealed**. **And for the sake of man**, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve… DA 761.3 [For our sake Satan was to continue on longer—how is this for our sake? Because we must decide, we must see for ourselves the difference between the methods and principles of God and that of Satan. And if we can't see this difference in the subtle ways they manifest, then what will God allow to

happen? Won't He allow more and more evidence, more truth, more obvious differences to be manifested so that we can see the difference between the principles of God and that of Satan? This is the rise of the beast of Revelation—a system built completely on imposed law, coercion, infliction of punishment all under the guise of seeking to make a better world, to improve lives, to save lives. So what was the specific concept that we all needed to understand more clearly that required Satan's existence to be continued? Here is the next paragraph.]

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and **if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice**. [What kind of law is Satan describing? A law which created beings can make, a system of rules that require oversight and coercive enforcement. This is Satan's lie about God's law and as we look through history we see this repeats itself over and over again. And at the end of time, the beastly system of Revelation uses imposed law to force its way, to create mandates, to restrict travel, to force compliance, no one can buy or sell…] …**God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.** [What is the basis of this allegation? What kind of justice is this? What law is this based upon? Again this is imposed law, and thus the allegation is that to not impose punishment is to not uphold the law. However, when we understand Design law, we realize that justice is not about punishment, but restoring or healing people back to harmony with the design-law.] {DA 761.4}

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. [Different position how? Different legal position? Or different position in objective reality? Note how] Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. **There was no more that God could do to save him.** [Why? Was Jesus unwilling to give His life for Lucifer? Was Jesus unwilling to pay a "legal penalty"? Didn't we just read that the death of Christ was for angels and the unfallen worlds as well as humans, so Jesus did die for angels—just as Colossians says, "all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross." Then, did God love Lucifer less than humans? Was God playing favorites? No! No! It was because Lucifer had destroyed in himself the capacity to respond to truth and love. He had seen, understood, and participated in God's love and rejected it. Thus he changed himself, hardened his own heart and corrupted his character. This again, is design law. Just the same way Pharaoh hardened his heart—when truth is presented a person must decide to accept or reject it, when we reject truth we harden, when more truth comes we have an opportunity to repent and be healed, but it requires humbling oneself and acknowledging where the lie was believed. If we refuse and instead reject the additional truth then we harden ourselves more until at some point we destroy the ability to respond to love and truth. This is what Lucifer did. Adam and Eve, while deceived, while infected with fear and selfishness, had not rejected truth that would win them to repentance and had not destroyed within themselves the faculties capable of responding to truth and love.] But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. **The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's**

love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. [What is it man needs? Is it a legal penalty paid? No, the legal solution is what people think up when they are operating under Satan's false view of God's law. But when we understand the truth, then we realize we need to be set right in heart and mind with God, meaning we need the lies removed and truth to win us to trust and love restored within the heart by the indwelling Spirit of God!] {DA 761.5}

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; **but mercy does not set aside justice.** [What does this mean? What law lens do we view justice through imposed or design? What difference does it make?] **The law reveals the attributes of God's character,** [which is what?] and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. [Why? For the same reason the law of respiration cannot be changed to meet a person drowning. God's law is the protocol upon which life is constructed to operate.] God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."** 2 Corinthians 5:19. {DA 762.1} [Which means that Christ was carrying out God's purpose to fix what sin did to humanity, set humanity back into harmony with God's law—design! Notice the next paragraph's description about justice.]

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine** character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. [Notice this is Christ, as a human, using human abilities, developing a perfect human character and then healing humans back to this perfect state. This is literal not metaphorical.] **Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ**. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. {DA 762.2} [If you see someone drowning, is it right and just to pull them from the water and administer CPR to revive them? What law are you operating under? Why, if you want them to live, must you do this? This is God's justice and what He accomplished for us through Christ. He pulls us from drowning in sin and breathes into us the breath of life, the Spirit of God Himself comes into us to give us new life with new motives and desires! We are resurrected from sin and death into a new life in Christ.]

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. [Mercy is God not abandoning sinners to die, not retaliating, not seeking to punish; Justice, doing what is right by sending Christ to destroy sin and restore God's law in humanity in order for us to be restored to life, to be set right or made right, justified, this is what is right or just. I just put up a blog this week in Justification by Faith, if you have any questions about what that is through the design law view, I encourage you to check it out. Justice is the sustaining of the operations of God's laws, including the law of liberty, justice is giving people freedom to reject God's healing remedy and reap what they sow.] **Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice**. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's

plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10. {DA 762.3} [How does Satan attempt to divorce mercy from justice? By getting us to believe the imposed law lie, which results in a split Godhead in which Christ in mercy dies to pay a legal penalty for our sins to a wrathful father who is the administrator of just punishments. Thus, justice is separated from mercy in the way we perceive and describe God—leading to theologies in which Jesus must protect us from the Father. 1. Jesus pleads His blood to the Father. 2. Jesus covers us with His blood so the Father can't see us. 3. Jesus applies His blood to our record books so the Father can't punish us for our bad deeds. 4. Jesus is our heavenly attorney to argue our case before the Father to protect us from His judgment and punishment. 5 Jesus took our place and was executed by His Father on the cross to pay for our sins. All of this is the divorcing of mercy from truth and justice by created a false caricature of the Godhead.]

By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. [How? What was the just or right thing for God to do? Fix the problem, which was accomplished through Christ developing a perfect character. What charges of Satan were refuted? That every sin must meet its punishment, that transgressing God's law requires punishment. These lies were refuted at the Cross. But Satan still gets legal theologians to teach the lie when they teach that all sins, past, present, future were put on Christ and punished by God at the Cross.] God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love. {DA 762.4}

Another deception was now to be brought forward. [History now repeats itself] Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, **that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law.** [What kind of law can be rescinded, changed, or abrogated? Imposed law, the kind of laws created beings make. Design law cannot be changed or abrogated. Thus Satan's allegations that began in heaven that God's law requires punishment, i.e. imposed law, now repeats itself and is accepted by the vast majority of humans, including Christians.] Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died…**It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross.** [Why? Because the law is the protocol of life, and only in harmony with it is there salvation, or healing!] **Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it**.[How? Twofold, one by declaring the law is no longer binding, which is only possible if the law were imposed rules. But, also, amongst those who claim the law is still binding, by tricking them into accepting the imposed construct, thus they claim loyalty to God's law and all the commandments, while they present it as imposed rules requiring God to inflict punishment. They, thereby misrepresent God, the Cross and God's law and ultimately practice Satan's methods of coercion as they will one day force other on some point of conscience or go along with governments that do, as long as it is for a good cause, perhaps to save lives.] **Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan**… [This is where we are today in Christianity, fighting a battle over God's law, not which day of worship, but which law—imposed or Design law. We are to call people back to worship Him who made the heavens… to Designer worship.] {DA 762.5}

By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world… [How? Not simply by a change in rules, but a change in the entire idea of law from the law the Creator builds life upon, to imposed rules so that people will seek to achieve justice through human governments and enforce their beliefs upon others. Notice the next paragraph…] {DA 763.1}

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. [Here we have it—the use of compelling power, which is always used in imposed law systems. This is what is happening in the world today and far too many Christians are going along with it. But they will say, "Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons and performed miracles in your name—we did this to save lives. And of course, in your name, to honor you and save lives, we forced people against their will to get the jab because we know that you want to save lives and we know those people are ignorant, are not scientific and that the jab isn't a religious issue, it is a science issue. So we know you would want us to coerce, compel and force in order to save lives." And Jesus replies, "Get away from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you."] {DA 763.2}

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. {DA 763.3} [Notice the paragraph, it is about developing character, character of love like Jesus, in which we sacrifice ourselves for others, present truth in love and leave others free. Or, character like the beast, where we use compelling power to coerce conformity! This is the test we all must face. And the final deception will be so subtle that if possible the elect will be deceived? How because it will be set up as a law for the good, for saving lives, for protecting others, for saving the planet. And those who won't comply will be presented as the enemy of the good. But notice what this author says comes next, after these two classes have formed, after every character is tested.]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be *cut off*. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch… [Why? Mercy—God would not use His power to keep people in a place of torment, but grants them their choice to be separate from Him, the only source of life.] {DA 763.4}

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. [This is design law, not imposed penalties!] He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. **God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice.** By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place

themselves so out of harmony with God that **His very presence is to them a consuming fire**. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. {DA 764.1}

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this.[What did angels not understand? God's law as design law, as an outworking of His character of love. They were confused by Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law. Thus history repeats itself as humans suffer the same confusion and many today are willing to use Satan's methods to coerce consciences in order to seek justice or save lives.] Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; **but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed**, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. [This is how many Christians, including in our own church, view things; they fail to understand the truth of God's law and instead teach the same distortion that God must kill the wicked, rather than the truth that unremedied sin itself results in death! And because they accept Satan's lie about God's law, they are willing to accept Satan's methods of compelling others for a good cause.] {DA 764.2}

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, **the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences**. **The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable**. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. {DA 764.3}

SUNDAY

A Vision of the End—it is about the future, what the future hold for the believer, and refers us to Revelation 21:1,2, in which we are promised a new heaven and a new earth, free of all sin, death, disease and pain the home of the righteous.

What is the Biblical view of the future? What happens to this planet as we know it according to the Bible?

Is there anything we can do to stop the destruction and recreation of the Earth by God? Should we try to stop this?

Does that mean, because we understand the future will result in the Earth as we know it being destroyed and a new Earth being created, that we are free to exploit, abuse, pollute, and destroy the planet? No, we are to be good stewards in how we govern ourselves and manage the Earth God has given us.

But, despite the best management possible, what happens to this planet?

Is the future of the Earth in the Biblical worldview the same as the evolutionary, Green worldview?

For those who reject the Bible, who reject the belief in God, who accept the lie that human beings evolved from lower life forms, what does the future worldview look like? It looks like over-population, depletion of the planet's resources, global warming and a mass extinction event—we eventually kill ourselves.

So, if you hold the godless worldview, what would you want to do? Would you want to intervene to stop the extinction of the human species, the destruction of the planet?

Now, in the godless worldview, what is more important to protect, individual human lives, or the planet?

In the Biblical worldview, what is more important to protect, the planet or individual human lives?

If people with the godless worldview were in power and could advance actions and agendas based on their worldview that were intended to save the planet what might those actions look like?

- Would the rate of population growth need to be controlled?
    - If the godless view is truly believed in, would leaders be able to wait until the majority of the planet were convinced of the urgency and willingly cooperated with population control, or would leaders need to take actions that would curb the population regardless of individual willingness to participate?
    - What might that look like?
    - Would governments restrict the number of children a family is permitted to have? Have we already seen this in the world?
    - Would easy access to abortion be part of it?
    - Would birth control be part of it?
    - Would impacting human sexuality through whatever means possible, fertility or gender identity, or media and social media messaging targeting children and adolescents to increase same sex relationships be part of it?
    - Other actions?
- Would carbon emissions need to be controlled?
    - Would carbon emission controls be simply about environmental protection, or would these controls be used to restructure society, shift national autonomy, incite restrictions on resources, ultimately impacting population growth?
- What about wars?
    - Would wars be a means to kill more people and prevent opposition groups from gaining power?
- What about biological agents—human engineered viruses—and their treatments?
- Would resources need to be managed?
- Would people be valued each with inalienable rights to be protected, or would people be viewed as commodities to be managed for the benefit of the whole?

- Would there be investment in science designed to accelerate the evolution of human beings to higher form, either through genetic engineering or cybernetic enhancements?
- Would people who value the Biblical worldview be supported or vilified?
- Would the principles of autonomy and liberty be protected?

Do we view the future from a Biblical worldview, or from a godless worldview? How many of the various agendas and narratives of the godless have made their way into your worldview and are you aligning with while you continue to claim a belief in God?

MONDAY

The Countdown to Jesus' Return—the lesson points us to Matthew 24 and other Bible passages that give us signs of His return. Let's look at some signs of Jesus' soon return:

1. Scoffers

First of all, you must understand that in the **last days scoffers will come**, scoffing and following their own evil desires. **They will say, "Where is this 'coming'** he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3, 4 NIV84).

This sign was fulfilled in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the Enlightenment, which directly opposed the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was a religious movement that called people's attention to the nearness of the second coming of Christ. But this movement was countered by the Enlightenment, in which godless scientific views and human reason replaced a belief in God, and godless evolutionism spread throughout the world. In the wake of godless evolution came communism and other godless philosophies that scoff at the idea that Jesus is coming again.

Not only is the world today filled with scoffers, but the critics of God have come to dominate the scientific, educational, and media landscape, creating a societal attitude that those who continue to look for Christ's return are less educated, ignorant, or foolish.

2. Wars and rumors of wars

You will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is not yet** (Matthew 24:6 NIV84).

Jesus here refers to the never-ending regional struggles, tribal wars, crusades, and conflicts throughout the Dark and Middle Ages prior to the "end times," which began in the 19th century with the Enlightenment. The end times come after these wars. Notice the shift from wars to nations and kingdoms rising against each other.

3. World wars, natural disasters, famines, pandemics

> **Nation will rise against nation**, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great **earthquakes, famines and pestilences** in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven (Luke 21:10, 11 NIV84).

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are **the beginning of birth pains** (Matthew 24:7, 8 NIV84).

After the long history of wars and conflicts through the Dark and Middle Ages, after the Enlightenment and the rise of the scoffers, we enter the 20th century and experience WWI, WWII, nuclear weapons, wars in Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Syria, and terrorism around the world. The 20th century, with its two world wars and other military conflicts, saw more people killed by war than any other century in human history. And in the past fifty years, the world has seen massive famines, the threats of climate change, HIV, SARS, Swine Flu, COVID, and the increasing frequency of earthquakes, hurricanes, destructive storms, and other disasters. But all of this is *the beginning of the birth pains*.

When a woman goes into labor, the time of delivery has begun. In other words, she has entered the "end time" of her pregnancy—but the labor isn't instantaneous. The pains get more frequent and more intense right up until delivery. We are now in the time of the end, the time of ever-increasing rapidity of events leading up to our Savior's return!

Understand that no matter what we do, things on Earth are not going to get better until Jesus returns. And the worsening of conditions on Earth, **the increasing labor pains as the Earth itself groans under the weight of sin, will be used by the scoffers to incite fear, turn minds away from God, and promote their godless solutions that will solidify power into a global coalition that persecutes the righteous.**

4. The promise of an era of peace and safety

Paul also used the metaphor of a woman going into labor when referring to the return of our Lord, adding an interesting detail:

> Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman**, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled (1 Thessalonian 5:1–6 NIV84).

When those who don't know God—the scoffers, the evolutionist, the humanists, those who are desperately seeking to save themselves and "save the earth"—are saying, "This is the way we can have global peace and safety," sudden destruction will come, as labor pains on a pregnant woman.

They will be unaware that sudden destruction is coming, but why? Because they have given up a belief in God, they no longer trust Scripture, they have accepted the false narrative of godless evolution and secular humanism, and they believe peace and safety can be achieved through the implementation of their worldly agenda. This is the delusion of socialism, of globalism, of the Green movement—that we can save the planet. They claim, "We can create a new world order in which all nations come together to stop climate change, to stop the destruction of the environment, to eliminate poverty—all doable through a new globalism that we can create with new economic realities that will bring in a new era of peace and safety."

But Jesus continues His warning:

5. Increased divisions in society, loss of faith, persecution of believers in Jesus

> Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and **you will be hated by all nations because of me**. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will **betray and hate each other**, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people (Matthew 24:9–11 NIV84).

Then, at the time of the end, at the time after the scoffers arise, at the time when the labor pains have begun, after the nations have had global wars, after the increase in natural disasters and pestilence, *then* those loyal to Christ will be persecuted, some put to death, and hated of all nations. Then people will betray each other to find security for themselves.

6. Love of most will grow cold

> **Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold** (Matthew 24:12 NIV84).

Because of the increase in wickedness—which is all the violations of God's designs, laws, methods, and principles—the love in the hearts of most people grows cold. Because of the denial of God and the rise of the lies of secularism, humanism, socialism, evolutionism; because of the breakdown of families; because of the assault on our common heritage and community values, love is dying in the human heart.

The historic big three societal defensive barriers to this tidal wave of fear we are seeing today have been God, family, and country. But since the Enlightenment, since the rise of evolutionism and secularism, these three "other-than-me" values have been removed. The messaging today is that there is no God, families are the "misogynistic domain of the patriarchy," and our countries are abusive relics of colonial exploitation and abuse. This leaves people with nothing greater than themselves, which results in increasing fear and a sense of isolation. This leads to a sense of hopelessness; there is no purpose to life other than survival, and people become increasingly fearful and concerned for their own safety and wellbeing. Fear of global warming, fear of economic collapse, fear of COVID and we see love growing cold. Thus, society devolves into ever increased pleasure-seeking, trying to numb the fear as love grows ever colder.

7. So caught up in entertainment and living, people are unaware

> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, **people were eating and drinking, marrying** and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen** until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man** (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84).

Incredible! The people before the Flood knew nothing about what was going to happen despite Noah preaching for 120 years and building a giant boat. How did they not know? Because they were consumed with pleasure-seeking, eating, drinking, and marrying. They were too busy either being entertained or living their lives to be bothered with eternal realities.

This is exactly the state of the world today: It is caught up in increasing consumption of mind-altering substances, or leaving reality behind for their preferred fantasy world of video games, social media activity, TV shows, movies, sports, concerts, amusement parks, or anything else to consume and distract the mind. This is the world today—ignoring the warnings of Jesus, ignoring the signs of the end all around, and living merely for the pleasures of the moment.

8. The good news about God's kingdom of love lightens the world

> **But he who stands firm to the end will be saved.** And **this gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, **and then the end will come** (Matthew 24:13, 14 NIV84).

But those who stand firm for the truth of God's kingdom of love will be saved! We will be the ones who take the good news about God and His kingdom of love to the world. We will advance the cause of liberty, for love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. We will stand for truth in a world of falsehood and propaganda. We will glorify God by revealing His character of love in how we treat our neighbors. We will call people back to the truth of our Creator by teaching people God's design laws—the laws our Creator built reality to operate upon, demonstrating that harmony with God and His design laws are the only way to health and happiness.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14—I wish we had time in the lesson to do a deep dive on this. But, we don't today.

But I want to announce that we have a new Pamphlet, in production on the Three Angels' Messages from the Design Law perspective. We will have that very soon, it is with the designer right now getting the layout and as soon as we get that back it will go to print, so hopefully within the next month or two.

And when we do, perhaps we ought to have a special 3 Angels broadcast, where we go over what is in the Pamphlet? What do you think? Let us know if you would like to have a Sabbath afternoon live broadcast on the message of the 3 angels when our pamphlet is ready?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on our rest in the first death, the sleep death, that what we call death is merely a sleep and is not the death of sin, which is the second or eternal death.

Understanding this, is why we can know that God has never killed anyone, God has put many to sleep, put them into the grave, but every one will rise again in either the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation and each of the lost arise with the same train of thoughts that they had when they died, and will finish their lives by the exercise of their own choices.

If you would like more on the state of humanity, what death is, and the final end of sin and sinners, here are some resources:

- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World Pamphlet
- Death and Resurrection lecture in the Power of Love Training and Equipping Course

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on Philippians 4:4-7:

> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Php 4:4–7 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss the questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

We will ***not*** have Bible Study Class on Saturday, September 18 as the team will be in Orlando, FL sharing free materials at the AACC (American Association of Christian Counselors).

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy 1
Preamble to Deuteronomy

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory verse:

> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1John 4:8 NKJV).

What does this text mean?

What does it mean to know God? This is not knowing about, it is a personal connection with, an intimate relationship with, it is a heart bonding of two beings becoming one.

We read about this in John 17, Jesus, praying to His Father, says in verse 3:

> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (Jn 17:3 NIV84).

And then goes on to say:

> "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one… My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (Jn 17:11, 20–23 NIV84).

What is Jesus praying for?

So, what does our memory verse mean?

Can a person have a cognitive knowledge of God and still not know Him?

Can a person be a preacher of Scripture and still not know God? What about those who crucified Christ? What about those who say to Jesus in the end, "Lord, Lord…"

As events unfold on planet Earth, right now today, what differentiates the children of God from the children of wickedness?

If they love God, how will they treat others? Will those who love God use the power of the state to force others or will those who love God refuse to unite with the state in compelling other people?

SUNDAY

Read the first four paragraphs, "First John 4:8…" This is well said. Congratulations Cliff Goldstein, who is the principal contributor and also editor of this quarterly. This is well said!

Is God being love something that is turned off and on depending on circumstances?

Is there a time when God is something other than love?

Is there a time when love can function without freedom?

Is there a time when love will take freedom away?

- What about discipline? If we discipline someone is that unloving? A parent putting a child in time out?
- What about a government imprisoning a convicted murderer—is that a violation of God's law of love? Why or why not?

Is there a time when justice will require God to take freedom away?

- What takes away our freedom—God or violations of God's law? How and why?

Is there a time where love will use power to inflict punishment upon people?

If God were to do this, then would people still be free?

So, what happens to the wicked in the end? How does God bring about the end of sin and sinners without taking away freedom?

Consider this commentary from the *Great Controversy:*

> God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. [which is what? God is love, He never stops being love, so His dealing with sin, must be an expression of love and how love functions, which means design law] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. **The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being**. {GC 541.2} [What do you hear? Is this a

contradiction? Is the author describing an infliction of external punishment, or the outworking of design law? What power is being employed? The author says the power and authority of the divine government—what power is that? Do you think of power like human governments or like the Creator God of love? Do you keep in mind while reading things like this other quotes like this one from *The Desire of Ages:* "God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**." {DA 759.1} So what power? The power of love and truth! But how can love and truth punish? Keep reading…]

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. [Can God get our love, trust, devotion, friendship by threatening us and then inflicting external punishment on people who don't give it? No! Imperial/imposed law violates the law of liberty and coercion destroys love. He can only get love by leaving people free!] He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. **And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes**. [What power is described here? The power of truth and love revealed that draw people to God. It is Satan's power of lies that get us to conceive of God as a being other than love, a dictator who inflicts pain and suffering, which undermines our ability to love and trust God. This is what penal substitution theology does.] {GC 541.3}

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies**." [Wait, love your enemies is the principles upon which God executes justice and punishes sin? How does that work? Consider how it is a function of love for God's enemies to be destroyed in the end. It will become obvious, but it is only a function of love if we understand it through design law! Impose law violates liberty and is not love.] **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited**. [What does this mean? Executes justice—what is justice, doing what is right, and what is right? Is it right to give people the freedom to choose? Is it right to let people reap what they have chosen after repeated attempts to win them to love and trust? And when does God let them go to reap what they have chosen, when they are still healable/savable or when they have destroyed within themselves the faculties that respond to truth and love? And how is it good for the wicked for God to do this? Because, if God did not let the wicked go, if God held on to them despite their hardened and rebellious hearts, then God would create, by His power, a place of torment and God would never do this. Thus, for mercy, for love, for the best outcome for the wicked, He executes justice, the right thing for them and sets them free from Him the only source of life.] **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the**

laws of His government and the justice of His character. [What are the laws of His government? Design laws and you can't force people to love you, or enjoy goodness and purity] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided**.[decided by who? a judge in heaven or each person decides their own destiny? Who determines if a person accepts or rejects truth?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why can't they enter God's presence? Is it because God doesn't want them there, God is angry and wrathful and hasn't had the price paid to Him for that unrepentant sinner? Is it because God can't handle their presence, it would offend Him, He would get angry and lash out? No, it is because of their condition!] Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become **fixed in their characters.** [Fixed by who? How did it become fixed? What law caused it to become fixed?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? **Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish**. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless **streams of light flowing** upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--[what does that light look like? From where does it come? Do you integrate texts like these: "the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." (Dan 7:9-10 NIV84) "for our 'God is a consuming fire.'" (Heb 12:29 NIV84)? Is this fire harmful? Do the righteous get injured by it? Why not? What about the wicked, why do they experience pain in this fire? From where does the pain come, from the fire or from unremedied sin?] could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no**; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction,** that they might be hidden from the

face of Him who died to redeem them. [What is being described? Do you integrate texts like "They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Rev 6:16 NIV84)? What kind of law? What is the reason? Is God acting justly? He is executing justice?] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God**. [Who decides the fate of the wicked? What does it mean voluntary with themselves? It is what they want, is it right and just on God's part to grant them exclusion from heaven? What kind of law?] {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [Why are they lost? Who made them incurable? Is this just on God's part? Is it an infliction that their condition does not bring upon them?]{GC 543.1}

Do you see how God's execution of justice is an expression of His character of love and is the best that He can do for the wicked in the end?

MONDAY

The lesson points out that Isaac Newton didn't discover gravity—everyone functioned upon it, but he discovered that gravity was a constant and was a law that nature operated upon. The lesson goes on to say, "though Newton's contribution was in the area of natural law, the same principle holds true with moral law."

Again, this is well said, this is absolutely right. Moral law is just like natural law in this way, design protocols upon which God has created reality to operate, and life and health are only possible in harmony with God's design laws for life.

Here is a beautiful description from the book *Education:*

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--**a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will.** To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. {Ed 99.2}

The lesson points out that God destroyed the world with a flood—we have spoken on this in detail in several lessons recently, so I won't go over it again now, but wanted to pause and ask if anyone has a question about this?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Genesis 12:1-3:

> The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.
>
> 2 "I will make you into a great nation
> and I will bless you;
> I will make your name great,
> and you will be a blessing.
> 3 I will bless those who bless you,
> and whoever curses you I will curse;
> and all peoples on earth
> will be blessed through you." (Ge 12:1–3 NIV84).

Then the lesson asks, "Today, looking back after the cross, after the death of Jesus and the spreading of the gospel, how do we understand what God was promising to do through Abram?"

When the Genesis text says God would make a great nation from Abram, what is that referring to? Was it referring to the state of Israel that exists today? What then?

What was the purpose of calling Abram and the nation his descendants were to form?

How is it all the people on the earth would be blessed through him? And would the purpose of the nation be? And what is that blessing to the world?

Here is how I paraphrased it in *The Remedy*:

> The Lord had told Abram, "Leave your homeland, your relatives and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you. 2My plan is for your descendants to become a great nation that lives out my methods, for they will be the avenue for the Messiah. I will change your character and make it a great example of my healing plan – that healing comes through trust – and you will be a blessing.'3I will bless those who bless and support you, but those who oppose you I will oppose; and the entire human race – all earthlings – will be blessed through you."

What was the purpose of ancient Israel? To be the messengers of God, His helpers to share the knowledge of God and prepare the world for Christ's first advent.

Because they were chosen by God for this purpose—this is why the Bible focuses our attention on them—it is all about fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15, the coming Messiah.

It is also why these people are specifically targeted by Satan for destruction, because Satan was working to obstruct the plan of salvation, the coming Messiah.

The lesson asks in the bottom pink section, "Today, how do we as Seventh-day Adventists see ourselves in relation to the rest of the world?"

Do we see ourselves as being called for a purpose, to fulfill a mission? What is the purpose?

Like the Jews were called to prepare the world for the first advent of Jesus, SDAs see their purpose in calling the world to prepare for the second advent of Jesus.

The SDA church shares several elements in common with ancient Israel:

- The seventh-day Sabbath
- A sanctuary message
- A health or lifestyle message
- An advent message
- The inspired record—the Word of God

What is the purpose of these common resources?

- The seventh-day Sabbath
  - An evidence of God as Creator and His laws as design laws
  - A reminder that He makes us holy—or heals us from sin
  - An opportunity to practice trusting Him each week in how we live
- A sanctuary message
  - To enlighten us to the plan of God to heal our hearts and minds and restore us to at-one-ment with Him
  - To encourage us, educate us in how we can participate with God and give us hope
- A health or lifestyle message
  - To help us experience the highest quality of life here and now, keeping us in the best condition for God's cause possible
  - To enlighten us to the laws of health which are design laws and help us realize that the plan of salvation is just like this, restoring God's law within us—it is healing us.
- An advent message
  - To give us hope and motivate us to fulfill our role in God's cause of taking the final message of mercy to the world
  - To point us to a better world free of sin, disease, death
  - To keep us focused on our mission and protect us from getting caught up in the business or entertainment or problems of this world
- The inspired record—the Word of God
  - To provide us the evidence of God in dealing with the sin problem—who God is and how He functions leading us back to trust in Him

- To protect us from letting experience or science lead us into mysticism or godlessness

What is necessary to be ready for Jesus' return?

If someone asked you, "What is the message the SDA church has for the world?" What would you say to them?

Would you say:

> "It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. **At this time a message** from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love**." Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

If so, how is this message different than the message of John Wesley who said,

> "What then is the mark? Who is a Methodist, according to your own account?" I answer: A Methodist is one who has "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him;" one who "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

So, what is different about the message the SDA church has for the world and that of John Wesley or any other Christian who teaches the love of God?

Because the message of the Advent message places the sin problem in the setting of the Great Controversy over God's character and law. It is the message that takes the truth of God's love to its ultimate conclusion and application in the heart, character, methods, law and government of God—exposing and eradicating from the hearts and minds of people the imposed law lies that have infected Christianity and corrupt the views of God taught within Christianity.

> Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of **self-sacrificing love**. In the light from Calvary **it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven**... {DA 19.2}

> But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that

> sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe**. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life**. {DA 21.2}

The message that prepares the world for Christ's return is the truth of God's character of love, but that truth is bound up in understanding God's law. It is only by coming back to understanding love is more than emotion, more than compassion, it is a principle, a law, a functional outworking of God's very nature that reality is built upon, that we are enabled to reject Satan's imposed law lie.

It is the lie of imposed law that infected beings in heaven and broke down their love and trust in God. It is the imposed law lie that caused Adam and Eve to break trust with God in Eden. It is the imposed law lie that corrupted the church of Rome and infects the entire world so that Christians around the world teach that God must use power to inflict pain and suffering upon sinners, that Jesus died to pay a legal penalty to the Father so the Father won't kill us.

The message the SDA church was given is the completion of the Reformation, to leave the fallen worldly systems of imposed laws behind and worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water.

In this worship, by beholding Him we are changed, we stop aligning with the kingdoms of this world, we stop trying to advance the kingdom of God through human governments, legislation, imposed rules, infliction of punishment. We instead focus our energy on love for God and living that love in how we treat others.

All the fundamental beliefs, rightly understood, are merely the extension of this truth of God's character and design law of love:

- the Sabbath is a sign or evidence of God's methods of truth presented in love leaving free;
- the message of the three angels, the first is the eternal good news about God, that He is love and His laws are design laws, it is a call to stop worshipping the imperial dictator god formed by Rome and worship Him who created, whose laws are design laws, to judge God correctly as Jesus revealed Him to be and thereby be transformed in character to live out God's law, give Him glory for the time has come for people to make a right judgment about God. With this truth we leave Babylon, the fallen system of imposed law and legal enforcement, with a punishing god that requires the blood of a human sacrifice. But if we reject the messages of the first and second angel, then we reap what we sow, our characters become like the imperial dictator god we have chosen instead of the creator and we mark ourselves as beastly, and when we come into the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb we will be burned with divine fire, the fire of God's infinite love and truth and it will be a terrible torment and the memory of the devastation that unremedied sin causes will be remembered by the righteous for all eternity.
- The cleansing of the sanctuary is the message of the cleansing of the hearts and minds of sinners to prepare us to stand in God's unveiled glory—to seal us, for the Bible says that when

> He appears we shall see Him face to face for we shall be like Him. And what cleanses us—the truth about God that wins us to trust so that we open the heart to receive the Spirit reproducing the character of Christ within us.

It is all the same, our message is the message of reality, to leave behind the myths, the superstitions, the fantasies, the falsehoods that have infected so many minds, churches and theologies and embrace the truth as it is in Jesus.

WEDNESDAY

Focuses our attention on the covenant at Sinai—what do you understand happened there?

Did a legal system of salvation get started then?

When is the first time in human history that we have a written law of God? At Sinai—did the law of God begin as Sinai?

Was the law of God in existence in heaven? In what form?

Did the angels in heaven have a law to honor their mothers and fathers or sins passing down their generations?

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, when was the Sabbath made? So, did the angels in heaven have the Sabbath?

Did the 10 Commandments as we know them exist in heaven or were they added later?

Here are a couple of historical quotes:

> The law of God existed before the creation of man or else Adam could not have sinned. After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition.55 FLB 80.2

> The angels were governed by it [the law]. Satan fell because he transgressed the principles of God's government. After Adam and Eve were created, God made known to them His law. It was not then written, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah.56 FLB 80.3

> If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would

> have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

Then the lessons points out that everything God instituted at Sinai was ratified with blood, sprinkled with blood and asks what the blood signifies?

Everything in the sanctuary services, the Levitical service and ceremonial law is symbolic—nothing is literal. The tent itself, the altars, the instruments, the robes, the priests themselves, the sacrificial animals and the blood all of it, is symbolic of something else—what?

So the blood represents the blood of Jesus, and this represents what? His perfect sinless human character or life which was developed for us. Thus the sprinkling of blood is the symbolic way of saying the receiving of the righteousness or perfect sinlessness of Jesus into our hearts and minds that transform and heal us.

This is why Jesus said in John 6, unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood we have no part with Him. In the symbolic system the blood was sprinkled throughout the physical tent or temple, in the reality it is to be internalized into the Spirit temple.

The flesh and blood are symbols that were replaced with new symbols bread and wine but they symbolize the same thing what? Flesh/bread—symbolize the Word (Jesus) made flesh, and as we take in literal flesh or bread it becomes building blocks for our physical bodies, so too taking in the Word of Truth the truth becomes building blocks for our beliefs, ideas, constructs, perspectives which destroys lies and wins us to trust. In trust, we open the heart to Jesus and receive the indwelling Spirit who takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us, such that "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" this is the blood, the life or character of Christ taken in. All taught in the symbolism.

THURSDAY

Thursday is about the rebellion of the people and their refusal to trust the Lord and obey His instructions and how they were "punished" by wandering in the wilderness for 40 years until a new generation grew up.

What kind of punishment was this? It was reaping what they had chosen, they chose not to go in and God let them have what they chose.

Is there a lesson in this? What about going into the eternal promised land, what happens to those who refuse?

Have we been wandering in the wilderness? Why?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Resource South Africa: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in in Afrikaans. We want to give special thanks to Jacques van den Heever, who spent many hours proof reading and working with editors and translators to get this resource availab.e Thank you Jacque!

It is available as a FREE download on our website, but if you are in South Africa and would like one in print, then email Jacque at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

There will be a small postage charge of R50 (around $4) or you live near Somerset West you are welcome to pick one up in person.

South Africa also has some newly printed materials including tracts, meditation guides, and CIBTS. If you are interested in getting copies for yourself or to share, please email comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

God is Love Children's Book Available on Amazon! We are happy to announce that our children's book, God is Love, is now up on Amazon and is available for prime shipping!

NOTES—my notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy 2
Moses' History Lesson

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

I have been receiving many emails, two I want to share with you.

I received this email this week:

> *Dear Dr. Jennings, I consider myself to be a Bible believing Christian who is, at this time, attending a Baptist church. I have been listening to your Bible study class for years. I would like to encourage you to continue to present the truth about the Covid virus and the vaccine. I had Covid in April 2020 and was hospitalized for two weeks and was on oxygen for months, I know first-hand how bad the virus can be. We all need to be careful and concerned about others but the way our government is presenting information and forcing the vaccine is wrong. Please continue to inform people about the lies and point out that this is not God's way. May God continue to bless you and your ministry.*

Here is another email:

> *Dear Dr. Jennings,*
> *I just want to thank you and tell you how grateful I am for you and how God is speaking through you in these times we are living in. You are spot on with everything I hear that comes out of your mouth!!*
>
> *I appreciate how honest you are each Sabbath lesson when you start off with the emails that you receive from some of your listeners that are discouraged or don't understand why you speak so much about what is (TRULY) going on in our World in your Sabbath school lessons.*
>
> *I also want to express (and I feel this is from God) "Keep sharing The Truth as you have been and warning people of what's to come but more importantly what we as Christians are supposed to be doing in this turbulent time" (as you have been doing) THANK YOU!!*
>
> *I at times have been frustrated with my fellow Christians around me who are SO fearful. I have said many times to them ….God's word is very clear when HE says "DO NOT FEAR" He NEVER said "Do not fear except when Covid hits"*
>
> *Back in the beginning of 2020 when we all heard about Covid, I started praying to the Lord asking, Lord, what is going on? And by day 3 God gave me PEACE to the degree that I have not been surprised by anything that has happened.*

I have watched so many people become deceived (some that I am very surprised by) but your words Dr. Jennings and what you are teaching in your lessons has been such a blessing because it's exactly what the Lord revealed to me when He gave me peace, and I believe that God has blessed you with a brilliant mind to do the research and speak TRUTH and to do it BOLDLY for Him!!!

11 years ago I know that the Lord unveiled my eyes to how the enemy really works.

On April 28, 2010 my family faced a horrible tragedy known as the "Craigslist murder" in Edgewood, Washington where 4 people came into our home terrorized, zipped tied us and held a gun to the back of my head with a countdown on it ! That night ended tragically in them shooting my husband 3 times in front of our 2 boys and killing him.

The 3 of us were spared for some reason to where they probably should have just killed us all because we were witnesses. But I believe God put His hand over us that night for He had plans for us and that was to glorify Him just as Genesis 50:20 says "What man meant for evil, God meant for good"

My husband Jim Sanders was a Christian man and the love of my life when he was taken in that horrific way with our 10- and 14-year-old boys suffering through that tragic night!!

And so, there with my husband lying on the floor gasping for his last breath and my hand on the doorknob waiting for the ambulance…. I looked up and I said these words that I will never forget. … "God if I believe in your Holy Word I have to believe it here and now and to TRUST YOU"

So, in all the hysteria of the tragic loss of my husband, we then had to go through 4 separate murder trials….and then repeat one of those trials 4 years later totaling 5 murder trials of getting raked over the coals by the murderers' defense attorneys!

But through all that, I felt like God showed me what evil really looked like and supernaturally through Him I was able to separate the evil act from the person and look at them as God "created" these 4 people that did this "evil act" and I knew that I was to pray that they would come to know Christ so that it would not destroy me and also knowing that if we are to be forgiven by Christ we too have to forgive as well.

Two days before my husband's death we were having a Bible study in our home and a gal asked a question… Can murderers go to heaven? And my husband's response was "yes murderers can go to heaven if they turn their life over to Christ."

Two days later he died on the floor only 5 ft. from where he made that statement! I don't think that was by accident that that happened in that way; it was almost like a preparation for what was to come and that I was to continue to carry on the Lord's mission laid out for us.

For like myself, Jim so passionately wanted to see people come to Christ and I have lived that out since that terrible day knowing that there's evil in this world and that my discerning spirit now being highly sensitive to the devil's attacks since 4-28-2010 has made me so much more aware of his deceitful ways that I WON'T let the devil win or take me down!!

Dr. Jennings you are right, WE have to "stand firm in our faith"

I believe God has primed me for these days right now. And I am even more convinced because on September 2, 2021 my sister-in-law (56 yrs old) who was a very strong Christian passed away from Covid because she did not get the correct treatment in the hospital like ivermectin, etc. and just like everything you've talked about we do have a cure but they aren't spending time on "the curing people" (because the government does not care).
They just want everybody to get vaccinated, which is such the work of Satan!

My sister-in-law passed away on her oldest son's birthday and it has been very frustrating to lose her in this way and tragically for the family we all now have to live without her! She has been taken out of this turbulent world but we remain here. Therefore I know that God has a purpose and a plan for us to stand firm in our faith and be BOLD for HIM.

Dr. Jennings I wanted to share a little bit of my story because I know you truly are one that really gets it and what is REALLY going on here and "who" is behind it!

So in closing I want to share with you how I became a listener of yours. It was the video you did on homosexuality and Christianity! My son (that was 10 years old at the time of our tragedy) told me after he graduated from High School that he was gay… It definitely was a shock! He is now 22 and a Christian (raised from birth [to love Jesus]); it has saddened me because he has been in torment at times because of how some Christians have made him feel because of the way he feels he was created and who he is.

Your video was such a HUGE blessing!! My son had been researching on his own just to make himself feel better about everything (since he felt like he wasn't accepted by Christians) Well we listened to your video and it was "life-changing" and definitely brought tears to both of our eyes.
It helped us to understand the biological part of the creation (I've watched your video 7 times) I especially love how you ended the video by saying to Christians: "If you still do not believe or even look at the possibilities in how they were created then you still have to look at Christ's love and that is the most important thing! For if we don't show Christ's love how are we ever going to draw anybody to Him?"

And in these times, I so agree with you that from day one of this whole Covid thing….
Christians (some) NEED TO WAKE UP!!

I know this is an extremely long email and if you made it through all of it I thank you for taking the time…MANY blessings to you and all those that make your ministry possible!

-In Christ-
Charlene Sanders Altman

Thoughts about this email?

- Do you think she has experienced evil in her life?
- Do you recognize the power of God's methods of truth, love, freedom that helped her overcome the assault of evil? She didn't become bitter, she didn't hate, she didn't seek to retaliate—she forgave and prayed for the salvation of those who murdered her husband.
- Do you think she is right to recognize how fear is infecting Christianity and how so many are being manipulated by fear?
- Fear is an intruder, it is part of sin, and we cannot overcome fear by might, power, threat, rules, legislation, coercion, control, forced obedience, destruction of those who don't go along with our thinking. What is the only way to overcome fear? Love—perfect love casts out all fear. And where do we find love? Will we find perfect love in any resource of this world? In any human government? In the Christianity of imposed law? No, we find perfect love only in Jesus and in returning to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water. It is returning to Creator worship, whose laws are design laws. We cannot win the war by legislation, mandates, rules, executive orders—"for though we live in the world we do not wage war as the world does…"

SABBATH

The lesson states,

> "Moses gives them a history lesson, a theme that is repeated all through the Bible: *remember what the Lord has done for you in the past.*
>
> "This admonition should mean something to us, we who are on the borders of a better Promised Land; 'In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing…I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord as led us, and His teaching in our past history.' –E.G. White *Life Sketches,* p. 196."

What a perfect quote for the day in which we are living. How many people do you know that are afraid of the future? Do we need to fear the future? Why not?

What does the future hold for those who are faithful? It will hold trials, it will hold difficulties, it will hold temptation—why?

- Because Satan hates Jesus and attacks those Jesus loves

- Because events will unfold in such a way that every single person will decide for or against Jesus in the law and methods they apply to their own lives in how they treat others. Do we love the Lord and our neighbor so that we present truth in love and leave free, or are we dominated with fear so much that we join with the beastly governments of the world to coerce and compel others in order to protect ourselves?
- In doing this every person will reveal one of two characters; every person will be sealed or marked into one of two characters.
- This is happening right now

We have nothing to fear for the future except we forget how the Lord has led us in the past. How has the Lord led you in the past?

Come and Reason started out as a weekly Bible study class, but the message of God's character of love and His design laws was rejected by some in church leadership who prefer the dictator god and the imposed law view.

We had our class canceled; we were banned from the local church facility and college properties; we had letters, emails and videos made about us that misrepresented us. We were *tempted* with emotions of hurt, frustration, anger which tempted us to retaliate, to hit back, to go to war against the local leaders. But, instead we prayed and asked God to take away our hurt and anger and we prayed for the people who were mistreating us. It wasn't instant, but our feelings changed, we established Come and Reason Ministries as a not-for-profit organization and began producing materials to give away and share this message. And God has blessed us over the last 11 years. Doors have opened, we have distributed materials all over the world, we have hubs in South Africa and Australia sharing these resources, many speaking opportunities have opened, we have many new friends, people who pray for us, others who donate, others who share our resources and this message continues to advance.

There is a lesson—when faced with adversity, when mistreated, when lied about, when the feelings of injustice, anger, resentment, desire to lash back arise, it is then we must go to Jesus and ask Him to fill our hearts with love for our enemies, to pray for those who would mistreat us. For it is in times of adversity that several critical things happen:

1. God is able to reveal His methods most powerfully and reach people who would not otherwise be reached (Daniel and the lion's den; the fiery furnace; stoning of Stephen; martyrs in the arena of Rome and the Reformers etc.)
2. Our faith is exercised and strengthened as we choose in governance of self to do what is right and trust God with how things turn out
3. Our characters are solidified into godliness by choosing to embrace and apply God's laws and methods or our characters are solidified into the satanic by choosing to embrace and apply Satan's laws and methods.

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Exodus 32:31-32 right after the Israelites have made a golden calf and God threatens to destroy them and start over with Moses, that Moses asks God to forgive them or blot his name out of the book.

Read second paragraph, "Even though Moses…" What does it mean that to forgive means to bear the sin? Is this a legal process being described, or is it something else?

Read the next two paragraphs, "Thus we have, early…" How do you hear this? Through what law lens?

If we read this through the human law lens, then what is often described? That sin is a legal problem and God, in order to be just, must inflict punishment for sin that would not otherwise occur, but God loves us so sent Jesus and put all the sins of every person upon Jesus and punished Jesus in our place to pay the legal requirements of inflicted punishment for sin.

But, if we understand God's law as design law, how do we understand what is transpiring?

Sin takes a person out of harmony with the law that God built life to operate upon. Adam did this to humanity and all of us are born in sin, conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5). Thus we are born "dead in trespass and sin" or have a terminal sin-condition. We are not born legally guilty, we are born terminal. God, sent Jesus to become sin, though He knew no sin, so that we might **become** the righteousness of God (2Cor 5:21). This is substitution—that Jesus becomes the second Adam, takes upon Himself our sinful condition, the terminal state and as a human being is tempted in all ways like us, but instead of succumbing to fear and selfishness eradicates fear and selfishness by loving perfectly and restoring God's law of life back into the species human. Thus He becomes the new head of humanity, the second Adam.

God's law is vindicated; God's character is vindicated; and God's design protocols for life are restored into the species human. God can but just and the justifier of Him who trusts in Jesus.

I was reading yesterday in the book *The Great Controversy* the chapter The Origin of Sin—if you haven't read that chapter in a while, I highly recommend it, very powerful. Here is a section from that chapter:

> **The same spirit that prompted rebellion in heaven still inspires rebellion on earth**. Satan has continued with men the same policy which he pursued with the angels. His spirit now reigns in the children of disobedience. **Like him they seek to break down the restraints of the law of God and promise men liberty through transgression of its precepts**. [God's law is design law—how does Satan seek to break down God's design law? With the same methods he used in heaven, which was? Lies believed break the circle of love and trust resulting in FEAR and selfishness, which results in imposed rules or laws to control others. Thus, he

breaks down God's law by the imposition of law! Do we see this today? Those who operate at level four and below moral development, are the people to follow rules, to seek to be obedient, who think sin is a legal problem, and who will seek to comply with laws. When government passes laws they will enforce them. Level five and above moral development, which only about 25-30% of people achieve, love others and will live out God's design laws, but end up being persecuted by the level fours and below.] **Reproof of sin still arouses the spirit of hatred and resistance**. [Reproof of the transgression of God's design law, i.e. reproof of the lies, of the censoring, the coercion, the mandates, the imposed rules to coerce consciences results in hatred and resistance] When God's messages of warning are brought home to the conscience, **Satan leads men to justify themselves and to seek the sympathy of others** in their course of sin. **Instead of correcting their errors, they excite indignation against the reprover, as if he were the sole cause of difficulty**. From the days of righteous Abel to our own time such is the spirit which has been displayed toward those who dare to condemn sin. GC 500.1 [And sure enough those who stand for liberty of conscience today are accused as being the cause of the difficulties in the world]

By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in heaven, causing Him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God's unjust restrictions had led to man's fall, as they had led to his own rebellion… GC 500.2 [He misrepresents God as a rule-giver and inflictor of punishment for sin thus causing men to distrust God and rebel.]

In the atonement the character of God is revealed. The mighty argument of **the cross demonstrates to the whole universe** that the course of sin which Lucifer had chosen was in no wise chargeable upon the government of God… GC 500.4

It was Satan that prompted the world's rejection of Christ. **The prince of evil exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus; for he saw that the Saviour's mercy and love, His compassion and pitying tenderness, were representing to the world the character of God…** [What won the day for Jesus? Living out God's law of truth, love and liberty while being assaulted with every evil attack Satan could bring. And in this time in human history, Christ's followers are to be His representatives, His lights in a dark world, to reveal His character to bring glory to Him—by doing what? Will it be that we will be assaulted with every evil power Satan can wield, lies, accusations, coercion, force, violence, financial threat and ruin, homelessness like Elijah, and how to we reveal God's kingdom? Isn't it by clinging to Jesus, by loving our enemies, praying for those who spitefully use us, by refusing the methods of violence, coercion, control, intimidation, by living out truth, love and liberty?]

The penalty of the law fell upon Him who was equal with God, and man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, <u>as the Son of God</u> had triumphed, over the power of Satan. Thus God is just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. GC 502.3 [What do you hear? What law lens? The penalty of the law fell upon Jesus, not the punishment of God. What is the penalty of the law? Why did it fall upon Jesus? Jesus who knew no sin took our sin condition upon Himself, was tempted in

every way just like we are yet without sin. He felt the temptation of the fallen nature to act in self-interest. But with every temptation He overcame by love and trust in His Father. "Father into your hands I commend my spirit." And man was free to accept what? A legal payment? No! Man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ—meaning Christ developed a perfect sinless righteous human character and we are free to accept this into our hearts and be reborn and then live a life of penitence and humiliation—meaning selfless love, not self-exaltation. And we triumph over sin and Satan **as Christ did**, by love and trust in the face of injustice.]

How do we understand what was happening when Moses pled with God not to destroy Israel?

We must remember the context—which is the Great Controversy. At this point in human history, not all the angels in heaven were settled, some still had sympathy for Lucifer, Satan was still trying to win the heavenly beings to his side, but Satan was also working to try and destroy the avenue through whom the Messiah would come. This is the landscape upon which the events in Exodus are taking place.

Does God have foreknowledge? Yes—did God know that Moses would plead with Him as he did? Yes, and did God know that He would not actually destroy the people? Yes, of course He did. Then, this is not about God being angry, wrathful, frustrated, impatient, and fortunately He had a friend in Moses who loved the people and had more patience than God and could intercede with God to talk God down from His anger. This idea is offensive, corrupt, vile and is Satan's version of events because it misrepresents God and sadly is the most common version taught in Christianity.

But the truth is that God was never about to kill the people and didn't need to have Moses plead with Him, but instead took this opportunity to demonstrate what happens in hearts and minds of sinners, of murderers, who spend time with God. Moses, the murderer of the overseer, the fearful person who ran away to protect himself, after time with God had been transformed, reborn, recreated, renewed with God's law of love written in his heart. And when God Himself offers to exalt Moses and start over with Moses' family, Moses instead of embracing the exaltation, offers to sacrifice himself to save others.

Can't you see God turn to the angels in heaven and say, "I told you, my methods work. Those who trust me are restored fully to my methods of love."

This is what is truly happening in the plan of salvation!

MONDAY

In Sabbath's lesson we are reminded of the importance of not forgetting history, of not forgetting God, of not forgetting how God has led us in the past.

What are some of the ways that people today have forgotten God?

Read first paragraph, "Despite some of the error…" What are some of the ways that people today have forgotten God?

- godlessness, evolutionism
- false god concepts—a dictator god
- taking eyes off God and focusing on the problems of the world, bills, climate change, fires, floods, hurricanes, pandemics…
- busyness in good causes so we don't take time with God
- others?

The lesson asks what happened at Kadesh Barnea and what is the lesson? The Bible records real people, real history, doing real stuff, but the reason these events are chosen is because they reveal the plan of salvation being worked out and often serve as object lessons to the larger reality.

- The people had been held in captivity in Egypt—this represents being captives in sin and surrounded by a pagan and/or godless worldview. This represents the entire plan of salvation, humans bound in the slavery of sin and God leading us out. But it also represents the people of God in the Dark Ages. The Hebrews were God's chosen people to evangelize the world, but had become slaves in Egypt. The church became God's chosen people to evangelize the world, but the church became infected with pagan views of God just as Egypt was pagan and thus the Christian world was enslaved to a false god-construct and the imperial methods of the world. God worked to lead the people out of Egypt, so too God led the Reformers to lead the minds of people out of the pagan views of God that infect the church.
- God led the Israelites to Sinai where He gave the people the law and the tabernacle. This represents leading the Reformers back to the truth of God's law as design law, and the Sanctuary message of cleansing the Spirit Temple to prepare the people of God to be at-one with Him, to tabernacle with Him in His presence, i.e. to enter the Promised Land.
- After the law and tabernacle were given, God led the people directly toward the Promised Land. After God led the Reformers to return to God's law, reject pagan views, and embrace the cleansing of the sanctuary message God led the people to prepare to enter the heavenly Canaan.
- As God led the people from Sinai toward the Promised Land, the terrain became more difficult and the people, primarily from the mixed multitude, began to complain. As God led the Reformers who were preparing for the second coming of Christ, toward the heavenly Promised Land, difficulties arose, and among those who clung to the pagan view of God's law opposition entered into the camp; those who clung to imposed law were not pleased with the direction in which the message was going.
- While God was feeding the people the bread of heaven, the disgruntled people began to clamor for the fleshpots of Egypt, so too while God has provided truths from heaven to feed our souls, the disgruntled Christians have clamored for the laws, methods, and practices of the world. Many have rejected the message for this time of God's design law and have clung to the wine of Babylon, the lie that God's law functions like human law, and thus have developed a form of godliness with no power.
- God gave them the meat that they demanded and they ate the quail until they were sick and many died. So too, when we reject God's design laws and embrace the methods, principles and

practices of the world God lets us have what we insist upon and people become more legal, more rules-oriented, more coercive, more controlling and the people get sick, characters become corrupt and millions die. We see this happening right now and sadly millions/billions of Christians and Christian organizations are embracing the beastly methods the church is sick and many are spiritually dying.

- God brought the Israelites to the border of the Promised Land, and God has brought us to the border of heaven. But the report of ten of the spies focused on threats rather than on God and His promises, and fear took hold in the hearts of the people. As the Advent Reformers were advancing the truth, presenting the message of righteousness by faith that would prepare the people to enter the heavenly Promised Land, Satan's agents in the church diverted the minds away from God's promise to heal and restore to the lie of imposed law and legal declarations. And today the focus is on the threats from the world, rather than the promises of God and fear is paralyzing the church and God's people.
- Caleb and Joshua voiced the true message, but the ten unfaithful spies denounced them. In our own history, Jones and Waggoner voiced the true message of righteousness by faith, pointing to God's design law and healing of heart and mind. But they were denounced by the legal adherents. And today we have been pronouncing God's methods of truth, love, liberty and have been denounced by those who want to use government to mandate, coerce, compel and force.
- Then Korah, one of the Levites, led a rebellion against Moses and God's plan to lead the people into the Promised Land. Likewise, the penal legal adherents in the church led a rebellion against the righteousness by faith message and the church has been wandering in the wilderness.

Consider this quote from EG White regarding the events of the 1888 GC:

> "When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. The **people are acting over the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**. [What did these three do at the border of Canaan? What were the people doing in 1888?] I have placed you in your proper position, which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony; but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. [What was the message? Actual healing of hearts and minds, righteousness by faith as 2Cor 5:21 teaches, but it was rejected for the penal legal lie of declared righteousness even though we are not righteous] It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people. [The messengers were Jones and Waggoner and the message was healing of hearts and minds, real righteousness by faith.] They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness. I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should heal them. [What is described? They reject truth and their minds become darkened, and unless they repent, meaning reject the lies and embrace the truth, they cannot be healed. But if they would God would heal them. It is about healing, not legal forgiveness.] They have obscured their spiritual eyesight. They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word. Lightness, trifling, jesting and joking are daily

> practiced. They have not set their hearts to seek Me. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: "Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." These words from God I have not dared to disregard."–Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. (To "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie," Nov. 5, 1892.) {3MR 191.2}

The leadership of the SDA church at the 1888 GC took the position of Korah and rebelled against God and have led the church into the wilderness of penal legal theology, from which the church has still not recovered.

So, when Israel was about to enter the Promised Land—what did Satan do to interfere with God's plan, to get them to balk, to get them to stop, to get them to resist God, to get them to rebel?

- Fear messaging
- Worldly living—long for the comforts of this world
- Inspire leaders who value Satan's methods
- Seek temporal safety over trusting God and being loyal to Him

Do we see this today?

Consider this quote:

> The greatest want of the world is the want of men—**men who will not be bought or sold**, [do you see how Satan attacks? How many are feeling the pressure to compromise their consciences, their beliefs, their principles for a gift card, ability to travel, to keep their job?] men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, [How many of our leaders, whether in government or in our own church are willing to respect the conscientious choices of others, or who are willing to use pressure, coercion, threat to advance what they believe is right? Is this honest and true or is it a deceit?] men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, [It is sin to violate God's laws, including the law of love and the law of liberty. Whenever we engage in practices that coerce or compel or pressure the consciences of others we are sinning against God and our fellow human beings.] men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall. Ed 57.3 [True to duty, what duty? Isn't it true to God, to live out His methods, to reveal His character, to have His law be the supreme standard of conduct in how we treat others? How do we become such people?]
>
> But such a character is not the result of accident; [It is not a genetic happenstance, an accident of birth, biologically randomly determined. Character cannot be created it must be developed.] it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. [Such a noble character is not the result of God playing favorites, God does not choose to magically endow some with mature and strong character and others with feckless wavering character. No, each person develops their own by the choices they make when faced with temptation. Our characters are not developed in the good times, but it is in the furnace, in the heat of spiritual battle, when the hammer blows of our enemy falls upon us and we lean into Jesus, we choose to resist the pull of fear, reject the actions of selfishness, say no to the survival drives. It is when we love instead

> of hate, forgive instead of harbor resentment, it is when we live the truth and leave others free rather than seeking to compel others that we develop a noble character. Or, instead we can choose the fear, choose to act in self-interest, choose to advance a cause to force others to comply—for their own good of course—but in so doing we develop a different character.] A **noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.** Ed 57.4 [Each one of us right now in this COVID crisis is deciding who we will trust, what methods we will practice in how we treat others, and what character we will develop.]

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention upon God's organization of the people and that God is a God of order, not disorder. In the last paragraph it reads, "Though we sometimes hear people rail against 'organized' religion (what would they prefer, 'disorganized' religion instead?), the Word of God, especially the New Testament, acknowledges no other kind but an organized one."

When people rail against organized religion what is it they are really railing against?

They are railing against the valuing of the organization over the people:

- It is better for one man to die than the nation, as Caiaphas argued regarding the crucifixion of Jesus
- The cover up of child molesting priests or pastors to protect the organization
- The disfellowshipping of people who question orthodox views
- The practice of rule enforcement over loving of people

Oswald Chambers recognized this problem:

> Reconciliation means the restoring of the relationship between the entire human race and God, putting it back to what God designed it to be. This is what Jesus Christ did in redemption. **The church ceases to be spiritual when it becomes self-seeking, only interested in the development of its own organization**. The reconciliation of the human race according to His plan means realizing Him not only in our lives individually, but also in our lives collectively. Jesus Christ sent apostles and teachers for this very purpose—that the corporate Person of Christ and His church, made up of many members, might be brought into being and made known. We are not here to develop a spiritual life of our own, or to enjoy a quiet spiritual retreat. We are here to have the full realization of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of building His body. ("The Spiritually Self-Seeking Church," My Utmost for His Highest.)

In my experience, people never rail against helping other people, they rail against rule enforcement that smacks of institutional protection at the expense of the people.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses again on Moses pleading with God not to destroy the people and emphasizes the argument of Moses that God's reputation would be injured after leading the people out of Egypt if He should kill them in the wilderness.

The lesson notes "the idea that God is to be glorified in His people."

What does this mean? How is God glorified in His people?

Is this a message for us today?

> Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Re 14:6–7 NIV84).

What does this mean? How would you explain this to someone today?

- What is the eternal gospel?
- What does it mean to fear God?
- What is the significance of "the hour of his judgment?"
- What is the call to worship about?

So, how do we glorify God?

THURSDAY

Read the first three paragraphs, "In Deuteronomy 2…" How do you explain the instructions to kill everyone, men, women, and children?

What would you have done had you been there?

Do you think God would have been angry if a person had such a tender heart that they didn't want to kill another, but like Moses would give their life for the wicked?

What happens in the hearts and minds of people when they kill another human being? Does it make for greater psychological health? Does it bring greater sense of peace? Do those who kill others typically become more gentle? Or do they become hardened, more callous?

Why would God instruct them to do this then?

Didn't God kill the first born of Egypt? Didn't at a later time an angel kill 180,000 Assyrians? Didn't God still have the ability to do this, kill them Himself? Then why did God have the people do it?

Was it God's first plan?

> I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. 28 I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. 29 But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. (Ex 23:27–30).

So this was God's plan—what happened to this plan? The people didn't go along with it.

Why instruct to kill everyone then? What does God want, maximum killing or minimum killing? Maximum PTSD or minimum PTSD?

So from God's perspective, if they insist on fighting, what course results in the least amount of people killed in war, and the least amount of people participating in the violence? By getting it over in one generation, wiping them all out, so that there isn't perpetual generational war for thousands of years. But, they disobeyed on this as well and there has been perpetual war in the Middle East with essentially every generation scarred by it.

FRIDAY

Read Friday's lesson, "As Creator…" What is the problem here? FOTAP—the Fallacy of the Assumed Premise.

What is the assumed premise? That God's law functions like human law, and therefore God can arbitrarily do anything.

God is Creator and God is Sovereign but God cannot do anything—what can God not do and remain the God Jesus has revealed Him to be? God cannot coerce, compel, or force the conscience. Why? Because it is a violation of His law of liberty, and love only exists in freedom.

So God's sovereignty is revealed in sustaining His laws that govern reality and these laws are design laws, not imposed rules.

The idea of judgment is presented as imperial, punitive, imposed, judicial, which is based on the lie that God's law functions like human law.

Several problems here, even in their model. First, the judgment is a future event yet they have God punishing sin before the judgment. Second, the punishment for sin is eternal death, not sleep death, and all of these people died the first death and will arise again at the end of the 1000 years to face judgment. So, in their own false legal view their conclusions are contradictory and create confusion.

We agree that God's elimination of these people was part of God's actions to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. This is the real issue, so His actions had nothing to do with punishing sin, but His judgment here was the judgment of a physician judging the people as necrotic and needed to excise the necrosis to bring about the cure.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

AACC Report: The American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference was held in Orlando Florida—over 6000 in attendance, people from all 50 states and multiple countries. It was wonderful to be together again with believers and friends. Less than 5% of people wore masks during the event.

Our ministry gave away over 10,000 items:

- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- *The Remedy New Testament*
- *The Remedy Psalms*
- *God Is Love Children's Book*
- *The Meditation Guide*
- *Tracts*

We had incredible positive responses from people, stories of lives being changed from using our resources and applying God's design law methods. One man told of an addiction recovery program his ministry runs and four years ago he listened to one of my programs, then went to our booth and got our materials and started using our materials in their recovery program and over the last four years, he reported, that they have had a three-to-four-fold increase in the number of their patients remaining sober.

Pray that God will use the resources we distributed to heal more hearts and minds for His kingdom.

Come and Reason Property update: A production consultant has examined the property and we are now working on getting contractors to give us a bid.

It is not our way to do fundraisers and we will not do a fundraiser or send out donation requests, however, several people have recently approached us and asked if our ministry has any needs and recommended that we make our vision and plan to have our own facility public so that anyone who want to support us in this endeavor can do so.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 Q4 Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 3: The Everlasting Covenant

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

Covenants today:

My mother lives in a subdivision that has covenants. For those of you who are not familiar with this type of covenant, it is a lengthy list of items you can and cannot do if you are going to live there….what you can have in your yard, what type of animals you can have, what type of changes you can make to your house, or the size of the house you build….and on and on. Why would anyone want to live where there are so many rules, you ask?

Mostly, people who agree to this list want to maintain their house's value and live among other people who share this outlook. They are willing to agree with each other to accomplish this purpose….retain and enhance value.

5 years ago, when my father needed a ramp, we elected to put it inside the garage, which was big enough to accommodate a ramp. It has been a real lifesaver! Why didn't we put it outside the house? Mainly, we didn't want to have to get permission from the leadership of the subdivision to make changes to the outside of the house. But also we didn't want to advertize that disabled people live there that they might be a helpless target for criminals, so that the ramp would not have to undergo degradation due to weather, and so we wouldn't have to be in bad weather while getting into and out of the car.

A covenant is a very valuable tool. We agreed, we promised. We kept our covenant promise.

What happens if we break that promise? Consequences! In a subdivision, fines and poor relationships with your neighbors who know we signed the covenant agreement and are now breaking it, which lowers the value of their houses. They don't want to live with our mess.

My husband and I live out in the country where no covenants are in place. Guess what? Neighbors can do anything they like to their property and behave any way they like. So, where there was once neighboring woods now holds a house with a yard full of trash and toys. If our neighbors want to shoot their guns, they do. My sister and her husband built a home in the country, only to have industrial chicken coops built just down the road.

A covenant is very valuable.

Marriage is a covenant, when we make promises to another person that we plan to keep, but these days, often don't. Why is it so easy to break our promises?

God considers Himself our husband and we believers are His bride. We look down at the Israelites and think to ourselves that we wouldn't turn away from Him like they did, we wouldn't complain about everything like they did, we wouldn't worship anything else like they did. But is that true? Are there ways we do that very thing….are we too busy, are we focusing on and complaining about the behavior of the "others", and are we spending much more time with entertainment, politics, business or hobbies, etc. than we spend with God? Just keep track of how you spend your time for a week, and you will have your answer.

Today, let's take a real look at our covenant with God. As Elijah asked on Mount Carmel, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal (or anything else that has your primary attention) is God, follow him!"

How can you be commanded to love someone you can't see, hear or touch? Does this bring out the rebel in you?

How can we love and trust someone we cannot see, hear or touch…an invisible being? Ideas?

- Letters that share the thoughts and feelings, questions and concerns
- Stories other people share about what that being has done for them
- Seeing a requested response actually occur (God helps with not only big problems, but gives you "flowers")
- Experiencing healing changes in your mind and heart, and at times your body

Psalms 34:8-9, 12-15: "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack no good thing….whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry;"

It's harder for some to love and trust God because they have been hurt and betrayed by people here on earth that promised to love and protect them, or gave birth to them. God has to find a way past all of that hurt, anger and distrust, though He had nothing to do with causing it.

To me, one of the most poignant texts in the Bible is Isaiah 65:1,2, where God says: "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me. I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations'."

Hosea 11 describes God's perspective on His relationship with His people Israel, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called, the more they went away from me….It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms, but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them….My people are

determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?...My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man – the Holy One among you."

Covenant is mentioned 334 times in the Bible. It must be very important to God!

This week's memory text is: "'And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you' " (Genesis 17:7, NKJV).

From the middle section of the first page: "God out of His saving grace and love offers you a salvation that you do not deserve and cannot possibly earn; and you, in response, love Him back "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30, NKJV), a love that is made manifest by obedience to His law: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3, NKJV).

Do we not deserve to be saved? To be healed of our terminal condition of sin? Are we not God's children…even the bad ones? Did we choose to be born terminal? I would submit that God could do nothing less than what He did to accomplish our salvation, not only because he loves us that much, but because we do deserve to be healed, to have a chance to make a different decision than Adam and Eve did. We didn't ask for this. We can't be held accountable for what Adam and Eve did to our species.

We can be held accountable for not taking the medicine that Jesus died to produce. His character and love replacing the selfish thoughts and actions that we do even at the expense of others.

The Covenant with God IS how you take your medicine and become healed. He promises to be Your God, your Healer, your Savior. You promise to love and trust Him enough to open that door He is knocking on and let Him into your heart. There, He will make the changes inside that we are simply unable to do on our own. Christ IS our substitute; His life, like a transfusion, replaces ours, which He sacrificed His life to make possible. His human life was made perfect IN the sacrifice.

As a nurse, I find it interesting that the Bible uses the metaphor of "Blood". The DNA in our blood and how it is expressed holds the instruction manual for who we are, how we are different from others. Jesus' DNA was uniquely human and Godly. What an amazing swap He offers us! A transfusion of holiness! A complete removal of the virus of sin from our brain's computer!

John 17:25, 26: Jesus prayed for His disciples and for all of us when He said, "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

SUNDAY

The Covenant and the Gospel

First Paragraph:

> All through the Bible, the covenant and the gospel appear together. Though the idea of covenant existed before the nation of Israel (for example, the Noahic covenant), and though the covenant promise was made before the nation of Israel existed, it was expressed prominently through God's interaction with His people, starting with their fathers, the patriarchs. And even from the start, the central truth of the covenant was the gospel: salvation by faith alone.

From the second half of the page:

> Abraham believed God, believed in God's promises to him, and thus he was justified before God. Abraham sought to uphold his end of the covenant by obedience (basically, doing what God told him to do), such as seen in Genesis 22, when he showed the whole watching universe that he totally trusted God by being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac at Mount Moriah. "His faith is accounted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5, NKJV).

That's why, Paul would use Abraham as the example of what it means to live by the covenant promises God had made with His people. This theme echoes throughout the Bible. Paul brought it up another time in Galatians 3:6, where he again quotes Genesis 15:6, about Abraham's faith being "accounted . . . to him for righteousness" (NKJV), and he refers back to the promise first made to Abram about all nations being blessed in his seed (Gal. 3:8, 9).

The covenant promises are made to all, Jew and Gentile, who "are of faith" (Gal. 3:7) so they are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, however much they are obligated, because of the covenant, to obey the law. I found this confusing.

Our favorite question: What law lens are we looking through? God's laws are the foundation of life and breaking them takes life away. Much like staying underwater longer than you have air causes death unless you come up for more air. Breaking God's law of respiration causes death.

How does faith and law work, if we are saved by faith alone? By opening up our hearts to take in all that Christ gives us, including a desire to keep the law.

When Jeremiah talks about the new covenant, he does so in the context of the law: " 'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people' " (Jer. 31:33, NKJV), reflecting language that goes back to the book of Leviticus: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Lev. 26:12, NKJ

In today's society, "saved by grace" has come to mean, that if you say you believe in Christ, you are saved. But according to Jesus' brother, James 2:18, 19. "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good? Even the demons believe that…and shudder!'"

And looking toward the very end of time, which is where I believe we are, Revelation 14:12 says, "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.

Even when you look at how the Bible says the good and bad people are separated, in Matthew 25: 31-46, it is the actions of help and love toward our fellowman that enable us to be saved (we have the compassionate heart of God living in us). The second death has no power over those who rise in the first resurrection. Ignoring the needs of our fellow man shows we do not have the love of God in our hearts or love others as we love ourselves, and results in eternal loss of life, the second death. Revelation 20:6, 15.

MONDAY
The Covenant and Israel

I really like this: " 'It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' " (Deut. 9:5, NKJV; see also Deut. 9:27).

Here the covenant of grace appears: God worked for them— despite the constant mistakes. When they begged for a king, God warned them that a king would take all of the best stuff from them, but they still wanted a king. What did God do? He helped them find one. He valued a relationship with them, even when they were wrong, and insulting to God's ability to be their leader.

How do the covenant promises work?

- Exodus 2:23-25 says that God hears his people, remembers his promise/covenant and was concerned about them.
- Exodus 6:2-8 details His promises, made with "an uplifted hand" with his identity "I am the Lord."
- Leviticus 26:40-46 says God will remember His covenant when their "uncircumcised hearts" are humbled.

The last two paragraphs reflect this:

> The exodus from Egypt, the great symbol of God's saving grace, also was based on the covenant the Lord had made to their fathers. That is, even before the beneficiaries of the covenant were born, the promises were made in their behalf. Through no merit of their own, they received the promised deliverance, which God did for them through the miracles and

> events of the Exodus. They went from Egypt to Sinai, where the covenant with them was "officially" established (see Exodus 20). Central to that covenant was gospel and the law, the Ten Commandments, which they were called upon to obey, a manifestation of their saving relationship with the Lord, who already had redeemed them (the gospel). Hence, again and again in Deuteronomy, they were called to obey that law as their part of the covenant, which had been ratified at Sinai.

We don't earn salvation by law. God's law describes life itself, it protects and promotes life. Jesus saves us, but the law connects us to him and to others.

We were created for life, but we deviated from the plan and found ourselves alone, separated.
The law is the pathway God gave us to return to life.

How does the law connect us? Any ideas?

- Opening up to the flow of God's life through us, we become part of the river of life again.
- Seeing even an enemy as beloved of God and in need of help, healing and salvation
- Allowing the river of life to flow out to others in good deeds, caring acts, self-sacrificing actions to reach out to the separated, hurting and lonely.
- Opening up even more to God to allow even more resources to flow through us to others

TUESDAY
The Book of the Covenant

In the Middle section, Deuteronomy 5:1–21, when Moses was trying to encourage the children of the Israelites that left Egypt, but would not go into the promised land, and ended up out in the desert for 40 years. Have faith in God this time, so that doesn't happen to you:

> Not long after the children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt, God established the covenant with them, at Sinai, just before they were supposed to enter the Promised Land. Then, after a 40-year detour, just before they are again to enter the Promised Land, which was a central part of the covenantal promise (see Gen. 12:7, Exod. 12:25), through the mouth of Moses, the Lord again gives them the Ten Commandments, a way to re-emphasize just how important it was for them to renew their covenant obligations, as well. The Lord was going to fulfill His covenantal promises to them. Now, they are obligated to uphold their end of the deal: " 'So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone' " (Deut. 4:13, NKJV).
>
> He did it at Sinai, and now He was doing it again, in Moab, just before they were to take the land promised to them through the promise made to the fathers centuries earlier, a manifestation of the "everlasting covenant" that preceded even the existence of the world. "Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn

> pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race."—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 834
>
> Deuteronomy 5:29 says, "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever."

What is difficult about the 10 commandments as listed in Exodus 20? The first 4 are how we show our love for our creator, and the last 6 are how we show our love for other people…by not hurting them in any way.

The only commandment people seem to have trouble remembering is the 4th commandment that ironically starts with "Remember" the Sabbath day to keep it holy…the seventh day (which we call Saturday in English, or Sabado in Spanish)….the day created by and commemorating our creator and His character of love, truth and freedom. He could have created the world in 6 days, then said, "Alright! You have seen my power! Kneel before me and be my slave always." But instead, he allowed us a day of freedom to consider the character of the One yielding the power.

This seventh-day period showed His genius because it cannot be owned, bought, or kept from anyone. We all pass through this glorious day once every week. We have the privilege of reconnecting with our Savior in an ever deeper way throughout our lives, and honoring Him as our God and creator!

But we may not understand what it means to "keep the Sabbath". In Luke 18:18-30, Jesus shed light on that in His discussion with the rich ruler, who asked him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.' The ruler said, "All these I have kept since I was a boy,"

Jesus responded, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." The ruler was sad, because he amassed a lot of wealth which he did not want to part with. Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" People thought that if you were rich and healthy, you were blessed by God, so this came as quite a shock!

Jesus' answer shows that though the ruler THOUGHT he had kept the commandments all his life, he had not. He showed that he did not love God with all his heart because he wouldn't follow Him. He showed that he did not love others because he hoarded his good fortune instead of sharing it with others. If the shoe had been on the other foot, he would have wished a rich person would share some of his abundance with him.

Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said, ""Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Bearing that in mind, why do you think many Christian people today have such an aversion to keeping the law, and say that we are saved simply by what Jesus did for us? Especially when the saved deeds are pointed out in the Bible as well as knowing God?

- What kind of faith does nothing to heal you of your sin?
- Do we really want to go to heaven the way we are?
- Do we expect God will miraculously change everything about our characters and who we are when we arrive in heaven?

Matthew 7:21-23 What about these people?"

> Jesus said," Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

WEDNESDAY
His Special People

In the first section, this information is reviewed:

> It's hard for us today to grasp much of what the ancient world was like at the time in which Israel was wandering the wilderness. If whole empires have come and gone, with only ruins (if that) remaining, what can we know of many of the smaller pagan nations that lived in the same area as Israel did? Not a whole lot, but we do know one thing: these people were steeped in paganism, polytheism, and some utterly degrading practices, which included child sacrifice. Try to imagine just how degrading and evil a culture and a religion would be that would do that to their own children, and do so in the name of some god! No wonder, again and again, all through the history of ancient Israel, the Lord had warned His people against following the practices of the nations around them. " 'When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations' " (Deut. 18:9, NKJV). And that's because God had called out this nation for a special purpose. By having entered into the covenant with God, they were to be a special people, a witness to the world of the God who created the heaven and the earth—the only God.

According to Deuteronomy 27:9-26 and Exodus 18:5-30, the people had sexual and behavioral practices that not only contaminated their minds and bodies, and sometimes their livestock, but "even the land was defiled."

We can tell this by the different instructions the Israelites were given when taking over a group of non-Israelites. Numbers 31 indicates they could take the spoils, and the virgin girls (after a purification process), but kill everyone else. I think we can gather that the adults had sexually transmitted diseases.

Other times they were told to destroy everything and take absolutely nothing from the town. Or they were to kill the people, but could keep the livestock. God was trying to limit the issues brought into the Israelite camp.

The bottom section asks us to consider the idea of "this day" committing to God and to His covenant requirements.

To put off decisions for God is to take our eternal life in our hands. The longer we go without Him, the further away we will be and the harder it will be to return to Him. Nothing is stagnant about this life….we are moving through space and time…and we don't get that back.

The philosophy I live by is, "Plan as if you are going to live forever, but live as though you are going to die today." We can talk about when the "end of time" will come, but truly for any of us, our end of time could be today. Satan tries to get us to procrastinate, and we are oh-so-good at that. I am. But it is a deadly mistake.

Looking at it from another perspective, the sooner we join forces with God, the sooner we experience all the benefits of healing, balance, maturity of character, depth of compassion and love, and connectedness to our creator and all people. All this and preparation for life in heaven, too!

THURSDAY
Other Images

In the bottom section, we look at this:

> "In Deuteronomy 4:20 and Deuteronomy 32:9, there is the idea of family, which, ideally, should be the closest, tightest, and most loving of bonds. God has always wanted this kind of relationship with His people. Even after their shameful rejection of Jesus during the time of the cross, Jesus said to the two Marys after He had been resurrected, 'Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me. " (Matt. 28:10, NKJV). Even as the resurrected Christ, He referred to the disciples as "My brethren," an example of love and the grace that flows from love for those who certainly didn't deserve it. That's essentially what the relationship between God and humanity has always been: grace and love given to the undeserving."

What?

Once again, let's look at this concept of "undeserving." Does a child filled with cancer deserve treatment? Put another way, do we, as God's children, filled with sin deserve treatment?

> John 3:16, 17, "For God so LOVED the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

John 15:9-17, Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit; Fruit that will last, and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

Zechariah 2:8 "For this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you…for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye.'"

Does that sound like God considers us undeserving? Or does that sound like we are so precious to Him that He would do anything to give a chance to know Him, open our hearts to Him, so He can heal us?

FRIDAY
Further Thoughts

"The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today, through which we have hope. Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the Author and the Finisher of our faith."—Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1077.

"Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, 'It is finished,' He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' John 19:30; 17:24."—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 834.

Discussion Questions:

1) As the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in what ways should we fulfill the role that ancient Israel should have fulfilled in its time? How can we learn to avoid the mistakes that they made?

- Be in the world, but not of the world – don't distance from those who need help

- Realize that it is not because of our righteousness that we have this great treasure of truth, but because God wants us to grow spiritually, while spreading the good news to everyone

- Don't hoard the truth…it isn't "Ours"…

- Proverbs 24:11, 12, "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who guards your life know it? Will He not repay everyone according to what they have DONE?"

2) Why are the gospel and the promises of the gospel so central to the whole idea of the new covenant? What texts can you find in the New Testament that show how the law and obedience to the law were not abolished under the new covenant, as commonly taught by other Christians?

- Romans 8: 7, 8, 13 "The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God."…For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

- Romans 13:8-10, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

- Hebrews 4:8-11, "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience."

- Isaiah 66: 22-24, "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the Lord. "And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

3) Why do you think so many Christians say that the gospel nullifies the need to keep the Ten Commandments?

- There are many texts in the New Testament that talk of salvation by faith and not the law.

- But I like to think of the Law like an MRI. It can show you what is wrong, but it cannot heal you. You MUST go the Great Physician for healing. This healing comes by faith in the Healer. That He actually has a remedy that works, and then you actually allow Him to give it to you in daily doses!

- The devil has no interest in our healing. In fact, if it weren't for our angels, we would all be dead. Look at Job. As soon as Satan was free to do anything, what did he do? Destroyed! So, he gives the ideas to leaders of churches that salvation doesn't include actual healing to perfection. When that though it adopted, there is no effort to connect to God for the purpose of healing and becoming more and more like Jesus each day.
- "Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: 'Ah, I will vent my wrath on my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities'." Isaiah 1:24, 25

- "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'" Isaiah 35:3,4 What is the best retribution for a person who has been killed, diseased, deceived, etc? Healing and restoration – Salvation!

Revelation 14:6,7, "Then I saw another angel flying in midair and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language, and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.'"

What is the good news here?

- This is for all eternity, not just temporary
- No one on earth is excluded
- God has given us the ability to use good judgment to identify the truth about God
- What gives glory to God is following the truth about this awesome God to the point where you understand, love and worship Him without fear (Luke 1:74 – John the Baptist's father, Zechariah's prophecy that part of the mission of Christ is to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.")
- The same judgment we make about God and others, will God make about us as being healed or not healed. Unselfishly loving, or judgmental and misjudging of others and God? He makes an accurate diagnosis. Matthew 7:1,2 Matthew 25: 31-46 Isaiah 11:1-4
- The sign or banner of this creator God is the brilliant choice of a period of time (the 7th day Sabbath), rather than an icon or item (like a wedding ring). He created this 7th day as the last day of creation, where He "rests His case". A day for us to consider how He uses his mighty power, and who we are in relationship with Him. A day to keep ourselves holy through staying connected to and healed by Him. Gen.2:1-3 Exodus 8-11

E.G. White, Desire of Ages, pg 308, "'Till heaven and earth pass,' said Jesus. 'one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' The sun shining in the heavens, the solid earth upon which you dwell, are God's witnesses that His law is changeless and eternal. Though they may pass away, the divine precepts shall endure. 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.' Luke 16:17. The system of types that pointed to Jesus as the lamb of God was to be abolished at His death; the but precepts of the Decalogue are as immutable as the throne of God. Since 'the law of the Lord is perfect,' every variation from it must be evil. Those who disobey the commandments of God, and teach others to do so, are condemned by Christ. The Saviour's life of obedience maintained the claims of the law: it proved that the law could be kept in humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is 'holy, and just, and good.' Romans 7:12. On the other hand, all who break God's commandments are sustaining Satan's claim that the law is unjust, and cannot be obeyed. Thus they second the deceptions of the great adversary, and cast dishonor upon God. They are the children of the wicked one, who was the first rebel against God's law. To admit them into heaven would again bring in the elements of discord and rebellion, and imperil the well-being of the universe. No man who willfully disregards one principle of the law shall enter the kingdom of heaven."

E.G. White, Desire of Ages, pg 309, "The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ's day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul. It does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness. A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life. The darkest Chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists. The Pharisees claimed to be children of Abraham, and boasted of their possession of the oracles of God, yet these advantages did not preserve them from selfishness, malignity, greed for gain, and the basest hypocrisy. They thought themselves the greatest religionists of the world, but their so-called orthodoxy led them to crucify the Lord of glory. The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world."

E.G. White, Council to the Churches, pg 261, "Great blessings are enfolded in the observance of the Sabbath, and God desires that the Sabbath day shall be to us a day of joy. There was joy at the institution of the Sabbath. God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All things that he had made He pronounced 'very good.' Genesis 1:31. Heaven and earth were filled with rejoicing. 'The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Job 38:7. Though sin has entered the world to mar His perfect work, God still gives to us the Sabbath as a witness that One omnipotent, infinite in goodness and mercy, created all things. Our heavenly Father desires through the observance of the Sabbath to preserve among men a knowledge of Himself. He desires that the Sabbath shall direct our minds to Him as the true and living God, and

that through knowing Him we may have life and peace. When The Lord delivered His people Israel from Egypt and committed to them His law, He taught them that by the observance of the Sabbath they were to be distinguished from idolaters. It was this that made the distinction between those who acknowledge the sovereignty of God and those who refuse to accept Him as their Creator and King. 'It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever,' the Lord said. 'Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.' Exodus 31:17, 16. As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God's people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law. It distinguishes between His loyal subjects and transgressors."

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy
To Love the Lord Your God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

This week a group of Seventh-day Adventist Christians put out a public appeal to the SDA church entitle: To the Seventh-day Adventist Church: An Appeal in Defense of Liberty of Conscience.

It is extremely well done call for the principles of liberty of conscience, religious liberty that we have been advancing. It is open for anyone to sign onto this letter. I encourage you all to read it and if you agree sign it. The link is here.

https://libertyandhealth.org/liberty/

On Wednesday evening the group did a live webcast with Ben Carson to discuss the Biblical, moral, ethical and Constitutional principles of liberty. It was also well done.

But I noticed in the live comments going by that there were a couple of people who kept texting things like: "This isn't about liberty. If you love people you get the vaccine."

What is the problem with such a statement? Love cannot exist in an atmosphere of freedom. This is one of Satan's traps—to set up a situation in which people believe it is righteous to advance a cause by taking away freedom, by mandates, by force, by threats, by economic or other pressures.

The memory text for today is: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV4).

I had my lesson prepared on Deuteronomy and there was nothing in it about COVID, and I still have the notes and we will get to it. But, then I received an email this week, and I thought—what does love do? If I love the Lord don't I love people too? And doesn't love remain open to advancing truth? Here is the email:

> *Please get back to the Bible and out of social issues and politics, such as Covid19, the Left and the Right, Afghanistan. Dr. Jennings, you are beginning to sound like a Fox News anchor. It's making me sick. I hate what you are becoming!*
>
> *You should know that leadership requires difficult decision-making. Over 700,000 people have died in this country alone, so what do you do with a virus that is spawning variants by the day? If you are not around people, you do nothing; however, if you are working around others, you vaccinate for your own safety, your family's safety and for the safety of others until this thing is*

> *finally under control. I can see your point if the government was merely forcing this on people for reasons of obvious control of its citizenry, or as a precursor to additional enforcements in the future, but be for real. We are in a pandemic that is taking thousands of lives by the day. And yes, you should know that with every vaccination and every medication, there will be side effects, but they pale in comparison to the number of people who are being saved from the worse of the virus and most of all, death.*
>
> *So can we get back to the Holy Bible, our great commission, and sharing the love of Jesus as we prepare for the soon coming Savior? PLEASE!*

So what does love do? This person sounds frustrated, perhaps angry? Why? It appears they are concerned I am misperceiving the danger from COVID, listening to right wing talk shows, and not speaking about pertinent Bible issues.

Well, no wonder she is upset—I would be upset too if I thought someone I valued was being misled to the point they were no longer presenting truth.

So, if you are the one who emailed—thank you for reaching out. Can we agree that the solution to all of this is the truth? Jesus said "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." This is a principle that applies to all aspects of life—not just spiritual life. Truth frees from lies and according to Paul those who are lost in the end are lost because "they did not love the truth and thus be saved." (2 Thes 2:10).

If you go to the gym and work out with weights, your muscles will get stronger—are you then only able to use your increased strength at the gym, or can you use that strength anywhere? Likewise, when we exercise our God-given ability to reason, think, discern these abilities develop and strengthen and as we advance in discerning truth from error we are able to use our discernment skills anywhere. This is a spiritual exercise—loving truth, the discerning of truth, the moving forward in truth no matter the truth.

When I was in college and was presented with godless theories of evolution, I had to think them through and examine those theories in light of Scripture and choose what I would believe. Was this merely science, or was it a spiritual pursuit?

The righteous, the saved, are those who have minds that love truth, they are open to be corrected by facts, evidence and truth. They know they are finite beings and that their current understanding may not be 100% accurate and they are willing to examine new perspectives and evidences and update when the evidence is persuasive.

That is the type of mind I want and for which I have prayed, to grow in the truth at the earliest possible moment I can, not delay until the truth is unavoidable. This is part of what it means to be humble—a humble person is one who can learn, can update, can be corrected when they are wrong. I have not always been humble. I have believed things that were not true and had to change my beliefs and it

wasn't pleasant. And I learned—I don't want to cling to error, I want to follow the truth at the earliest possible moment my mind can comprehend it.

Remember—we can never avoid the truth we can only delay the day we deal with it—and the longer we delay the worse the problem is.

So, emailer—can we examine your concerns in light of truth and the principles of God?

You are concerned about what I have been saying because you have different *beliefs* about what has happened and what is happening. Is our *beliefs*, what we *believe*, in whom we *believe* and *trust*, why we *believe*, upon what we base our *beliefs* important? Is examining our beliefs and establishing them in harmony with truth and God's Word a responsibility of the Christian? If we pursue the examination of our beliefs, always seeking greater truth, are we practicing Bible principles?

So, you have some beliefs that are different from mine—why? I would suggest we are incorporating different data points, and perhaps we have different *methods* upon which we decide what we believe.

How have you come to believe what you have?

For instance—you have stated the following beliefs:

- over 700,000 deaths from COVID have occurred in the USA
- New variants of SARS-COV2 are spawning daily
- If you interact with others responsibly then you get the COVID vaccine for one's own safety and the safety of others
- Thus, your position believes the vaccines keep you and others safe from SARS-COV2
- You believe we need to continue vaccinating "until this thing is finally under control." Suggesting you believe we can vaccinate our way to safety.
- You believe it isn't right to mandate or control people—but then say "But be for real, we are in a pandemic" which suggests you believe we are in a pandemic and that it is an immediate threat and that in such circumstances limiting freedoms by mandates is okay.
- You believe that vaccines do have side effects but they are insignificant to the number of deaths occurring from the virus.

I hope I have been able to accurately represent the beliefs you hold. It is the best I could do from the email.

How did you come to believe all of this? What method did you use?

- Did you go to the various sources and examine the data for yourself?
- Did you think it through for yourself and compare it to your understanding of reality—or did you allow an authority to tell you the answer?
- Did you base your beliefs upon what the government said, or the CDC, the FDA, the head of the NIH, or some other government official?

- Did you get persuaded because you watched interviews with people who sounded convincing and were affirmed by the talk show host?
- Is it because the legal authorities have used their legal powers to pass laws or mandates and you trust them to protect society and you accept what they say as true?
- Is it because you have a personal experience with someone who has died of COVID?
- Is it based upon a consensus of your friends, peers, neighbors? In other words, does it seem to you that the majority of people think this way so it must be true?

Understand, the issues around COVID aren't restricted to what we believe, it is also about what *methods* we use to decide what we believe.

The Bible describes *all* the governments and kingdoms of the world as being part of Satan's kingdom—and Satan is the father of lies.

- What do you think that means for human governments?
- Do you believe that our governments—any government including the USA—are honest with their people or do our governments lie to us?
- We can make a Biblical case, that since the governments of the world are Satan's and Satan is the father of lies, that human governments will not only use beastly methods of coercion, violence, force, but will also lie. Why are so many people so willing to place blind faith in their governments? Is where we place our faith a spiritual issue? Is this an end-time Bible issue?
- Why do people trust their governments? Why do they resist the idea that their governments are lying? Because they identify with their nation, their sense of self is tied up with it. "I'm proud to be an American" or whatever nationality is the patriotic attitude that impacts the self. We vote for our leaders in democratic societies and we want to believe that we are honest, so we choose to believe our government, which represents us, is honest. But our governments are not honest—they are manipulative and deceitful.
- We will not find truth by trusting the governments, what we will experience is our minds being damaged, our emotions being manipulated and our freedoms being undermined. But, if you trust blindly enough you may go into your prison believing you are being locked away for your own safety and thank them for it.

The Bible describes the Bereans (Acts 17:11) as being more noble in character because they wouldn't believe something just because one of the Apostles said it, they went home, examined Scripture for themselves and only believed when they were fully convinced in their own mind on the weight of evidence. If we shouldn't believe because one of Jesus' Apostles said it, if we still should check the evidence for ourselves if one of Jesus' Apostles said it, then how much more important for us to examine the evidence for ourselves when our government or the media tells us something?

This is a principle for all healthy belief formation. When I give a patient a copy of *Could It Be This Simple?* I tell them, "never believe anything just because it is in a book. I want you to read this and only believe that which you have thought through for yourself, considered, weighed, tested and concluded it is actually true. Don't believe just because I said it or it is in a book."

That is the only way for us to truly become the people that God has called us to become. There is a difference in believing 2+2=4 because the teacher said versus learning math and realizing why 2+2=4. The person who believes because the teacher said it has their mind weakened, they might know the right answer but they can't problem solve. The person who hears the teacher and then thinks it through for themselves being fully persuaded in their own mind matures. This is what God wants for us.

So, we have different beliefs—do we have different methods upon which we formulate our beliefs?

God's method for leading people into truth is by presenting the truth, in love and leaving them free. That is the method we advance at Come and Reason. That is why we are against mandates. If the truth is so compelling, then it should be straightforward to convince people, mandates should not be needed. And when you see people employing the methods of mandates, coercion, bribes, intimidation, threats, censoring, accusations, withholding of civil liberties, restricting the freedom to travel, shop, assemble, worship, be employed in order to force a behavior, an injection—**you can be certain that those using those using such methods don't have truth on their side**—they are not working for God's kingdom because **we can never win God's cause by using Satan's methods.**

So having said all of this—let's examine your beliefs again in light of evidence, facts and truth.

You believe over 700,000 people have died ***of*** COVID.

- The 700,000 number is the number used by the government. However, this is purposely misleading and false. In order to maximize the fear of COVID, which allows those in power to use emergency powers to take more freedoms, the government changed the reporting from those who died ***OF*** COVID, to those who died ***WITH*** COVID.
- This is their first lie and it magnifies the number of COVID deaths being reported and makes it appear many more are dying *from* COVID than actually are. This was financially incentivized by the government paying hospitals significantly more if they reported any deaths as COVID deaths, and the rules allowed them to report the death as a COVID death if they were suspected of being COVID even without a COVID test. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/vsrg/vsrg03-508.pdf
- Second deception is the way they determine who has COVID, the PCR Polymerase Chain Reaction test. It makes copies of genetic material and amplifies it multiple times until it has enough to turn the reagent positive. This is the test used to determine if someone is COVID positive.
- But the more times you cycle a sample the greater the amplification and the more false positives you get. The typical run historically was under 25 cycles, but for COVID the original government recommendations were 45 cycles which created many false positives and therefore artificially inflated the reported numbers of COVID cases.
- Another problem is the tests themselves, in order to be approved they had to have a 95% sensitivity and 95% specificity. However, its predictive value will depend on the number of actual cases in the sample population.
    - For instance if you have 10,000 people getting tested and 100 of them are actually infected with COVID and 9900 are not. "The test will detect 95 of the infected persons and five will be falsely negative. For those who are not infected, 9702 will be correctly

diagnosed and 198 will be false positives. The PPV is 95/95+198 or 32.4%. In this case, 2/3 of the positive results are false positives. For a prevalence of 0.1%, the PPV drops to 4.5%." https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7934325/

- According to the FDA:
  - For example, a test with 98% specificity would have a PPV of just over 80% in a population with 10% prevalence, meaning 20 out of 100 positive results would be false positives.
  - The same test would only have a PPV of approximately 30% in a population with 1% prevalence, meaning 70 out of 100 positive results would be false positives. This means that, in a population with 1% prevalence, only 30% of individuals with positive test results actually have the disease.
  - At 0.1% prevalence, the PPV would only be 4%, meaning that 96 out of 100 positive results would be false positives.
  - https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/letters-health-care-providers/potential-false-positive-results-antigen-tests-rapid-detection-sars-cov-2-letter-clinical-laboratory

- So the government rolls out this test which, in an environment with low prevalence, will turn out 96% false positive rate. Then the government pays for free testing and pressures healthy people without symptoms to get tested, which creates up to 96% false positives results. And that is if the test is 98% specific. Some were only 95% specific which would make the false positives even higher.
- Then the media picks up on the number of positive cases and reports it. But the news only reports the number of new cases, they don't report how many of those were asymptomatic, went home, did fine. This is designed to create a false narrative of a pandemic to increase fear and keep their emergency powers in force.
- The FDA did a class one recall on the PCR test and it is no longer approved for COVID testing.
- The third lie—the number of positive COVID **cases** represent the number of **people** with COVID. Setting aside the inaccuracy of the test, there is another accounting trick the government has done to make it seem the number of people infected is greater than it actually is. And that is counting every positive **test** as a new **case**—if the same person gets tested more than once and the test comes back positive more than once then **each test** is counted as a **new case** even though it is the same person. This magnifies the count and makes it appear worse than it really is.
- So we have an artificially inflated number of cases and it is these numbers that are still being touted to create a sense of a terrible pandemic and horrible numbers of deaths from COVID. And it is those artificially inflated case numbers that justifies the mask mandates, social distancing, business and church shutdowns and vaccine mandates.
- According to the CDCs own report only 6% of the 700,000 deaths were due solely to COVID, all the rest were people dying from other illnesses but who also had COVID. The CDC acknowledges 94% of the deaths could have been listed as from another cause, but because they had a positive COVID test, or were suspected of having COVID without a test, it was

decided to list the death as a COVID death.
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221475002100161X#

- Then there is another problem with the number of COVID deaths. That is the CDC's treatment guidelines and recommendations. According to the guidelines, if someone tests positive they are sent home and told don't come back unless they get into distress. Then when they come back they are put on a protocol, recommended by the CDC, that includes getting Remdesivir. This is an antiviral agent that failed its studies for treating Ebola because the Remdesivir arm of that study had significantly more deaths than any other arm. And Remdesivir causes renal and other organ failure. In fact, 25% of those who have been given Remdesivir for COVID have died.
- Contrast this with what Uttar Pradesh, a state in India with 241 million people, that announced this week that 33 of their provinces are COVID free—and they have a 98.7% recovery rate from those who had been infected—how? They treated their entire population with prophylactic Ivermectin, which our government obstructs.
https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/lucknow-news/33-districts-in-uttar-pradesh-are-now-covid-free-state-govt-101631267966925.html
- Why would the government do this? Could it be that Ivermectin treatment costs $12 whereas Remdesivir costs over $3000 per treatment? Could it be that more perceived sickness and more perceived deaths allows for more fear and more governmental control?
- Hundreds of studies have documented that early treatment protocols reduce hospitalizations and deaths up to 86%--yet our CDC, FDA, big pharma and the media continue to obstruct it.
- https://journals.lww.com/americantherapeutics/fulltext/2021/08000/ivermectin_for_prevention_and_treatment_of.7.aspx
- https://ivmmeta.com/

- The government lies about the number of cases, the number of deaths and obstructs effective early treatments, pays hospitals more if a death is counted as COVID death, gives them legal permission to count a COVID death as long as it is suspected even without a positive test, and then if someone comes in to the hospital for treatment they are instructed by the government and CDC to use a treatment that increases the likelihood of death while being obstructed from using protocols with hundreds of studies that show reduction in death.

So your first belief that we have 700,000 COVID deaths is based on false information and therefore is a false belief.

The belief that we are in a pandemic—no, we are in an endemic. An endemic is when a pathogen exists in the environment and is never going away. So any idea that we need to keep up restrictions until this is under control is fraudulent.

You believe that if you want to protect yourself and others you get the vaccine—and you know what? I agree with you—we should get vaccinated with a safe, effective, and proven vaccines if and when we are in danger of being infected with pathogens that are virulent to us (unless there is a specific medical reason not to).

Someone not a risk of an illness doesn't need to take a vaccine. There are diseases that exist in other parts of the world that we don't need to get vaccinated against unless we travel to that part of the world. There are diseases that only certain groups in society are at risk for and only they will benefit from the vaccine, so we wouldn't give vaccines to people not at risk for the disease. And children are not at risk from COVID. When they get exposed their immune systems fight it and kill it very quickly and then they have long term immunity from all variants and they do NOT spread it to others. So, anyone making a case to vaccinate children against COVID are either terribly misinformed or are lying to you and have another agenda.

- 81 million people under age 18 in US (July 2020)[1]
- Approximately 499 people under the age of 18 have died with COVID January 2020-October 2021[2] 22 deaths/month (most had serious medical problems like leukemia, cystic fibrosis etc.)
- Influenza: 372 died in 2018-2019[3] 31 deaths/month
- Suicide in 2019: 2,756 [4] 230 deaths/month

1. https://www.statista.com/statistics/241488/population-of-the-us-by-sex-and-age/
2. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1191568/reported-deaths-from-covid-by-age-us/
3. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/2018-2019.html
4. Kids Data Link

Let's talk about vaccines for adults. We have all had the polio vaccine—and everyone you grew up with did as well—how many cases of break-through polio have you seen?

If you have travelled to third world countries, you received a battery of vaccines for pathogens endemic in those areas. After you received the vaccines, did you then avoid those areas where the pathogens existed or did you go into those areas? In other words, did you need to be afraid of being exposed to the pathogens you were vaccinated against?

Actual vaccines prevent infection and transmission of an illness and once a person is vaccinated they don't need to fear or avoid exposure to the pathogen. According to the BioNTech application for the booster dose of Comirnaty (page 20) "An additional analysis appears to indicate that incidence of COVID-19 generally increased in each group of study participants with increasing time post-Dose 2 at the start of the analysis period."

Those who have been vaccinated against COVID may actually be at increased risk of infection with COVID variants with every injection they get. This type of inoculation is very likely compromising the immune system and they become less capable of fighting it. Which means they need to get new boosters every year for the new variants the previous injection will not protect them from. Does this sound like wonderful money making machine for big Pharma? Worse, those who have had one of these vaccines become carriers that transmit the variants to others.

These COVID injections are not vaccines, not in the traditional understanding of vaccines—they do not prevent infection, transmission or reinfection!

A CDC report of a TX prison outbreak:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- 185 of the 233 or 79% of the inmates were fully vaccinated
- 74% or 172 inmates contracted the virus
- 42 were unvaccinated
- 129 out of the 185 fully vaccinated individuals got infected.

July 2021 COVID outbreak in Provincetown Massachusetts:

- 74% of the infected were fully vaccinated
- CDC director Walensky admits in an interview that the vaccines do not prevent infection or transmission and were not designed to do so https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-58065854

England Public Health Study from February to September 2021 found that 63% of deaths from COVID were among the fully vaccinated.

Table 5. Attendance to emergency care and deaths of sequenced and genotyped Delta cases in England by vaccination status (1 February 2021 to 12 September 2021)

Variant	Age group (years)**	Total	Cases with specimen date in past 28 days	Unlinked	<21 days post dose 1	≥21 days post dose 1	≥14 days post dose 2	Un-vaccinated
Delta cases	<50	497,105	119,611	49,527	30,359	83,009	85,407	248,803
	≥50	95,587	35,596	7,602	314	7,129	71,991	8,551
	All cases	593,572	155,252	58,003	30,674	90,138	157,400	257,357
Deaths within 28 days of positive specimen date	<50	204	N/A	7	6	11	48	132
	≥50	2,336	N/A	32	11	138	1,565	590
	All cases	2,542	N/A	41	17	149	1,613	722

2,542 DEATHS
1,613 FULLY VACCINATED
63.5% OF TOTAL DEATHS

Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation in England

Technical briefing 23

17 September 2021

So the belief that we can keep ourselves safe and others safe by these injections is a false belief, not born out by the science or evidence. In fact, the documentation from the manufacturers never claimed they would prevent infection or transmission.

Your second belief that we can get this under control through vaccination is also false. The science/evidence demonstrates that because the injections don't prevent reinfection and transmission then there is no possibility of eliminating this virus through the current campaign of so-called vaccination. And in fact, the vaccinated are the vehicles for the growth and spread of the new variants.

Viruses mutate all the time, the naturally recovered have a wide range of robust antibodies that are effective at killing the variants so they don't generally reproduce or spread from the naturally recovered. The vaccinated however, have limited immunity with antibodies targeting the spike protein, when variants emerge with sufficient change in the spike protein it can evade the antibodies of the vaccinated and reproduce and then be transmitted to others. So one could say we are now in a pandemic of the vaccinated.

So why are hospitals requiring their employees to get vaccinated? Because of financial pressure from the government, NOT because doing so will stop the spread of COVID or protect patients.

If hospitals really wanted to protect their patients from being exposed they would identify the COVID recovered employees, who have broad, robust and lifelong immunity and who do not spread it to others and they would give them all the privileges and require the vaccinated to wear masks and limit contact with others.

You suggest that being vaccinated has less risk than getting the active infection—according to the government's own data in the CMS website 59 million Americans have Medicare, that is 18% of the population. Their medical information is tracked in the government's database and according to the government's own data, just within that 18% of the population, 48,465 people have died within 14 days of receiving the COVID vaccine (19,400 were under age 80 and 28,065 over the age of 80). Do you know how many of these deaths the government counted as a vaccine death? None—because according to the government you are not considered vaccinated until 14 days after the vaccine. This is another accounting trick the government uses to make it appear the vaccines are safer than they really are.

- Researchers, examining the studies that got the vaccine EUA discovered that the study populations did not represent the at risk from the virus population. The elderly are at greatest risk of dying from COVID, whereas children and young people are at low risk of dying from the illness. The studies that got the vaccines their approval were done on populations that were mostly younger only 4.4% were 75 y/o or older. This resulted in a marked decrease in the potential risks and deaths from the vaccines in the studies. These researchers concluded and I quote:
    - "A novel best-case scenario cost-benefit analysis showed very conservatively that **there are five times the number of deaths attributable to each inoculation vs those**

attributable to COVID-19 in the most vulnerable 65+ demographic"
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221475002100161X#

And this is just a small sample of the evidence that exposes the multitude of lies being told to us by the government and media. Do you see why there is such strong censorship—these lies could not stand if the truth were fully revealed. If people knew that COVID:

- is no more lethal than a moderate influenza strain
- has extremely low risk for children
- is not transmitted by the unvaccinated COVID recovered
- that children are not a threat to their grandparents
- that masks are completely ineffective and useless to stop the spread
- that the injections don't prevent infections, transmission or reinfection
- that the injections weaken the immune system and increase variants

If people knew all of this what would happen to our fear? It would go down and if we were not afraid there would be no need for government control of our lives, shut downs, masks, mail in ballots, etc. etc.

So, emailer, we have different beliefs about what is happening—but are we both lovers of truth? Do we both want to follow the truth where it leads? Are we both looking to Scripture to embrace and apply God's methods to our own minds in how we think, how we determine what to believe, and how we treat others? Are we both following the principles of truth, love and freedom? Are we placing our trust in God, in truth, or are we trusting human governments to think for us?

Is this a Biblical issue to learn to discern, to think for oneself?

Let me say this as clearly as I can—when the government uses its power to compel conscience, to coerce people to go against their loyalty to their Creator in governance of their own bodies—then the government has crossed the line and is fulfilling Biblical prophecy and acting as an agent for Satan. And if you support the government in doing so you are aligning yourself with the enemy of God, whether as an individual or as a leader of a hospital, church or corporation.

Read memory text: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV4).

What does this text mean?

What does it look like to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls and strength? Would one's strength refer to one's physical body? Are we to honor God with our bodies?

In the next verse, Moses says, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts" (Dt 6:6 NIV84)

Love the Lord with all our hearts and souls and strength and the commandments given are to be upon our hearts. What does it mean to be upon our hearts?

What is the new covenant? God will write His law upon our hearts and minds. What does that mean?

A few chapters later Moses says this in chapter 11 verse 1,8-9, 13-14:

> Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always… Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey… So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.

What does this mean?

What law lens are you hearing this through?

How did the Jews end up applying this? Through a behavioral legal lens of rules and rule enforcement—and where did that lead? To persistent rebellion and the eventual rejection of Jesus.

What is the design law view of this passage?

Why will observing God's law give strength? Why will observing God's law result in longer life and better health? And what is the meaning of having rain in due season—autumn and spring rains, to gather grain, new wine and oil?

What happens to our health when we live in harmony with the laws of health, get good nutrition, hydration, clean air, sunshine, exercise regularly, get appropriate sleep and Sabbath rest for the mind? We get stronger, healthier, live longer.

What happens to our mental, emotional and spiritual health if we forgive those who wrong us, rather than hold grudges, if we are peacemakers, rather than constantly in conflict, if we focus upon love rather than fear? We have healthier relationships, and less mental and emotional stress, which results in less inflammatory cascades in our body, lower rates of physical health problems and thus we live longer and have better health.

What is the meaning of the rain—is it merely physical water falling from the sky, or is there an object lesson in this? Does the rain symbolize something? And what about the grain, new wine and oil?

- The rain symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and before the second coming of Christ—the first and latter rains
- The grain represents Jesus the seed of the woman, the wave sheaf, the bread of heaven, the Word made flesh, the truth about God that Jesus is
- The new wine represents the blood which represents the sinless life or perfect human character that Jesus developed and offers us as a free gift
- The oil represents the Holy Spirit applying in the life the truth and life of Jesus that heals and restores us to righteousness.

Consider this historic quote from *Review and Herald* October 8, 1901:

> **The prosperity of God's people is dependent on their obedience**. [Why? What law lens? Design law, it is the only way for health to exist] The Lord declares, "It shall come to pass if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in the fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you.... RH October 8, 1901, par. 1 [Can you get love by command, by proclamation, by threat, by legislation, by rule-enforcement? So, what kind of law is God advancing when He links commandment keeping with love for God?]
>
> "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day; and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but ... go after other gods, which ye have not known…" RH October 8, 1901, par. 2 [What does this mean and blessing and cursing? What law lens are you understanding this through? Is it God using divine power to dispense blessings as rewards, like a teacher giving a gold star and cursings as punishments like a teacher paddling an unruly student? Or is it describing reality—there are blessings from living in harmony with God's design laws and there are cursings from breaking them?
>
> These words should be as distinctly stamped upon every soul as though written with a pen of iron. **Obedience brings its reward, disobedience its retribution**. RH October 8, 1901, par. 4 [Why?]
>
> God has given His people **positive instruction**, and has laid upon them **positive restrictions**, that **they may obtain a perfect experience** in His service, and be **qualified to stand** before the heavenly universe and before the fallen world as overcomers. **They are to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimon**y. Those who fall short of making the preparation essential will be numbered with the unthankful and the unholy. RH October 8, 1901, par. 5 [What does this mean? Positive instructions and positive restrictions—what is

that? For what purpose? That we may obtain a perfect experience. What does perfect experience mean?

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect**" (Mt 5:43–48 NIV84).

What is the perfection? It is the perfection of love for God and others. It is living out God's design law in heart, mind and character. It is not about task performance, but about attitude of the heart.

What does the blood of the Lamb have to do with our overcoming? The blood is a metaphor for the sinless life of Christ, His perfect human character of love lived out. When we trust Jesus we open the heart and the Spirit comes in and we receive the life of Christ "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." We get new desires, motives, peace, joy and are empowered to succeed when we choose to love others. But we still must choose the right. And Satan will tempt us with strong feelings to choose the wrong. But God wants to free us from fear and selfishness. He wants us to grow strong in love and trust. So, if God wants us to grow strong in love and trust what will He do? Listen to the next words of the quote]

The Lord brings His people by ways they know not, that He may test and prove them. [Test and prove? What law lens do you hear this through? If imposed law, does it sound like a set up? Design law, what do you hear? What about the Tree of Knowledge in Eden—what was its purpose? To give Adam and Eve the place and means to choose what they would know—would they know love, truth, honesty, holiness, loyalty, fidelity, trust, faithfulness by choosing to live out the truth. Or would they know lies, fear, selfishness, pain suffering and death by choosing to believe and live out the lies? We are brought into circumstances where we must choose what we really believe and what we really value in the choices we make in how we live and how we treat others. This is how God's law is ultimately sealed into our hearts. God cannot form our characters for us, but He inspires us with Christ's desires, methods, motives, and then leaves us free to choose to live them in real circumstances and this solidifies Christ's character into our own.] This world is our place of proving. **Here we decide our eternal destiny**. [Who decides our eternal destiny? How do we decide this? Is it primarily in a evangelistic meeting with a profession of faith, or in a public ceremony? To be sure these are important moments in the life when people choose to give their hearts to the Lord, but the real healing and sealing comes after surrendering to Jesus, when we choose day by day to live as Jesus would have us live, to face the trials, to experience the temptation and to seek God and act in harmony with His will relying on His strength as we reject the fear, stand faithful in the face of rejection, or loss of earthly reputation or wealth. Satan seeks to get us to betray God through loss of anything we might value more than we value God.] God humbles His people that His will may

be wrought out through them. Thus He dealt with the children of Israel as He led them through the wilderness. **He told them what their fate would have been had He not laid a restraining hand upon that which would have hurt them**. He speaks to them. Hear what He says: it is a revelation of the ministration of angels: "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.... [Do you see the metaphor of this to our lives, the wilderness of this sinful world, the fiery assaults of Satan and his agents, of sickness, disease, and sin? Of the drought in the world today of godliness, of truth, of love? And our only source of the water of life is not in the nations or governments of the world, but from Jesus, the rock, and our food, what feeds our souls cannot be found on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter or any earthly source. We must feed our souls the bread of heaven, Jesus.] Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, **if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.** [Why will they perish? Because God will get mad and use His power to inflict punishment because they broke His rules? No! Because of design law—if they reject Him, the Creator, their protector He sets them free, in harmony with His design law of love and liberty, to reap what they have chosen—to be under the power of the god they prefer and there is no life outside of unity with God.] As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord." RH October 8, 1901, par. 6

It is a solemn thought that by our present course of action we are deciding our eternal destiny. [Do you understand this? By our present course in how we live, what law we apply in how we treat others. Are we applying God's eternal design law of truth, love and freedom, or are we being seduced by fear and selfishness to seek to save lives by applying Satan's laws of imposed rules, mandates, coercive enforcement and thereby writing Satan's law into the character?] Let those who **know the truth practice the truth**, remembering that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and is of more value than all the treasure which the world contains. [The mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong Heb 5:14—we must practice truth for it to become part of our character. To know the truth cognitively is not how we become righteous. Just like the Tree of Knowledge was not the tree of facts or data, it was the tree where they would choose what they would know by action and function. So too, in the world right now in how we live, what law we practice in how we treat others, we are deciding what character we are forming.] The world is the Lord's vineyard, and to each one of us He says, "Go work today in my vineyard. As I have cared for you, so you are to care for the honor of my name." RH October 8, 1901, par. 7

In His dealing with ancient Israel God has given us an illustration of the result of disobedience. Even as He punished the children of Israel, so He will punish all who cause His glory to be reproached…. [How did He punish ancient Israel? Was it an infliction of something they would not otherwise reap, or was it by letting them go to reap what they

chose?] **They would not submit to God's way, so He permitted them to have their own way, to carry out the purposes of their unsanctified hearts**. RH October 8, 1901, par. 8 [This is design law, those who sow to the carnal nature, from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8]

Christ warned the Jews of their danger, and entreated them to return to Him; but they were too proud to accept His overtures of mercy. **They persisted in their rebellious course, and as a result the protection of God's Spirit was withdrawn from them.** RH October 8, 1901, par. 9 [God is warning us today and if we don't listen, He will let us go to our destruction as well. And this is what we are seeing on a national scale. The governments of the world have rejected God and have rejected His methods of truth. They have embraced godless paganism and look what is happening. We are all reaping what they have sown.]

When Christ predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, **He predicted also the destruction of the world.** He saw that till the end of this earth's history **men would refuse God's mercy**. God has given men and women talents that they may work in His service; but many in their selfishness misuse these talents. **By a love of money and a desire for the supremacy they rob God and hurt their brethren**… RH October 8, 1901, par. 10 [Do you see one of the primary motivators that is happening in the world right now regarding COVID and the mandates is greed, the love of money and power, the desire for supremacy, the desire to rule over and control others?]

God's people are to maintain the elevated character of His work. They are to carry forward this work in His lines. Christ is their pattern, and He says, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Let us remember that we are laborers together with God. We are not wise enough to work by ourselves. **God has made us His stewards, to prove us and to try us, even as He proved and tried ancient Israel. He will not have His army composed of undisciplined, unsanctified, erratic soldiers, who would misrepresent His order and purity**. RH October 8, 1901, par. 13 [What is described here? It is through our choices in how we deal with adversity, how we deal with trials, how we deal with conflict that we are being healed and sealed. Do we embrace the justice of the world, do we seek to make others pay, to use the power of the state, to enforce mandates, or do we humbly go to our Creator and seek His wisdom, follow His directives, live out the truth in love while leaving others free?]

Those who think that they can please God by obeying some other law than His, and by performing works other than those which the gospel has enjoined, are mocking God. [Like forcing people to get medical treatments that they don't want under the guise of claiming it is necessary in order to save lives. All of you who keep saying "if you love others you will get the jab, don't actually know what God's love it. You have been deceived by this world and are being foolish. If you want to advance God's love then you say, "If you love other present the truth in love and leave each person free to decide in their lives what is the action God would have them take." God's love ALWAYS leaves free—it never manipulates or coerces. And it doesn't presume to know what is best for another to do in any given situation.] They are insulting the Holy One of Israel**. Warning after warning is given in the last message of**

> **mercy to the world.** Appeal after appeal is made. The worst of sinners are to hear the call. **All are to be given a final test.** [What is the final test? As you have done it unto one of the least of these you have done it unto me. We are all being tested right now, recognize the test. Will you live out God's law of love or will your join with the state the beast of Revelation to compel and coerce others. Will you for the sake of government funds mandate your employees get an injection they don't want? Your character is being determined by what law you apply to your life right now!] Loath to give up, sorrowful, yet hoping, Christ knocks at the door of the heart. RH October 8, 1901, par. 14
>
> **When the Saviour saw in the Jewish people a nation divorced from God, He saw also a professed Christian Church united to the world and the papacy**. [How? By embracing the imposed law of the world, practicing the imperial methods of compelling, mandates, coercion of the world, violating the consciences of people repudiating the principles of Protestantism—religious liberty and Republicanism—civil liberty] And as He stood upon Olivet, weeping over Jerusalem till the sun sank behind the western hills, so **He is weeping over and pleading with sinners in these last moments of time**. Soon He will say to the angels who are holding the four winds, "Let the plagues loose; let darkness, destruction, and death come upon the transgressors of my law." Will He be obliged to say to those who have had great light and knowledge, as He said to the Jews, "If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes"? RH October 8, 1901, par. 15

So what does it mean to love the Lord with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength? To live out His design laws in all we do, trusting Him with the outcomes.

MONDAY

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13:

> And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? (Dt 10:12–13 NIV84).

What is the relationship between fear of God and love for God?

John wrote "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." (1 Jn 4:18 NIV84).

Is this a contradiction?

Read second paragraph, "In one verse…" Well the lesson rightly describes fear as awe, admiration, respect for our infinite God. The fear we are to have in love is not terror, dread, the feeling of being

afraid. Fear as we normally experience it in our modern definition is a fear that is concerned for self, it drives us to we afraid of injury, rejection etc. Thus the modern definition of fear is part of the infection of sin and drives toward more selfishness and survival of the fittest instincts.

The perfect love of God drives this type of fear with its selfishness from the heart because when we experience God's love we lose site of self. When we love God and others more than self we are not fearful for self, we are not focused on self.

I have given this example—imaging crossing the street and as you step into the crosswalk you look up to see a truck running a red light and it is about to hit you—what emotion do you experience? Fear—but now consider seeing your 3 year old child toddle into the street and a truck is about to hit them, you have just enough time if you act right now to reach them and shove them out of the way, but if you do you will get hit by the truck, what do you do? You shove them out of the way. And as you see your child land safely on the grass where you shoved them, what emotion are you experiencing? Joy—but wait, you are getting hit by a truck. In the first scenario there is only fear—in the second your love has cast out your fear.

Satan works to focus us on the threats, the dangers, the pain, the costs, the hurts, the risks, to incite fear to paralyze us, to destroy our love for God and others.

God works to focus us on the truth of who He is, His character and methods of love. To get us to trust Him enough that we will open the heart and then He pours His love into our hearts. This love casts out our fear. In love, with reducing fear, God inspires us to act, to act in harmony with His methods, to make changes, to say no to old habits, to say no to old partners in sin, to stand up for truth in love and then to experience His increasing presence of love for Him and others as we gain victories and our fears are overcome.

We gain ever increasing awe, admiration, respect, and love for God as our fear for ourselves goes down.

What about the idea that we have all broken God's law and therefore deserve condemnation?

What law lens do you understand this through?

How did each of us *become* a sinner? Psalms 51:5, we were born in sin, we didn't choose to be sinners. And what is the result of being born with a carnal nature, being born in sin? Isn't that we will all commit sin? Are the sins the actual problem, or are the sins the symptoms of the condition with which we were born?

Thus, we are not responsible for being sinners—we are responsible for whether we accept or reject the free Remedy of Jesus that gives us a new heart of love that casts out the fear and empowers us to live lives of love and loyalty to God or not. That is it.

We don't deserve condemnation in a legal sense, we have a terminal condition and if we refuse the Remedy we deserve to die from that condition, just like a person who purposely refuses to pull the rip cord on their parachute deserves to hit the ground at what is called "terminal velocity."

God has provided in Jesus the means for every person to be healed from sin. None need to die eternally, only those who refuse Jesus and what He provides will be lost. And it will be because they prefer to die than to live in God's universe.

Read the third paragraph, "Despite the fact that we were…" Wait, we should fear Him because of His wrath, but we are not to live in fear of Him if we love Him—is this a contradiction?

What law lens do we understand this through?

What does it mean to be children of wrath?

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.
> verse 24: **Therefore God also gave them up…**
> verse 26: For this reason God gave them up
> verse 28? And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind… (Ro 1:18–32 NKJV).

What is Paul describing?

What is God's wrath? Why does it come?

From *Hard Sayings of the Bible:*

> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32).

> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves.
>
> In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. (Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996, P 543)

So what does it mean to be "children of wrath"?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Even amid rules…" How do you connect obedience with love?

Is the obedience God wants about performance or about heart attitude?

Consider two children, ages 4 and 14. You are weeding in your tomato garden and your 4 y/o comes up behind you and with a big smile says, "I want to help" and pulls up a tomato plant. Is this an obedient or disobedient child? Do you get angry and punish the child?

What about the 14 y/o who pulls only weeds but curses you the entire time under their breath because they aren't out playing with their friends?

Which of the two are considered obedient in the Biblical sense? Which is considered obedient in the worldly sense?

Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.

Humans and Satan are legalists, rules, imposed laws, and behavioral performance and monitoring.

God is all about the motive of the heart, which will translate into choices, but may or may not translate into effective performance—the choices will become more consistently in harmony with God, but the actual skill in carrying it out will depend on practice. One might still misspell words, even though one studies hard and tries not to.

This is the difference between a person with Asperger's and a narcissist.

Both people can appear on the outside, in the way they interact with others to be rude, abrupt, without compassion, blunt, seem to not care for the feelings of others. But the Asperger's person actually does

care, has good motives, intentions to help, but has impaired social neural nets where they don't process the interpersonal cues and thus offend frequently. Whereas the narcissist is actually selfish and doesn't care about anyone but themselves.

Read second paragraph, "Again and again in Deuteronomy…" And we absolutely believe God is love and revealed His love to the people by His actions—but what do you say to those who object and say, "Yeah, God loved them so much that He would have killed them all if Moses didn't beg Him not do"?

If people teach the story of God threatening to kill the people and Moses pleading for Him not to, through imposed law, what impact does it have on how we see God? What is the design law way to see this?

Read fourth paragraph, "As Ellen G. White said it:…" Do you see design law expressed in this quote?

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph, "Israel…" We agree, if we love God we obey Him—no question about it.

But does our obedience change when we obey God through an understanding friend perspective versus an obedient servant perspective? John 15:15

Is there a difference between a serving friend and friendly service?

Who are the two people in the Old Testament described as God's friends? Abraham and Moses—were they obedient to God?

When God told Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom, why didn't Abraham say, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it. Who am I to question. I will obey." Or when God told Moses He was going to wipe out the people why didn't Moses respond with simple acceptance of what the Master said. Why did they both argue?

Were they being disobedient to argue as they did? Why not?

What does this tell us about Biblical obedience? What does God want from us?

Read the third paragraph, "This is why…" Do you agree that obedience to God means obeying the Ten Commandments?

Hmmm….are there times when we obey God by breaking the Ten Commandments?

So when king Saul chose not to kill king Agag was he being obedient to God or disobedient?

And what about Jephthah, when he sacrificed his daughter to the Lord and then we find him as one of the faithful in Hebrews, was he being obedient or disobedient?

How do we understand these stories?

Is it primarily about the deed, the behavior or the attitude of the heart?

THURSDAY

The lesson again focuses our attention on the verse to love the Lord with all our heart and then states, "What could be more 'present truth' than this command? In the very last days, when the final events unfold and everyone will be called to choose one side or the other in a very dramatic way, the commands of God (Rev 14:12) will play a crucial role."

Thoughts?

How will everyone choose?

Won't it be by the methods they apply to their heart when the decide how they treat others? Will they embrace and apply the methods of the beast, coerce and force others, or will they apply the methods of God, give of self to protect and bless others?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

My notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy
The Stranger in Your Gates

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Dt 10:19 NKJV).

The lesson focuses our attention on loving others and in the second paragraph quotes Jesus, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself"…(Mark 12:31).

What does this mean?

Is loving your neighbor the first and greatest commandment or the second? What is the first and greatest? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength."

Why do we love God before we love our neighbor? Because it is in a loving trust relationship with God that we have selfishness purged, are given wisdom to comprehend reality, are empowered with strength, motivated with love, given new hearts with spirits of mercy, compassion, patience, kindness—in other words, if we don't love God first we won't be able to love anyone.

And what does it mean to love your neighbor *as yourself*?

What is the first rule in caregiving? The first rule in running a psychiatric ward is staff safety, not patient safety why? Because if the staff are not safe then the patients are not safe and no care can be given.

In my book, *The Aging Brain* I discuss caring for a loved one with dementia and the first rule is the health of the in-home caregiver. If the spouse or whomever is providing the in-home care doesn't maintain their health first, then they become disabled and can no longer provide care to their loved one.

This brings back the principle of remember the first commandment—we have our first duty to God, to maintain our health, wellness in the highest state—not for selfishness sake, but so that we can be of greatest service in God's cause, which means ministering to others as God would have us.

So, each person must establish the routines necessary to maintain their own health and wellness—regular hours of sleep, healthy diet, physical exercise, not placing demands on one's body that injures and disables (such as lifting another person if they are too large), time away from work, from the responsibilities to rest the mind and be quiet with God and rejuvenate etc. So, when one is in the role

of caregiving and these basic requirements for one's own health are consistently compromised then it is time to get outside help.

Jesus consistently took time away from needy people to rest, sleep, unwind, spend time with His Father. Jesus, as a human, had to live in harmony with the laws of health and His physiology required rest and recovery, His mind required time with His Father etc.

Any disagreement with this principle?

So, if Satan cannot get a righteous person to choose to do evil, what might Satan tempt the righteous person to do that would effectively neutralize the righteous person's influence? Get them to take on too many good tasks, responsibilities, roles, duties to the point of overwhelming their limited human abilities and they burn out.

- Does this principle, of maintaining the health of the person, not for selfishness sake, but for the sake of being a benefit to others, require we sometime say no?
- Would it require we set boundaries?
- Would it require we limit how much time, energy, and resources we spend on *worthy* projects?

- Does this principle apply only to individuals, or does it apply to our local churches as well?
- Does your local church have unlimited membership, with unlimited human energy, and unlimited finances, or does the local church have to decide upon which projects it will invest?
- Will the local church, at times, have to say no to very worthy needs in the community and the world because to invest in all of them would bankrupt the church?
- Does saying no mean the church doesn't care about those people or projects for which they have decided to draw a boundary and limit investment?

- Does this principle apply only to individuals and churches, or does it apply to other organizations?
- What about nations, does it apply to nations?
- Do nations have responsibility to set boundaries, say at their borders, to limit the numbers of people entering the nation—not for the purpose of selfishness, but for the purpose of maintaining national integrity, health, financial solvency to be a blessing to as many people as possible?
- Do churches have the responsibility to not only set boundaries on expenditures, but also on who becomes a voting member of the church? Should a church allow into membership people who don't believe in Jesus, people who believe in godlessness, who want to become members to get into positions to teach Eastern philosophies instead of Biblical truths?
- Is it unloving for a church to set such boundaries?
- What about a nation—should a nation allow in immigrants who don't share their values of religious liberty, civil liberty, people who want to change society toward communism where the state controls the press, the state controls the education of your children, the state controls your healthcare, your liberty to travel, associate with family, your religious practices?
- Is it unloving for a nation to set such boundaries?

If you wanted to ruin a church might you trick them into over extending and bankrupting itself, or perhaps allowing unconverted people into membership who will fundamentally change the principles of practice in the church?

What about a nation, could a nation be ruined by unregulated immigration?

Is it unloving to set such boundaries? And what does it say about people who advocate for such actions claiming it is an expression of love, of compassion to do so?

So, could you be loving the strangers by setting limits on the amount of resources you expend on them in order to maintain a steady flow of support to help many more people over time? And could you love the strangers by allowing in a steady, but limited number of them, that will not overwhelm the organization or nation in order to sustain the organization's ability to support them, or would it be more loving to bring in so many that the economy collapses and many more than just the immigrants end up in poverty?

Satan is at work in the world. He is moving his agents to undermine love, to incite increasing fear, conflict, poverty, exploitation, disease. Satan hates liberty because in freedom love grows.

SUNDAY

The lessons asks us to read Deuteronomy 10:1-15:

> At that time the LORD said to me, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to me on the mountain. Also make a wooden chest. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Then you are to put them in the chest."
>
> So I made the ark out of acacia wood and chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hands. The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now. (Dt 10:1-5 NIV84)

Why was there a second set of 10 Commandments? Why did Moses break the first set?

Where did the second set get placed? In the Ark of the Covenant. Why? What is the lesson?

What does the ark represent?

The ark in the Most Holy Place represents the universe reconciled to God again—the Shekinah represents the Father, the angels the angelic heavenly host, the lid of solid gold represents Jesus the

connecting link between God, the heavenly universe and what is below the lid/covered by the lid? The box made of porous wood covered in gold represents the saved sinners who are covered/infused with the righteousness of Christ. There were three elements in the box that were placed a certain order: the first was the manna, which represents the Word of God, the truth, of which we are to partake. It is the bread of heaven, Jesus, which destroys lies and wins us to trust. And having been won to trust, we open the heart and have the living law of God written upon their hearts (represented by the 10 Commandments) which was next placed in the ark; and once the living design law of God has been written upon our hearts and minds, we who were dead in trespass and sin come to life and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, represented by Aaron's rod that budded—which was the third item placed in the ark.

Now, there were two sets of 10 Commandments given, one that was broken by Moses and an unbroken set, which went in the ark? The unbroken set—what is the lesson, and this is huge, it is another Biblica evidence that exposes the lie of the penal legal view of salvation.

In the penal legal view of salvation, it is declared that the law was broken, and that the broken law requires a penalty be paid, and that atonement is having the blood sprinkled above the ***broken law*** to pay the legal payment for sinners so God can legally save. But, there were two versions of law, a broken one and an unbroken one. If God wanted the lesson to be that the broken law requires a blood payment, then He would have had Moses put the broken pieces of the law in the ark. But He didn't. He had Moses put the ***unbroken*** law in the ark, because the ark symbolizes the hearts of saved sinners who have had God's unbroken design law of love written in their hearts again. In other words, the sanctuary theater teaches healing and restoration and refutes the pagan systems of blood payments and legal adjustments.

Read Deuteronomy 10:14-16:

> To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer (Deuteronomy 10:14-16 NIV84).

What is it that we are to understand about the heavens and earth belonging to God and everything in them? Is the most important lesson about power? Why does the entire creation belong to God? Because He made everything—AND—He sustains everything! Why is this important? What happens to any part of creation that becomes completely severed from God? It ceases to exist. What happens to any part of creation that does not become completely severed from God, but is disrupted in its operation, no longer functioning as God designed? In other words, it is no longer operating in perfect harmony with God's design laws that He built reality to exist upon? Then that part of creation will groan under the weight of sin, it will have defects, it will suffer and be compromised in its health, wellness and function in some way. And it will ultimately die if not restored back to harmony with God's design laws for life.

All things are God's for what purpose?

- So God can be built up by them?
- Does God get taxes from His creatures to fund infrastructure projects?
- Does God require praise to make God feel good?
- Did God create angels get good housekeeping services?
- What is the purpose of all creation? **To be recipients of God's love**, God's grace, God's energy flowing out from God to give life, health, energy, happiness, vitality and ever-expanding growth to all of God's creation. God experiences joy from the health, wellness, joy, and happiness of His creatures, just as parents experience joy from the health, happiness, wellness, joy and development of their children.

So the purpose of all creation is to receive God's love and grow in God's love.

So, what is the most important thing to know about all things belonging to God? It is God's character of love, His design laws, and how all things are built to operate upon design law of love.

What is the lesson about circumcision of the heart? Why does the heart need to be circumcised?

This is a powerful and poignant object lesson.

The physical circumcision is of the bodily organ that is designed by God to be an expression of intimate love, of life-giving love, the organ used when, as God designed, the two separate individuals come together in marital love and become one.

> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Genesis 2:24 NIV84).

Circumcision physically cuts away a barrier in this union of two becoming one and is a metaphor of our hearts.

Jesus prayed that we would be one with God and each other just as He and the Father are one. This is at-one-ment. It requires we cut our heart free from all attachments to the things of this world, we cut away our love and affection to anything that we use to comfort ourselves in place of God and what God has provided. Fear and selfishness must be cut out of the heart in order for us to be at-one with God and others. This means we must have the worldly things we value, cling to, attach ourselves to cut away from our hearts so that we can have our hearts truly united with God in love and trust. As long as we feel safe and secure because of our wealth, or position, or abilities, or guns, or church membership, or rituals, or Sabbath-keeping, or we comfort ourselves with entertainment, drugs, alcohol, food, or anything else instead of God, we will not have complete union with God. So God allows events to unfold to challenge us in where we place our trust, what we look to in order to find peace and security for our hearts and minds.

Physical circumcision is painful—so too is cutting away the ties to things we have become attached to. The older a person is when physically circumcised the more painful, likewise the older a person is with deeper attachments to sin and worldliness the more painful to cut away those attachments. And

sometimes, like the rich young ruler, people walk away sad rather than cutting the ties to what makes them feel secure.

We cannot tell just by looking at people who are circumcised or who are not—the only way is to become intimate with them. Likewise, we cannot tell whose hearts have been cut away from the things of the world just by looking, we have to get to know people and see them live out their principles in real life.

So, circumcision is a powerful and poignant metaphor of the cutting away of fear and selfishness and various worldly attachments used to make us feel safe and secure, and the establishing of our hearts in purity and at-one-ness with God.

What does it mean to be stiff-necked? The lesson rightly suggests stubborn. But I think the idea of stiff-necked symbolizes more—when the neck is stiff what can a person not do? They cannot turn their head and take in information from different points of view. Consider driving and never turning your head. Thus the stiff-necked metaphor goes beyond stubborn, it connotes a certain level of blindness, resistance to even considering or evaluating points of view that are different or new. Stiff-necked people become stuck in a single focus and are difficult to convert to the truth.

MONDAY

Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19:

> For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt (Dt 10:17–19 NIV84).

When the Bible uses the language that God is the God of gods, does that mean there are actually other gods? No, there are no other real gods, but there are many false gods, so Moses is communicating to people who have a history of coming from a polytheistic society in which it was commonly believed there were many gods. Remember Abram and Jacob had household gods until Jacob finally buried them all. And Egypt was a pagan polytheistic society and the Hebrews had been deeply affected by those teachings. So God is simply affirming to them, there is no God other than Him, the Creator of all reality.

What does this mean, “the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes”?

What is a bribe?

According to the dictionary a bribe is “anything given or serving to persuade or induce.”

So, the Bible says that God accepts no bribes, do you believe this? I certainly do.

But do you realize that almost all of Christianity does not believe this? Do you realize many in our own church do not believe this? Do you realize that most of Christianity teaches just the opposite of this—they teach that Jesus died to pay a blood payment to God so that God will be persuaded, propitiated, assuaged, appeased, have His wrath turned away so He will declare us to be righteous even though we are not and therefore not kill us.

Do you realize that because of the imposed law lie, the idea that God's law functions like human law, that sin is defined as a legal problem requiring inflicted punishment and legal adjustment, that it is taught that Jesus came to be punished by God in our place and then to offer His blood to His Father to pay the Father a blood payment to induce or persuade the Father to accept us back and not kill us. This is a bribe, and it is corrupt, and it is a lie based on Satan's false view of God's law.

When we return to the truth that God's law is design law, then we realize that sin changes the sinner, and without intervention from God the sinner dies from sin, just as the Bible says "sin when full grown brings forth death" or "those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction." And Jesus was God's means to restore His living law of love, the basis for life, back into the species human and provide a way for every willing person to have this living law restored in us. Thus, there is absolutely no bribe going on, there is sacrificial love originating in God and being bestowed upon us in Jesus and His victory over sin in our behalf.

The last paragraph, in talking about how we are to love others, states, "In other words, the Lord is telling the people, *Ok, maybe you are chosen, you are special, and I love you, but I love others, too, including the needy and helpless among you. And just as I love them, you must love them, as well. This is one of your covenant obligations, and an important one, too."*

What does this make you think? How does it make you feel? Do you feel relieved, freed, or burdened?

Can you love people through obligation? Can you get love through legislation? Through taxation? Through forcing yourself to do things you really don't want to do?

Would you want a spouse who has a check list of duties and carries them out because it is a rule—so on their list they:

- Smile when you come home and give you a hug and a kiss
- They, then look down at the list and read the prescribed words "I love you"
- They, then ask, "Is that sufficient or do you need to hear me say those words again?" And they offer to repeat those words as many times as you need to hear them.

Would you want a marriage like this? Would you want your children to relate to you like this?

I received this email this week:

> *Thank you all for everything you do. Don't let the discouraging emails derail you. There are more of us that your ministry has blessed than there are of them.*

You helped my wife and I to find our way out of a stale and repetitive 17-year-old SDA experience with Revelation Seminar after seminar and knowing all kinds of facts about God and memorized Scripture but raining fire and brimstone on anyone I disagreed with on Facebook.

Your application of God's Design Laws into our everyday lives is life altering as it teaches us how to live out Jesus' character in real life through His indwelling Spirit. And for the first time in a long time, we started to see progress in the way we treated others and even each other.

When other SDA preachers always talked about denying self, they make it sound so dreary and self-punishing almost making it sound like God wants us to walk around like monks, miserable and depriving ourselves out of any pleasure. This of course is not true and incomplete.

When understood through Design Law, denying self more accurately means, If you love others more than self and you are looking out for their best interest over yours, you are in fact still denying yourself but now the heart motive is altruistic agape love like Jesus loves us and then we find joy and happiness in the whole experience not just doing the self-denying out of compliance.

I would have never understood that without your message. Thank you so very much guys for what you do. Your message has made a huge impact in my life and in my relationship with my Lord Whom I love now more than ever by seeing just how much more amazing His character is, especially in the way He has dealt with humanity through His Design Laws.

May God continue to Bless you all,

Have you had a similar experience? Is there a difference between loving others out of compliance and loving others because the heart has been changed?

This is why the new covenant is writing the law on our hearts and minds—it is the living law of love restored into the heart and mind that becomes the wellspring of action. It isn't primarily about the external behavior, but the motive that drives that behavior.

And even when we are restored to hearts that love, does God call each of us to love others in the exact same way—in other words, do we all have the same specific duties to carry out in ministry? No! Our service for God and others will necessarily be different based on God's wisdom, our talents, our position, or place in society, our willingness to work with God, our gifting by the Spirit etc.

TUESDAY

The lesson again focuses our attention on helping the stranger. What does that look like?

How can a desire to help others be used by Satan to hurt others?

When the desire to help is carried out by people who don't understand reality, who don't understand God's design laws, who don't understand the circumstance or situation, who are carrying out their ministry:

- to keep a rule
- fulfill an obligation
- obey a commandment
- make themselves feel good
- make themselves look good
- get credit

If we really want to help others we must understand reality, God's design law, the actual need of the person from an eternal point of view, not merely a temporal point of view. And then sometimes the best help we can provide is to let the person suffer—am I being harsh? Am I making this up? Am I being unloving?

Consider what Paul wrote, "For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Th 3:10 NIV84).

Was Paul being unkind, unloving, cruel? Or was Paul fulfilling the commandment to love his neighbor? How, why?

Which is more in harmony with God's design, God's law of love, what Paul wrote or the Basic Universal Income proposed by some politicians today? Understand, the Basic Universal Income is not disability income, it is not retirement income, it is not poverty subsistence—it is income to be given to able-bodied people regardless of ability to obtain employment and provide for themselves.

What would likely happen to your teenage child if you provided them with perpetual income without any requirements to achieve, they don't need to go to school, or work, you put money into their bank account every month for them to do as they please?

Consider story of the prodigal son, what did he do with his inheritance? And once he spent it all and ended up in poverty, why didn't the father intervene and give him a Basic Universal Income? Didn't the father love that child?

Understand how Satan manipulates people through empathy and compassion to take actions that approximate or mimic love, but are actually violations of God's design laws and end up injuring and harming.

We cannot effectively carry out love for others while violating God's design laws for life. In other words, effective love for others cannot be done by rules, only by living out God's design laws, which require we actually understand them!

What about God allowing Israel to be taken into captivity by Babylon—was God being unloving?

If your grandmother is weak and struggles to walk, but is still able to walk, is it an act of love to give her a motorized wheelchair for her home so that she doesn't have to walk anymore? What if your grandmother has arthritis and walking is painful—would it then be an act of love to give her the wheelchair?

If your child struggles to learn to read or do math at a fourth-grade level, is it an act of love to pass them to the fifth grade even if they haven't mastered their current level? What would happen when faced with even more difficult material at the higher level? What happens to their developing sense of self?

If you're hiking with your spouse and she falls and breaks a leg, and you need to splint her leg, but doing so will cause more pain, would it be an act of love to splint the leg? Would it be loving to have surgery even if that caused pain? And when it is time for physical therapy and your spouse cries from the pain, is it an act of love to do her exercises for her?

What if it is not a broken leg, but a broken heart—she has been traumatized in the past and is hurting—is it an act of love to focus on merely relieving her pain, or to focus on healing the emotional wound even if the work to heal is painful? What if she gets angry and accuses you of attacking her—is it love to accept the accusation and apologize for trying to help?

If your child has a temper tantrum when you don't give them candy, is it an act of love to give them the candy to stop their tantrum? What if it isn't a child, but an adult, perhaps your spouse, who yells, accuses, screams, threatens to leave, or even threatens suicide if you don't do something they want—is it an act of love to give in to them in order to calm them down?

Once there is brokenness, there are no pain-free options. The path of love is to bring healing, even though the healing interventions are painful. Unfortunately, many people focus merely on the immediate experience and instead of seeking to heal, they seek to relieve the pain or discomfort and, thus, actually harm. Love understands design law and reality and acts to heal and restore even if it is painful.

WEDNESDAY

The first paragraph states, "As believers, we have been called to reflect the character of God. Paul wrote about 'my little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you'" (Galatians 4:19 NKJV).

No question we want Christ formed within us. Any questions or point to clarify in this statement?

What about the idea of being called to "reflect" the character of Christ? Is that the same as saying we have been called to "reveal" the character of Christ?

What is the difference and which do you think is more accurate to use?

Consider this quote from the book *Education*, does it describe a rule or a principle and if a principle does it apply even to our relationship with God, why or why not?

> **Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do**. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to **develop this power**, to train the youth to be **thinkers**, and **not mere reflectors of other men's thought**. [Is this only other men's thoughts or not mere reflectors of God's thoughts?] Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. Ed 17.2

What do you think? Do we bear God's image by thinking for ourselves, exercising godly powers of individuality, power to think and act, or do we bear the image of God by being reflectors of God's character?

Consider, is there a difference between a bicycle reflector and a headlight? What is the difference?

What did Jesus call us to be—reflectors in the world, or lights in the world?

In John 15:15, Jesus says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15 NIV84).

What is the difference between a servant and friend? Servants do what they are told, but they don't necessarily understand, but a friend who joins with their friend to carry out their work does so out of understanding appreciation and willing participation.

What is the last fruit of the Spirit when the Spirit has His way in our lives? It is "self-control" we have fear and selfishness removed and our liberty, our freedom to live out God's design law under the direction of our God-given abilities is restored to us. This is how we are lights in the world, not puppets, not robots, not reflectors, by living lights who freely love God and others.

Read second paragraph, "It's all kind of proverbial…" Can we achieve godly justice through human governments, human laws, inflicted punishments and coercive pressure—why or why not?

What is the best human governments can do?

- Can human government legislate unbiased laws? Laws intended to improve the lives of its citizens? Does that mean when such laws are passed that every person experiences justice under those laws?
- What else is necessary besides the best set of imposed laws humans could ever devise in order to have the least biased government possible?
- Governmental officials who have Jesus in their hearts and are mature in the things of God. Even if you have good laws, if you have godless, atheistic, pagan, or imperial law believing God-believers in office, you will have corruption in the application of the laws and injustice will occur.

The best human governments are the ones that maximize liberty for their people. But let's be very clear here—every kingdom, nation, government of this earth is part of Satan's kingdom—every one. So they are all beastly, they all commit injustice, they all injure and harm and we will NEVER achieve God's goals for humanity through human governments.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Again we see the Lord's concern…" Don't oppress them why? Because in the eyes of the Lord it is sin? Meaning what? That if the Lord didn't see it as sin it would be okay to oppress them? That oppressing people isn't sin in its own right, it is only sin because the Lord sees it that way?

Is this how we understand sin, sin is sin because God says it is, or is sin sin because it violates God's design law for health and damages and destroys those who break God's design law. And God says it to educate us, enlighten us, warn us, protect us, but even if God didn't say it, it is still sin?

Which way do you see it?

Human law doesn't work this way. Human law requires the law to be enacted by some authorized way, and then posted in some way, and breaking it isn't illegal until it is actually imposed first. For instance, illegal substances are not illegal until the specifical molecular structure is written into a new law and made illegal. Thus, new designer drugs keep getting released onto the market that are not illegal until the government identifies them and passes a new rule making them illegal. But, even without the imposed law making them illegal, all of these substances violate the laws of health. This is the difference between human law and God's law.

FRIDAY read and discuss questions

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 6
For What Nation Is There So Great?

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson points out that the first three chapters of Deuteronomy is a history of the Lord's deliverance and what the people had been through up to that point. Then chapter four starts off with a conjunction "And now" or "So now" and in the NIV it is rendered "Hear now."

The lesson then states

> That's why the first verb that appears after "So now" is *shama',* the same verb (in the same form) as used in the beginning of the Shema prayer, and it means "hear" or "listen" or "obey"—a verb repeated all through Deuteronomy. Thus, the chapter begins: *So now, Israel, because of what I have done for you, you must obey the following….*

What do you think if this *interpretation* of what the Bible is saying?

Understand, what the lesson has written is commentary, it is opinion, it is expert theological opinion, but it is not words from God, it is to be evaluated by us, through the enlightening of by the Holy Spirit to come to our own conclusion. Just as is everything I teach—I am fallible, I share the best of my understanding, but I am not here to do your thinking for you, only stimulate you to think and consider and then conclude for yourself.

This is one of the reasons I like the SDA quarterly, because it is thought provoking—it stimulates me to think, it requires me to think and reason and investigate the evidence for myself. And thus, it is very useful for Bible study as long as I always remember the quarterly is not the Bible, it is a tool to help me study the Bible.

So, what do you think of this interpretation? How would you like this applied to your life by some person? Someone does a real kindness for you, maybe even lifesaving—a good Samaritan rescues you from a fire, a person donates bone marrow that saves you from leukemia, a person pays off your mortgage so you don't get evicted from your house. And they do this without you asking them, they just became aware of your need and did this for you. And then afterward, when things have settled down, they come to you and say, "So now, because of what I have done for you, you *must* obey and follow me…."

What do you think of this method of getting followers? What of this method to achieve obedience?

Will it work to get trustworthy and faithful followers in human relationships?

Will it work for God to get trustworthy and faithful followers? Why or why not?

It will not work because it is presented as a debt one owes and is obliged to pay back, the act of deliverance is revealed to be not an act of love, but an act of manipulation, of indenturing, of getting people in debt so they can be controlled. Thus it is a violation of liberty.

So, because I recognize design law, the law of liberty, how love functions, I immediately was cautious about this interpretation of Scripture and did what I recommend we always do, I went to the Scripture and read it to see what it says.

> Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. (Deuteronomy 4:1 NIV84).

Do you hear God saying "because of what I have done you must now obey and follow?"

Or do you hear God describing design law—in the context of reminding them He loves them and is trustworthy? So is God saying:

> *Remember what I have revealed to you, what I have done for you, how I have delivered you. How nature itself is under my control. Recognize I don't need anything from you, but want to bless you and free you. So, listen, comprehend, understand, learn what I am teaching you about myself and my laws, which are how reality operates. Follow them if you want to be healthy, happy, succeed, and overcome your enemies in this world?*

Which way do you think is more accurate to what God is saying in Deuteronomy?

Is God saying the same thing to us today, that we are to remember how the Lord has delivered us in the past, all that that He has done for humanity in general and also for each of us personally, and then under that umbrella of His historic acts of love, we are to learn about Him, His character, His design laws, His methods and principles and, if we want to succeed, be healthy, happy, and overcome the obstacles in this world today, then we are to live in harmony with Him and His design laws trusting Him with outcomes?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Deuteronomy 4:2:

> Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you. (Deuteronomy 4:2 NIV84).

What does this mean? Does this mean not to add or subtract from the actual words, or not to add or subtract from the instructions, commands, directions, principles, truths?

Some people get very literalistic and believe there is something magical or supernatural about the words and that to paraphrase the Scripture adding words not in the original is to disobey this directive from God. Is it?

No! If we cannot change the words of Scripture for new words then the Bible can never be translated into any language and must be read in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. But the syllables that form words are not inspired of God—it is the concepts, truths, insights, wisdom that God inspires the Bible writers to comprehend, but the words were chosen by the humans. Thus as long as the truths, the concepts, are accurately communicated it is appropriate to replace words and even add words as necessary to bring the thought over. All translations do this. In the King James Version they will italicize all the words that are added to make it more understandable. Most of the time this is helpful. Sometimes it changes the meaning in the wrong direction, like in John 12:32:

> "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me" (John 12:32 KJV).

So adding to or subtracting from the commands is not about the words but the realities of life, the responsibilities and duties of Israel in fulfilling the purpose for God in their time.

The adding and subtracting was adding Corban that allowed people to subtract their duty to their parents. It was adding a list of deeds to the Sabbath that subtracted their love for God and the freedom the Sabbath was intended to remind us of.

The lesson asks, "why would anyone want to change God's law?"

Then they provide this quote from *Selected Messages* book 2, p. 107:

> Satan has been persevering and untiring in his efforts to prosecute the **work he began in heaven, to change the law of God**. He has succeeded in making the world believe the **theory he presented in heaven before his fall, that the law of God was faulty, and needed revising**. A large part **of the professed Christian church**, by their attitude, if not by their words, show that they have accepted the same error. But if in one jot or tittle the law of God has been changed, Satan has gained on earth that which he could not gain in heaven. He has prepared his delusive snare, hoping to take captive the church and the world. But not all will be taken in the snare. **A line of distinction is being drawn between the children of obedience and the children of disobedience, the loyal and true and the disloyal and untrue. Two great parties are developed**, the worshipers of the beast and his image, and the worshipers of the true and living God. 2SM 107.2

Satan began his war in heaven over an attack on God's law, advancing the theory that God's law was faulty and needing revising.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is revealed in this statement—what is the imbedded lie hidden in Satan's attack?

That God's law is subject to revision—in other words it is not design law, it is imposed rules.

Consider the same author describing the law angels understood in heaven when Lucifer began his rebellion:

> **But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality**. **When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of**… MB 109.2 [What kind of law can be in force and people are obeying it but they have not thought about it; they haven't been told about it; they don't even realize there is a law? Only design law can function this way. Consider Isaac Newton telling his friends his discovery about the law of gravity—don't you think they might have said, "Law—hmmm…I never thought it was a law, it just how things work"?]

Remember this commentary on sin's origin in heaven from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761.4

What kind of law is Satan promoting? Imposed, human-like law, which requires the infliction of punishment. And what happened when heavenly intelligences accepted this idea? Rebellion, division, destruction of love!

Do you see Satan's attack? Do you understand how Christianity has been infected with this false view of God and God's law?

What is the final message to prepare the world for Christ's return? The message of the 3 Angels which is the eternal good news about God—to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water—to worship the Creator and not the dictator who imposes rules and punishes rule-breakers.

So, how is the Christian church today advancing Satan's lie about God's law? Through all penal legal theologies that teach God is the source of pain suffering and death inflicted to punish sin. That Jesus died to pay a legal penalty to God or our legal debt, or to pay God off for our sin. That it is righteous and just to inflict punishment for law-breaking. And therefore, leading its members to join with the state to enforce laws they believe are right upon others, even in violation of conscience. Human law is not God's law.

We can never achieve God's goal through Satan's methods—we cannot achieve love, friendship, loyalty, trustworthiness by legislation, rules, rule-enforcement, in other words through more human governments.

Understand, as the world has rejected God it has fallen under Satan's influence, the hearts of people have become more corrupt, the design laws of God are rejected, and arbitrary rules and standards are elevated:

- Darkness is called light and light is called darkness
- Truth is called hate speech and hate speech is called truth
- Males are called females and females are called males
- Merit is called discrimination and discrimination is called equity
- Practices that harm are advanced as cures
- Policies that injure are presented as treatments to heal.
- And society decays, the social fabric that makes a society healthy frays and greater corruption occurs—this results in more fear, greater perversion, greater pain, suffering, sickness both physical and moral and people respond by implementing more of Satan's methods—more law, more demands, mandates, rules, coercive government and greater violations of liberty—which always destroys love, damages individual development and drives to greater rebellion, division in society and injustice and human suffering.

Consider the following, written by EG White, February 26, 1914, a little more than a year before she died:

> Had Israel taken heed to the messages of the prophets emphasizing the value of "the great things" of God's law, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they persisted in **turning aside from his law** that God was compelled to allow their enemies to take them captive. [What law? Imposed rules, or God's design law given through all Scripture? Remember over and again the prophetic message of justice was loving people, not rule-keeping?] "My people are destroyed for **lack of knowledge**," was his message to them through Hosea. "Because thou hast **rejected knowledge**, I will also reject thee, ... seeing thou hast forgotten **the law of thy God**." Hosea 4:6. [What knowledge had they rejected? Creator worship whose law is design law of love, truth, freedom and they preferred pagan gods with imposed laws instead. So God would teach them reality, cause and effect, which is design law. Note what comes next] **In trial and affliction they were to learn lessons** that under circumstances more favorable they had refused to learn. RH February 26, 1914, par. 1 [If a child refuses to learn by the favorable circumstances of instruction not to touch a hot stove, then the child eventually learns through the trial of touching the stove and the affliction of getting burned.]
>
> **In every age, transgression of God's law has been accompanied by the same result**. [What is the result of transgressing God's law? Why?] In the days of Noah, when every precept of this law was set aside, **iniquity became so deep and widespread** that God could no longer bear with it…" [Why? Because God lost patience? He really isn't infinite in love, mercy, grace? Or He could no longer bear with it because to bear any more would mean the loss of Noah the last family that would work with God to bring the Messiah and thus God would lose humanity?] In the time of Abraham, the people of Sodom openly defied God and **his law; and**

there followed the same wickedness, the same corruption, the same unbridled indulgence, that had marked the antediluvian world… The time preceding the downfall of the northern kingdom was one of **similar disobedience and of similar wickedness**. [What happens when people reject God's design law? Why does this happen?] **God's law was counted as a thing of naught, and this opened the floodgates of iniquity upon Israel…** "RH February 26, 1914, par. 2 [What would happen in a society if it was taught there are no laws of health. You can eat and drink anything, never exercise, put any drug or as much alcohol as you want into your body and it has zero impact on your health. If society lived this way what would happen? A floodgate of health problems, disability, sickness, and corruption of the species. The same is true when God's moral law, the principles of love, truth, liberty are rejected.]

And as it was then so it is today. Men boast of the wonderful progress and enlightenment of the age, but God sees the earth filled with guilt and violence. **Men declare that the law of God has been abrogated, that the Bible is not authentic; and as a result, a tide of evil**, such as has seldom been seen since the days of Noah and the days of apostate Israel, is sweeping over the world. [Do we live in a world where belief in God is denied, where the institutions of society declare there is no God, that we evolved from lower life forms, where the leaders of industry are also godless? What is the result of rejecting the knowledge of God?] **Lawlessness, dissipation, extravagance, and corruption are coming in upon us as an overwhelming flood. Nobility of soul, gentleness, piety, are bartered away to gratify the lust for forbidden things. The taking of human life is a matter of daily occurrence. The terrible record of crime daily committed for the sake of gain is enough to chill the blood and fill the soul with horror**. [Are we seeing this ins the world today?] "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." RH February 26, 1914, par. 3

The time is right upon us when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. [Are we living in this time? What is the cause of the sorrow? Rejecting of God and God's design laws. Why can't human medications, treatments, laws, interventions heal it?] **The Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the world**. [Why? Where is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God on earth? The Spirit Temple, the hearts and minds of people. And what happens when billions reject God and prefer the lies of Satan, the evolutionary worldview? The Spirit of God is withdrawn as we choose to reject God. And what is the result?] **Disasters by sea and land follow one another in quick succession**. How frequently we hear of earthquakes and tornadoes, of destruction by fire and flood, with great loss of life and property. **Apparently** these calamities are capricious outbreaks of seemingly disorganized, unregulated forces, **but in them God's purpose may be read. They are one of the means by which he seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger**. RH February 26, 1914, par. 4 [Why do the calamities come? Why does God allow it? To wake the sleeping saints, the five wise virgins to understand the hour in which we live. To shine their light of godly character, methods, principles in standing for truth, loving our enemies, praying for those who persecute, while leaving others free. Of refusing to bow the knee to the imperial systems of this world, refusing

to go along with imposed mandates that coerce the consciences of people under the guise of saving live.]

"As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.... Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." RH February 26, 1914, par. 5

The prophecies of judgment delivered by Amos and Hosea were **tempered with prophecies of future glory**. According to Hosea, the children of Israel were to "abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward," the prophet continued, "shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and **shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days**." RH February 26, 1914, par. 6 [God doesn't just warn of tragedy, He encourages with the promise of deliverance to His faithful! But when is the prophecy to be fulfilled, upon which people is it applicable? Consider what this author says.]

This prophecy is to reach its complete fulfillment in the gathering out from all nations of a people prepared for the second coming of Christ. The remnant of Israel is symbolized by a woman, representing the **Lord's chosen church on the earth**. [It is not about genetics—it never has been. It is always about character, about having faith like Abraham to be reconciled to God in trust and through that faith/trust receive the indwelling Spirit who takes the righteousness of Christ and reproduces it us.] "Behold," he says, "I will allure her, and bring **her into the wilderness**, and speak comfortably unto her. [What does this mean? Wilderness is away from the kingdoms of the world, it is out of Babylon—leaving the systems and methods of this world behind and returning to the garden—to worshipping the Creator whose laws are design laws.] And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be **at that day**, [when? At the time of the final generation that is alive when Jesus comes again!] saith the Lord, that thou shalt **call me Ishi ["My husband**," margin]; and shalt call me **no more Baali ["My lord,"** margin]. For I **will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth**, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." RH February 26, 1914, par. 7 [We will call God "My husband" meaning the lover of our souls. We will be restored to at-one-ment—the two shall be one. We will be united in love and we will no longer call God "my lord" meaning master. We will be friends and not servants. This means we come back to worship God as Creator and reject the false Baalim dictator god of imposed rules, which means we return to Design Law worship and reject the human-law lie of Satan, the kingdoms of the world, and penal substitution theology.]

In the last days of this earth's history, God's covenant with his commandment-keeping people is to be renewed. [What is the covenant? Writing His design law for life into our hearts and minds!] "In that day I will make a covenant…and I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in

mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord. RH February 26, 1914, par. 8 [What is life eternal? Knowing God—being united in heart and mind. Having His design law of love written into our hearts and minds. Consider the law that binds a man and woman together in marriage? Is this law human law? No! It is God's law of love, the binding of hearts together cannot be done by force, by legislation, by rule, by external authority. God is saying He will heal our hearts, take away our fear, and unite Himself with us in eternal love and trust if we will unite with Him!]

"And it shall come to pass **in that day**, [What day? The time right before the second coming of Christ. Today, our day right now!] I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; [What does this mean? The corn is the Word, the Truth revealed in Christ, the wine is the blood or sinless life of Christ which revealed and lived out perfectly the living law of love and the oil is the Spirit of truth and love that applies into our hearts the Truth and Love of Christ, which is the righteousness of Christ, which is the law of God.] and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were **not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God**." Hosea 2:14-23. RH February 26, 1914, par. 9 [What is described? The application of the righteousness of Christ into all willing human hearts upon the earth to prepare us for Christ's return.]

"**In that day**, [what day? the time just prior to the second coming—our day!] ... **the remnant** of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, ... shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth." Isaiah 10:20. From "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" there will be those who will gladly respond to the message, "**Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come**." [What will happen in this people who are the remnant, who are reconciled to God, who have the covenant of God's law restored in them?] **They will turn from every idol that binds them to this earth, and will "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters**." [They reject the imposed law lies and all the pagan views of God that fill the earth and return to worship the Creator, Designer and Builder of reality!] **They will free themselves from every entanglement**, and will **stand before the world as monuments of God's mercy**. [We are God's evidence, God's witnesses, God's revelation as we are the living monuments of God's living law of love! Like Job, God will say, "Look universe, consider my friends, they are perfect and righteous in all their ways! They have trusted me and my living law if restored with them.] **Obedient to every divine requirement, they will be recognized by angels and by men as those that "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus**." [This is our privilege, to receive Christ, to be reconciled to God, to have His living law written into our hearts, to have fear and selfishness purged, to have our Spirit Temples cleansed, to be lights in the darkness, to love our enemies and pray for them that would abuse us, to reject the imposed laws of this world, to say no to human justice, and to live in harmony with our Creator God of love.] Revelation 14:6, 7, 12. RH February 26, 1914, par. 10

What was God's goal for Israel? What did He want to accomplish through them beyond being the bloodline for the Messiah?

Did He want to reveal the principles of life lived out upon the earth—to contrast the difference in the two antagonistic principles?

What is God wanting from His people today, from this generation on earth? Does He want a people who have surrendered to Him and who have His law written upon their hearts so that they live out His design laws in their lives in contrast to the imposed law methods of this world?

Is that what Revelation 12:17 means:

> Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:17 NIV84).

Does obeying the commandments mean keeping a list of rules or living in harmony with God's design laws—having the law written upon the heart and mind? And holding to the testimony of Jesus, does that mean belonging to an organization that possesses the writings of dead prophets, or that the living people cling to or hold to the same testimony about God that Jesus gave—"If you have seen me you have seen the Father?" Thus this group of people reject the imposed law lie of a penal legal theology and live out God's design laws and present the same testimony about God as Jesus did.

This is the purpose of God's people on earth today—to reveal His character, to live out His living law of love, to give the testimony Jesus gave about His Father, to call people back to Creator worship and in the face of threat, opposition, hostility, rejection to have faith in Jesus, trust Him with the future, with the outcome, to keep our eyes on Christ and not be overwhelmed by the raging storms the devil is bringing.

This is the second message of the three angels—to come out of Babylon that fallen system of imposed and contradictory rules. We must stop seeking to get justice through human law. We must stop seeking to enforce what we believe is right through human governments. We must stop seeking to compel and coerce others to live by our moral standards. We must love God and others as Jesus has loved us—present the truth in love and leave others free.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the apostacy at Baal Peor. This was when the Midianites paid Balaam to curse Israel, but Balaam blessed Israel repeatedly, and eventually counseled the Midian kings to seduce Israel into worshipping Baal.

The strategy they employed was to send seductive women into the camp of Israel under the guise of friendship and seduce the men. Then Balaam, who was considered a prophet, invited the people to a

pagan festival. At the pagan festival the senses were bombarded with music, dancing and alcohol, eventually leading the people to engage in promiscuous lewd sensual behavior, followed by worshipping Baal and offering sacrifices to Baal.

This was followed by pagan rituals being brought back into the camp of Israel.

God responds by sending a plague and Moses instructed that the leaders of Israel that participated in the pagan worship must be put to death by the members of their own tribe. As the people were repenting before the tabernacle, one leader brought a Midianite prostitute into the camp and Phineas, the son of Eleazer the High Priest, ran a javelin through them both and the plague was halted. Then God instructed the people, through Moses, to war against the Midianites and eradicate them—which they did.

What are your thoughts about these events?

What is the context of what is happening?

The overarching context is God working to fulfill His promise of Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. In other words, God is working to bring Jesus, the Messiah, without whom no human being could be saved. God had already revealed that it was through Abraham's descendants that the Messiah would come—but not all of them, not through Ishmael, it was through Isaac, and not through Esau, but through Jacob.

So the Bible focuses our attention on the plan of salvation, on the people through whom God is working to bring salvation to humanity. And Satan is actively fighting to stop God's plan. We see this repeatedly throughout the Bible record. At this point in history Satan stirs up the Midianites to try and destroy the people of God, if not literally by killing them, then by corrupting their minds and hearts and hardening them all so that none would be righteous and willing to work with God to be the conduit for the Messiah.

So God intervenes, makes a diagnostic judgment of what is happening and then makes a therapeutic judgment of what is needed to stop the assault on the hearts and minds of the people and keep open the avenue for Messiah.

This is what is transpiring.

We must remember all those who were put to "death" were put to "sleep" or first death, which is the death from which there is a resurrection. This is not the "punishment" from sin "death" that happens at the end of the 1000 years. So, it would be a mistake to equate these deaths with punishment for sin—it has another purpose, which is the therapeutic intervention to provide Jesus to save humanity. And there is also and object lesson application, but that is not the primary purpose, that would be a bonus application of the events.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

Read Deuteronomy 4:3,4:

> You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today. (Deuteronomy 4:3–4 NIV84).

The lesson asks, "What is the difference between those who fell into sin and those who didn't?"

Is there an object lesson for those of us living today?

Is Satan working to try and seduce the people of God today? How? What methods is he using?

What is the core of all pagan worship? It is the false law construct, imposed law, imposed rules, inflicted punishments for sin, appeasement etc.

Do we see these lies taught throughout Christianity?

And what happens in the minds and hearts of people who believe God functions this way?

What happens in the way they treat others?

Does Satan also attack God's people today through sensualism, worldliness, seduction, addictions?

The lesson states that the people must make a choice, to cling to God or not.

What does it mean to cling to God?

Does this remind you of Elijah—"If Baal is god worship him, but if Yahweh is God worship Him"?

Do we have a similar message today? Are we calling people to decide whom they will worship? Is this not the message of the three angels?

WEDNESDAY

Read Deuteronomy 4:5-9:

> See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. 6 Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." 7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is

> near us whenever we pray to him? 8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?
> 9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. (Deuteronomy 4:5–9 Niv84).

What is the message here? What law lens do we understand this through? Was this a message of rule-keeping, or of faithfulness and trust, of living out the principles of God first and foremost in heart, and secondarily through the theatrical system to reveal the larger plan to the people and any who came to study—such as later the Queen of Sheba?

What are the two truths that made Israel special, or great?

Being close to God and having His law.

What is the application of this to us today?

Immanuel—God with us. We are great as we open ourselves to God and have Him dwell in our hearts. We are great as we commune and walk with God and have His living law of love written upon our hearts so that we live out His principles.

God has already come down to us because we couldn't go up to Him. God has already provided the evidence of His trustworthiness. He has provided the Remedy to the sin problem. He has provided Jesus. He has provided His Spirit. All we have to do is choose to trust Him, open the heart to Him and He enters into fellowship with us, healing, renewing, regenerating, recreating, cleansing our hearts and minds from lies, fear and selfishness, writing His design law of love into us and we begin to live out His law.

Thus we are made great by being living temples in which God dwells by His Spirit and through that Spirit we become living conduits of God's law, God's truth, God's character in the world. We become lamps that give heavenly light in how we live and how we treat others by living out the law of God in the methods we apply to ourselves in how we treat others. We present truth, in love and leave others free. We don't align with the pagan systems of this world, with the imposed law systems to compel and coerce consciences. We don't give in to fear to the survival drives but we trust our lives to Jesus to protect and watch over.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that when we are close to God and have His law in our lives that we have wisdom and understanding.

What is godly wisdom and how is it different from the wisdom of the world?

> The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:
>
> 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord
> that he may instruct him?"
>
> But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:10–16 NIV84).

Read second paragraph, "At first glance…" What is the wisdom that comes from keeping God's commands?

So, were the Pharisees who wanted Jesus off the cross in order to obey the Sabbath command wise? Why not?

Is there a way of obeying the commands that obstructs wisdom, that blinds the mind, that hardens the heart? How is that?

What is the obedience that results in wisdom?

The Greek for obey or obedience is:

> **5218 ὑπακοή** [*hupakoe* /hoop·ak·o·**ay**/] n f. From 5219; TDNT 1:224; TDNTA 34; GK 5633.[1]

The first part is hypo, as in hypoglycemia, or hypotension and means under, or low, or lowly, and the second half is akoe from which we get acoustic and means to listen, to hear. It means a humble willingness to listen, to learn, to be lead out of lies, misunderstanding, old habits, preconceived ideas, false beliefs and into better and more accurate understanding of reality, not just in comprehension but in practice. We listen, comprehend, trust, and apply to our lives what we understand.

In that choice to listen, think, comprehend, agree and apply we are united with God and we are empowered to carry out the will of God when we choose to follow what He has directed. In this process we are changed, our hearts are circumcised—we have cut out the attachments to the world, our characters are transformed, our neural pathways are rewired. This is growing up in Christ, receiving the mind of Christ, being sanctified.

[1] Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

So an obedient person is one who eagerly listens for the voice of God and has the desire to hear, to understand, and to fulfill God's instructions and therefore chooses to do so to the best of their ability. It is not about perfect performance, it is about heart attitude.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason Property update: The renovation project is out to get contractor bids.

NOTES—my notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 7
Law and Grace

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What comes to mind from the lesson title – Law and Grace?

Read memory verse:

> I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21 NKJV).

What does this mean?

Read first paragraph, "Christians of most denominations…" Which of the following statements is true:

- We have all violated God's law and because of this we are all sinners
- We are all sinners and because of this we have all violated God's law

Are these two statements the same?

Imposed law makes sin about the behavior—therefore they focus on the deeds and make statements as the lesson does: "And because we all have violated that law—'but the Scripture has confined all under sin' (Gal 3:22)—it's only God's grace that can save us."

The lesson seems to take the position that the first statement is the correct one, we are sinners because we have violated the law.

But when did any person you have ever known chosen to become a sinner?

Doesn't the Bible teach that "we are born in sin" (Ps 51:5)?

Doesn't the Bible teach that we were all in Adam when Adam sinned? And Adam changed himself to be a sinner and we are all born with Adam's attributes, propensities, or nature. In other words, we are born filled with fear and selfishness rather than perfect godly love.

The Scripture is absolutely true that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 6:23). But the *reason* all have sinned is because all are born sinners, all are born infected with a condition they did not choose and which, without remedy, results in symptoms we call sins. The sins are not the primary problem, the sins are they symptoms, the unavoidable result of the primary problem if that problem isn't treated or remedied.

Our ongoing sins, though they are not the cause but the symptoms, do add to the damage and if persisted in will destroy us, burn out the faculties that are sensitive to the Spirit of truth and love. If that happens we have moved ourselves beyond healing and there is nothing more God can do for us.

So what is the law spoken of in Galatians? This was the question that divided the SDA church leadership at the 1888 GC. The primary division at that conference was over this question—was the law that Paul was referring to, that was added to lead us to Christ, the ceremonial law of the sacrificial services, or the moral law of Ten Commandments.

Jones and Waggoner took the position it was the moral law and conference president, GI Butler, who wasn't there in person but sent letters, took the position that it was the ceremonial law. They both wrote documents laying out their positions. Butler's *The Law in Galatians*, and Waggoner's *The Gospel in Galatians*.

What would you say if I suggested that the leadership's attitude in choosing imposed law and rejecting design law at that meeting resulted in the loss of the outpouring of the latter rain and contributed to the delay in the second coming of Christ? Do you think that would be an overstatement?

Consider what EGW wrote after that event:

> "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). In this scripture, the **Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law.** [What law was added? The Ten Commandments—not the design law principles upon which life is built, but the written out code designed to meet human beings in their sin condition. It was necessary to put the law in this form, to add this form for our need. Why?] **The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ** and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 1SM 234.5 [To diagnose us, convict us and lead us to Christ for healing.]
>
> **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth**, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. [Do we still see this today? People who have accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law and insist on the imposed law view of things and are unwilling to accept advancing light? And they do this by adherence to law, which gives them the conviction of being faithful, true, law keepers, just like the Pharisees in Christ's day. But what is the result in this clinging to the wine of Babylon, the idea that God's law is imposed added rules?] By exciting that opposition **Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit** that God longed to impart to them. **The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost**. [The latter rain was resisted, by what strategy did Satan succeed? By getting the brethren to cling to imposed law. Note what she says next, what could have been had they embraced the advancing truth.] **The light that is to lighten the**

whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by **the action of <u>our own brethren</u>** has been in a great degree kept away from the world. 1SM 234.6 [The light that is to lighten the whole world they resisted. This is the message of the 3 angels—but hasn't the SDA church made it its mission to take the 3 angels' messages to the world? Have we? Have we taken the eternal gospel to the world when we present it through imposed law? Our church has been gifted with the message for this time in history, the truth about God's character of love and His design law for life—but that message and the power to take it to the world to a great deal has been obstructed through the persistent clinging to the imposed law lie with its penal substitutionary views that make God out to be the source of pain, suffering and death.]

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. **Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience**. [How can this be? How can I have freedom and happiness if I am prohibited and restricted? Isn't real freedom in doing as I want with no law to restrict me? This is Satan's lie from the beginning, that God's law is restrictive. It is viewed this way when we accept the lie that it is imposed. But as soon as we return to worship God as Creator and realize His laws are design laws, then we are freed from the enslavement of sin and set free in Christ. When a parent prohibits their child from smoking, that prohibition is a sure guarantee of healthiness and happiness if obeyed, but if the child smokes they will experience disease which destroys health and happiness.] **As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages**. [The law works in us the purity of Character if received in Christ—in other words, not our work, but the living law of love received in a trust relationship with Christ purges fear, we trust Him to watch out for us, we don't need to act in self-interest, our lives are His.] To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the **immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression**. 1SM 235.1 [The principles of health, life, happiness which are the outworking of God's character of love, built into reality as God's operational laws upon which life exists and functions. Now, to leave no doubt as to EGW's position and that we are speaking of design law, notice what she writes next.]

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. 1SM 235.2 [This is design law, and the penal legal adherents reject it and thus the church continues to wander in the wilderness.]

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

This conflict in 1888 reveals another example of one of Satan's strategies, that is to pit to either false or incomplete ideas or views against each other and get people to choose one side or the other. In this case it was pitting the ceremonial law versus the moral law and dividing the church to fight against each other and that obstructed the Spirit of Truth from being poured into their hearts

EGW wrote later:

> "I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments**" 1SM 233.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "God is a God of love…" This is well said, and in fact, love cannot exist without freedom. Understanding this alone rules out all imposed law as a basis for God's government. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. So this alone should lead people to reject the penal views of God's law.

Read the second paragraph, "And central to the idea of moral freedom…" What is suggested? Are they suggesting that moral law is not design law, is not of the same type of law as the laws of nature?

I would suggest that the moral law is exactly the type of law that governs the rest of nature, but of a higher quality that only higher functioning intelligent beings can process, understand, and live in harmony with.

For instance the law of respiration is one of God's design laws for His Creation—but the rocks don't breathe, the stars don't take in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide. Thus, we would not say, that the law of respiration is a different type or quality of law than gravity because only living organisms operate upon it—gravity and respiration are both design laws. Likewise the moral law and the laws of nature are both design laws.

Consider this quote, do you agree or disagree?

> Every organ has its function, and our Creator has pledged Himself to keep our organs in a healthful condition **if we will obey the laws implanted in our nature. The laws governing the physical nature are as truly divine in their origin and character as the laws of the ten commandments.** Man is fearfully and wonderfully made; for Jehovah has inscribed **His law by His own mighty hand on every part of the physical structure**. Many are sick who might be well if they would but cooperate with God, surrendering soul, body, and spirit to His control. For **in order to have health, we must keep ourselves in harmony with God's law**. To have clean hands and a pure heart is to have peace and contentment of mind, and this is conducive to health. - 16MR 60.2 1892

Is this speaking only of the physical laws, or does the moral law affect our health?

Why is it that those who honor their parents live long on the earth? What happens when we don't love, but instead we resent, hate, and are controlled by fear and selfishness? We activate the fear circuits, which activate inflammatory cascades and we damage our bodies and die younger. But those who love have lower stress on the body, and live longer. It is reality, love is the basis of life.

For those who have parents that were abusive or untrustworthy, honoring them doesn't mean exposing yourself to abuse and ungodly treatment. It means living God's law in how you treat them. Thus, if they are ungodly, abusive, cruel, unkind, and unwilling to repent and grow, what is the way we honor them? By honoring their choice to be that way, recognizing the truth for what it is, and setting healthy boundaries so we don't get exploited and injured over and over again. We forgive them in our hearts so that we don't become filled with anger, bitterness, resentment etc., but we don't trust them until they prove they are trustworthy.

Consider this quote:

> **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God**. Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see **our sin in violating the laws which He has established in our being**. [What kind of law are the laws of health? And these laws are to teach us about what sin is. Sin is transgression of the law? What law, the moral law, and this law has been established in our beings, what does this mean? We were created in Adam as living temples in which God's design law of love was to operate and direct all functions. Sin breaks that design and displaces love with fear and selfishness. The plan of salvation is Jesus coming as the second Adam, taking up humanity infected with this perversion of love that tempts with fear to be selfish and purge the infection and restore God's law of love into the species. Jesus accomplished this for us. All who are won to trust in Jesus receive a new heart and right spirit, and have love poured in that casts out all fear and are empowered to live out God's law of love in their lives today.] **All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** [this would include the moral law, which is also design law.] Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are **living in violation of the laws that He has established**. And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. **He publishes His law** and **the penalty** that will follow the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in **harmony with natural law**. [Where did He publish it? In Scripture, but also in nature Romans 1:20. And what is the penalty and from where does it come? Gal 6:8] He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it if they will. Idiots will not be responsible. **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.** 3T 161.2 [What is the message of the three angels? That God's law is not imposed, that Babylon the system of imposed law is fallen. That God is Creator and we are to worship Him, which means returning to design law

understanding of who God is, His character of love, the sin problem, the solution for it, and then give glory to Him by revealing this truth at this time in history.]

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--**a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will.** To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. {Ed 99.2}

MONDAY

Why does God tell them again and again and again that their success is dependent upon their obedience to His law?

Read the second paragraph, "Even the most cursory…" A design law understanding makes this so simple—of course it is an absolute reality that obedience to the laws that life is built upon is a requirement for success.

But what of this idea of a covenant obligation?

Is marriage a covenant? And do marriages succeed as God designed for them, when the covenant is approached through obligation? What makes the covenant work? It is love, and so too our success with God is a covenant, an agreement, a trust relationship that we enter with Him:

- We agree with God that we are sinners, sick with a condition that we didn't choose and for which we cannot fix or heal.
- We agree that God is not under some external obligation to fix our sin problem, but because He so loved us He chose to take upon Himself the burden, pain, and suffering sin causes and overcome it for us to provide us the remedy.
- And we agree, if we trust Him, He will restore in us His design law of love.
- Our responsibility is to follow where He leads and choose to apply to our lives what He has revealed for us to do. And we do this freely, not because He will punish us if we don't, but because we happily trust Him and are eager to do it because we love Him, but also understand it is for our good or the good of others that God loves.
- Thus obedience in the Greek is: **5218 ὑπακοή** [*hupakoe* /hoop·ak·o·**ay**/] n f. From 5219; TDNT 1:224; TDNTA 34; GK 5633.[1]

[1] Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

The first part is hypo, as in hypoglycemia, or hypotension and means under, or low, or lowly, and the second half is akoe from which we get acoustic and means to listen, to hear. It means a humble willingness to listen, to learn, to be lead out of lies, misunderstanding, old habits, preconceived ideas, false beliefs and into better and more accurate understanding of reality, not just in comprehension but in practice. We listen, comprehend, trust, and apply to our lives what we understand.

So an obedient person is a lover of truth, one who eagerly listens for the voice of God and has the desire to hear, to understand, and to fulfill God's instructions and therefore chooses to do so to the best of their ability. It is not about perfect performance, it is about heart attitude.

What about the idea that grace is "God giving us what we don't deserve"?

This way of expressing the concept is too easily misunderstood or conveys wrong ideas.

If this is the definition of grace—being given something one doesn't deserve—does that mean when Satan murdered Jesus, because Jesus didn't deserve such abusive treatment, that Satan was giving Jesus grace?

What the lesson has inadvertently done is make grace the process of being undeserved rather than what grace actually is. They are right that grace is not earned by us, but that is the process, the manifestation of God's character of love. Consider grace as a noun and the action the gifting us the noun without merit is a verb. Grace is what we are gifted, providing it as a gift is the method, means, process—but grace is more than this free giving.

Merit is when you work hard you reap the rewards of your work.

- So if you get paid by your employer you have earned or merited your pay.
- If you get stronger muscles by exercising regularly you have earned or merited the growth in muscles.
- If you become a better musician because you practice four hours each day, you have earned or merited your proficiency.

Unmerited favor is when you receive something you didn't earn or didn't merit or don't have a right to claim as being owed to you. Grace in that sense is not ours to claim by right, but grace is not the process of being unmerited—grace is what is unmerited.

If someone gave you a glass of water when you were dying of thirst—you didn't buy it, earn it, work for it, it was a gift. One could say the water was unmerited, it was given to you freely but water is water, the method of its gifting is separate from the substance of what it is.

If the idea is that God's grace is not ours by our individual rights, or something we have earned like a salary is correct. But it is not correct to say, as the lesson says, grace is giving us what we don't deserve.

> "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Lk 2:52 NIV84).

"Favor" in this text is the Greek word for "grace." Was the favor or grace Jesus received undeserved? Or did Jesus deserve it and yet still needed it and need to grow in it?

So what is God's grace?

Consider these texts:

- "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; T**he LORD will give grace and glory**" (Ps 84:11 NKJV).
    - Who is the Sun of Righteousness that rises with healing in His wings?
    - Who is our shield from sin and shame?
    - Who did God give to us because He so loved the world?
    - So what does it mean the "Lord will **give** grace and glory"? Does it mean the Lord will send Jesus, the full disclosure, revelation, dispersal, outpouring, fulfillment, of God's grace and glory?

- "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his **Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. **The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word**" (Heb 1:1–3 NIV84).
    - Is Jesus God's glory revealed and poured out upon us?
    - Is Jesus God's grace given to us?

- "But each of us was **given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift**" (Eph 4:7 NRSV).
    - What does this mean?
    - Grace according to the measure of Christ's gift?

- "The **Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have **seen his glory**, **the glory of the One and Only**, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth**" (Jn 1:14 NIV84).
    - Is Jesus living grace and living truth and living glory?
    - What is this glory and truth and grace—how do you understand it?

- "From the **fullness of his grace** we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**" (Jn 1:16–17 NIV84).
    - Who is the source of this grace?
    - Is the truth separate from Jesus or is Jesus the source of truth and the manifestation of truth?
    - Is the grace separate from Jesus or is Jesus the source of grace and the manifestation of grace?
    - Is this grace a legal payment to God, or is this grace God pouring out Himself in Jesus to do something literal, real, powerful in the species human?

- "just as Christ was raised from the dead **through the glory of the Father**, we too may live a new life" (Ro 6:4 NIV84).
    - What is God's glory?
    - God's character—but where do we find the manifestation of God's character? Jesus is the living reality of it, but what is a transcript of it? The law—what kind of law?
    - The law of love, God's character expressed in the living protocols of life—the principle of giving, God's glory diffusing out from Himself to all the universe to create and sustain all things.
    - Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father when Jesus perfectly restored God's law, God's character of love into the humanity He assumed.

- "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from **his glorious power**" (Col 1:11 NRSV).
    - What is the power that makes us strong?
    - It is the truth, love, grace and glory of God that we receive from Jesus living in us when we trust God.

- "The heavens declare the **glory of God** (Ps 19:1 NIV84).
    - How do the heavens declare God's glory?
    - What is God's glory?
    - His character of love, His design law of love, which is a constant outworking of Himself in sustaining all things.

- "How great is your **goodness**, which you **have stored up for those who fear you**, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you" (Ps 31:19 NIV84).
    - God's goodness—His character of love, His grace, His truth, is stored up for those who fear Him—Does this remind you of any text for our time?
    - Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour if His judgment has come!
    - We are to be in awe of God, revere Him, it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). And seeing His goodness, His glory and grace revealed in Jesus, we revere Him and for those who revere Him He has stored up His goodness to pour out in us. Thus, we give Him glory because we receive His grace—we receive Jesus and it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.

- Jesus prayed:
    - "Father, **glorify me** in your presence with the **glory** I had with you before the world began… **I have given them the glory that you gave me**, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (Jn 17:5, 22–23 NIV84).
    - What does it mean to glorify God? To have fear and selfishness purged and God's law of love restored within such that we love God and others more than self. To be at-one with God again!

- "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; T**he LORD will give grace and glory**" (Ps 84:11 NKJV).
    - Who is the Sun of Righteousness that rises with healing in His wings?
    - Who is our shield from sin and shame?
    - Who did God give because He so loved the world?
    - So what does it mean the "Lord will give grace and glory"? Does it mean the Lord will send Jesus, the full disclosure, revelation, dispersal, outpouring, fulfillment, of God's grace and glory?

- For it is by **grace you have been saved**, **through faith**—and this not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God—not by works**, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:8–10 NIV84).
    - The grace is a gift—like water in a desert is a gift—the gifting is gracious but the grace is more than the act, it is the substance of God's character, love, methods, power, glory—fully manifested in Jesus. We receive God—Him, His presence into our hearts when we trust Him, through faith. And He, Jesus living in us, is the living grace of God that heals and transforms us.

TUESDAY

Read the last paragraph, "The law often has been…" What kind of evil does the law protect us from?

- Does the law protect people from physical illness—consider Job, the man born blind, or all of nature (Romans 8)?
- Does the law protect people from being murdered—consider Uriah?
- Does the law protect people from natural disasters?
- Does the law protect people from rejection—consider Jesus?

What does the law protect us from? From having our characters, minds, hearts corrupted with sin, fear and selfishness.

Other people can do us harm, can perpetrate evil upon us and we can suffer from sickness, and natural disasters, evil in this world can harm us physically, emotionally, and tempt us spiritually—we are not protected against the temptations and hurts, we are protected against being corrupted in heart, mind and character if we cling to Jesus and stay faithful to His law of truth, love and liberty.

Jesus said,

> "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:11–12 NIV84).

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33 NIV84).

God's law doesn't protect us from being attacked by the evil forces in this world, it protects us from being corrupted by evil.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the Sabbath and it given again in Deuteronomy and this time emphasizing instead of creation, that God delivered them from slavery.

What is the significance of this change?

What is the significance of the Sabbath in relationship to God's moral law?

How is the Sabbath relevant to us today?

What is the difference in understanding the Sabbath through imposed versus design law lenses?

THURSDAY

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3 KJV).

What does this mean?

Through imposed law lens?

Through design law?

The sinful heart is distrustful of God and enmity to God and God's law, it is antagonistic to God's methods and character. Abraham trusted God, in other words, his heart was changed from distrust to trust and God counted Abraham for what he was in reality, a changed man, a man who now trusted God.

And in trust, Abraham's heart and mind were surrendered into the hands of the Creator and God had liberty to work in Abraham to will and to do, and what does God do in people who trust Him? He heals, transforms and recreates into real righteousness.

So God, who spoke into existence, spoke or declared, when Abraham trusted, that Abraham is righteous and Abraham was transformed through faith by God's grace into righteousness—as all who trust like Abraham will be.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason Property update: The renovation project is out to get contractor bids.

NEW TRACTS:

We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 8
Choose Life

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What does the title make you think of?

Was the first thought temporal life or eternal life?

Read our memory verse, but let's read Dt 30:19 and 20:

> "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days" (Dt 30:19–20 NKJV).

What does this passage mean to you?

What life is referred to here—temporal or eternal?

In Friday's lesson it quotes from *The Great Controversy* p 544:

> "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23. While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. Moses declared to Israel: "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." Deuteronomy 30:15. **The death referred to in these scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is "the second death" that is placed in contrast with everlasting life**" (GC 544).

Is there a connection with receiving life, blessings and love for God and obeying His voice? What is that connection?

Is there a connection between cursing, death and not loving God and disobeying His voice? What is that connection?

Do you see how the view of God's law we take impacts our understanding of these questions?

Do you see how the view of God's law we take impacts our understanding of God's character, if we believe the imposed law view we actually end up worshipping a different god that our Creator God.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Read the first three paragraphs in Sabbath's lesson, "Always, it's a sad story…"

What do you think of this woman's plan?

Are the premises or ideas that have caused her to pursue this path without merit? Or is there a real rational basis to her approach? For instance:

- Can we die and live again? Don't we believe Jesus died and rose again? Don't we believe Moses died and rose again, and others? Don't we believe in the future resurrection?
    - So if is possible to live again after dying, then the idea of dying and living again is not far-fetched to us.
- What about having our individuality, personhood transferred to another body—an upgraded body, a body that is not diseased an immortal body? Do we believe that this can happen?
    - Will that body be this exact same physical body we live in now, made of the same particles of matter our bodies have now, just with all the defects fixed, or will it be made of different physical matter? Consider this quotation from EGW:
        - **Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave**. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. **There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death.** God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him. {6BC 1093.2}

- There are reports of people dying, but doing so in places where the body rapidly cooled and being resuscitated up to 18 hours later https://leaps.org/coming-back-from-the-dead-is-no-longer-science-fiction/particle-2
    - Do we know the time limit on this?
- So, is there a logic a rationale that if she were to cryogenically freeze her brain she could be resuscitated and have her individuality transferred to a new body, perhaps a cybernetic body in the future?

My view of those who have died and been resuscitated many hours later is that they were in fact not dead, as my definition of death is necrosis not mere cessation of heartbeat or brain function, cellular death is true death from my view.

A recent 60 minutes segment interviewed Yuval Noah Harari, Israeli professor of history and intellectual, author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* predicts an end to homo sapiens and a replacing humans with a new upgraded species genetically or cybernetically enhanced. Or transferring our consciousness to completely artificial platforms.

He makes the difference between consciousness and intelligence. Consciousness is the ability to feel, love or hate, to have compassion, to have conviction of right and wrong, a morality. But intelligence is about problem solving. Artificial intelligence has immense problem solving ability but with no consciousness, no feelings, no conscience, no moral compass.

Who does that describe? Satan—Satan is highly intelligent, can process information, problem solve, but he has destroyed within himself the faculties that love, that have compassion, that has any conviction of wrong—yes I suspect he feels hate, anger, rage—so not a complete cyborg, but the plan to enhance humans is designed to make us more like Satan and less like Jesus. And it will be sold to us as a way to make us better, but it will not.

I wrote a blog about this in June 2021 entitled Human 2.0: The Rise of the Cyborg—Disconnecting Humans From God in which I describe my concern that these actions are designed by Satan to change the human brain in such a way that we no longer are capable of connecting with the Holy Spirit.

This is designed to destroy the image of God in humankind. This is Satan's goal to make humans to be the temple of his character. It will be presented as advancing and enhancing and improving the species—but it is just like the temptation to Eve—take the fruit to make yourself more knowledgeable, better, more godlike but it instead corrupted her and effaced the image of God in humankind. Then the antediluvians corrupted humankind further consider this quote:

> But if there was **one sin above another** which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, **it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God**, and caused confusion everywhere. 3Spiritual Gifts 64

Sadly millions will eagerly line up to take these augmentations if they become available.

So, is this woman's plan without rationale or logic?

So the premises that cause her to seek this path are not irrational, but what is? What is the part that does make her plan irrational and doomed to fail? That even if human technology could at some point achieve this, it would be resuscitating people into mortal bodies, still subject to death, with carnal natures and the life that they have is still infected with fear and selfishness who experience the pain and suffering that sin brings and who would likely have the image of God destroyed in the process. It is not eternal life that comes from harmony with God. It is Satan's counterfeit fruit offering people to pursue as a means to save self while remaining in sin.

So, in the end this is truly doomed to fail.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The Tree of Life—any questions about this?

The lesson quotes from *The Great Controversy* page 532:

> "In the midst of Eden grew the tree of life, whose fruit had the power of **perpetuating life**. Had Adam remained obedient to God, he would have continued to enjoy free access to this tree and would have lived forever. But when he sinned he was cut off from partaking of the tree of life, and he became subject to death. The divine sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," points to the utter extinction of life." *The Great Controversy* 532.

What does this mean?

- Would access to the tree prevent death if one were beheaded, or incinerated, or vaporized in a nuclear explosion?
- My view is that the tree provided something nutritional that prevented all physiological aging, infections, decay, provided healing powers from physical injuries much more robustly than we have now, but it would not have prevented Cain from smashing Abel's head with a stone.
- And if access to the fruit were to in some way prevent physiological death despite being beheaded, or being blasted with high dose radiation, or torn apart by wild animals, if that were true (which I don't think is so) how would the fruit have likely been used once human beings were corrupted by sin? to torture others.

Why did God remove the tree of life? If God would not have removed the tree of life from the earth after Adam's sin, what would have been the most likely result?

If there were the proverbial fountain of youth in existence today on earth, a fountain that prevented aging, and even perhaps healed injuries and diseases—who do you think would control it and who would be granted access to it?

Do you think if such a fountain existed on earth it would bring greater peace or greater conflict, greater harmony or more war, greater love or greater exploitation?

So, if the wicked, the unrepentant, those who love Satan's ways had access to the tree of life, what would be created? Hell—a place of perpetual torment, exploitation, and evil.

So, God in mercy, in love, removed the tree of life from the earth until He could fulfill His plan to remove sin from people and restore His law of love in us. Then, He will return the tree to earth and we will have access to it again.

What does "The divine sentence, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,' points to the utter extinction of life" mean?

Does it mean God pronounced a judicial sentence upon them—they broke a rule and God sentenced them to death—or does it mean they changed themselves to be out of harmony with how God built life and the unavoidable result is decay—disconnected from God the source of life, slow wearing out, ruin and death?

God's sentence upon them did not cause their death sentence, or inflict it, God's sentence announced it, pronounced it, confirmed it, made plain the reality of their terminal condition.

Another thought about the Tree of Life—does life have its origins in a tree? Another way to ask this is—where did the tree come from? Did God create the tree? Then the tree gets its life sustaining powers from God, not inherent in itself, and thus life comes from God, not from a tree. God, for some reason, has chosen to use the tree to sustain and maintain human life in Eden, similarly to how God uses fruits and nuts today to give us life, but life really doesn't come from any tree—all life comes from God.

- In him was life, and that life was the light of men. (Jn 1:4 NIV84).

- I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:48–51 NIV84).

Consider this quote:

> "Christ is the source of our life, the source of immortality. He is the tree of life, and to all who come to Him He gives spiritual life" (RH Jan. 26, 1897). {7BC 989.8}

MONDAY

Following up on Sunday's lesson, the lesson on Monday points to multiple texts in the Bible that speak of only two options, life and death, let's look at 1John 5:11-12:

> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 Jn 5:11–12 NIV84).

From where does life come? And how is it that if we have Christ we have life? Why is it that if we don't have Christ we don't have life?

How is it that all choose for or against Christ if all haven't heard about Jesus?

We choose Christ whenever we choose truth, love and freedom. Jesus is love, Jesus is truth and Jesus is freedom. We only have these in union with Jesus. And we choose these in how we treat others. Jesus said, "as you have done it unto the least of these you have done it unto me."

Jesus works through His agencies on earth to bring His healing truth and love to bear on all hearts. Every person is given opportunity to choose truth, love and freedom in how they treat others—and making the choice in what we choose to do in governance of self, choose to surrender our lives into God's hands, is how we are healed and transformed.

The law of worship enters in, by beholding we are changed. So, it is imperative to inquire, which God are we worshipping—the God of truth, love and freedom revealed in creation as the basis of life (Romans 1:20), revealed fully in the life of Jesus, revealed in Scripture, revealed in reality of how things work, or do we reject the God of love and truth and embrace the god of this world, the god of fear, selfishness, control, coercion, imposed law, force and inflicted punishment, the god that seeks justice through more government?

There is no middle ground—we are either becoming more like Jesus who did not seek to reform the governments of this world, either the Jewish government or the Roman one, but came to heal hearts and minds, or we are becoming more like Satan and seek to advance our morality, our view of right and wrong through more enforcement upon others.

The second paragraph states, "In the end there is no middle ground for us human beings. Before the great controversy is completely over, sin, Satan, disobedience, and rebellion will be eradicated."

Do we agree that all sin, disobedience, evil, rebelliousness, along with Satan and all those who persist in sinfulness will be eradicated?

But how does God eradicate all wickedness along with the wicked without inciting fear and causing more rebellion?

If God were to inflict this upon people, use power to kill those who would not otherwise die, what would be the result?

Consider these quotes—do you agree?

> God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government.** The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. *The Desire of Ages* 759

Now this next quote is powerful, we will unpack it, it reveals what we are dealing with right now in our world and the choice we have between the two sides, how it gets framed, and how people get duped into choosing the wrong side and the results of choosing that wrong side:

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. [What law? How did it begin in heaven? Were the Ten Commandments in heaven when Lucifer rebelled? When the angels realized there was a law, what was their view of that? How did Satan attack God's law? By attacking the idea of law in the minds of intelligent beings, infecting their minds with the idea that God's law is made up rules, imposed laws, which once accepted immediately causes one to view God as a rule-enforcer, the source of inflicted punishment for disobedience, which immediately undermines love and trust and fuels more rebellion.] **Every man will be tested**. [How? What will be the test? How will we be tested? Will it be by a rule or by methods we employ in how we live, how we treat others?] Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. [What is obedience? Is it rule keeping? Were the Jews who killed Jesus obedient because they kept the Sabbath? Was the Good Samaritan disobedient because he didn't keep the Sabbath or sacrifice at temple or eat a kosher diet? Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments—which he explained was to love God and others. The sheep and goats are not separated by Sabbath keeping, they are separated by how they treat others. Do we live God's law truth, love and freedom, or do we live Satan's law of imposed rules with external enforcement upon others?] **All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn**. [How? Where? When? By the law we choose to practice in governance of self in the treatment of others.] There will be but two classes. **Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion**. *The Desire of Ages* 763.3 [How will they show? By the character they develop in the law they identify with and apply to their lives in how they live and treat others!]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. [How will the end come? What causes it? How does God vindicate us?] Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion w**ill be cut off.** Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Malachi 4:1),—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, "Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; ... I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." Then "the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;" "they shall be as though they had not been." Ezekiel 28:6-19; Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16. *The Desire of Ages* 763.4 [How is it Satan and His sympathizers are destroyed—they are cut off? Cut off from what? From the source of life, from God. What causes them to be cut off? Who decides to cut them off? They decide. They beg for the mountains to fall on them, they flee from His presence, they hate holiness, love, honesty, truth, it torments their minds to be aware of their own state and all the evil they have done.]

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. [What kind of law uses arbitrary power? Imposed law, but this is not arbitrary power, not an infliction. This is the natural result of unremedied sin.] **The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown**. [What kind of law is sowing and reaping? "those who sow to the carnal nature, from that nature reap destruction" Galatians 6:8.] God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. [They choose to separate themselves from God—this is what sin does, hardens the heart and the sinner, if not healed, if

not reconciled will voluntarily choose death over connection with God.] He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. **God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles**. [How? What causes this?] This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. **By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them**. *The Desire of Ages* 764.1

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. [Why didn't they understand this? Because sin and death were never seen and Satan had introduced lies about what was happening.] Had Satan and his host then been left to r**eap the full result of their sin, they would have perished**; [From what? From God letting them go, not from an infliction of death] **but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin**. [Sin, not God, causes death. God is the source of life. But Satan has so infected minds with the lie about God's law most Christians, including SDAs believe God must use His power to torture and kill the wicked in the end. The church has perpetuated this lie and it is the message of the 3 Angels that is to lighten the world with the truth about our Creator God and His design laws and the real cause of death, which is breaking the laws upon which life is built. But sadly, our own church is still deeply infected with imperialism and human law constructs of God and has failed thus far to effectively take this end time message to the world.] A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. *The Desire of Ages* 764.2

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. [Why will not doubt about God remain? Why will no rebellion remain? Because God will **not** use power to inflict death upon the wicked, they die of the natural results of unremedied sin in their being. As the author states elsewhere, the death of the wicked is "voluntary with themselves."] Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, **the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable**. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. *The Desire of Ages* 764.3

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "The Lord is very clear…" What do you think of this? Why would the words be the same between good and evil that Adam and Eve chose and what we choose?

Each person decides what we will know by experience, not cognitively, but functionally.

Adam and Eve were created sinless and chose to know evil, fear, selfishness in their being.

Jesus was born to a sinful mother, and through her knew by experience the temptation of sin, being tempted in every way just like we are, but Jesus chose to know in His heart and mind and character only good.

We are born in sin, conceived in iniquity, we all know sin, know fear, know selfishness both in temptation and experience, but through our faith in Jesus we can choose to die to fear, selfishness and sin, and know good—we can choose to know God and choosing this is to partake of the divine nature, to take the bread of life and thus to know life.

The lesson states, "In a real sense, the Lord said to them: *Therefore, with the free will that I have given you—choose life, choose blessing, choose goodness, not death, evil, and curses."*

Why must we choose? Because it is the only way for use to be healed, cleansed, restored and retain our individuality.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points us to Deuteronomy 30 where Moses points out that when they find themselves in distress, disbursed among the nations, that when they turn back to God and obey all He told them then He would bless them and restore them.

The lesson asks what this tells us about God's grace.

Are blessings grace from God? What about cursing, is that grace from God?

What is the cursing? Isn't it the sufferings and consequences that come when people reject God, walk away from Him, insist on violating His design laws for life? And is this suffering, pain, loss grace from God or the lack of grace from God?

Under imposed law such suffering is seen as punishment for sin.

Under design law it is seen as God's grace allowing them to reap what they have insisted upon sowing into their lives. And God permits them to reap loss, pain, suffering to cause them to reflect and consider and perhaps learn and repent and choose life. But if there was no pain or suffering when we break God's law, it would only lead to greater injury, separation and eventual eternal death. Thus the so-called cursings are also God's grace working to wake us up and turn us back to God.

Do you remember this quote that I shared two weeks ago?

> Had Israel taken heed to the messages of the prophets emphasizing the value of "the great things" of God's law, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they persisted in **turning aside from his law** that God was compelled to allow their enemies to take them captive. [What law? Imposed rules, or God's design law given through

> all Scripture? Remember over and again the prophetic message of justice was loving people, not rule-keeping?] "My people are destroyed for **lack of knowledge**," was his message to them through Hosea. "Because thou hast **rejected knowledge**, I will also reject thee, ... seeing thou hast forgotten **the law of thy God**." Hosea 4:6. [What knowledge had they rejected? Creator worship whose law is design law of love, truth, freedom and they preferred pagan gods with imposed laws instead. So God would teach them reality, cause and effect, which is design law. Note what comes next] **In trial and affliction they were to learn lessons** that under circumstances more favorable they had refused to learn. RH February 26, 1914, par. 1 [If a child refuses to learn by the favorable circumstances of instruction not to touch a hot stove, then the child eventually learns through the trial of touching the stove and the affliction of getting burned.]

Are the trials and afflictions grace? Yes!

God's grace is God working to save us—all His actions are for us, everything God does is for us.

> What, then, can we possibly say in response to this? Don't you realize that God is on our side? And if God is for us, who can be against us? God does not need convincing to be good to us; No! It is we who need convincing that God is good to us! If he did not withhold his own Son–but gave him up for us all–don't you realize that he will withhold nothing good from us? But along with his Son, he will give us all things that are for our good! Who is it, then, that brings charges against those whom God has chosen? Stop believing Satan's lies about God — it is not God who brings charges against us! It is God who sets us right with himself. It is God who heals and transforms us. Then who condemns? It is not Jesus, oh no! Christ Jesus, who died–and more importantly, who was raised from death to life–is sitting at God's right hand and is working hand in hand with his Father. Together they are interceding with the malignancy of sin in our minds and holding in check the power of the evil one, while providing the Remedy for our deliverance, healing and restoration. Who, then, shall ever separate us from the love of Christ? Shall problems, or hardships, or criticism, or persecution, or hunger, or disease, or homelessness, or nakedness, or imprisonment, or financial ruin, or terrorists, or war? As it is written: "For no matter what we face, including death, we will not doubt you; even if we are treated as sheep led to the slaughter–our confidence in you will not waver."
>
> In all things — no matter what we face — we are more than conquerors through trust in him who loved us. For I am absolutely convinced that God is totally on our side and nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the past nor present nor future, nor any power in the universe; neither things exalted nor things debased, nor anything else in all creation–nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39 Remedy)

There is an EGW quote in the third paragraph, "All His biddings are enables." COL p. 333.

What does this idea mean to you?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Central to the covenant…" Is there a law involved here? What law and what type of law?

What happens if we insert into people's minds the idea that this is a rule, that there are imposed religious rules one must conform to—dress in a certain way on a certain day, don't do this, do do that, don't use the same kitchen utensils for meat and milk, don't push an elevator button on Sabbath for it is a spark and that is starting a fire.

If one believes worship functions like this—what kind of god are they worshipping?

And then, because of the law of worship—by beholding we are change, what happens to their mind, hearts and character?

Thus the 3 Angels' messages to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water—worship the Creator whose laws are design laws.

This was the message of 1888 that was rejected and the leadership went with the imposed law view and our church has been presenting the dictator view of God and obstructing worship of the Creator and we have languished.

Below I am including the text of an entire article printed in the *Signs of the Times* January 20, 1890 entitle: God Made Manifest in Christ by EGW.

This article was written in 1889, shortly after the 1888 GC. I encourage you all to read the entire thing—it is the direction the church was to go after 1888, but instead the penal legal view as advanced.

> **At the first advent of Christ, darkness, covered the earth, and gross darkness the people**. [Darkness about what? It was about God, the controversy has always been about God. The eternal gospel is the good news about God.] Light and truth seemed to have departed from among men, and Satan appeared to reign in undisputed power. Rival sects existed, and among those who professed to be the servants of God were displayed **love of preeminence and strife for power and position**. [Satan's government is rising above others, the elites rule over others and the masses serve the elites. But Jesus did not think equality with God was something to be grasped but sacrificed Himself to uplift the masses.] Souls who were desirous of light were filled with perplexity and sorrow. **Many were sighing, "What is truth?" Ignorance prevailed, but many were looking for something better, looking for light that would illuminate the moral darkness of the world**. [Do we find the world in this state today?] They were **thirsting for a knowledge of the living God**, for some assurance of a life beyond the tomb. [This is what the world is truly thirsting for today, even if they don't know it. Instead they the common view of God is simply a more powerful dictator—no different than any human ruler, imposing laws and punishments.] There **were men not of the Jewish nation who prophesied** that an inspired instructor would come to teach them of the truth. [God didn't limit

His revelations to the Jewish people. The Holy Spirit works on all receptive minds. The Bible is the recorded focus because it focuses us on the human family through which Jesus would come, but it isn't the total sum of all God's revelations to humankind.] There were among the Jews men who had not polluted their integrity, who read with eager anticipation the sure word of prophecy that pointed to the advent of the Redeemer. They rejoiced in the promise that God had made to his servant Moses: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." ST January 20, 1890, par. 1

Again they read how the Lord should anoint Him to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. They read how he would set judgment in the earth, how the isles should wait for his law, how the Gentiles would come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. ST January 20, 1890, par. 2

Christ came just as prophecy had foretold. He was the "way, the truth, and the life," and the beams of the **Sun of Righteousness dispelled the moral darkness** so that the honest in heart might see the truth. [What was His goal? To reveal truth that dispels lies and sets hearts and minds free. He didn't come to establish an earthly kingdom of imposed laws and forced obedience, but to free hearts from fear and selfishness.] The absence of outward display and worldly grandeur, called forth comments of disapprobation from the people. **Doubt and criticism met him on every side.** [Why? Over what? He was too human, too frail, to weak. He wasn't even an Olympic champion. He wasn't even a Mr. Universe body builder. He was a real human and how can a real human be the Son of God. He doesn't show power. He doesn't show wealth. He doesn't who superiority of intellect by using words and language that made others feel stupid. He was easy to approach and talk to. And He ate with sinners.] **Christ himself had chosen the human conditions of his life.** He had selected the lowliest place in society. He was the Majesty of heaven, and he knew that the world would bear sway by magnificence, carrying everything before its display and grandeur; but Jesus honored those whom the world looked upon with contempt. Christ's birthplace was devoid of conveniences, not to speak of riches and luxury. And his entire life in this world was in keeping with the humble home of his early experience. ST January 20, 1890, par. 3

The Saviour of the world proposed that no attraction of an earthly character should call men to his side. **The light and beauty of celestial truth alone should be the drawing power. The outward glory, the worldly honor, which attracts the attention of men, he would not assume.** [Why? What is the goal? What is God working to achieve? The transformation of hearts and minds. To win us back to trust, love, understanding friendship. Does this occur when people are intimidated, fearful to ask questions, awed and silenced? Understand the purpose of the Roman cathedrals, they are designed to awe, intimidate and silence the mind, to stop thinking, to make us feel small and insignificant. The Roman liturgy, robes, and altar are all designed to intimidate, not make the approach simply and safe.] **He made himself accessible to all,** teaching the pure, exalted principle of truth as that which was only worthy of

their notice. But although so humbly born, so unpretending in life, God did not leave him without a witness. The principalities of heaven did him homage. Wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth beneath attested his power and majesty. At his baptism a voice from heaven fell upon the ears of men, declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The bright glory of God in the form of a dove of burnished gold encircled him. John declared: "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and **the world knew him not**. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." ST January 20, 1890, par. 4

Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. **He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed**. [Why did He come? What was His purpose? Why was this necessary? What is the issue in the Great Controversy?] **We could not behold the glory of God unveiled in Christ and live;** [Why? Is it a rule that if we peak God will kill us, or is it something about reality that in our sinful state we couldn't tolerate God's unveiled glory?] but as he came in the garb of humanity, we may draw nigh to our Redeemer. We are called upon to behold the Lord our Father in the person of his Son. **Christ came in the robe of the flesh, with his glory subdued in humanity, that lost man might communicate with him and live**. Through Christ we may comprehend something of him who is glorious in holiness. Jesus is the mystic ladder by which we may mount to behold the glory of the infinite God. **By faith we behold Christ standing between humanity and divinity, connecting God and man, and earth and heaven**. ST January 20, 1890, par. 5

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that **when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him**. [What holds us captive? Lies about God and our own carnal natures, our fears, guilt, shame insecurities, which are magnified by believing Satan's lies. Christ came to set us free. What is the payment called that frees one from captivity? A ransom, the ransom is the truth about God and the new nature Christ developed that He offers to us. Thus the ransom price is paid to us.] **Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God.** He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth.** [Has Satan had success in obstructing the true views of God on earth? How? By infecting Christianity with imposed law and teaching God as dictator. Those who believe this in the church promote false views of God and many who reject the belief in God do so because of this false view of Him.] He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary**. [Presenting God's law as imposed and making rules etc. misrepresents God as the source of inflicted punishments] He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father**, to correctly

represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.** [What is setting right? Justification and what is keeping right, sanctification—and what was the only way to do this? By revealing the truth about God which destroys the lies and wins us back to trust!] That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. ST January 20, 1890, par. 6

The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be. [But which view of God dominates the church? Which view of God was advanced by our church after 1888?] Said Christ, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." **The love of Jesus, expressed for the fallen race in his life of self-denial and sufferings, is the manifestation of the Father's love for a sinful, fallen world.** Christ endured shame and grief and death for those who despised his love and trampled upon his mercy. **He paid the debt of man's transgression upon the cross of Calvary with his own precious blood.** [To whom? What was the debt? Why was it necessary to pay it? Did the Father need truth revealed to Him in order to free Him from Satan's lies? Did sinful humans need that truth? And did the Father need a new sinless nature developed for Him, or did the species human need a human to overcome sinfulness, purge it and restore God's law of love into the living creation? And Jesus is the second Adam, the one human being who developed a sinless human character eradicating the infection of fear and selfishness.] **The men of his own nation, the leaders of the people, were so ensnared by the deceptions of Satan that the plan of redemption for a fallen race seemed to their minds indistinct and unexplainable.** ST January 20, 1890, par. 7 [How many Christians are lost in the same confusion—with imposed law constructs, penal systems, Latin words that don't make sense?]

Man was God's workmanship, made after his image, endowed with talents, and fitted for a high destiny. **But Satan has worked to obliterate the divine image, and to impress his own image instead of the image of God in man's nature**. [Is this describing a legal problem, or a change in the state of being? When Adam and Eve sinned, were they still loyal, faithful, selfless, beings operating upon God's law of love but now had a legal problem—or did they actually get changed and were now infected with Satanic principles of fear and selfishness, the survival drives?] Jesus condescended to humble himself, to take human nature, and by **uniting divinity with humanity, he proposed to elevate man in the scale of moral value.** [How? By restoring God's law into humanity and sharing His immortal life with us.] All heaven was poured out in the gift of God's dear Son. **Through faith in him the sinner could be justified, and God could yet be just in justifying the sinner; for Christ had become a propitiation for the sins of the repentant soul**. [What does this mean? Set right, how? By restoring God's design law of love into us and Jesus was the means of doing this in reality.] The only plan that could be devised to save the human race was that which called for the incarnation, humiliation, and crucifixion of the Son of God, the Majesty of heaven. After the plan of salvation was devised, Satan could have no ground upon which to found his suggestion that God, because so great, could care nothing for so insignificant a creature as man. The redemption of man is a

wonderful theme, and the love manifested to the fallen race through the plan of salvation, can be estimated only by the cross of Calvary. The depth of this love even angels cannot sound. **That God could consent to become flesh, and dwell among fallen beings, to lift them up from their helplessness and despair, is an unfathomed mystery**. [What kind of kingdom is this? What kind of government? What kind of law? Is this the elites ruling over the masses, or the Elite of elites giving and sacrificing self to uplift the masses? Understand, all human governments are Satan's because they use imposed law, punishments and seek to exploit the masses to elevate the few.] He whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, whose dominion endureth throughout all generations, **made himself to be sin for us that he might lift up all that are bowed down**, and give life to those who are ready to perish. ST January 20, 1890, par. 8

Oh, that men might open their minds to know God as he is revealed in his Son! Truth came forth from the lips of Jesus, uncorrupted with human philosophy. His words were from heaven, such as mortal lips had never spoken nor mortal ears ever heard. **His heart was an altar on which burned the flames of infinite love**. [An illusion to the golden altar in the sanctuary where incense burned. And this is to be our hearts also.] Goodness, mercy, and love were enthroned in the breast of the Son of God. He set up **his tabernacle** in the midst of our human encampment, pitched his tent by the side of the tents of men, that he might dwell among them and make them familiar with his divine character and love. [Again referencing the OT theater pointing us to the reality.] No one could love Christ and pay homage to him without serving and honoring the infinite God. Those who had an appreciation of the character and mission of Christ, were filled with reverence and awe, as they looked upon him and felt that they were looking upon the **temple of the living God**. **Officers were sent to take the Son of God, that the temple in which God was enshrined might be destroyed**. [Where is God to be enshrined? Only in Jesus, or in every one of us?] But as they drew near and heard the words of divine wisdom that fell from his lips, they were charmed, and the power and excellence of his instruction so filled their hearts and minds that they forgot the purpose for which they had been sent. Christ revealed himself to their souls. Divinity flashed through humanity, and they returned so filled with this one thought, so charmed with the ideas he had presented, that when the leaders of Israel inquired, "Why have ye not brought him?" they replied, "Never man spake like this man." They had seen that which priests and rulers would not see,—humanity flooded with the light and glory of divinity. **Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom he represented**. **Christ exalted the character of God,** attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, **of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God**. [What was His mission? To set men right through what? What? No legal payment to God? No, legal payments were never required. The requirement has always been perfect harmony with God's law, which required it be restored into humanity. Jesus did this as a human for us, restoring the image of God in humanity, revealed the truth of God to us to dispel the lies and win us to trust. And when we trust Him He shares Himself with us we become partakers of the divine nature and our temples are cleansed.] In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which

> thou gavest me to do." **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men**. ST January 20, 1890, par. 9

Wow—what do you think of this?

The lesson talks about God being a jealous God—this is not human selfishness, jealous for ourselves, it is the jealousy of love, the jealousy of wanting the best for others. He jealous for our good. To me in our language zealous would be a better word.

Read last paragraph, "However different the context…" Would this "pressure" include medical mandates upon others?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Property update: The renovation project is out to get contractor bids.

NEW TRACTS:

We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 9
Turn Their Hearts

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text: "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29 NKJV).

What does this text mean to you?

What is the condition to finding God? Seeking with all your heart and all your soul—what does that mean?

Another way to say it is with all your **mind** and all your **being**. When God breathed into Adam he became a living soul or a living being, so the word soul means your entire self—the word heart means the inner works of your mind, affections, longings, your true heart's desire.

Why won't we find God if we don't seek Him with all the heart and soul? Is it because God hides? Or is it how reality works—we reap what we sow, if we take apple seeds and label them pumpkin seeds and plant them do we get pumpkins?

If we study the Bible or go to church or join a church organization so that we can get approval from people, get a job, get contracts for our businesses etc. will we find God in doing this?

So God is making the point right here in the beginning of the Bible, that the motive of the heart is what matters. God is differentiating design law from rule-keeping. It has always been this way.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the Hebrew *Mi-Yitten* which has the meaning of a wish, a desire, a hope, a longing that someone wants badly.

Read Deuteronomy 5:29: "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Dt 5:29 NIV84).

Read 6th paragraph, "Here is the Lord—Creator God…" This is so well said, so many good points in this paragraph. Let's unpack them.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

First, God is the Creator of all reality—and as such His laws are the laws that reality operate upon. God is sovereign in that He is Creator and also Sustainer of all reality. His sovereignty is manifested in maintaining control of what God controls. And God controls Himself and His laws, including the law of liberty. Thus, when bad things happen this is not God causing it, but God sustaining liberty why? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of liberty. If God were to override our minds, our hearts and use power to force a change upon a person that that person didn't choose for themselves, such an action would destroy the individual, erase their personhood and create either a robot, or a new naïve being like Adam was in Eden.

The only way for God to achieve His goal of our individual salvation is by winning us to trust Him. In trust we choose Him; we actively participate in the process of our own transformation:

- The truth doesn't come from us.
- The new heart and right spirit doesn't come from us.
- The law of God that is written in our heart doesn't come from us.
- The perfect sinless character that develops within us doesn't come from us.
- The power to overcome temptation doesn't come from us.
- The love that motivates and takes away our fear doesn't come from us.
- What comes from us is our **choosing**—daily choosing to trust God, to say yes to Him and no to temptation, to place our lives, our heart's desires, our fortunes, our families, our futures into God's hands—like Joseph, like Daniel, like Paul.
- And in making that choice of faith we enter into a real union with the Creator of heaven and earth and are transformed in that process.

So God is Creator. His laws are design laws. Liberty is a requirement to healing hearts and minds. We must choose God. So, if God cannot trample our freewill and we still be free, then do you see how this truth exposes the fraud of penal/legal system. God's law cannot work like human law. If at any point God uses His power to inflict external punishment for sin that the sinner would not reap naturally from sin, then we are not free, we are being coerced or compelled, and this destroys love and incites rebellion.

So this reality raises multiple questions—how does God bring an end to sin and sinners without violating freedom?

If love cannot be achieved through rule-keeping, through law, through threats of punishment, then why did God use so much law?

Read the last paragraph, "And just as we humans…" If the choice is ours, and the benefits of choosing God are infinite, beyond imagining and counting, and the loss of choosing against God is eternal death, what prevents so many from making the choice for God?

- Lies about God that prevent people from knowing the goodness of God and the dangers of sin—two of the most effective lies are that God is the source of inflicted pain and suffering for

sin—which violates liberty and incites rebellion, and there is no God we evolved from lower life forms

- Feelings—guilt, shame, fear—which cause people to feel hopeless, too sinful or bad to be saved
- The pain of what reality requires we experience when we choose God—the crucifixion of the old nature. Once there is brokenness there are no pain free options. Choosing God may require the loss of a job, or a friend, or alienation from family, or the pain of going through detox, or the humiliation of repentance not just to God but to others.
- Destroyed faculties—some have persisted in rebellion so long that they prefer power over others to sacrificing to help others; they prefer the thrill of getting away with exploiting to the peace of living honestly; they prefer the fear of intimidation to the joy of appreciation, and God's principles simply are not appealing to some.
- Misplaced trust—some don't come to God because they have never trained their minds to think for themselves, they wait to see what others whom they have trusted will think and then follow what those people say to do.

Remember this quote?

> If we mistake the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God we are led astray by the foolishness of man's wisdom. Here is the great danger of many in -----. **They have not an experience for themselves**. They have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves, **with unprejudiced, unbiased judgment, questions and subjects that are new and that are ever liable to arise**. **They wait to see what others will think**. If these dissent, that is all that is needed to convince them that the subject under consideration is of no account whatever. Although this class is large, it does not change the fact that **they are inexperienced and weak-minded** through long yielding to the enemy, and **will always be as sickly as babes, walking by others' light, living on others' experience, feeling as others feel, and acting as others act. They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others; they are merely shadows of those whom they think [are] right. Unless these become sensible of their wavering character and correct it, they will all fail of everlasting life**; they will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days. **They will possess no stamina to resist the devil, for they do not know that it is he**. Someone must be at their side to inform them whether a foe or a friend is approaching. **They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned. They are not wise in those things which relate to the kingdom of God.** Neither young nor old are excusable in **trusting to another to have an experience for them**. Said the angel: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." A noble self-reliance is needed in the Christian experience and warfare. 2T 129.2

I share this quote a lot and I like it, because it describes reality so clearly. What is the problem for these people? They have never learned to think for themselves and they have never learned to trust Jesus for themselves. This describes people who trust others; they trust the opinion of others more than trusting Jesus and the truth directly for themselves. This is why they will fail to have everlasting life.

A third of the angels in heaven trusted Lucifer rather than examining the truth for themselves. Their misplaced trust caused them to be sympathetic to him and this allowed them to believe his lies and be turned away from God.

This is what is happening in the world now—people are being faced with decisions, personal decisions, decisions over their own health and that of their family and people are deciding—how do we choose? Who do we trust? What methods of discernment? What motivates the choice—love or fear?

Any finite being who is in a saving relationship with God can still listen to bad advise and make choices that are not the best, not what God would have them do, but not lose salvation because of this, just be injured or diminish their usefulness for God's cause.

Remember Paul taking the advice of church leaders to participate in a Jewish ceremonial cleansing—in the book *Acts of the Apostles,* p. 404 the author calls this advice on part of the church leaders as stemming from cowardice and it was not consistent with the gospel message. Paul didn't lose his salvation for taking this advice, but he lost his freedom, had his ministry shortened and eventually lost his life.

We each have the responsibility before God for the choices we make in carrying out the duties God has given us. We are wise to be informed with the input from others, but we are foolish if we surrender the choice of what we do in governance of ourselves to others.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "All through the Bible…" I think the example of Peter denying Jesus is a great example of God's foreknowledge—if we accept the Bible record as accurate, which I do, then God foreknew Peter's choices before Peter made them.

Other examples:

- Judas betraying him
- The casting lots for his clothing
- The crucifixion by His people rather than stoning like Stephen
- Cyrus releasing the Jews to return to Jerusalem
- Only the need for one ark at the time of Noah

Consider this quotation from *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> He that ruleth in the heavens is the one who s**ees the end from the beginning--the one before whom the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread**, and who, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, beholds the accomplishment of His own purposes of love and blessing. Though "clouds and darkness are round about Him:

> righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne." Psalm 97:2, R.V. And this the inhabitants of the universe, both loyal and disloyal, will one day understand. "His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Deuteronomy 32:4. {PP 43.1}

God is the Creator of all reality—including time—God is not subject to time, time is subject to God. God lives outside of our linear existence.

But some genuinely sincere people, who love God and want only to represent God in the best possible light, have real difficulty with this truth. They just can't understand how God can know the future and we still be free to decide. In their way of thinking, if God knows our actual choice, not our possible choices, but our actual choices, then to them we are no longer free to make them. What would you say to this?

- Foreknowledge is not causality—knowing the future doesn't cause it, any more than knowing history caused the history. Think about that. If you read about Moses striking the rock—that is a fact of history. We know that fact, but is our knowledge of the history what caused it to occur that way? Likewise, knowledge of the future isn't the same as causing the future.
- Another way to comprehend it is this way. What informs God of what any person does in the future—is the action that the person takes at that point in the future when they choose. The individual choices is what God knows because He is there at that place in time when they make their choice.

What would it say about God, if God didn't live outside of time, if God didn't know the future?

Read the fourth paragraph, "Notice that in…" What causes people to forget lessons from history?

- Painful or unflattering lessons that some part of us wants to forget
- Propaganda—purposeful misinformation
- Lack of education, not ever being taught history

What were the lessons that God wanted them to remember that they forgot over and over again?

- That God is love and God is trustworthy
- That God doesn't need to be persuaded to be on their side
- That God's laws are design laws not rule-keeping
- That there are no other gods
- That true worship is in living God's law in how we treat others
- That salvation is healing of hearts and minds not legal adjustment

Are we still struggling today with remembering these same truths?

Read fifth paragraph, "God's grace is amazing…" What would be the only reason God would not restore them? If they refuse to allow Him.

But what about forgiving them—what comes first, God's forgiveness or our repentance?

What leads us to repentance? The kindness of God—Romans 2:4.

Do we believe "For God so loved the world that **He** gave His only Son…" or do we believe, "That God was so angry at the world that Jesus had to sneak out of heaven to pay the blood price to propitiate God's wrath so that God would be able and willing to forgive us our sins?"

Yes, God is for us and is always for us and God is NEVER against us. The entire Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in perfect unity expending every resource of their infinite selves for our salvation. There is nothing that comes from God that obstructs our salvation. There is nothing that comes from God that condemns us—all condemnation comes from sin and the accuser.

TUESDAY

Read the first paragraph, "All through the book of Deuteronomy…" Is obedience important?

Is there more than one type of obedience?

Paul take up the issue of obedience in his writings and contrasts two types of obedience. What are the two types of obedience Paul contrasts?

The obedience that springs from law versus the obedience that springs from faith.

What is the difference in these two types of obedience?

Is difference in obedience made distinct in the action, the behavior, the deeds?

- Sabbath keeping
- Tithe paying
- Food choices
- Bible readings
- Doctrinal beliefs (Creation, the Bible is inspired, state of the dead etc.)

Or, can a person who obeys based on law and one who obeys based on faith appear to be the same in their behaviors and even their core doctrinal beliefs?

What is the difference of obeying out of law and out of faith?

Does the obedience that springs from law have a different impact upon the heart and mind of the obedient than the same action that springs from faith?

Consider these two quotations:

- The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense **of obligation merely**--because he is **required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey**. [What does this mean, does not obey—the man is paying a faithful tithe—the church treasurer even checks his math. He doesn't do any work on Sabbath, his business is closed, TV off. He eats only the approved foods. What does this mean? Why is rule-keeping not actual obedience, even if the behaviors are the proper deeds?] When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. **True obedience is the outworking of a principle within**. It springs from **the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God**. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3} [What does God want? He wants to change the heart. He wants our love, loyalty, friendship, understanding, devotion—and cannot God get this from us by rule keeping, imposed law, threats, or enforced compliance. It only comes from truth and love winning the heart to trust/faith.]

- **A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel.** By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and **in the love of God**. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897} [True obedience is when the heart is transformed to love God and others and then the behaviors are driven by the motive of love. What drives the behavior of the law-keeper, those who think they are obedient? It is still fear and selfishness—fear of punishment or desire for reward (level 1 and 2), fear of rejection or desire for acceptance (level 3), fear of legal trouble or desire for legal security (level 4). What drives the obedience of faith is love for God and others (level 5), understanding of God's design laws and methods (level 6) and understanding and willfully participating in God's purposes (level 7).]

Does our faith have levels of obedience that has different impact upon the heart and mind—for instance, is there a childlike faith that is real, but which doesn't really comprehend, it is an immature but real faith? And is there a mature faith that is real and also understands the reasons through the reasons why it works this way, what the best actual action is in any given situation to fulfill God's will and purpose? Does the maturity of the person, their level of understanding along with their faith have a different impact upon the heart and mind, and thus the specific behaviors might change?

For instance, could a childlike faith not eat foods offered to idols because they love Jesus and don't want to eat foods that they think could give false gods power over them. And could a mature faith love Jesus and recognize that the idols are nothing but wood and stone and thus have no power whatever and eat whatever they want, regardless of whether the animal was sacrificed to a pagan god?

How many things like this happen in Christianity in which two people of sincere faith have exactly opposite conclusions of what faith leads them to do?

How many times does Satan step into this situation and incite argument, division and even accusation with some accusing the other of being conservative, superstition, legalists or liberals and this infects hearts with hostility?

I see this in the SDA church most commonly around Sabbath keeping.

Do you see why we are not to judge the hearts of others? We are only to judge for ourselves what our duty is in God's cause.

What did Jesus say He wanted from us?

> "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15 NIV84).

What is the difference between a servant and friend? Do faithful servants seek to obey? So both servants and friends are being obedient, but Jesus doesn't want the service of a slave, He wants the service of a friend, what is the difference?

Understanding and agreement—Jesus wants us to comprehend His character, His design laws, His methods and realize how good He is and how good His laws are and to agree, to be fully persuaded in our own minds. To obey because it is the most rational, reasonable, logical, sensible action that we fully want with all our hearts.

Consider this quote:

> "All whom God has blessed with **reasoning powers are to become intellectual Christians**. [If you don't have reasoning powers you are excused.] **They are not requested to believe without evidence**; [What? Isn't that faith, believing without evidence? No! Who has no truth, no evidence? Satan, it is our enemy who would advance a theory that faith is believing without evidence—the one who doesn't have any.] therefore Jesus has enjoined upon all to search the Scriptures. Let the ingenious inquirer, and the one who would know for himself what is truth, **exert his mental powers** to search out the truth as it is in Jesus. [What laws are involved here? The law of exertion, the law of sowing and reaping, the law of worship, the law of truth.] **Any neglect here is at the peril of the soul**. [Why? What is the plan of salvation to accomplish? The healing of hearts and minds—can that happen without your participation? But what if we believe because we trust a really nice pastor or Bible teacher and believe what they taught us?] We must know individually the prescribed conditions of entering into eternal life. . . . We cannot allow these questions to be settled for us by another's mind, or another's judgment. . . . We cannot trust the salvation of our souls to ministers, to idle traditions, to human authorities, or to pretentions. . . . **The Lord positively demands of every Christian an intelligent knowledge of the Scriptures**." Review and Herald, March 8, 1887 (2RH 117:1:1 - 2:0); The Medical Missionary, May 1, 1892 [Why can't we trust salvation of our souls to our church leaders? Because it is in the process of wrestling out the truth with God for yourself that you

are transformed and healed. Pastors, Bible teachers, friends can function like a trainer or coach—but they cannot do the exercises for you. You must think for yourself, reason for yourself, and choose for yourself in order for you to be transformed. "'Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool'" (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).]

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks what is repentance? What is your understanding?

Consider these quotes, do they add insight?

- Again the people sought help from Him whom they had so forsaken and insulted. "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against Thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim." **But sorrow had not worked true repentance. The people mourned because their sins had brought suffering** upon themselves, but not because they had dishonored God by transgression of His holy law. **True repentance is more than sorrow for sin. It is a resolute turning away from evil**. PP 557.2
- When before the high priests and Sadducees, **Peter clearly presented the fact that repentance is the gift of God.** Speaking of Christ, he said, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to **give repentance to Israel**, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). **Repentance is no less the gift of God than are pardon and justification**, **and it cannot be experienced except as it is given to the soul by Christ**. If we are drawn to Christ, it is through His power and virtue. The grace of contrition comes through Him, and from Him comes justification.... A New Life 21.2
- **No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation**. **The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin**; it is a **principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct**. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven. DA 555.6
- Many are confused as to what constitutes the first steps in the work of salvation. Repentance is thought to be a work the sinner must do for himself in order that he may come to Christ. They think that the sinner must procure for himself a fitness in order to obtain the blessing of God's grace. **But while it is true that repentance must precede forgiveness**, [What does this mean? That God doesn't forgive until we repent, or we don't experience the forgiveness God has already provided until we repent?] for it is only the broken and contrite heart that is acceptable to God, **yet the sinner cannot bring himself to repentance**, or prepare himself to come to Christ. **Except the sinner repent, he cannot be forgiven**; [Without repentance we cannot experience forgiveness we cannot enter into a state of forgiveness but that doesn't mean God is unforgiving or hasn't already forgiven from His heart. Consider those who crucified Christ.] but the question to be decided is as to **whether repentance is the work of the sinner or the gift of Christ.** Must the sinner wait until he is filled with remorse for his sin before he can come to Christ? The very first step to Christ is taken through the drawing of the Spirit of God;

> as man responds to this drawing, he advances toward Christ in order that he may repent. 1SM 390.1

Friday's lesson quotes the following from *Christ's Object Lessons p. 160:*

> **At every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen.** It is to those whom the Lord has forgiven, to those whom He acknowledges as His people, that He says, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." Ezekiel 36:31. Again He says, "I will establish My covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Ezekiel 16:62, 63. Then our lips will not be opened in self-glorification. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone. We shall make the apostle's confession our own. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Romans 7:18. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14. COL 160.3

What does this concept mean regarding repentance—if it deepens at every advance step is it about bad deeds or about deepening abhorrence to sin, selfishness, and all deviations from God's law as we see evermore clearly the contrast between God's character, methods, law and sin?

THURSDAY

The lesson continues the exploration of repentance and conversion and focuses on the New Testament.

Consider the story of the Prodigal Son—when was the Prodigal converted? When did the Prodigal truly repent?

- In the pigsty or when he returned home and interacted with his father?
- What brought the prodigal to repentance?
- Paul says in Romans that it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance.
- So, the prodigal found himself in terrible circumstances suffering as a consequence of leaving home and living wildly, and in that circumstance he knew he didn't like it. He knew the servants at home lived better. He was sorry for his choices and for the suffering, but he hadn't yet been converted to truly love and trust his father and embrace his father's ways.
- When he went home he fell down beginning to ask forgiveness and argue he was glad to be a servant—but then he experience the father's love, the father's kindness, the father's grace and received the restoration to sonship, with all the rights, privileges and authority—and it was then the son's heart was converted, then true repentance took hold.

When was Peter fully converted?

- "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Lk 22:31–32 NIV84).

- The KJV says "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Did something change in Peter after his denial, his conviction of heart, his weeping bitterly, and his restoration on the beach? What? Did Peter enter into a state where he could no longer make mistakes, where he could no longer be wrong, that if Peter said it then it was like God speaking—his words had the weight of absolute and undisputed truth? No, Peter still made mistakes and had to be corrected by Paul—does that mean Peter wasn't converted, or Peter wasn't inspired? No. He was converted and inspired by the Holy Spirit. What changed was Peter never again allowed fear and selfishness to cause him to deny Jesus. In other words, fear and selfishness were displaced and love for Jesus became the driving force for Peter after this. This is true conversion, the heart being reborn, renewed, transformed from being dominated and controlled by fear and selfishness to a heart that is governed by love and trust, yet still subject to temptation by fear and selfishness.

The lesson focuses on our need to repent of our sins—what are your thoughts on this?

Is there a difference between initial repentance/conversion and ongoing repentance?

Once we have been genuinely converted, we have a new heart with new motives and new desires, but we still live in bodies that are weak, that have conditioned responses, that have memories and neural pathways from our unconverted lives before Christ. And this can sometimes manifest in a response, a reflex, an action that our new hearts don't want to be part of our life any more. How do we understand this? This is Romans 7, from *The Remedy*:

> Therefore, your selfish, fear-ridden heart died when you accepted the truth revealed by Christ's death, and you received a new heart from him who was raised from the dead, in order that you might grow in character–to be like Jesus–and live to honor God. [5]For when we were controlled by the infection of fear and selfishness — which resulted from distrust — the destructive passions revealed by the law were ravaging our bodies, we were terminally ill and spreading death wherever we went. [6]But now, as we die to the distrust, fear and selfishness that once bound us, the law no longer diagnoses us as infected and terminal. In fact, the law now confirms that we have a new heart–not by observing rules, but created within by the Spirit. We are now healthy and loving like Jesus.
>
> [7]What shall we say then? Is the law evil and selfish because it increases the amount of evil and selfishness we see? Absolutely not! I would not have known what evil and selfishness looked like if it wasn't for the diagnostic efficacy of the law. I would not have realized that coveting was evil and selfish if the law didn't say, "Don't covet." [8]But selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the law is only a diagnostic instrument–and not a Remedy–magnified every covetous desire within me. For apart from the diagnostic ability of the law, sin is unrecognizable. [9]Once I thought I was healthy and free from the infection of distrust, fear and

selfishness, but then the commandment examined me, exposed how utterly infected I was, and diagnosed me as terminal. [10]I discovered that the very commandment given only to diagnose my condition I had unwittingly attempted to use as a cure, and thus my condition only worsened. [11]For selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the commandment could only diagnose and not cure, deceived me into thinking that I could be cured by working to keep the commandments; but instead, my terminal state only worsened. [this is describing the obedience that stems from law but only the obedience of faith saves/heals] [12]So understand this: The law diagnoses perfectly, and the commandment is the standard of what is right and good, set apart by God to reveal what is evil and destructive. [13]Did the law, which did good by diagnosing what was wrong with me, become the source of my terminal condition? Of course not! It only exposed what was already in me, so that I could recognize how totally decayed, putrid and near death I was, and so that through the lens of the commandment I might become utterly disgusted with evil and selfishness, and long for a cure.

[14]We know that the law is consistent, reliable and reasonable; but I am inconsistent, unreliable and unreasonable, because the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness has warped my mind and damaged my thinking. [15]I am frustrated with what I do! For having been restored to trust, I want to do what is in harmony with God and his methods and principles; but I find that even though I trust God, my old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. [16]And if I find an old habit causing me to behave in ways that I now find detestable, I affirm that the law is a very helpful tool revealing residual damage in need of healing. [17]What is happening is this: I have come to trust God, and I desire to do his will, but old habits and conditioned responses — which present almost reflexively in certain situations — have not yet been totally eliminated and thus cause me to do things I do not want to do. [18]I know that my mind was completely infected with distrust, fear and selfishness, which totally perverted all my desires and faculties, so that even when distrust has been eradicated and trust has been restored, the damage caused by years of distrustful and selfish behavior has not yet been fully healed. So, I find that at times, I have the desire to do what is right, but do not yet have the ability to carry out the desire. [19]For the old habits and conditioned responses are not the good I want to do: No! They are remnants of my selfish, unconverted mind. [20]So, if I find myself doing what I no longer desire to do, it is not myself that acts, but the vestiges of old habits and conditioned responses that have yet to be removed. And through God's grace, they will soon be removed.

[21]So I find this reality at work: When I want to do good, my old selfish habits and residual feelings of fear are right there with me. [22]In my mind, I rejoice in God's methods and principles, [23]but I recognize that I remain damaged from years of being infected with distrust and practicing Satan's methods, so that even though the infection of distrust has been removed, the old habits of fear and self-promotion tempt me from within. [24]What a damaged and corrupt man I am! Who will deliver and heal me from a brain and body so diseased and deformed? [25]Praise be to God–for he has provided the healing solution through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I find that in my mind I am now renewed with trust in God and love of his methods, but my brain and body remain damaged by years of self-indulgent behavior.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mark Your Calendars: December 11—Class will meet at Bake Crafters at our usual time. We will have class, then a Christmas potluck, which will start right after our Q&A time. Then we will have an afternoon open discussion.

Heads up, in January we will have a special Sabbath Afternoon live-broadcast event here in Chattanooga on the 3 Angels' Messages. More details soon.

NEW TRACTS:

We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 10
Remember, Do Not Forget

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD" (Deuteronomy 9:7 NKJV).

What does this mean?

Does this mean the Lord has limited patience? That God is very much like us and can be provoked to act out if we pester Him enough, if we rebel enough, or are wicked enough?

Is the message that you better obey or else God will be provoked and use His power to strike you down?

If you do think this is the message why?

If you don't think this is the message why?

How can we know which way to understand this?

By knowing God and His law—if we know God and His law then we know what this means and how to understand it.

If one understands law as imposed rules that require imposed punishments—like humans make—then one reads this and concludes God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death for sin. God becomes the one from whom we must be protected and the solution for sin becomes legal. This is the root of all paganism, imposed laws with imposed punishments by deities that requiring sacrifice and offering be made to propitiate wrath, expiate sin, pay the legal penalty etc.

But, when we worship God as Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then we realize that love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom and God cannot be saying that He will use His power to inflict punishment for sin, for to do so would destroy love and incite more rebellion. This line of thinking, that sin requires punishment, is Satan's trick, Satan's deception, that causes some to pursue righteousness, to pursue being orderly, to pursue law-keeping, to pursue salvation through legal mechanism so they feel righteous while they spread the infection of sin, which at its root is selfishness and fear, rather than love and trust.

Through design law we understand that rebelliousness, violating God's law, hardens the heart. So we understand the passage to mean that these people rebelled to the point that they wouldn't listen to Moses, they wouldn't listen to God Himself, they wouldn't be humble even with the pillar of fire at night and the cloud during the day. So, because God is love, because God loves them and wants to prevent their eternal destruction, the reality of what sin was doing to mindset and heart attitude required that God withdraw His protection, to allow the scorpion and snake to come in and bite them in order for them to learn from reality what they refused to learn from instruction.

Consider this quotation out of *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> Moses faithfully set before the people their great sin. **It was God's power alone that had preserved them** in "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water." Deuteronomy 8:15. Every day of their travels they had been kept by a **miracle of divine mercy**. In all the way of God's leading they had found water to refresh the thirsty, bread from heaven to satisfy their hunger, and peace and safety under the shadowy cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Angels had ministered to them as they climbed the rocky heights or threaded the rugged paths of the wilderness. Notwithstanding the hardships they had endured, there was not a feeble one in all their ranks. Their feet had not swollen in their long journeys, neither had their clothes grown old. God had subdued before them the fierce beasts of prey and the venomous reptiles of the forest and the desert. **If with all these tokens of His love the people still continued to complain, the Lord would withdraw His protection until they should be led to appreciate His merciful care, and return to Him with repentance and humiliation**. PP 428.3 [Why did God withdraw? Did God get impatient? Did God get His feelings hurt—"Look you ungrateful people, I am spending time on you, resources and energy on you, if you can't at least give me a little appreciation, then forget you. I'll let you suffer!" Is that it? Or is there another reason? What is happening to their hearts, minds and characters while they practice rebellion, cherish selfishness, grumble, complain, and blame God? So, if God continues to protect them from reality and let THEIR fantasy that things are better in Egypt fuel their grumbling, what happens to them? They harden themselves and spread the rebelliousness into their children and grandchildren. So, God was forced by reality, how love and liberty work, to remove His protections and let them become educated on reality in order to wake them up—that their fantasy isn't how reality works. Only in harmony with God's design laws is their life and health. This is happening in the world right now, in the USA right now. Many have fantasies about how reality work and some of these fantasies have recently become public policy—and for those who see outcomes, consequences, results, we see the pain and suffering caused by the pursuit of fantasy. But others must implement their fantasy and suffer the painful results before they realize the truth. But others, just like ancient Israel, will refuse the truth despite the painful consequences and die in the misery of their own making.]
>
> **Because they had been shielded by divine power they had not realized the countless dangers** by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. **The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness** [Note that these serpents are the natural inhabitants of

the wilderness. These were not especially brought by God to inflict punishment, they had been especially restrained by God prior to this to prevent injury. This is an important point for some people read this story and teach that because of their rebellion God used divine power to bring snakes that would not otherwise have been there in order to inflict punishment, not so. God's power is used to heal and protect not torment and kill.] were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. **As the protecting hand of God was removed** from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures. PP 429.1

Now there was terror and confusion throughout the encampment. In almost every tent were the dying or the dead. None were secure. Often the silence of night was broken by piercing cries that told of fresh victims. All were busy in ministering to the sufferers, or with agonizing care endeavoring to protect those who were not yet stricken. **No murmuring now escaped their lips.** [Why? Were they all suddenly reborn into faith relationships with God and had new hearts of love and trust? No, mere awareness of reality, things with God were a lot better than the fantasy their complaints were stemming from.] When compared with the present suffering, their former difficulties and trials seemed unworthy of a thought. PP 429.2

The people now humbled themselves before God. They came to Moses with their confessions and entreaties. "We have sinned," they said, "for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee." [Is this repentance? No, this is still not repentance—it is confession and pleading or entreaties. What is it they are sorrowing over, the sin or the results of their sin? This is often the first step in repentance, but many stop here.] **Only a little before, they had accused him of being their worst enemy**, the cause of all their distress and afflictions. But even when the words were upon their lips, **they knew that the charge was false;** and as soon as real trouble came they fled to him as the only one who could intercede with God for them. "Pray unto the Lord," was their cry, "that He take away the serpents from us." PP 429.3 [Have we seen similar process being played out in the world today? I have, certain people being blamed for the cause of various problems, being accused as being the worst enemy, but those making the accusations know when they are making it that their accusations are lies—like the accusations against Nick Sandman or a certain leader colluding with Russia and many others. God permits people to reap their rebellion and all choices out of harmony with truth, out of harmony with design law, with reality, result in greater pain and suffering, which is designed by God to help people break out of the delusion in which their minds are trapped. But sadly, many double down on more lies. We see this happening right now in the world, so many decisions being made based on falsehood and the damage and injury is spreading.]

Moses was divinely commanded to make a **serpent of brass resembling the living ones**, and to elevate it among the people. [What does this represent? Jesus became a real human!] To this, all who had been bitten were to look, and they would find relief. He did so, and the joyful news was sounded throughout the encampment that all who had been bitten might look upon the brazen serpent and live. **Many had already died, and when Moses raised the serpent upon the pole, some would not believe that merely gazing upon that metallic image would heal them; these perished in their unbelief**. [Yes, some refuse to believe the truth no matter what.

Some would rather die that admit they were wrong, humble themselves and repent. We see this in society today also.] Yet there were many who had faith in the provision which God had made. Fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters were anxiously engaged in helping their suffering, dying friends to fix their languid eyes upon the serpent. If these, though faint and dying, could only once look, they were perfectly restored. PP 430.1

The people well knew that there was no power in the serpent of brass to cause such a change in those who looked upon it. The healing virtue was from God alone. [The people knew that the brass serpent did nothing for them, it was God healing them! Do we know that our healing comes from God? Do we know that we cannot heal ourselves from sin? Can we heal our nations from sin—violence, rebellion, prejudice and all the various problems? So, if a nation were to make changes that applied God's methods what would be the result? And what would be required for a nation to do this? Wouldn't it be that people in charge would have to themselves be godly, understand God's design laws and methods?] In His wisdom He chose this way of displaying His power. By this simple means the people were made to realize that **this affliction had been brought upon them by their sins**. [What was the source of their affliction? Sin, not God!] **They were also assured that while obeying God they had no reason to fear, for He would preserve them**. PP 430.2 [What does this mean? If we don't obey God do we have reason to fear? Yes we do—but we do not have reason to fear God while in disobedience, we have reason to fear sin. The problem with the imposed law view is that it causes people to fear God who is trying to save them more than sin which actually kills them. We never need to fear God (as in terror or be afraid, awe and reverence yes) but we should be afraid to lose our connection with God, which is what sin does to us.]

The lifting up of the brazen serpent was to teach Israel an important lesson. **They could not save themselves from the fatal effect of the poison in their wounds**. [This is a powerful object lesson. It wasn't about a legal status, a broken rule, or being in legal trouble with God. They had an actual condition that without remedy would result in their death. Likewise, all human beings since Adam sinned are born with a sin-condition that we did not choose and that without remedy will result in our deaths. We cannot fix it, cure it, or save ourselves from the poison of fear and selfishness in our characters. The Remedy is Jesus Christ that we must receive through trust. And then, in trust we choose to do all that He leads us to do in our lives.] God alone was able to heal them. **Yet they were required to show their faith in the provision which He had made**. [Why did they have to show faith? Is faith of the sick person required to heal a physical wound? Do you remember the father whose son threw himself into a fire asking for his son to be healed—the father exercised faith and the boy was healed; we don't have any record that the boy exercised faith. The point being, faith does not have to be exercised to heal a physical wound, God can heal physical wounds without our participation. But, not so with spiritual wounds; wounds of fear and selfishness and sinfulness in the heart, mind and character require our faith or trust to heal—why?. Without our willingness, our trust, our agreement, then our individuality would be erased if God were to act to eliminate the patterns of sinfulness in us. It is only by our willful and trusting cooperation with God that He is able to change the current of our thoughts, instill new motives and desires and lead us to choose new patterns of behavior that we are enabled to live out by receiving His power

strengthening us. So, this event is more than just physical healing, it is an object lesson for healing us from sin.] They must look in order to live. It was their faith that was acceptable with God, and by looking upon the serpent their faith was shown. **They knew that there was no virtue in the serpent itself, but it was a symbol of Christ**; and the necessity of faith in His merits was thus presented to their minds. [This is powerful, they knew a Savior was promised and salvation was not in themselves but in the coming Messiah! And what are His merits? His accomplishments, and what did He accomplish? The revelation of truth about God, the exposing of Satan as a liar, the demonstration that sin separates from God and results in death—that death is not inflicted by God, and the development of a perfect, mature, sinless human character that destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness, thus becoming the second Adam the new head of humanity restoring the species to unity with God.] **Heretofore many had brought their offerings to God, and had felt that in so doing they made ample atonement for their sins**. [Prior to this, they thought their sacrifices were paying the legal price for salvation. They viewed the object lessons through the wrong law and drew the wrong conclusion. The brass serpent experience demonstrated reality to them and is why the health message is the right arm of the gospel, because the health message operates upon design law.] They did not rely upon the Redeemer to come, of whom these offerings were only a type. **The Lord would now teach them that their sacrifices, in themselves, had no more power or virtue than the serpent of brass, but were, like that, to lead their minds to Christ, the great sin offering**. PP 430.3 [Why did Jesus have to die for our salvation? Was it to teach us of God's love? Why would death be necessary to teach us God loves us? Does a parent have to die to teach their children that God is love? Then why would Jesus have to die to teach us of God's love? There is only one situation in which that is true—a situation in which the children are under an actual death threat and the parent's intervention and death would save the child. If a parent saw their child in real danger, drowning, but refused to jump into the water and save the child would reveal the lack of love for the child, or at least a greater love for themselves. Or, the Titanic is sinking and a parent takes a seat on the lifeboat while their child is left to drown—that would demonstrate the opposite of love. But if the parent gave the child the seat, that would demonstrate love. So, the only place death demonstrates love is if without the action the other person would die. So, why would humans die if Christ didn't come as our substitute and Savior? It goes back to the law, to reality. Just as this object lesson of the brass serpent is teaching. They had real poison in them and we have real sinfulness, fear and selfishness in us that is contrary to how life is built to operate. Without intervention this condition results in ruin and death. Thus, if we are to live, then someone has to eradicate the infection and restore the life-giving principle into humanity. There were no humans, after Adam sinned, that could do this. So Jesus came as the second Adam and through His mother partook of the terminal condition but through the Holy Spirit, His Father, He shared His sinless immortal self. And then as a human He was tempted in all ways like us; He was tempted to act out of fear and to be selfish, to violate the law of love, the protocols of life. But instead, Jesus lived out the law of life perfectly as a human and at the cross He eradicated the infection and restored God's law back into the humanity He assumed. Thus we look to Jesus in faith, in trust and we receive by faith a new heart and right spirit, we have new longings, desires, motives and we choose to say yes to Jesus and it is no longer our fearful selfish selves that live, but Jesus lives in us.]

> "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," even so was the Son of man "lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:14, 15. **All who have ever lived upon the earth have felt the deadly sting** of "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan." Revelation 12:9. **The fatal effects of sin can be removed only by the provision that God has made**. [It is only through the victory of Jesus that we can be healed from sin, that our spirit temples can be cleansed and we be restored to at-one-ment with God!] The Israelites saved their lives by looking upon the uplifted serpent. That look implied faith. **They lived because they believed God's word, and trusted in the means provided for their recovery**. **So the sinner may look to Christ, and live**. He receives pardon through faith in the atoning sacrifice. Unlike the inert and lifeless symbol, **Christ has power and virtue in Himself to heal the repenting sinner**. PP 431.1

Let's read Paul's description of how Jesus brings peace and unity in Ephesians 2:14-17:

> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. [The two one, referring to Jews and non-Jews. In other words, unifying people into one body. How, by destroying the dividing wall of hostility—what is the dividing wall of hostility? What caused Cain to kill Abel? What causes all hostility, division, violence, conflict? Sin, fear and selfishness, the carnal nature—thus Jesus came to destroy sin that exists in the heart of sinful humans. Sin is the dividing wall. What about abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations? What is the purpose of the added law, the 10 Commandments and other ordinances? They were ADDED as a diagnostic instrument to expose sin, and they are no longer necessary when sin has been eliminated. Are MRIs needed when there is no disease? So Jesus destroys the need for the written law which exposes sin, by destroying sin in the heart. Why did He do this? Next verse] His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [One new man? Yes, the second Adam, a new human being that is free from sin, free from fear and selfishness, free from the carnal drives. In Jesus the carnal nature was eliminated and God's perfect character of love was established. He did this by combining His sinless immortal life with our sinful mortal life and purging the infection of fear and selfishness; you could say He killed the carnal nature and rose again on the third day as a human being purified from the infection and with God's law perfectly restored within. Thus, through Jesus we may partake of the DIVINE nature and be part of a new humanity, cleansed and renewed—all who do are reconciled or at-one with God through the cross.] (Ephesians 2:14-17 NIV84)

Read the second paragraph, "God often tells…" Here we are reminded to remember, but in other places we are told to forget and that God forgets or will not remember our sins anymore.

When the Bible says that God will not remember our sins, does that mean memory erasure, amnesia, or something else? What does it mean?

It means that when the sin has been removed from the heart, mind and character it is no longer an obstacle to the relationship and doesn't need to be thought of anymore. It can be forgotten from the relationship—no intervention needs to be applied, no treatment, no therapy, no discipline, no monitoring, etc. We don't need to think of the days of pain and heartache that sin caused, we can now live out our love for God and others and God celebrates with us. We no longer need to experience the guilt, shame, fear, loneliness, isolation that sin brings but those days can be forgotten as a way of living—not as a fact of history.

So, the point about God not remembering is not about forgetting the facts of history, it is about not having the problem in the relationship any longer.

Would our remembering be the same? In other words, when God tells us to remember is it primarily about remembering facts of history, or is it about relational remembering, remember in a way that builds and strengthens our bonds of love and appreciation for God? It is remembering in a way that makes us more loyal, faithful and godlike, so that we become more humble, kind, generous and loving.

But there is a way to remember that works just the opposite—did the Jews who crucified Christ remember:

- That they were descended from Abraham?
- That God made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
- The weekly Sabbath?
- The annual festivals?
- That God delivered them from Egypt?
- That God chose David to be king?
- That God promised David would have a son whose kingdom would never end?

Did the Jews who crucified Christ forget all these things? No, then what happened?

They forgot the true meaning of them. They remembered the historical facts but interpreted the facts through the wrong law lens and ultimately drew the completely wrong conclusions about God, their purpose as a nation, and the coming Messiah.

What about Christians today, can we fall into the same trap, remembering historical facts, various doctrinal truths, but do so through the wrong law lens so that we misinterpret the meaning to such a degree that we actually become God's enemies?

> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in **your name**, and in **your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**'
>
> "Therefore everyone who **hears these words of mine and puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the

> rock. 26 But everyone who **hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Mt 7:22–27 NIV84).

My blog this week is entitled Building on the Rock and I explore this parable, how we don't have a choice to avoid the storms of life—no matter where we build, we will experience storms. Our choice is where we build. We either build upon Jesus, His kingdom, putting into practice His design laws and methods, trusting in Him and then He dwells within us building us up in godly character, OR we build on the principles and methods of this world.

Only those who build upon Jesus, putting into practice the truths, principles, methods and design laws that Jesus revealed will stand when the storms come.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention upon the rainbow, which was to help us remember God's promise to never destroy the world with a flood again.

Has the world forgotten this? Has the rainbow come to represent something other than God's grace and plan of salvation?

And having forgotten that the world was destroyed by a flood, has this allowed for other false beliefs to enter into the hearts and minds of people that are part of what is corrupting the world today?

The apostle Peter wrote about the future of planet Earth:

> First of all, you must understand that in the last days **scoffers will come**, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But **they deliberately forget** that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. **By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed** (2 Peter 3:3–6 NIV84).

Do we have scoffers today who mock the idea of Creation, who scoff at the idea of a worldwide flood and Noah's ark?

And these people who deny evidence, facts, and truth, who cling to a false worldview, they are the very ones who are leading our scientific institutions, our national and international policies. They are leading the Green movement. These people who deny Bible truth are leading the governments of the world in the COVID response. Why is it that church leaders defers to these deniers of reality?

If persons reject God and refuse to accept the truth, then who do you think is leading and inspiring them? It is Satan—the Green movement is not a godly movement, and we need to realize this and reject it. Peter continues:

> By the same word the **present heavens and earth are reserved for fire,** being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; **the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare**. **Since everything will be destroyed** in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming**. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking **forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness** (vv. 7–13 NIV84).

What is the future of planet Earth from a Biblical understanding? Understand reality: This planet as we know it, is going to be destroyed and replaced with a new perfect planet free from all defects.

Before God returns and recreates it anew, things are going to get worse—and we cannot stop it. Satan is going to use the worsening conditions on the planet to incite fear—fear of climate change, of rising oceans, of terrible storms, of famine, of pandemics—and Satan will cause these calamities to increase. This will cause those who have rejected God to become more fearful and seek to save themselves by taking greater coercive control, passing more laws, taking away more freedoms, and ultimately seeking to cull the population in order to try to save the planet.

If you are a Christian and you are supporting the Green movement, you are supporting the enemy of God; you are empowering those who value the planet more than the people on the planet—and whose policies are designed to cull the population in order to save the planet. But as children of God, we love people more than the planet; we want as many people as possible to come to salvation, which means we don't want to cull the population; no—we want to bring people to Jesus!

Rejecting the Green movement does not mean that we fail to be good stewards of the Earth. In the very same way we govern ourselves, we will practice God's methods and not pollute, not abuse animals, not exploit the environment—but we will also not give our support to a godless movement that values the planet more than the people, a movement that will initiate policies that will result in injuring billions in the name of saving the planet. And we are seeing this happen right now all over the world!

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Deuteronomy 4:32-39:

> "Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created **man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other**. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? [First point—ask, has any other god created life, created humankind? No! Only the true God. But notice the instruction is to ask **from one end of the heavens to the other**—here in the Old Testament we see that the conflict isn't restricted to the earth. There was a conflict in the heavens, ask throughout the heavens to know, is there any other god who creates life and created humankind in His image on the earth. Angels in heaven, Lucifer and Christ are not the same. Lucifer is a created being and has no power to create. Jesus is God, an infite being with no beginning and is the Creator.] Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? [And this Creator God cares about you and speaks to you directly, personally, He doesn't stay afar off and unreachable, but comes down to where you are and talks to you directly. And will eventually give up divine abilities to become one of us in order to save us.] Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?
>
> You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other. [God doesn't just declare truth, God reveals truth. God revealed truth throughout the heavens when He created the earth and humans upon it. God revealed truth to you directly by the demonstration of power over the elements of creation, by exposing the gods of Egypt as false, by overturning the power of the most powerful nation in the world. God did all of this to give you evidence that He is real and not some fantasy made up by imagination.] From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. [He spoke to you and disciplines you because He loves you and wants to heal you.] On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today. [Didn't He love other people or only their forefathers? So what does this mean? He was able to have His love act, flow, move, work through their forefathers thus He loved then functionally because they trusted Him. And when God's love is functional, operational, in the being it heals and transforms and God is able to will and do according to His good pleasure, and in this case to bring about the people who will be the avenue for the Messiah to save the entire world.]
>
> Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other." (Dt 4:32–39 NIV84).

Do we still need to remember this today? Do we see how hard God's enemy works to get people to forget this?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the dangers of prosperity—what are the dangers?

Is there a blessing in the struggles of life, what are the blessings of the struggles?

What does this mean?

> "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Ro 5:3–4 NIV84).

Does it mean that if we have no struggles, trials, sufferings that we have no hope?

Could there be danger in what the world thinks is success?

Do we help people by alleviating their suffering—does the cause of their suffering matter?

What if the suffering is a result of failure to apply oneself, or to choose avail oneself of the opportunities available?

Is it ever godly and loving to take an action that causes someone to suffer?

Why are government programs that are designed to relieve suffering often the cause of more suffering?

What is the difference between a government program and the Bible principle of helping those in need?

When Ruth and Naomi were in poverty and had no money for food what was God's method to provide for their food? Gleaning in the field, what is the principle taught in this story?

- that people were required to do as much for their own health and welfare and sustenance as they were capable of doing—that they were not required to do more than they were capable, but it would be wrong to make others do for them what they were able to do for themselves why?
    - because it would atrophy the abilities of the one not utilizing them
    - it would diminish the character of the one not living up to their abilities
    - strength comes through exertion
    - our dignity and self-worth is a result of living out the principles of God to the best of our ability, failure to engage ourselves results in loss of our sense of worth and value. We will rightly feel guilt and shame and this is corrosive to the soul.
- But what if a person is capable and won't do for themselves?
    - For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are

> busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. (2 Th 3:10–12 NIV84).

Is this cruel or loving to treat people as this passage instructs?

But they might go hungry, they might cry out in despair—they might complain of how unloving you are for not giving them food, they might complain that it is because of their race, or gender that they are not given a universal monthly income.

But what happens to people when they don't work and are capable of doing so?

> Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Ga 6:7–10).

What is required for a person to do real good for another? That they know design law, know God's design for life and health and choose to operate in harmony with those designs. Good intentions are not enough to do good. The road to hell is often paved with good intentions. To do real good people must know God and God's laws and then know the situation and what actions will be therapeutic.

So, the difference between government programs and the Bible method is that the Bible method calls us to love others directly. We don't substitute a nameless, faceless bureaucracy for human relationships, which means we must get to know them personally. We must want their eternal best interest, and then we use our influence to create opportunities for their actual development and advancement as people created in the image of God to recover the image of God, to think and to act. We do not take actions that would destroy their individuality, that would infantilize them, that would make them shadows of others and corrupt their characters. This is what many of the government programs do, they take from people who don't want to help and this builds resentment, it also relieves from people any sense of further responsibility to actually help their neighbor, then gives to people who haven't fulfilled their life responsibilities, who don't do all they can with the abilities they have thus causing further dependence and atrophy of abilities rather than development of abilities.

Remember all governments of this earth are Satan's and they all practice Satan's methods. So many people get duped into buying into the goal and ignoring the destructive methods of achieving the goal.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read Ephesians 2:8-13:

> "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:8–13 NIV84).

What does this mean?

What is God's grace—God being gracious? God doing something that we don't earn, something that isn't pay or salary or the result of our effort?

So our salvation is a work of God for us—why was this needed? Why couldn't we do it for ourselves?

What does it mean created in Christ Jesus—how are we created in Christ Jesus?

Jesus became the second Adam, the second head of humanity and in the humanity, the individual human being of Jesus, God saved/healed the species. God did something in the specific person of Jesus that overcame the damage that Adam did to the species. In Jesus God restored His living law of love and purged the infection of fear and selfishness and if we receive from Jesus what He accomplished we will be healed, restored, to do good works as an produce a fruit of His work.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

DECEMBER 11: Class will meet at Bake Crafters at our usual time. We will have class, then a Christmas potluck, which will start right after our Q&A time. Then we will have an afternoon open discussion.

JANUARY 15: Special Sabbath Afternoon live-broadcast event here in Chattanooga on the 3 Angels' Messages. 3 p.m. at Hamilton Community Church

NEW ROKU CHANNEL: Come and Reason has just opened a Roku channel and you can find it in Roku by searching for Come and Reason. For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

PROPERTY UPDATE: The renovation project is out to get contractor bids.

NEW TRACTS: We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 11
Deuteronomy in the Later Writings

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text: "The LORD delighted **only** in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day" (Dt 10:15 NKJV).

What does it mean that God delighted *only* in the ancestors of the Jews to love them?

Does it mean God doesn't love all humans? How do you understand it?

Does this speak about God's attitude and affections or about God's ability to function in their lives, the power and function of love? In other words, it was the ancestors of these people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who trusted God enough to surrender to Him, to allow God to transform their hearts, to allow God's love to manifest in and through them and thus become the progenitors of a people that would be the avenue for the fulfillment of God's promise to Adam that Jesus would come?

We must put this together with the entire inspired record where God is not a respecter of persons, where they were to be a kingdom of priests that were to witness to all the nations and that Abraham's descendants were to be counted from all the peoples of the world, the promised Seed was to bless all humanity, not just the Jews.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on king Josiah, grandson of Manasseh, who took the throne at age 8 and initiated religious reform when the book of the law was discovered.

As we have discussed before, the Old Testament is not just a record of historical events, it is also object lessons to teach the larger reality of the war between Christ and Satan and lessons for us today. Thinking about the events in Josiah's time, how the law being rediscovered brought reformation in the battle for hearts and minds, let's see if we can discern the same forces at war in our day and how returning to the truth about God's law, God's methods, God's principles frees the people and brings reformation today. Let's think about this as we examine the commentary on Josiah from the book *Prophets and Kings:*

> With the accession of Josiah to the throne, where he was to rule for thirty-one years, those who had maintained the purity of their faith began to **hope that the downward course of the kingdom** was checked; for the new king, though only eight years old, feared God, and from the very beginning "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way

of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." 2 Kings 22:2. [Are there faithful people in the world today hoping for someone to check the downward course of events in the world today?] Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father's steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, **Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel**. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and his grandfather had fallen. He "turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." As one who was to occupy a position of trust, he resolved to obey the instruction that had been given for the guidance of Israel's rulers, and his **obedience made it possible for God to use him as a vessel unto honor**. PK 384.1 [Is there a lesson for each of us? For our church? Despite errors of past generations, we have the responsibility for ourselves to NOT accept the views, beliefs, traditions, practices of previous generations, even our own fathers and grandfathers, but to study God's word for ourselves, to understand God's duty for our lives for ourselves, and to choose to fulfill that the duty God has given us even if it differs from what our ancestors have done.]

At the time Josiah began to rule, and for many years before, the **truehearted in Judah were questioning whether God's promises to ancient Israel could ever be fulfilled**. From a human point of view the divine purpose for the chosen nation seemed almost impossible of accomplishment. [Do many Christians question God's promises today? Are many asking, where is the promise of the coming Savior? From a human point of view does it seem almost impossible to accomplish?] The **apostasy of former centuries had gathered strength** with the passing years; ten of the tribes had been scattered among the heathen; only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained, and even these now seemed on **the verge of moral and national ruin**. [Has the apostacy of the Christian churches gathered strength? Do we seem on the verge of moral and national ruin?] **The prophets had begun to foretell** the utter destruction of their fair city, where stood the temple built by Solomon, and where all their earthly hopes of national greatness had centered. [Have some of us been foretelling of the apostacy of the principles of liberty of conscience and the erosion of civil liberties, of the abuse of powers and the support of this abuse by not just politicians but by religious leaders? Churches have begun to support the discrimination of people based on vaccine status. Some churches are refusing religious services, some nations are locking unvaccinated into their homes, denying them basic civil liberties. In Revelation 17 the woman on the scarlet beast is described as a prostitute or whore. What does a woman in Bible prophecy represent—the church, so a pure woman represents the true church, those faithful to Jesus. What does a prostitute represent? But what is the different between a prostitute and an adulteress? Both are unfaithful to their husband, so both would represent people who claim to be loyal to Jesus but are not. The difference is that the adulteress is deceived and joins with another because she gives her heart to another. The prostitute sells herself for money or gain. Now, in this current COVID crisis why have so many Christian owned hospitals and healthcare systems gone along with mandates on their employees and are still doing it today? It is not for the health of the employees or the patients—the safest people in society are those who are unvaccinated COVID recovered. They have antibodies to multiple sites on the virus. They have IgG and IgM in their blood and IgA on their mucous membranes, so when they get exposed to the virus their

immune systems kill it and they do not spread it. The CDC was forced to acknowledge that there is not one confirmed case of a COVID recovered individual spreading SARS COV2. But the most dangerous spreaders in society are the vaccinated. They have been given a treatment that is designed to reduce severity of symptoms. They achieve this by producing IgG and IgM antibodies to one site (spike protein) but they have no IgA antibodies. So when they get exposed the virus reproduces in their nose and throat and when it crosses into their blood they have IgG and IgM antibodies so they don't get as sick, they don't stay home, they go to work and have virus in their noses and throats and they spread it to others. This is the science, this is the reality. Then why are Christian hospital systems forcing unwanted vaccines on their employees, coercing the consciences of people, siding with the beastly powers? For money, for Medicare reimbursement, or to avoid lawsuits for not following CDC guidelines; they are selling their virtue, their principles, their honor, their character to the state for money. They are more interested in the health of their organizations than people. They can justify it any way they want but they are acting the role of the harlot of Revelation 17.] Could it be that God was about to turn aside from His avowed purpose of bringing deliverance to those who should put their trust in Him? **In the face of the long-continued persecution of the righteous, and of the apparent prosperity of the wicked, could those who had remained true to God hope for better days**? PK 384.2 [Are we seeing the righteous being persecuted? But don't lose hope, better days are promised for those who endure to the end.]

These anxious questionings were voiced by the prophet Habakkuk. Viewing the situation of the faithful in his day, he expressed the burden of his heart in the inquiry: "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? [Do we cry out to the Lord because of increasing violence in our societies—riots, mob thieving, open attacks upon people?] Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted." Habakkuk 1:2-4 NIV84. PK 385.1 [Do we see in society those doing grossly illegal activity being praised and protected by various government officials, while those who seek to protect others are being maliciously slandered and prosecuted? Do we see injustice all around?]

God answered the cry of His loyal children. Through His chosen mouthpiece He revealed His determination to **bring chastisement** upon the nation that had turned from Him to serve the gods of the heathen.. PK 385.2 [They turned from Him not merely in worship services, the primary turning from God was in the implementation of their anti-truth narratives. In their application of selfishness and exploitation calling it justice. In the lying, cheating, abuse of power. Do we see this today? Do we see an assault on truth which is from the father of lies and is designed to destroy the minds of people? Do we see lies from the government and the media like never before? This is the practicing of principles contrary to the government of God. This is a form of paganism or false worship when we find worthy of our investment, time, energy and practice the methods of God's enemy. See what is happening in the world. Almost everything being advanced by mainstream media today is contrary to God's kingdom of truth, love and freedom. Its goal is to destroy godliness in people to make us distrust and hate each

other, to incite such fear and outrage that we will be willing to embrace Satan's methods in how we treat others. The king of the south—godlessness—is making its final assault. It is purposeful and it is irrational, extremely so, for it is designed to stir up in people anger, outrage, frustration, fear to incite the king of the north—religious conservatism and imperialism to no longer be tolerant of others, but to violently put down the abuses from the other side. It is designed to tempt Christians into joining the formation of the beastly system of Revelation to seek justice through human governments and enforced laws. It is now like never before that we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, daily surrender our lives to Him, trust Him with our health, family, fortunes and futures. It will seem overwhelmingly right to join with forces that will use Satan's methods to achieve justice, but the righteous use only the methods of God.]

Confident that even in this terrible judgment the purpose of God for His people would in some way be fulfilled, Habakkuk bowed in submission to the revealed will of Jehovah. "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?" he exclaimed. And then, his faith reaching out beyond the forbidding prospect of the immediate future, and laying fast hold on the precious promises that reveal God's love for His trusting children, the prophet added, "We shall not die." Verse 12. [Do we have this same faith? Do we know that as events get worse on earth that we, the faithful of God, will not die? That Jesus will redeem us and we will inherit the earth? Think about it—which nation had/has a greater claim on God's protection, ancient Israel at the time of Habakkuk or the USA? Which nation could more confidently say they were established by God to fulfill a purpose for God? And yet, what happened to that ancient nation? It was defeated by the Babylonians—and what was required of the righteous? To trust God and NOT fight the enemy forces with physical violence. What about us today?] With this declaration of faith he rested his case, and that of every believing Israelite, in the hands of a **compassionate God.** PK 386.1 [Do we see God's interventions to "chastise" to bring the Babylonians the way Habakkuk did, as evidence of God's compassion? What enables Habakkuk or us to do this? Understanding design law, and God's character of love, the great controversy and what God's actions are accomplishing and what would happen if God did not allow the Babylonian captivity.]

This was not Habakkuk's only experience in the exercise of strong faith. On one occasion, when meditating concerning the future, he said, "**I will stand upon my watch**, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me." [Have you decided to stand upon your watch, to be a sentinel of truth, to stand in the breach and oppose the lies, the false narratives, the perversions of godly justice, the corruption of reality that our society is advancing? Are you refusing to bow the knee to social pressures, the god of false science, to political correctness and to the political powers coercing and compelling conscience?] Graciously the Lord answered him: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for **an appointed time, but at the end it** shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: *but the just shall live by his faith*." Habakkuk 2:1-4. PK 386.2 [Are you willing to be one of the just, who, choosing to do what is right and just in governance of self, then trusts God with outcomes? Or are you going to

embrace the methods of the world and claim we must violate God's principles; we must coerce other people, we must force them to take the jab because we must control the future, we must stop the pandemic? Who do you trust? Where is your responsibility? The just live by faith, by trusting outcomes to God and choosing to do what is right in governance of self, and that means they live out God's design laws of truth, love and liberty in how they treat others!]

The faith that strengthened Habakkuk and all the holy and the just in those days of deep trial was the same faith that sustains God's people today. [Do we have this faith? Are we exercising this faith? Or are we listening to the roar of God's enemy and allowing fear and the survival drives to motivate us to take matters into our own hands and seek to force others to do what we want so we can feel safe?] In the darkest hours, under circumstances the most forbidding, **the Christian believer may keep his soul stayed upon the source of all light and power**. [Do you believe this? Are you choosing to live this?] **Day by day, through faith in God, his hope and courage may be renewed.** "The just shall live by his faith." [This is a daily renewal every day we must embrace and exercise our faith/trust in God!] In the service of God there need be no despondency, no wavering, no fear. **The Lord will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom their varied necessities demand**… PK 386.3

We must cherish and cultivate the faith of which prophets and apostles have testified— the faith that lays hold on the promises of God and waits for deliverance in **His appointed time and way**. [Do you see this is exactly the opposite of the world's methods. The world doesn't believe in waiting for the Lord. The world believes in making its own way, of force, of demands, of mandates, of compelling power. But the righteous present the truth in love and leave free. The righteous live God's law and trust Him with outcomes.] **The sure word of prophecy will meet its final fulfillment in the glorious advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords**. [We are entering the final movements leading to Christ's return. Don't get distracted on these earthly conflicts. See what is happening, see the rise of tyranny, the satanic methods implemented under the guise of justice, but recognize them as signs of the times, as evidence of the soon appearing of our Savior and be encouraged not discouraged!] **The time of waiting may seem long, the soul may be oppressed by discouraging circumstances**, many in whom confidence has been placed may fall by the way; but with the prophet who endeavored to encourage Judah in a time of unparalleled apostasy, let us confidently declare, "**The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." Habakkuk 2:20. Let us ever hold in remembrance the cheering message, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.... The just shall live by his faith**." Verses 3, 4…. PK 387.2 [We are living in the time when Jesus, our heavenly High Priest is in His holy temple, cleansing the hearts and minds of His people to prepare us to meet Him. Part of this cleansing is bringing us into circumstances where we decide whom we will trust and what methods we will choose to embrace and apply in how we treat others. Will we present truth in love and leave others free, or will we join with the beastly systems of this world and enforce mandates? Will we sell our souls for Medicare reimbursements? Will we say it is better for a few of our employees to die than our hospital

corporation to be closed? Will we deceive ourselves that we are obeying the law or we are saving lives and therefore it is proper and just to violate God's law in forcing compliance upon others?]

Habakkuk was not the only one through whom was given a message of bright hope and of future triumph as well as of present judgment. During the reign of Josiah the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah, **specifying plainly the results of continued apostasy**, and calling the attention of the true church to the glorious prospect beyond. **His prophecies of impending judgment upon Judah apply with equal force to the judgments that are to fall upon an impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ**: PK 389.1

"**The great day of the Lord is near**, [Do you recognize this reality?]
It is near, and hasteth greatly,
Even the voice of the day of the Lord:
The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. PK 390.1
"That day is a day of wrath, [What is God's wrath? Letting go, why? Because people insist on denying God, on doing it their way. So God lets them go. Are we living in a time when people are denying God, rejecting God's methods, principles and laws? Is humanism, evolutionism and godlessness being embraced? And as hearts harden against God, what happens to the Holy Spirit? He is slowly withdrawn from the earth and Satan and his forces gain more power on the earth and we see more chaos, breakdown in social order, more hate, more exploitation, greater calamities in nature. This is the time of God's wrath!]
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of wasteness and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess, PK 390.2
"A day of clouds and thick darkness,
A day of the trumpet and alarm
Against the fenced cities,
And against the high towers." Zephaniah 1:14-16. PK 390.3

"I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust.... [Are we living in such times? Do you see the blindness of so many of our leaders—our political leaders, science and medical leaders and church leaders. They are blind, why? Because they don't embrace God's design law methods. They are focused on the world's system of imposed laws, of saving self, of compelling power.] Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath: [Are we seeing this? Has any nation in history spent more money than our congress is spending, supposedly to "build back better" but what is actually happening? The more money they spend the worse it is going to get, why? Because they are spending money that doesn't exist. They are printing money, digitally creating it, and flooding it into the economy, this makes it less valuable, which drives prices higher. This is called inflation. And the people hurt are the poorest people in society. They will ultimately become more and more dependent upon the government, which doesn't respect them as individuals but views them as commodities to be exploited, harvested, used for the benefit of the powerful elites. The

> consequences of violating God's law cannot be avoided through more spending.] but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Verses 17, 18… PK 390.4 [Jesus said, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49 NIV84). What is this fire? Is this the same fire that is to devour the land?]

Hezekiah was a righteous ruler who led the people to embrace the principles of the law and the nation prospered. But his son Manasseh was wicked, he reigned 55 years and led the people to forget God and God's law. Manasseh's son Amon, was also wicked, but only reigned two years before Josiah came to the throne. When the book of the law, which was Deuteronomy, was rediscovered this led to reformation.

Do we see lessons in this in the history of Christianity? Jesus came and was the living Word of God who reformed the understanding of God's law, government, character the plan of salvation and resulted in a reformation, and the early Christian church was built upon the Jewish reformers (Apostles).

But the law of God—the law of love, as Jesus and the New Testament writers taught it, got obscured and replaced by Roman imposed law, and did the world go into darkness.

But did the truth of God's law get rediscovered, the messages of the 3 angels that began a final reformation before Christ returns? But, did that final message also get infected in 1888 with the imposed law lie and the penal/legal fraud and the true message of the 3 angels has been delayed? And thus the Bible prophesies that the message of the 3 angels must be given again and that is the message of Revelation 18, the repeating of the 3 angel's messages, but no longer through imposed law, now in its right setting, through design law.

> We will be doing a lecture January 15, 2022 at 3 p.m. Hamilton Community Church on this topic and releasing a new sharing magazine. We will livestream this event, so mark your calendars.

The lesson points out in the fourth paragraph that "this reformation included a cleansing and purging of 'all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem…"

This is a metaphor of the cleansing and purging of the spirit temple, our hearts and minds from sin that is to occur before the second coming of Christ.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Deuteronomy 10:12-15, but let's read through verse 19:

> 12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and

with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? [Does the Lord ask anything different from us? And what does it mean to fear the Lord? What does it mean to walk in his ways? How do we love God? What has the Lord commanded of us today? Does the Lord's commands have something to do with what methods and principles we embrace and practice in our own health, what we choose to eat, or what we choose to drink, or smoke, what about what we choose to inject into our bodies? What about how we treat others? Are we do live out God's law in how we treat others? Why? Is it so we won't get into legal trouble with God? Or does breaking God's law actually damage us?]14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. [What is being established by this statement? Why does all creation belong to the Lord? Because He both built/created it and He sustains it. Reality only exists because God continually disperses His energy to maintain all the laws upon which the universe operates. To be cut off from God means to be cut off from life.]15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. [What is the point being made? That despite God being Creator of all things, a universe so immense we cannot even image it, that He loves us and wants to save and heal us! We are valued, we are important to Him. We are not some random collection of molecules that organized themselves and came into being, we have identity and individuality as beings created in the image of God and we matter to Him!] 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. [What does this mean? We are to cut away from our hearts all worldliness, all fear, selfishness, and all the methods, practices and principles of Satan. Stop resisting reality and embrace truth, love, and liberty.] 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. [What is revealed in this statement? What kind of law is always applied with partiality and can be impacted by bribes? Imposed law, but God's laws are not altered by partiality or by bribes. God is constant and His design laws are expressions of His character of love and they are not partial, they are no respecter of persons. They treat everyone the same. And God's love is for everyone the same.] 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt" (Dt 10:12–19 NIV84). [This is the outworking of God's law, to love others, which cannot be done through legislation, it can only be done through heart transformation. Understand, the various governmental programs that claim to be interested in helping the poor, are a means, mechanism, gambit, to get more power for the government—to justify taking more money, to divide society into constituency groups, to create injustice and inequity under the lie of seeking justice and equity.]

TUESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Jeremiah 7:1-7, let's read through verse 8:

> This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message: [What is the application to us today? What is the

Lord's house? The temple built on earth was a shadow or theater, a teaching tool to the genuine one. And what material is the genuine temple of God built out of, the one not built by human hands, the place where the Bible repeatedly states is God's dwelling place? It is built upon the Apostles with Christ the chief cornerstone and it is built out of the saved, the people. We are God's temple that He is cleansing. Do we see ourselves as the messengers of God standing at the gates of His temple to proclaim a message the world at this time in human history?]
" 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. 3 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. [Do we have a message of Reformation? Does God have a message for this time that the people of God are to reform? Reform about what? About how we understand God, His law, His government, what righteousness actually is. We are to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water; we are to finally leave behind the false methods of imperialism and legal adjustment as a way to righteousness and instead embrace truth, love, liberty experienced through a faith relationship with our Creator God!] 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" [What is the message for us today? Might it be, "Do not trust in deceptive words and say "The Sabbath of the Lord, the Sabbath of the Lord, this is the Sabbath of the Lord"? Was the message that the temple in Jerusalem was God's temple a false message? Is the message that the seventh-day Sabbath is God's Sabbath a false message? Then why did the prophet tell them don't trust in deceptive words and say "This is the temple of the Lord?" Why would it be a false message to say "This is the temple of the Lord," when it was the temple of the Lord? What about saying "this is the Sabbath of the Lord" how could that be a false message when it is the Sabbath? When we present it as a legal requirement of a god who makes up imposed legal rules, as a test of obedience, as a behavioral requirement rather than as a gift from God to human beings built by God into reality to bless and benefit us—as part of His design for life and health.] 5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, [What is godly justice? Can we get godly justice through human governments? Notice what the text says next] 6 if **you do not oppress** the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if **you do not follow other gods** to your own harm, [Notice it doesn't say if your government doesn't oppress, or if your government passes the right laws, or has social programs. It is about what we do in governance of ourselves. Also, notice what is described in following other gods—harming oneself. The law of worship, we become like what we worship, worshiping false gods damages us. And we worship false gods by embracing the methods, principles and practices of those gods—even if we claim we are worshipping Jesus or don't believe in God at all. Thus, if Christians embrace the method of pursuing righteousness, pursuing godly justice through human governments, laws, mandates, they are worshiping the god of this world and misrepresenting the God of heaven.] 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. [Only the righteous in heart, the meek in character, those renewed to be like Jesus in how they live and treat others will inherit the earth and live in the earth made new.] 8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless" (Je 7:1–8 NIV84). [How many today are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless—the penal legal deception of salvation, social justice through human governments, mandates on other people's consciences—all of this is deception.]

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Micah 6:1-8:

Listen to what the LORD says:

"Stand up, plead your case before the mountains;
let the hills hear what you have to say.
2 Hear, O mountains, the LORD's accusation;
listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.
For the LORD has a case against his people;
he is lodging a charge against Israel. [Some Bible commentaries suggest that the mountains here refer to inanimate nature being called by God as a witness to the case against the people. However, I have another possibility to consider. In Scripture the mountains, hills, high places were the places of worship. Zion is called God's holy hill. And hills also represent places of pagan or false worship (Leviticus 26:30; 1Kings 14:23; 2Kings 16:4). God's government is open. God is the God of truth. We see glimpses of this in the first chapter of Job and the heavenly counsel. The issue against Israel is about false worship and perverse views of God and worship practices. So, I suggest God is using this language to suggest that God is speaking truth before all His enemies and reality bears witness that their false religions are false.]

3 "My people, what have I done to you?
How have I burdened you? Answer me. [God, being truth, confronts them with a question designed to get them to examine what they have been thinking. God asks, "Why do you think I have burdened you or that I have done something against you?" It is designed to expose that their apostacy stems from some lies they believe about God.
4 I brought you up out of Egypt
and redeemed you from the land of slavery.
I sent Moses to lead you,
also Aaron and Miriam. [God reminds them He saves and delivers]
5 My people, remember
what Balak king of Moab counseled
and what Balaam son of Beor answered.
Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."
[God again reminds them of historical facts that demonstrate His righteousness]
6 With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,

with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:1–8 NIV84).
[God then makes it clear rituals are meaningless, what matters is a transformed heart and mind to have God's living law written within.]

How many Christians today need this same message?

Read second paragraph, "Bible scholars…" Isn't it sad—they take the very passage designed to turn them away from a legal view of things and to a healing view of reality, and instead of seeing the healing truth they persist on interpreting it through the imposed law lie trying to make this a legal problem when it is a problem of the condition of the heart and mind. Only through design law, the law upon which reality operates is this rightly understood.

They suggest it is a legal problem because it is based on covenant law. What is the primary covenant that the Bible uses to model the plan of salvation? Marriage—it is a covenant and throughout human history, what kind of law did it operate upon?

Was Adam and Eve's marriage based in human law, imposed rules, what about Abraham and Sarah?

God's design law is about how reality operates, two hearts and minds bonding together in love, trust, respect, and devotion. This cannot be legislated. It can be betrayed, love and trust can be broken, but such law breaking is not a legal problem, it is a problem of health, of life itself. Such law breaking breaks the heart, damages the mind and corrupts the character.

This is the reality of God's kingdom. This is what Deuteronomy and Micah are teaching us. And the message for the people today is to stop viewing God as an imposer of rules and instead judge Him to be the Creator whose laws are design laws, then do what is right because it is right and right doing pleases God.

THURSDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "As Deuteronomy had said…" Why was it necessary to drive the people from the land and have them go into captivity? Was this punishment for sin, or was it a therapeutic act of mercy to keep open the avenue for the Messiah?

What made this action necessary? It was the refusal of the people to stay faithful in their responsibilities to the Lord.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

MARK YOUR CALENDARS, DECEMBER 11: Class will meet at Bake Crafters at our usual time. We will have class, then a Christmas potluck, which will start right after our Q&A time. Then we will have an afternoon open discussion.

JANUARY 15 AT 3 P.M. AT HAMILTON COMMUNITY CHURCH: We will have a special Sabbath Afternoon live-broadcast event here in Chattanooga on the 3 Angels' Messages.

NEW ROKU CHANNEL: Come and Reason has just opened a Roku channel and you can find it in Roku by searching for Come and Reason. For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

PROPERTY UPDATE: The renovation project is out to get contractor bids.

NEW TRACTS: We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

NOTES: My notes for each class are available for download on our website under our Bible Study tab.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 12
Deuteronomy in the New Testament

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

One of our online listeners and friends, Kent Johnson, sent this to me this week:

> *My sister Kathy Brannan wrote this for a flyer to pass out to people at their church's Christmas booth after a parade. She put the thoughts together from what she's been learning from you, Graham and others just in the last few years.*
>
> *"A Baby Solves the Case*
>
> *God has a court case to solve–and it's not yours, or mine–it's His Own! (Romans 3:4) He faces a lot of serious accusations–He is either "malevolent–unwilling to prevent evil or He is impotent–unable to prevent it." Some say that neither option is acceptable, so they conclude God does not exist.*
>
> *Humans were given their tragic start in accusing God long ago by the chief Mudslinger, recorded in Genesis 3. God is restrictive and arbitrary, ("you can't eat from any tree?"); God is not trustworthy, ("God lied--you won't die"); God is selfish, ("He is keeping something wonderful from you"). Revelation 12:7-9 unmasks this "Mudslinger," and reveals that he began this slander with angelic beings right at the throne of God.*
>
> *Yes! God has a case of cosmic proportions to resolve! What is the truth about His character? The Mudslinger was quite successful in heaven, as he has been on earth! And because forced obedience only results in rebels, God gives freedom to every being in heaven and earth to decide who to believe. Satan, the Mudslinger, fights with force, deceit, and ego. God has been battling the accusations with love, freedom, truth, and... a baby!*
>
> *This baby came to give the greatest evidence possible to humanity and to the entire universe (Colossians 1:20) that God is trustworthy– yes, sin does cause death–not because God will punish, but because sin will separate the created from the life-giving Creator. God the Father did not kill God the Son; He withdrew and allowed Jesus to demonstrate the results of the separation that occurs from sin. (Matthew 27:46) This baby gave evidence beyond our comprehension that God is not selfish–God became a human baby and then willingly let humans, inspired by the Mudslinger, put Him to death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8) And this baby gave wonderful evidence that God only restricts to protect us from the damage caused by sin. When this baby grew to manhood, He said, "I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly!" (John 10:10) His whole life was spent in giving life and healing!*

The jury is still out. This Christmas, let the truth this baby reveals convince you!"

Before we turn to lesson twelve, I wanted to examine one Old Testament references we didn't get to last week.

It is from lesson 11, TUESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Jeremiah 7:1-7, let's read through verse 8:

> This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message: [What is the application to us today? What is the Lord's house? The temple built on earth was a shadow or theater, a teaching tool to the genuine one. And what material is the genuine temple of God built out of, the one not built by human hands, the place where the Bible repeatedly states is God's dwelling place? It is built upon the Apostles with Christ the chief cornerstone and it is built out of the saved, the people. We are God's temple that He is cleansing. Do we see ourselves as the messengers of God standing at the gates of His temple to proclaim a message the world at this time in human history?] " 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. 3 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. [Do we have a message of Reformation? Does God have a message for this time that the people of God are to reform? Reform about what? About how we understand God, His law, His government, what righteousness actually is. We are to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water; we are to finally leave behind the false methods of imperialism and legal adjustment as a way to righteousness and instead embrace truth, love, liberty experienced through a faith relationship with our Creator God!] 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" [What is the message for us today? Might it be, "Do not trust in deceptive words and say "The Sabbath of the Lord, the Sabbath of the Lord, this is the Sabbath of the Lord"? Was the message that the temple in Jerusalem was God's temple a false message? Is the message that the seventh-day Sabbath is God's Sabbath a false message? Then why did the prophet tell them don't trust in deceptive words and say "This is the temple of the Lord?" when it was the temple of the Lord? What about saying "this is the Sabbath of the Lord" how could that be a false message when it is the Sabbath? When we present it as a legal requirement of a god who makes up imposed legal rules, as a test of obedience, as a behavioral requirement rather than as a gift from God to human beings built by God into reality to bless and benefit us—as part of His design for life and health.] 5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, [What is godly justice? Can we get godly justice through human governments? Notice what the text says next] 6 if **you do not oppress** the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if **you do not follow other gods to your own harm**, [Notice it doesn't say if your government doesn't oppress, or if your government passes the right laws, or has social programs. It is about what we do in governance of ourselves. Also, notice what is described in following other gods—harming oneself. The law of worship, we become like what

> we worship, worshiping false gods damages us. And we worship false gods by embracing the methods, principles and practices of those gods—even if we claim we are worshipping Jesus or don't believe in God at all. Thus, if Christians embrace the method of pursuing righteousness, pursuing godly justice through human governments, laws, mandates, they are worshiping the god of this world and misrepresenting the God of heaven.] 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. [Only the righteous in heart, the meek in character, those renewed to be like Jesus in how they live and treat others will inherit the earth and live in the earth made new.] 8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless" (Je 7:1–8 NIV84). [How many today are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless—the penal legal deception of salvation, social justice through human governments, mandates on other people's consciences—all of this is deception.]

Okay, back to **Lesson 12**

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 4:1-11:

> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."
> 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"
> 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.
> 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:
>
> > " 'He will command his angels concerning you,
> > and they will lift you up in their hands,
> > so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"
>
> 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
> 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."
> 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"
> 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Mt 4:1–11 NIV84).

Any lessons strike you immediately?

First point is that "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." But we are to pray, as Jesus taught us, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Mt 6:13 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into wilderness **to be tempted** by Satan, but He leads us away from temptation?

Because Jesus' mission was to confront and overcome Satan and the temptations of sin as a human being, using only the resources available to humans, in order to restore God's law of love back into the species human, destroying the death condition caused by Adam and restoring eternal life into humanity—the humanity He assumed. Thus, Jesus became the second Adam, the new head of humanity, the mystical vine and we are the branches that get grafted into Jesus through faith. In our faith relationship with Jesus we receive a new nature—we become partakers of the divine nature and are transformed and healed to be like Jesus.

We don't have to win the victory; we get to share the victory won for us. We will never have to tread the winepress alone. We will never be left to our own strength. We are promised never to face a temptation beyond our ability to resist.

This is why Jesus was led to the desert to be tempted but we pray to not be led into temptation.

What was the goal of the temptations? To get Christ to act selfishly.

How did Jesus overcome?

The lesson states, "Jesus didn't argue with Satan or debate with him. He simply quoted Scripture because, as the Word of God, it is "living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12).

First why didn't Jesus argue or debate with Satan, but Jesus did have a discussion, even a debate of sorts, with Nicodemus?

What was the difference in the two encounters?

Nicodemus was open to truth. His mind had not been hardened beyond hope. But Satan had destroyed the faculties that respond to truth and love and there was no amount of truth that could be presented to Satan that would be redemptive to Satan. So, it would only lengthen the time Jesus would be under temptation, not the time Satan would have for the opportunity for salvation—that time was already closed.

Jesus said, "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces" (Mt 7:6 NIV84).

So Jesus didn't enter into discussion or debate because there was no point, Satan's mind and heart are beyond impacting with truth and love.

The second point though is a little subtler point to reason through—and that is using Scripture. The lesson quotes Hebrews and suggests that Jesus used Scripture here because it is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, but what does it mean to describe the Scriptures in this way? When we say it is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, what are we talking about? Isn't Scripture used as a two-edged sword separating bone from marrow describing how the Word of God, the truth can cut through lies, expose sin and selfishness, bring conviction, and work to circumcise the hearts from the world?

In this case, was Jesus when Jesus quoted Scripture to defeat Satan, was it to cut through Satan's heart, reach his mind, pierce his conscience and bring him to repentance?

Couldn't Jesus have resisted Satan by staying silent like He did with Pilate or Herod, or simply walking away?

Wouldn't quoting the Bible to Satan be like casting pearls before swine? Would Scripture truths have any positive impact on Satan? Then for whom where they quoted?

Certainly, Jesus as a human, tempted in all points like us, would be encouraged by quoting Scripture. Have you ever been tempted and quoted Scripture and it encouraged you? And could Jesus have quoted Scripture because He was aware that the entire universe was watching, and could His quoting of Scripture have also been as a witness to angels in heaven? And what about as a witness to all of us through history who have read this account?

So, Jesus is quoting Scripture not to pull out His sword of truth and enter into a duel with Satan, but to encourage Himself, witness the truth to all those who are still open to be influenced by the truth.

What do you think it means "you shall not tempt the Lord your God?" or put God to a test?

Here is how I paraphrased it in *The Remedy NT*: "Don't test God to provide miracles when he has already provided overwhelming evidence upon which to base one's beliefs and know one's duty."

There is another lesson—did Jesus have a copy of the Bible with Him when He faced temptation? Then how was He able to quote Scripture?

If we don't study, memorize, and understand Scripture before we face temptation, we will not be equipped with heavenly truths in order to resist effectively. Another way to say it is, the more Scripture we bring into our hearts and minds, the greater our resources to call upon in trials and temptations to help us overcome and the less vulnerable to deception.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Deuteronomy 10:17-19, but let's back up and read beginning in verse 12:

12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? [Does the Lord ask anything different from us? And what does it mean to fear the Lord? What does it mean to walk in his ways? How do we love God? What has the Lord commanded of us today? Does the Lord's commands have something to do with what methods and principles we embrace and practice in our own health, what we choose to eat, or what we choose to drink, or smoke, what about what we choose to inject into our bodies? What about how we treat others? Are we do live out God's law in how we treat others? Why? Is it so we won't get into legal trouble with God? Or does breaking God's law actually damage us?]14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. [What is being established by this statement? Why does all creation belong to the Lord? Because He both built/created it and also sustains it. Reality only exists because God continually disperses His energy to maintain all the laws upon which the universe operates. To be cut off from God means to be cut off from life.]15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. [What is the point being made? That despite God being Creator of all things, a universe so immense we cannot even image it, that He loves us and wants to save and heal us! We are valued, we are important to Him. We are not some random collection of molecules that organized themselves and came into being, we have identity and individuality as beings created in the image of God and we matter to Him!] 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. [What does this mean? We are to cut away from our hearts all worldliness, all fear, selfishness, and all the methods, practices and principles of Satan. Stop resisting reality and embrace truth, love, and liberty. And the sharp instrument that God uses to circumcise our hearts is the truth, found most clearly in the Scripture. I love this quote from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

"The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth." His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself." DA 671.1] 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. [The lesson points out multiple New Testament texts that state God shows no favoritism. Is it true? What is the key truth revealed in Deuteronomy 10:17 that when understood confirms that God never plays favorites, but treats everyone with the same love, constancy, and reliability?

What kind of law is *always* applied with partiality and can be impacted by bribes? Imposed law, but what kind of law is never impacted by bias, opinion, emotion, prejudice, or

favoritism? Design laws, and God's laws are design laws and are not altered by partiality or by bribes. God is constant and His design laws are expressions of His character of love and they are not partial, they are no respecter of persons. They treat everyone the same. And God's love is for everyone the same.] 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt" (Dt 10:12–19 NIV84). [This is the outworking of God's law, to love others, which cannot be done through legislation, it can only be done through heart transformation. Understand, the various governmental programs that claim to be interested in helping the poor, are a means, mechanism, gambit, to get more power for the government—to justify taking more money, to divide society into constituency groups, to create injustice and inequity under the lie of seeking justice and equity.]

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Galatians 3:1-14, this is from *The Remedy NT:*

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has clouded your minds and confused your thinking such that you would prefer lies to the truth? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified, and as the only Remedy for our sin-infected minds! 2 I would like to know just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit of love and truth, and experience his healing power, by practicing rituals and observing rules, or was it by understanding and believing the truth that you heard? 3 Are you really so foolish that you think that after experiencing the healing power of the Spirit, which came by trust alone, you can now complete the healing process by your own effort–without the Spirit? 4 Have you really gone so far in the treatment course for nothing? And it will be for nothing if you persist in trying to heal yourselves! 5 Is it because you observe a set of rules that God enlightens your minds with his Spirit and miraculously transforms your characters, or is it because you have been won to trust by the evidence Jesus revealed?

6 Consider Abraham: "He trusted God, and his trust was recognized as righteousness: The distrust caused through Satan's lies had been removed, and through trust he was endowed with a new heart, right motives, and Christlike principles." 7 Be clear on this: All those who trust God as he did, experience the same transformation of character and are considered children of Abraham. 8 The Scriptures foretold that God would set the Gentiles right with himself by trust–just like Abraham–and announced this incredible good news to Abraham: "All nations, peoples and ethnic groups will be blessed through you." 9 So those who trust God experience healing of heart and mind — just like Abraham, who trusted God.
10 All who try to get well and experience unity with God by observing certain rituals, or following a written script, or obeying a set of rules are abandoned to their own fate, for it is written: "Abandoned to their own choice is everyone who fails in the slightest to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly, no one is healed and set right with God by working to follow a set of rules, because "Those set right with God live by trust." 12 The written law, as applied by the Jews, is not based on trust; on the contrary, it is based on

> individual performance–on attempts to heal oneself–as it is written: "The one who works to save self will live in fear and only get worse." 13 Christ saved us from where the law leaves us–diagnosed as terminal and abandoned to die–by being himself abandoned on the cross in order to restore us to trust and to purge humanity from the infection of selfishness and death; for it is written: "Abandoned to die is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He saved us from a futile, self-focused works system in order that the blessings of love, life, and freedom–given to Abraham–might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that by trust we might receive the full enlightenment, renewal, and regeneration of heart and mind that comes by the Spirit.

Read third paragraph, "Paul's point is that we…" What do you think of the lesson's description?

Can a person dying of cancer be saved from cancer by another person dying from cancer and then having their death registered in the death registry as a credit to them?

What about this: can a person dying from cancer be saved from cancer by another person getting treatment, having the cancer go into remission and then having the medical records of the healed person placed into the record of the terminal person crediting to them the healing that the other person experienced?

Understand, the entire penal/legal theory of salvation is a fraud, it is a scam, it is a lie from Satan to trap people into believing they have addressed the sin problem in their life when, in reality, they have not. Some forms of this are more grotesque than others, like the form that says you can go out and commit any sin as long as you come to confession and get absolution through a priest. But this same legal accounting of sin that the Roman church perpetrates is brought into Protestantism through penal substitutionary theology when it is taught acts of sin were punished in Jesus and salvation is the process of legally claiming His blood payment by faith so that we get His righteousness credited to us while we remain unrighteous.

Sinfulness is a condition that, because of Adam's sin, we are born with and did not choose (Psalm 51:5). Thus, we are born terminal, not legally guilty. Every human being born since Adam is born with a condition that we did not choose; therefore, **we individually are not in some "legal" situation of our making—we are in a sin-sick situation of our birth**. This carnal condition is what causes acts of sin and results in death (James 1:15; Galatians 6:8). **The acts of sin are symptoms of the condition, not the cause of the condition**.

The plan of salvation is God's intervention to eradicate the death condition and replace it with God's eternal-life condition (Romans 6:23). This requires that God's law (which is the law that life is built to operate upon) be written upon our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10). But we are unable to do this. This is what Christ came to do for us, to be the remedy to our condition, to **eradicate** the carnal nature and replace the carnal nature with a righteous sinless nature that He, as a human, developed for us.

Those who enter into a faith relationship with Jesus "die" to the old man, the carnal nature, and receive via the Holy Spirit a new heart and right spirit (Ezekiel 11:19). We receive a new nature—we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). As Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no

longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). As Scripture teaches, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Note, the Bible does **not** teach that "I have been *declared* to be crucified with Christ," or that "it is *declared* that Christ lives in me," or that "it is *accounted* that we become partakers of the divine nature," or that "Christ became sin for us so that we could be *declared* the righteousness of God." No, we are transformed and changed; the old carnal nature is put to death, and we get a new nature—we "become the righteousness of God!"

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points us to Deuteronomy 18:12 and practices that were considered an abomination to the Lord, let's start in verse 9:

> "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or* a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 18:9-13 NKJV).

What is the abomination? Why is this an abomination? Is this in any way related to the abomination that causes desolation?

All of these practices are forms of spiritualism—and what is the root of spiritualism? The pursuit of knowledge without the use of reason or the investigation of evidence. It is forming beliefs based on signs, wonders, claims, proclamations, authority of someone else—it is the land of deception and trickery, Satan's domain that will destroy the minds of people.

It is only by truth reasoned out, the weight of evidence, understood and chosen that our hearts and minds are won from lies to truth, as the *Desire of Ages* quote said earlier.

thoughts?

Read second paragraph, "In reference to the covenant…" What do you think about the idea of having in intercessor with God?

It is true that Moses represents Jesus—in what stage of Jesus ministry?

- Moses represents Jesus in His pre-incarnate state—when Jesus was in heaven planning with the Father the plan of salvation.

- The sacrificial lamb represents Jesus during His life on earth, culminating in His sacrificial death.
- Aaron the high priest represents Jesus after His resurrection and ascension into heaven as our heavenly High Priest.

So, Jesus is our intercessor—but what does this mean? The people at Sinai asked Moses to intercede—is that what God wanted, required, or needed?

So, when Jesus came to earth, who was interceding between God and Judas as Jesus washed Judas' feet? In other words, who was washing Judas' feet? Wasn't it God doing it? Does Jesus need someone else between Him and us?

When we recognize that Jesus is fully God, what does that do to the idea of intercession?

So, we have three phases of Jesus ministry depicted to us by Moses, the lamb and Aaron—all three are interceding for us—but interceding in what, for whom, where, how?

God intercedes for us in three places or ways:

- In our own hearts and minds, God intercedes with what sin would naturally do to human beings; after Adam sinned the natural human heart is enmity to God. God intercedes in our hearts by placing enmity between humans and Satan. God intercedes by convicting us of sin, convicting us of a better land, life and future and giving us a desire for more than this world has to offer. Without this intercession in our own hearts and minds we would be fully united with Satan
    - Consider this quote: "The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." **The enmity does not exist as a natural fact**. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and **if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven**, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. **There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men;** both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship." {ST, July 11, 1895 par. 5}
- God also intercedes with the principalities and powers of darkness, with evil forces to bring about the plan of salvation. We see this in the book of Job, with Elisha and the angel armies and throughout all human history.
- God interceded with the natural course of what sin does to a sinner, when Jesus who knew no sin became sin for us and overcame and destroyed the infection of sin (fear and selfishness) and restored God's design law back into humanity, thus becoming the second Adam. Jesus opened a new avenue, a new and living way back into at-one-ment with God.
- God intercedes, through the ministry of our heavenly High Priest, in our hearts and minds not just to convict and draw, but to heal and restore, to place His law, His character in us and transform us into actual righteousness and prepare us to meet Him.

So we have Jesus interceding throughout all human history for our benefit—but never with His Father, always with any element that would injure us and alienate us from Him.

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "This faithfulness…" What is the penalty for sin?

To whom is the penalty paid? Why is the death penalty the penalty for sin?

Is the penalty for sin something God inflicts or is it something God holds back?

If God were not to use any divine power against the sinner, would the sinner still suffer the penalty for sin?

What difference does it make to us how we understand this?

How does Jesus' death resolve the penalty for sin?

Does every sin have to be punished? Who says it does?

> **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761.4

The lesson points our attention to Hebrews 10:28-31:

> "Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:28–31 NIV84).

How do you explain this text to those who view God as the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin?

Here is Hebrews 10:28-31 from *The Remedy NT:*

> In the symbolic stage play — which was designed to reveal the truth about God and his plan to heal — anyone who rejected the script of Moses was terminated from the group on the

testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more certain will the agonizing death be for those who reject the Son of God (the only Remedy for our terminal condition), who treat as poisonous the healing truth that his death revealed, and who reject God's Spirit that enlightens the mind with this life-saving Remedy? 30 For we know him who said, "It is up to me to determine when someone is beyond healing–when someone has rejected the only healing cure; I will decide when to let them go;" and again, "The Lord will accurately diagnose his people." 31 It will be horrible for those who remain God's enemies to experience his unveiled goodness and realize all they have rejected, and experience the full weight of their own guilt.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

COME AND REASON IS ON ROKU: Find it in Roku by searching for "come and reason". For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

PROPERTY UPDATE: We have signed a contract for the renovation and work will begin Monday December 6th and has a 4-6 month projected completion date.

NEW TRACTS: We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2021 4Q Present Truth in Deuteronomy Lesson 13
The Resurrection of Moses

Seventh-day Adventist Church
SOUTHWESTERN UNION

To: North American Division Secretariat

Date: November 11, 2021

Subject: Southwestern Union Response to NAD Memorandum on OSHA ETS

On behalf of, and with the approval of, the executive officers of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference, Oklahoma Conference, Texas Conference, Texico Conference, Southwest Region Conference, Southwestern Adventist University, and the Southwestern Union, we have prepared the following statement, which reflects our convictions and also, we believe, those of the Seventh-day Adventist members in the Southwestern Union territory.

In light of prophetic understanding, we formally request that the North American Division and the Office of General Counsel review the OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard and consider the conflicts it presents with the beliefs and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We strongly believe that the mandates as prescribed in the OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard violate the freedom of conscience and personal choice of our employees and members. Furthermore, it is our belief that the church should not be the enforcer of government policy, as we believe in the steadfast adherence to the Seventh-day Adventist Church principle of separation of church and state. The Southwestern Union and its entities request that the North American Division advocate on our behalf in opposing this federal government overreach and violation of church-state separation.

The aforementioned entities are prepared to present this issue to their respective executive committees for authorization to disregard the OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard. Collectively, we ask that the North American Division, and the Office of General Counsel, to provide counsel, advice and defense against penalties for such actions.

In God's Service,

Stephen E. Brooks,
Executive Secretary

Cc: Carlos Craig, President
John Page, Treasurer

P. 817.295.0476
F. 817.447.2443
PO Box 4000, Burleson, TX 76097
SouthwesternAdventist.org

https://conversation.spectrummagazine.org/t/southwestern-union-cites-prophetic-understanding-in-opposing-covid-19-rules/22259/12

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Time and again…" What about the wording of the idea that "it wouldn't be grace if we deserved it"?

I find this to be very poorly worded and always want to rephrase it. Grace is the outflow of graciousness—God is gracious. Did Jesus deserve God's grace when He grew in wisdom and stature and "favor" or "grace" with God and man?

To the degree the authors mean that we don't have a right to God's grace in that we have not created it, earned it as pay or salary, then of course no created being sinful or sinless deserves God's grace.

But I wonder if they would say that Gabriel deserves God's grace? Or would they say grace is only needed when sin happens and since Gabriel hasn't sinned he doesn't need any grace? Then, would God be less gracious to sinless angels then He is to sinners? Or, is it as Paul wrote that where sin abounds grace much more abounds? It isn't that grace isn't being poured out from God to all His creatures, because God is gracious—it is that our sin presents the situation where God's grace is magnified, most clearly manifest.

I think unearned is a better word than unmerited or undeserved. We don't earn grace, we don't have a right to claim it, and neither do the sinless angels earn it; so our attitude needs to always be one of humble thankfulness!

The problem with the "undeserving" or "unmeriting" language is that it leans toward making us think of our sins instead of God's character. We are undeserving because we have sinned, we are bad, we are no good, we are corrupt and we don't deserve anything good. This is the way the legal model takes the mind.

But this distorts the meaning and focus; God's grace is about God's graciousness. We have a sin condition that we didn't cause—Adam and Eve did. We are born with the condition. God knows this and God doesn't blame us or hold us accountable for this condition, instead God has been intervening to cure us of the sin condition, and all His actions toward us are manifestations of grace.

Think about having a grandchild who is born HIV infected, what is your attitude toward that grandchild? Wouldn't you do everything in your power to heal/save that child—and of course your own child also (the grandchild's parent). This is grace, the child and grandchild don't earn it, it is a manifestation of your love, your character. But their symptoms, whether they vomit on your carpet, or are irritable and gripe at you, or have a temper tantrum, such symptoms never change your desire to heal and save them.

The lesson asks us to read Numbers 20:1-13:

> In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

2 Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses
and Aaron. 3 They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell
dead before the LORD! 4 Why did you bring the LORD's community into this desert, that we
and our livestock should die here? 5 Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible
place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"
[What do you notice so far? They are blaming Moses for bringing them to where they are. But who is leading them? It is a pillar of fire by day and cloud by night—it is God that is leading them, which is Jesus leading them, but they don't like where God has led them they make Moses the target of their frustrations and accuse Moses of doing them harm. Do we see a strategy of Satan in this? False accusation. How much of this do we see in the church and the world today? So, what would cause the people to lose site of God's very presence and turn on Moses this way? Fear—they found themselves in a situation that made them afraid. What did Adam and Eve experience as soon as they sinned? They ran and hid because they were afraid. Fear is part of the infection of sin. What casts out fear? Love. But what does fear cause one to do? Look out for self, be willing to harm others. What does the roar of a lion do? It causes fear, and fear causes people to freeze, flee, or fight. At the end of time Satan roars and people become afraid and fear impairs thinking, impairs love, causes people to become more like God's enemy. We have a worldwide **pandemic of fear**. Almost every person on earth has been impacted by the fear pandemic, far more have been harmed by the fear pandemic than the viral pandemic. What would have prevented ancient Israel from turning on Moses? How about staying focused on God, thanking Him for His love, deliverance, constant watch care—and their love and trust for God would have made them appreciate their situation. But so many in Israel betrayed God and forgot His presence among them because of fear. So many today willing to betray God's methods in their lives so they can feel safe. We must refocus our attention off of the things of this earth, off of the virus, global warming, inflation, politics and focus our minds on God. Recognize what is happening is that God is leading His people to the heavenly promised land, preparing us to meet Jesus and Satan is trying to distract us with anything that will cause us to be afraid and take our focus off of God.]

6 Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and fell
facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. [Wow, just think about this: if you were a member of that group and saw the glory of God physically appear to Moses and Aaron, even from a distance, would you still keep arguing and accusing them or would you have enough awareness to realize they are following God's directions? What does it say about the people that they failed to recognize this? Remember those who came to arrest Christ, divinity flashed through humanity and they fell down, Peter cuts off an ear. Jesus miraculously restores the ear. And then, after the divinity is again veiled, what did they do—they arrested Him, they didn't worship Him. What do both of these accounts reveal? Sin damages the mind, sears the conscience and burns out the faculties that recognizes and responds to truth—so that even when truth is revealed the mind twists it, devalues it, interprets in through a false lens.] 7 The
LORD said to Moses, 8 "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly
together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring
water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink." [Since God has foreknowledge and knew Moses would strike the rock with the staff—why didn't God tell

Moses to leave the staff behind so he wouldn't have the option of striking it? Because He did know and there remained a tiny itty bitty piece of selfishness in Moses that Satan was seeking to exploit through the outrageous behavior of the people, Jesus wanted to remove that from Moses and it required Moses to either be tempted and surrender in trust or to have it manifest and repent.]

> 9 So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. 10 He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.
> 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough **to honor me as holy** in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."
>
> 13 These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD and where he showed himself holy among them. (Nu 20:1–13 NIV84).

What was the problem? What did Moses do here that was the problem? Is it that he broke a rule? What does it mean he failed to honor God as holy?

Moses calls them "rebels" and strikes the rock twice—perhaps he was angry, likely he was. What kind of God would this reveal to the people?

What if Moses instead stayed patient, spoke gently to the rock and water came forth, would that have given a different witness?

In Friday's lesson, they quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 418, we will start two sentences before them:

> More than this, Moses and Aaron had **assumed power that belongs only to God**. The necessity for divine interposition made the occasion one of great solemnity, and the leaders of Israel should have improved it to impress the people with reverence for God and to strengthen their faith in His power and **goodness**. When they **angrily** cried, "Must **we** fetch you water out of this rock?" they put themselves in God's place, as though the power lay with themselves, men possessing human frailties and passions. Wearied with the continual murmuring and rebellion of the people, Moses had **lost sight of his Almighty Helper**, [Does this remind you of any other Bible story? What about Peter walking on the water, what happened when he lost sight of Jesus? Yes, Moses said "must we fetch you water out of the rock?" But was it as big of an assumed power grab as many suggest? Let's reread Numbers 20:7-8: *"The LORD said to Moses, 8 'Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.* ***You*** *will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.'"* So God said to Moses, "YOU will bring water out of the rock." So when Moses said "Must we bring water out of the rock" was it possible Moses was acknowledging that God was the source because He didn't say "Must I

> bring water out of the rock"? I wonder if Moses really thought he had the ability to bring water from the rock? Do you think Moses believed he had that power? To me the bigger issue wasn't the words "Must we" as God Himself said "You will bring" no, the bigger issue is God's character and Moses misrepresented God as angry when God wanted to show His patience, gentleness, mercy, graciousness. It was a form of taking the Lord's name in vain. When we don't act like Jesus it is a form of taking the Lord's name in vain—saying we are Christian—like Christ but then acting in another way misrepresents the name or character of Christ. I have been guilty of this just like Moses was here and I have had to repent, just like Moses and I think this is the bigger issue.] and without the divine strength he had been **left to mar his record by an exhibition of human weakness**. [What was the problem—the action of striking the rock or was the action a result of the problem? The problem was taking the focus off of God, of looking either to the people, the problem, the stressors, the conflict, or to self. Do we struggle with this? Do we see in society today how Satan works to take our minds off of God and get us to focus on other things?] The man who might have **stood pure, firm, and unselfish** to the close of his work had been overcome at last. **God had been dishonored before the congregation of Israel**, when He should have been magnified and exalted. PP 418.2

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "According to this text…"

> But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "**Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy** in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." 13 These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD and where he showed himself holy among them. (Nu 20:12–13 NIV84).

What do you think is meant that Moses didn't trust God enough or have faith in God?

Did Moses go to a golden calf for directions when the people accused him, or did he go to God?

Did Moses stop believing in God? What does this mean?

It means in carrying out the action He used is own judgment of what would be best at that moment over the expressed and specific directions God had given Him. When God doesn't give us expressed and specific directions then we ARE to use our own judgment—most decisions in life are like this: what shoes to wear, which route to take to work, how to respond to an accusation etc. But when God gives specific directions we are to follow His directions—or at least talk to Him about a change before we make a change—like David did about building the temple.

It seems there are two possibilities of what happened with Moses and even perhaps a combo of both and we can learn from this experience:

- Perhaps, it went something like this—Moses knew what God had directed, but in the moment, Moses thought—"I think speaking is insufficient. These people are unruly, they are rebels; they are not open to listen to a quiet voice; they need to be reminded of God's power and authority; they need a stronger hand and display to remind them that if they act up they will get a spanking." So, he chose to strike the rock twice replacing God's direction with his own judgment of what is best. I don't know that he thought any of this, but it is a possibility.

- But another possibility: Perhaps it was just an emotional impulse without thought at all—but that would then be a slip or loss of self-control, allowing emotions to overrule and perhaps that is what happened. When we allow emotions to overrule our judgment we are not trusting God. If we trust God then we stay calm in the face of opposition, but if we don't trust Him with the events, the outcomes, our own safety etc. then perhaps emotions can get out of control.

What do you think of these possibilities and the lessons for us today?

The lesson asks "What had the Lord told Moses to do, but what did Moses do instead?"

Is the lesson implying that it was the failure to do the correct act that was the problem? Is it implying that we must always do the right actions as instructed or we will be in trouble?

What about David and the showbread—was David doing the right actions that were instructed by God for the use of the showbread? Was David in trouble for that, why was he not in trouble but Moses was?

In each circumstance (Moses and David), the symbolic acts are consistent with the reality of the hearts of the actors and the hearts of the actors determine the difference.

In Moses situation, his actions mispresented God and the plan of salvation and the attitude of his heart was one of lack of faith, anger, or selfishness. Thus, God took action to discipline and therapeutically intervene to heal Moses and teach the people and all of us through history who read about it.

In David's situation, his actions represented God beautifully and the plan of salvation as the showbread represents Jesus and those who eat obtain life and health. And David's attitude was one of faith in God and love for his men with a desire to save his men and honor God.

We cannot look merely to the behaviors, it is the attitudes of the heart that matter.

Are there other Bible examples of people not doing what God directed but the person not being in trouble with God? Paul going to Jerusalem, Paul was warned if he went he would be bound, but Paul went anyway and lost his freedom and eventually his life.

Why wasn't this sin for Paul? Because his motive was to honor God, to save people, to bring the gospel to the Jews, because there was no selfishness in Paul's actions, nor rebellion against God, it wasn't wise, but it wasn't sinful.

I think in Paul's case God was saying to Paul—I'd prefer you didn't go there. These people will not accept the gospel, they will harm you, your ministry will be cut short. But I know how much you love them, how important it is for you and you won't be satisfied until you go and try. Just know, if you go, this is what is going to happen. In other words, God didn't tell him not to go, He warned him not to, but left it up to Paul.

Read third paragraph, "Verse 9 has Moses…" What do you think of this idea that it was more miraculous to speak to the rock that strike it? I have trouble with that idea? Are they suggesting that the rod was like a magic wand and using it would suggest a talisman and thus reduce the miracle, but if just spoke to it somehow it would be a greater miracle?

TUESDAY

The death of Moses—what do you understand about this?

What is the object lesson demonstrated by Moses not going into the promised land but instead he died, along with all those who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years?

Remember the Bible records real historic people doing real historic events, but these events are recorded to teach us more than history—they are recorded to teach us a larger reality. Many of the historic figures and events serve as object lessons for us—what about this event, what is the lesson?

What does a wilderness represent symbolically? It is a place without water—what does water symbolize in the Bible—i.e. the water of life? It symbolizes God's love, which is the principle of life, what life operates upon.

So a wilderness represents a place devoid of God's love and in fact a place where only from the Rock, who is Jesus, do we find the water of life, or God's love. The wilderness then represents this world of sin—a place where God's love doesn't flow except through Jesus the connecting link between God and us.

What does the Promised Land represent? The New Earth—and who gets to cross over into the New Earth, the real promised land? Those who have had God's love restored in them; those who have had God's law written in their hearts and minds; those who are attached like branches to the Vine Jesus and have Jesus love flow through them.

So why didn't Moses go over to the earthly promised land with Israel? Because the people needed to be taught the truth:

- God is love and the source of life
- God is not angry at them—God is angry at sin which separates them from Him
- He is the source of life and only those restored to love and trust have life

- Moses' actions revealed a breakdown of trust and thus he could not go over to the theatrical promised land because without trust there is no reconnection with God who pours His love/life into our hearts.

But what did the resurrection of Moses reveal? By resurrecting Moses it is demonstrated that Moses did in fact have a healed heart and that bad deeds don't keep one out of heaven, unhealed hearts do. The bad action misrepresented God, and God revealed to Moses a hidden microdot of vulnerability in need of full and complete healing, which Moses received.

After Moses' mistake, after allowing anger to take control of him and acting out of impulse instead of faith, after God pronounced the therapeutic consequence for Moses and the object lesson for the people, **Moses had to choose**, trust God, repent, accept God's will, or rebel, protest, complain, get angry at God, list the long list of good deeds Moses had done for God, the many sacrifices and try to justify self.

Moses' response to God's intervention is evidence that Moses accepted he needed this last little therapeutic intervention. I suspect when we meet Moses in heaven and ask him about it, he will say to us. "Jesus was so good to me there. I really needed that. I didn't realize how my feelings of irritation and frustration over the many years of the people complaining had eroded some of my love for them and undermined my trust in God and I lost site of the bigger picture for a moment. I am so glad God didn't ignore that. I never wanted to be irritable or angry with the people. I love them all so much I would have gladly given my life for them."

So, Moses dies, Read third paragraph SABBATH's lesson, "As Ellen G. White expressed it: 'Moses knew…" thoughts?

No earthly friend would be permitted to minister to him in his last hours…do you think he was COVID positive?

Of course he wasn't, but is it a torment of soul, to die alone? I recently attended a funeral of a lovely Christian woman, someone who loved our class and the family described the precious memories of their last moments with her.

I have patients who were forbidden to be with family members dying in hospice care. Others, whose family members were hospitalized and no members of the family could stay with them. What we as a society have done in denying families the ability to be with their loved ones as they leave this world is not God's will; it is not in harmony with the principles of heaven; it is not the outworking of love. It is the outworking of fear and selfishness.

Notice EGW states that Moses' severest "trial was his separation from the people of his care and love."

Yes, even the godless in our society recognize the destructiveness of isolation, of separation from loved ones. Our physical and mental health is damaged from social isolation. The immune system is

undermined and we become more susceptible to infections when we are socially isolated. Our risk for post surgical complications increases when we are socially isolated. Our pain levels are higher when we are socially isolated. Depression and suicide rates increase when we are socially isolated. Oh, the damage we have done to people because we have allowed fear to direct our decision making instead of love.

WEDNESDAY

The death of Moses: what death did Moses die—first or second?

Is the first death the death that is the punishment for sin? Do the righteous die the first death? Are they being punished for their sin?

Why is there a first death? Because of sin, AND because of God's grace—God working to destroy sin and save sinners.

Consider the options, what would history look like if there was no first death? Consider the amount of suffering that would take place in our world of sin if people could be tortured—but couldn't die the first death? Or, consider the hopeless state of things if people could die but every death is the second eternal death?

Understand, the first death, as painful as it is to us to lose loved ones into the sleep death, the first death, it is a mercy, a part of God's grace, for the working out of the plan of salvation. God is not the cause of death, even the first death, but God's grace has permitted it to exist, for the body to wear down and cease functioning, while the soul—the individuality of the person (like software on your computer) is stored securely on the heavenly servers, called the Lamb's book of life. So that when Jesus returns, as Paul wrote in Thessalonians, he "will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

So, Moses died the first death, the sleep death, the death where his body stopped functioning, but his soul, his psyche, his individuality, was safe and secure with Jesus in heaven. And at some point, we are not given a date, Jesus came to the Earth downloaded the software/soul/psych/individuality of Moses into a reanimated and glorified body and Moses rose from the dead.

This is our hope. Because of Jesus' victory we have the hope of eternal life, if we, like Moses, surrender in trust to Jesus and allow Him to heal our hearts and minds.

How was Moses able to be resurrected and taken to heaven before Jesus came to earth and won the victory over Satan, sin and death in our behalf? Because God lives outside of time and is not restricted to a linear existence. Once Jesus left infinity and entered into our linear existence being born as a babe in Bethlehem and procured the Remedy in our timeline, God who lives outside of time could access what Jesus has achieved and apply it anywhere in time because God lives outside of time. The point being is that Enoch, Moses, Elijah were all saved by Jesus in the exact same way we are.

Read last paragraph, "But how could Christ…" When did Moses come under the power of Satan? This is an interesting question or concept.

All nature groans under the power of sin—the power of sin is the defects and damage that has occurred on earth because of sin, it is the survival of the fittest drive, the decay, randomness, chaos and erosion that happens because we are separated from God's life-giving glory. We are all born with a terminal condition of fear and selfishness. So, in that sense we are under the power of sin, the power of the carnal nature. But because of God's grace, God intervenes in human hearts via the Holy Spirit to limit the power of temptation, the power of those drives so that no person is tempted beyond that which they are able. King Darius had Gabriel dispatched to limit the power of the temptation and leave Darius free to choose which action he wanted to take.

But when we choose to reject truth, to reject known revelation, to reject God's will, we place ourselves in harmony with Satan and allow Satan's power to gain a foothold in our hearts. Our longings for the evil, the addiction, the next gossip morsel, the next angry word, to retaliate, to hate the perceived enemy etc. grows in our heart. We are not lost, we are not cast off, but we are weakened and we must repent and seek God who will enter our hearts and heal us and then we must choose to say no to the next temptation so that we grow in godly strength.

The sin of Moses did not put Moses into legal trouble, it was a manifestation of the condition of sinfulness into which he was born and would be similar to an occult malignancy, evidence of sin, fear, selfishness still not fully eliminated.

When the author states, "he was death's lawful captive" that is quite right, not Satan's lawful captive, but death's lawful captive. Death is not an intelligence; death doesn't make accusations; death doesn't prosecute a case in court; death is a condition, a state of being separated from God who is the source of life. Death is the natural result from breaking God's design law of life and cutting oneself off from the channel of blessing. Tying a plastic bag over one's head causes a death condition, at that point we can say, the merits of tying a plastic bag over your head is that you become death's lawful captive. It is lawful for death to ensue for those who tie a plastic bag over their head.

Because of Jesus taking this death condition and eradicating it and restoring God's eternal life condition in humanity, Moses through trust received from Jesus a new life, a new heart and right spirit that Moses did NOT develop or achieve, Jesus did. Moses partook of this by trust or faith.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph, "How long Moses…" thoughts? Isn't this a wonderful point? Again an example of God's grace. What would heaven be like if those who die the first death are in heaven conscious and awake while their little children remain on earth to struggle, suffer, be exploited, abused, enslaved, molested? How many times in history has this happened?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Would heaven be a place of comfort to watch this?

Consider Moses—if you were Moses and you fell asleep in the first death—when would you want Jesus to resurrect you—immediately so you could watch the people you knew personally, your own grandchildren, struggle, suffer, rebel, kill and be killed in war. Or would you want to wait a few centuries until at least the people you see suffering and struggling are not those you knew personally?

Read fourth paragraph, "Without the hope…" What difference does it make in your life to know that Jesus rose again and that we will also?

In our world today do we remember this?

What does it profit a man to gain the entire world and lose his soul? What is the point of this question?

What if we reworded it this way: "What does it profit a man to gain a few decades of life and lose his soul?" The three worthies on the plan of Dura, bow down or go into the fiery furnace—what is the temptation? Save your life, give yourselves a few more years of life, but at what cost?

What was the temptation for the Reformers at the stake?

What is the temptation with COVID? To act in ways that violate God's design laws in how we treat others so that we can have a few more years of life.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Roku channel: Come and Reason has just opened a Roku channel and you can find it in Roku by searching for Come and Reason. For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

Property update: Renovations have started:

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 1
The Letter to the Hebrews and to Us

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

We are starting a new quarter studying the book of Hebrews.

Who wrote this book? This has been a point of discussion throughout all Christian history. For the first four centuries after Christ, the Christian community couldn't decide, there was no consensus. The author is intimately familiar with Jewish rituals, and esteems and values the OT Scriptures. This led the church to conclude that Paul was the author. However, more recent scholars have noted that when Hebrews quotes the Old Testament the quotes are exclusively and exactly from the Greek not Hebrew OT. Further, the writing style, and word selection to convey the concepts are not consistent with those chosen in the epistles known to be written by Paul. So, recent scholars have doubted the authorship by Paul.

But, the most likely explanation is that Paul is the inspired source of the truths that are conveyed in the book of Hebrews, but it was penned by an assistant, Timothy or Luke. My belief is that Paul is the author.

But, this question of authorship of Hebrews is actually not a relevant question for determining truth, it isn't ultimately important, it makes no difference, it is just like those who would question the authorship of some of EGW's writings, to the serious Bible student it is inconsequential to the only truly relevant question, which is: Is what is written true? Does it harmonize with the rest of Scripture? Does it carrying forward the truths and principles of God as revealed throughout the totality of Scripture?

It is the spiritually immature who make a big deal out of the authorship—why? Because children are those who haven't yet developed the ability to discern right from wrong—thus they *need* an authority to tell them the answer. The immature believe because someone said so. Thus, if we don't know who said it, how can we trust it? If Paul didn't write it, then is it inspired? If EGW didn't write it, but copied it, is it inspired, how can we trust it?

The spiritually immature are not evil, they want to be good children, they want to obey, they don't want to get into trouble that is why it is so important to them to know who wrote what so they can determine who is the authority they are supposed to trust. They don't want to trust the wrong person and be tricked.

But this is the thinking of the immature. It is like those who don't know how to do math saying, "Why should we believe that 12 x 12 is 144? We don't know who wrote that answer. If we are sure the Nobel prize laureate in mathematics wrote the answer then we will believe it." But for those who have developed the ability to do math they can discern the difference between the truth and the false.

Why do I believe Hebrews was authored by Paul and penned by an assistant? Because the theology of Hebrews is the same theology in all of Paul's epistles, namely that the rituals of the Jewish services are incapable of providing salvation—they were merely teaching tools to point to Christ. It is Jesus who is the fulfillment of the Scripture; it is Jesus who completes the object lesson; it is Jesus who opens the way back to God; it is Jesus who restores us to unity to God and takes away sin and brings us righteousness.

So the message of Hebrews is to transfer one's faith from rituals to Jesus, from animals, priests, buildings, festivals, sacrifices to Jesus.

Interestingly, the great reformer Martin Luther didn't believe Hebrews was inspired. He rejected Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation.

This is quite significant as these are the books that most clearly teach the Great Controversy view of the sin problem, a war in heaven. He not only rejected these books, he rejected the idea of a war in heaven. Luther absolutely believed in an authoritarian God and the imposed law view of God's government.

I have no doubt that Luther was moved by the Holy Spirit to break away from the lies *that he perceived* and to move toward greater truth. However, it wasn't possible in his short lifetime for him to journey all the way out of the darkness into which he was indoctrinated and into the greater light—and especially so when he rejected the inspired record of much of that light. That is why the Reformation didn't end with Luther, but has continued since Luther. We esteem Luther, what a man of courage. We are thankful for Luther, but we don't teach ideas that are 500 years old and require us to reject four books of the Bible.

Sadly, many theologians, even in the SDA church, continue to advance a theology that depends on Luther's legal model of atonement. We have such a better understanding than Luther.

SUNDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "At the beginning of the Christian…." How do we deal with miracles today? If we see powerful signs and wonders should we believe the person doing the deeds has a message from God? Should the miracle convince us?

We must use the integrative evidence-based approach—which requires we harmonize Scripture, science, and experience. If we separate these threads, we get led astray. Science alone leads to

godlessness, experience alone leads to mysticism, nihilism, or deception, and Scripture alone leads to confusion.

What does Scripture tell us about miracles?

> If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken **takes place**, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (**gods you have not known**) "and let us worship them," **you must not listen to the words** of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is **testing you** to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. (Dt 13:1–4 NIV84).

If someone appears and does real signs, wonders, miracles, and they do it in the name of Jesus, or Jehovah, or Yahweh, or Yoshua, but they teach that god is a god who makes up laws and that justice requires their god to use power to inflict punishment on law breakers, they are presenting a false god and we are not to follow them why? Because we know God for ourselves, we love God with all our heart and soul—meaning we have intimacy with God.

Imagine someone came to you and did signs and wonders and miracles and then said your spouse sent them and they claim that your spouse said that we should do thus and so, but what they said is out of character for your spouse whom you know—what would you do?

We must know God for ourselves, know Him personally. We must have an experience in His design laws and methods. We must be personally settled into the truth that we cannot be moved.

What does it mean the Lord is testing us? This is what we are facing at this time in history. God is giving us an opportunity to "test" our mettle, to test our resolve, to test our commitment, to test our sincerity, to test our character, to test our religion, to test our beliefs. In other words, as events unfold we will be presented with situations and circumstances that require us to choose what law we apply to our lives in how we live and treat others. We will be honest or lie? Will we protect others or sacrifice other to protect self? Will we stand for truth in practice or only in theological quizzes?

Remember what Jesus said:

> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Mt 7:22–23 NIV84).

Miracles can be counterfeited, the truth cannot. Satan does not have truth on his side thus he will counterfeit miracles and present lies. But the lies may not be the lies you expect—it is very unlikely Satan will appear and claim that Jesus is not Lord. No, he will appear and claim that Jesus is Lord. He will endorse that sin is transgression of the law. He will support that salvation requires Jesus to die for the sins of the people. And what if he endorses the Bible Sabbath? But what he won't do is practice and apply God's methods, God's design law of truth, love, and liberty. He will seek to coerce and use

imposed laws, mandates, to compel compliance under the guise of the greater good, protecting others, protecting society, protecting the planet, and will likely do it with reluctance, with complaints of how he only loves us and wants to save us. But he won't leave us free, we will be pressured and compelled.

Read last paragraph "The Spirit gave early Christians…" This conviction of having sins forgiven is an important experience for all to have. The natural impact of sin upon the heart, mind and soul of the sinner is to feel guilt, shame, internal condemnation, and fear. Sin causes us to feel we are no good, that we deserve punishment. Sin warps our minds and causes us to be afraid of rejection and retaliation and to project these fears out upon God and believe God is mad, God is angry, wrathful and must punish us. Sin brings a burden a conviction that we deserve punishment and we cannot believe that God wouldn't punish us. Satan's lie is deeply imbedded in the sin experience, the lie that every sin must meet its punishment.

Therefore, God in love and mercy, meets the sinner in their place of fear, of condemnation, of guilt and shame and communicates they are forgiven. What a joy to experience the forgiveness of God. It is essential to the healing of our hearts to being reconciled to God.

But the barrier, the obstacle in our unity with God is not God—there is nothing in God that keeps us separate from Him. There is no anger, no wrath, no unforgiving attitude that blocks our approach—no it is sin in us that causes fear, guilt, shame and misjudgment of God that separates us from Him.

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (Jn 3:16–18 NIV84).

But Christianity, infected with the false law view, has not understood this truth and has taught that God must punish and cannot forgive without some legal penalty being paid:

19th Century Evangelist George MacDonald wrote:

> "The Lord never came to deliver men from the consequences of their sins while those sins yet remained … Yet, feeling nothing of the dread hatefulness of their sin, men have constantly taken this word that the Lord came to deliver us from our sins **to mean that he came to save them from the punishment of their sins**.
>
> "**This idea has terribly corrupted the preaching of the Gospel**. The message of the Good News has not been truly communicated. **Unable to believe in the forgiveness of the Father in heaven**, **imagining him not at liberty to forgive, or incapable of forgiving forthright**; not really believing him God who is fully our Savior, but a God bound—either in his own nature or by a law above him and compulsory upon him—to exact some recompense or satisfaction for sin, **a multitude of religious teachers have taught their fellow men that Jesus came to bear our punishment and save us from hell. But in that they have misrepresented his true**

> **mission.**" George MacDonald, *Discovering the Character of God* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989), p. 39.

God didn't sent Jesus to pay a penalty to God, to do something to the law or Himself. When Adam sinned God didn't change, the law didn't change, but Adam and Eve were changed—they were infected with fear, selfishness, guilt, shame and ran and hid from God.

God sent Jesus to reveal the Father, to expose the lies of Satan, to remove the guilt, shame and fear that causes us to run from God and causes us to misjudge God as the source of pain and suffering and death as punishment for sin and to cure the sin problem, to overcome sin and restore God's living law back into humanity.

God did not send Jesus to condemn us but to heal and save us. But those who refuse to belief the truth about God that Jesus revealed, those who hold to the lie that God is severe and unforgiving and wont forgive unless a blood sacrifice is offered to Him to pay Him off, remain condemned because they continue to misjudge God and continue to live in fear of Him.

Remember this quote from Oswald Chambers:

> **The Bible does not say that God punished the human race for one man's sin**, but that the nature of sin, namely, my claim to my right to myself, entered into the human race through one man. But it also says that another **Man took upon Himself the sin of the human race and put it away** — an infinitely more profound revelation…
>
> **Sin is something I am born with** and cannot touch— only God touches sin through redemption. It is through the Cross of Christ that God redeemed the entire human race from the possibility of damnation through the heredity of sin. **God nowhere holds a person responsible for having the heredity of sin, and does not condemn anyone because of it**. Condemnation comes when I realize that Jesus Christ came to deliver me from this heredity of sin, and **yet I refuse to let Him do so**. From that moment I begin to get the seal of damnation. **"This is the condemnation [and the critical moment], that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light . . . " (John 3:19)** Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest,* http://utmost.org

What does it mean?

We are not condemned by God because we have the sin condition—this condition is something we were born with. We didn't have a choice to be born sinless. Adam and Eve had a choice to remain sinless or become sinners, but not us. So we are not condemned by God for the condition. We are not responsible for the condition of our birth. We are not born guilty with a legal condition, we are born terminal with a lethal condition.

Thus condemnation comes when we:

- refuse the Remedy of Jesus that will cure us of this lethal condition.

- choose fear and selfishness over love,
- lies over truth,
- hate and resentment over forgiveness,
- cruelty over kindness,
- coercion over freedom,
- compelling others over respecting their autonomy,
- force over liberty.

When we do this we are condemning ourselves; we are refusing to be healed by the Spirit applying the character of Christ into our hearts and minds.

God wants to free us from the power of sin and evil—how does He do that? By giving us opportunity to choose Him.

The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love—we will be presented with opportunities to choose, the Spirit will bring enough truth to our minds in any given circumstance that we know the truth and then we are left free to decide what we will do. When we choose the truth the Spirit gives us divine power to succeed, but we don't get the power until we choose the truth, and this is how we grow, this is how we mature, this is how we develop godly character:

> We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Ro 5:3–5 NIV84).

Note the progression—suffering, trial, difficulties in this world brings us decision points. Do we fulfill our duties as God gives them to us, or are we negligent? Do we turn to God, stand firm on His principles, trusting Him with outcomes—or when events circumstances conspire to undermine our efforts and we are short on money do we take matters into our own hands and steal, cheat, or embezzle? Do we turn to destructive substances to self-medicate away uncomfortable feelings or do we go to God, get professional help, and do the hard work of healing inner wounds?

It is only by choosing God, His methods, wrestling out the painful feelings in our trust relationship with God that we grow and when we do this, notice what happens? God pours His love into our hearts—His love casts out all fear, we experience a real transformation of motive. Our fear and selfishness is replaced with love and trust.

Trials, difficulties don't go away, but our frantic efforts to fix everything ourselves does as we have a living faith relationships with the Creator of the universe. Consider Joseph or Daniel—they had many real-life struggles, enemies, problems. There is no doubt they had anxieties and fears. I am sure they had many sleepless nights—but did God ever abandon them? And because they trusted God, because in their difficulties they went to Him, look what God was able to do through them? This is to be our experience. God is longing for people who will run to Him when difficulties arise, who will stay true to Him and not embrace the methods of the world.

Consider this quote out of the book *Education:*

> **The greatest want of the world** [listen to this description and see if this isn't desperately true today] is the want of [people]—**[people] who will not be bought or sold, [people] who in their inmost souls are true and honest, [people] who do not fear to call sin by its right name, [people] whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, [people] who will stand for the right though the heavens fall**. Ed 57.3
>
> **But such a character is not the result of accident**; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. **A noble character is the result of self-discipline**, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—**the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man**. Ed 57.4

Wow—what a great description of what the world needs today, and how can we have such a character? Only by facing difficulties and choosing to say no to fear, no to selfishness, no to the methods of this world, and seek Jesus, surrender to Him, apply His methods to ourselves in how we live and treat others and trust God with outcomes.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 10:32-34:

> Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. (Heb 10:32–34 NIV84). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

What is the message? Are people of conscience being publicly exposed to insult and persecution today? Are we standing by those who are honoring God with their bodies and not submitting to government mandates or are we colluding with the government to compel people to act against their conscience?

And what happens to us if we side with the government and seek to compel and force people to act against their conscience?

What does it mean to sympathize with those in prison? Is it talking about sympathizing with those like Barabbas—who are in prison because they are a danger to society, those who have ongoing evil in their hearts, and if released would seek to exploit and hurt others? Is it suggesting we should sympathize with the exploiters of others and let them out of prison, or defund the police?

Or is it speaking of sympathizing with those who have been wrongly imprisoned, imprisoned for the cause of Christ, imprisoned for standing up for conscience? Religious and political imprisonment?

If we want to apply this broadly to all people in prison, because we have a prison ministry, then what is the godly way we sympathize with those that are imprisoned for actual crimes they have committed? We see them as people suffering from sin-sickness and our prison ministry seeks to bring them the remedy of Jesus Christ that if they accept Him will change the criminal into an honest and trustworthy person. But if they don't accept Jesus, then we grieve for them because they will only get sicker in heart, mind and character, but we don't let them out of prison to injure their own selves more or others, just because we sympathize with them. So, we can still sympathize with them, but we don't ignore the reality their condition.

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 11:24-26:

> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. (Heb 11:24–26 NIV84).

What is the lesson? What is the truth for us today?

- Do we, by our faith, love and trust Jesus more than all others? Do we identify as being part of the family of God and refuse to be known as the son or daughter of the worldly?
- Do we identify first and foremost as an image bearer of Jesus—a Christian or do we identify first as an American or Australian or Canadian or South African?
- Is our identity first and foremost as a follower of Jesus or do we see ourselves first as white, African American, Asian, Native American or Danish?
- Do we identify first and foremost as a Christian—one who follows Jesus, or do we identify as a follower of Paul, Apollos, Luther, Wesley, Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Graham Maxwell, Tim Jennings?

I served in the US Army and was conditioned to see the uniform first, and never really noticed a person's race. Are they Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force? I automatically looked at their rank, their specialty (medical, infantry, engineers etc.), their unit badge—were they in my chain of command or not, any specialty training (jump wings). The military conditioned me to evaluate people based on merit, ability, training, experience, and not race.

But the military also conditioned me to identify myself as a patriot, and American, to see the world through the lens of America being the best. And I developed a certain America-centered worldview in which as an American I thought better of myself than non-Americans.

But as I have grown spiritually I have realized this is just another trap of Satan. Human nation states are not part of God's kingdom. America is not God's kingdom. America is part of Satan's domain—all the nations of the world are part of Satan's kingdom. It has been a painful process to cut these heart-strings, to change how I identify, to become like Paul, who recognized his Roman citizenship, but

didn't identify as a Roman—Paul was first and foremost Christian. And that is what I have chosen to be.

We must all face these questions of our identity, what we value in our own sense of self.

Do we value the methods and principles of God—truth, love, liberty supreme so that we would choose, like Moses, to be mistreated with the people of God—those who stand for conscience, for liberty, or do we prefer the pleasures of this world and will join with the state in order to keep our privileges?

We are living in perilous times and Satan is bringing ever increasing pressures and deceptions to bear. Only those who daily surrender to Jesus, who have a personal experience with Him, who value His methods, who have His law written upon their hearts and who trust Him with their entire lives, fortunes, families and futures will stand—it is these who endure until the end.

The lesson also asks us to read 1Peter 4:14, but let's read 12-17:

> Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Pe 4:12–17 NIV84).

What is being described? Those who reject the principles of God (truth, love, liberty), those who embrace and value the methods of this world, power, control, force, authority—will hate those who represent Jesus. They will use all the powers of Satan against us. They will lie, bear false witness, accuse, twist, distort. They will do evil and then blame the righteous for it. They will make it appear that the suffering, the problems in the world are because of the righteous when it is because of them.

Consider this quote from *Christ's Object Lessons:*

> **Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others**. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, **so he judges other men by himself**. His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. **His self-righteousness leads to accusing. "Other men" he condemns as transgressors of God's law**. Thus he is making manifest the very spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. With this spirit it is impossible for him to enter into communion with God. He goes down to his house destitute of the divine blessing. COL 151.2

For those with eyes to see this is exactly what has happened with COVID. The safest people in society are the unvaccinated recovered. They have natural immunity far superior to those who have been vaccinated. But those in power deny truth, deny this reality, and continue to project the lie that it is the

unvaccinated that are making society unsafe. (If you haven't seen the data, multiple animal populations are now documented to be infected with SARS-COV2, including up to 50% of the deer population. The virus will persist, it will continue to mutate in these animals and it is not going away, and the so-called vaccines will not eliminate it. The entire vaccine approach to this virus has been built on lies, misinformation, and distortion. Why? Because it has not been about eliminating the virus or treating the condition, it has been about reshaping society and the virus is just an opportunity to achieve this.)

And have you notice as more truth comes out that those who have rejected the truth become more determined to force their way upon others. More mandates, more unreasonable orders, more violations of liberty, more assaults on common sense and people are put in positions they must decide how they will act in governance of self.

TUESDAY

Read Hebrews 2:18:

> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Heb 2:18 NIV84).

What does this mean? Why couldn't Jesus help us if He didn't suffer?

The SDA Bible commentary says the following:

> The human nature of Christ felt the full force of temptation. Otherwise, Christ would not have understood the terrific struggle of a poor sinner who is mightily tempted to yield. Christ was tempted in all points "like as we are" (Heb. 4:15). He actually suffered under temptation." Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1980). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 7, p. 407). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Do you agree? I do not agree with this view. I do not agree that our infinite God didn't comprehend, understand, know of our terrific struggle, that there was something beyond the knowledge of God and that God had to become human in order to learn. I reject this view.

This view, in my opinion, is a result of the legal view of salvation. They are trying to explain what is meant hear, but they don't understand the sin problem and its solution.

This is explained in Hebrews 4:15 and 5:8,9:

> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one **who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin**. (Heb 4:15 NIV84).

> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered **and, once made perfect**, **he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him**… (Heb 5:8–9 NIV84).

It is because He was tempted like us, but unlike us, He overcome every temptation to act on fear and selfishness and instead chose to love perfectly developing a perfect sinless human character that He is able to help those who are being tempted. **He is able to help us because He has procured an actual cure to treat our terminal sin condition**.

EGW puts in this way:

> **The law requires righteousness**,—**a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give.** He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them**. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God**. He **builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

This is why His suffering enabled Him to help those of us who are suffering.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 5:11-6:3:

> We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the **elementary truths** of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, **is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness**. But solid food is for the **mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil**. Therefore let us leave the **elementary teachings** about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the **foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death**, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. (Heb 5:11–6:3 NIV84).

What does this passage mean to us today? Do we teach children differently than adults? Why?

Why are those who are stuck on elementary teachings not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness?

What do children focus upon? Just think of any group of children, where is their focus? On rule-keeping.

Elementary schools are filled with tattle-tales, with kids monitoring other children's behaviors and tattling on those who break a rule. It doesn't matter the reasons, whether another teacher asked a child to leave class early, or to come to school in regular clothes rather than the uniform—what do the other children do?

Children are preoccupied with not getting in trouble with those in charge.

The immature are preoccupied with their legal standing, with getting their legal sin-debt paid, and with what behaviors are right and wrong.

Children do what they are told, or not, but children don't understand why.

Jesus said He wants us to be understanding friends, to be mature, to grow up, to do what is right because it is right, and those who do internalize the principles of God into their hearts and they are the ones who are acquainted with righteousness for righteousness is the restoration of God's character, His living law of love into the inmost being of people. Righteousness is not about a legal declaration that we are legally righteous while we remain unrighteous.

This takes us back to the seven levels of moral decision-making:

1. **Reward and punishment**:
2. **Marketplace exchange**:
3. **Social conformity**:
4. **Law and order**:
5. **Love for others**:
6. **Principle based living**:
7. **Understanding Friend of God**:

The first four levels are the levels of the immature, the focus is on self, on getting rewards, avoiding punishment, getting a good deal, being accepted and avoiding rejection, or not getting into legal trouble. Level five is the first level of the converted, the mature, it is where we love God and others more than self and we stop living with self at the center. Level six is moving beyond love, to an intelligent love, to not only having love in the heart for God and others, but understanding the methods and principles of God, His design law and making intelligent choices in how we live out God's love. And level seven goes beyond love as a motive and understanding design laws, to understanding friendship with God and intelligently participating in His purposes.

THURSDAY

Read Hebrews 10:23-39 from *The Remedy*:

> so that we may have ultimate confidence and trust in him who has revealed himself to be completely trustworthy.24 And think constantly how we can work with God to help each other

to grow in character to be like Jesus.25 Don't stop meeting together, as some have done, but continue to encourage each other, and do so even more as you see the Day of our ultimate deliverance approaching.

26If we deliberately reject the truth about God and his loving, life-promoting methods, and instead — after God sacrificed everything to bring us this healing truth — continue to practice self-destructive methods, no further remedy remains:27only the inevitable consequences of unrestrained selfishness — the total destruction of character, perversion of mind, and abject panic and fear when God unveils his life-giving glory which transforms the righteous but consumes the wicked.28 In the symbolic stage play — which was designed to reveal the truth about God and his plan to heal — anyone who rejected the script of Moses was terminated from the group on the testimony of two or three witnesses.29 How much more certain will the agonizing death be for those who reject the Son of God (the only Remedy for our terminal condition), who treat as poisonous the healing truth that his death revealed, and who reject God's Spirit that enlightens the mind with this life-saving Remedy?30 For we know him who said, "It is up to me to determine when someone is beyond healing–when someone has rejected the only healing cure; I will decide when to let them go;" and again, "The Lord will accurately diagnose his people."31 It will be horrible for those who remain God's enemies to experience his unveiled goodness and realize all they have rejected, and experience the full weight of their own guilt.

32 Remember those first days of recovery when you had just begun to internalize the healing truth: You stood firm for what is right and healthy in the great battle against the tormenting forces of selfishness, both internal and external;33 sometimes you were attacked publicly with name-calling or even physical assault; at other times you stood up and supported fellow believers who were being mistreated.34 Your hearts went out to those imprisoned for this cause, and when your properties were seized, you remained joyful because you knew they couldn't take your possessions of real worth–God's love, a new heart, a healthy mind, and life eternal.

35 So don't become discouraged and lose confidence; your trust will be richly rewarded.36 Maintain your focus and continue to implement God's methods in your lives, and you will receive all that he has promised;37 for in the grand history of the cosmos, it is just a very short time until "He who is coming to get us will come and will not delay.

38 And those who are set right with me will live their lives trusting me; but if any stop trusting and turn away, my heart will break over them."

39 But we are not those who stop trusting and turn away into the path of self-destruction and death; we are those who trust God and are healed. (Hebrews 10:23-39 REM).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

We encourage you to do read it online so you know what you are getting and then order you copies.

The vision we have for this magazine is for it to be shared—we want our friends and supporters to give as many away in their community as they can. We would encourage you to organize a Sabbath afternoon discussion group to discuss it. And please send us feedback after you have read it and shared it.

You may order yours at no cost to any US postal address by visiting our webstore. You may download a digital copy on our website.

New Roku channel: Come and Reason has just opened a Roku channel and you can find it in Roku by searching for Come and Reason. For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

Property update: Renovations have started:

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 2: The Message of Hebrews

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read last paragraph, "Thus, Paul wrote Hebrews…" I really like how they stated the focus of mediation—Jesus is mediating the Father's blessing to us, not His blood to the Father—well said!

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph and then last paragraph, "The main point…" How do you understand this idea of rulership?

- Satan is referred to by Jesus as the prince of this world.
- The kingdoms of this world are Satan's kingdoms.
- Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world

So there is some aspect of this idea where Satan has rulership—what is that?

And what of the idea that Jesus defeated Satan at the cross **recovering the right** to rule those who accept Him?

The lesson correctly describes Satan as a usurper and Jesus as the legitimate ruler, if that is so doesn't legitimate mean the one who is the rightful ruler or who has the right to rule? Doesn't usurper mean illegitimate or without the right?

Did Jesus not have the right to rule us before the cross?

So then what is meant that Jesus had to die to recover the right to rule those who accept Him? Is this idea even correct or is this idea false because it is based on a false premise, namely the wrong understanding of God's law?

What law lens do you see this through?

Does the language "recovering the right to rule" lead your mind into the imposed law landscape?

The design law landscape is that Jesus was always the legitimate ruler whose right to rule had never been removed, surrendered, or stolen. In fact, if Satan actually had the right to rule in any way, then Jesus coming here to try and recover a right to rule would make Jesus the invader.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Satan never had the right to rule. Adam was Jesus' subordinate and governed Earth under Jesus. Satan did NOT take Jesus' position or authority, but Adam's position and authority on earth. Jesus did not come to Earth to reclaim His divine authority on Earth, He always had it. Jesus came to Earth restore trust in Him and restore humanity's authority to govern the planet—and what kind of authority is that? It is not a legal authority, it is the authority of ability, of being, of capacity. Jesus came to restore humanity back to unity with God, in which God's design law of life operated within them, restoring within them the ability to carry out their office of governorship over the planet—with Jesus Himself being the second Adam or the HUMAN planetary ruler if you like that language.

Consider this quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

> When Satan declared to Christ, The kingdom and glory of the world are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, he stated what was true only in part, and he declared it to serve his own purpose of deception. **Satan's dominion was that wrested from Adam, but Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule.** The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, **Christ still remained the rightful King**. Thus the Lord had said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "**The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men**, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Daniel 4:17. Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits. DA 129.4

Did Jesus need to do anything at the cross to recover His right to rule? No! The teaching that Jesus had to recover His right to rule is a distortion based on seeing things through the false imposed law lens which is one of Satan's lies.

If we don't understand God's law correctly, then we misunderstand or misconstrue almost everything. This false idea about God's law is the metaphorical wine of Babylon that confuses or intoxicates the world.

It is beautiful to realize that Jesus' sacrifice wasn't to do something legal but to accomplish something actual—and the focus or purpose of the sacrifice wasn't to do something for God's advancement, or for God's empowerment, or for God's development, or to enhance God's rights, or reclaim His authority—it was for the children that He loves.

It is human beings that Jesus helps; it is human beings Jesus heals, saves, restores—but more; it is human beings that Jesus uplifts to a higher station than Adam possessed before the fall. We not only get our recovered position on Earth, but Jesus shares His heavenly throne with us. Truly incredible!

Read Hebrews 1:5-14 and then read the third paragraph:

> For to which of the angels did God ever say,
>
> "You are my Son;
> today I have become your Father"?

Or again,

> "I will be his Father,
> and he will be my Son"?

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,
> "Let all God's angels worship him."

7 In speaking of the angels he says,

> "He makes his angels winds,
> his servants flames of fire."

8 But about the Son he says,

> "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
> and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.
> 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
> therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
> by anointing you with the oil of joy."

10 He also says,

> "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
> and the heavens are the work of your hands.
> 11 They will perish, but you remain;
> they will all wear out like a garment.
> 12 You will roll them up like a robe;
> like a garment they will be changed.
> But you remain the same,
> and your years will never end."

13 To which of the angels did God ever say,

> "Sit at my right hand
> until I make your enemies
> a footstool for your feet"?

14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Heb 1:5–14 NIV84).

Third paragraph, "These verses are arranged…" What do you think of the lesson's interpretation of these verses?

What law lens? It seems to me the lesson again falls into the imposed law trap and misconstrues the meaning of these texts.

Words like "installs" "enthrones" and "confers power" implies putting in position one who didn't previously hold that position. It also suggests arbitrary power, not actual power. This is different from saying "The Father makes plain that Jesus is the royal son" or "The Father confirms the Son's authority and power over the Earth." This is the same false idea that is behind penal substationary teachings about righteousness—the falsehood that God declares us to be righteous when we remain unrighteous. No, we are recognized, accounted or declared righteous or set right with God WHEN our hearts are actually set right with God, when we are won from distrust and rebellion to trust and loyalty.

It is human law that makes arbitrary declarations. It is human law that can convict an innocent person and punish them for the crimes of the guilty while letting the guilty go free.

Does Jesus get His power from the Father, or does Jesus have divine power independent of the Father? Is Jesus fully God, pre-existent, co-equal, or does Jesus obtain His existence, authority, power and ability from the Father?

Jesus is fully God, and as God He doesn't have His power granted to Him by another; He doesn't have rights or privileges or abilities given to Him or bestowed upon Him. All power, rights, sovereignty, abilities are His by reality, by being who He is.

It is Satan's lies that have made intelligent beings question Jesus' position, power, authority both in heaven and on earth and made it necessary for the Father to clarify the truth about Jesus that has always been true. But Satan, the father of lies, twists the Heavenly Father's clarifying revelations to get people to believe God's declarations about Jesus are not simply His revelations of eternal truths, but God dispensing, investing, or giving of authority, granting of power, which introduces lies that there is a division of abilities between the Godhead.

Again, design law lens prevents us from being tricked by Satan's lies.

Consider this quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. **He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God**. [Satan's war advances in secrecy, not openness. It is one of the methods that lies require. This is still true today. When you observe people obstructing open dialogue, honest investigation of truth and evidence, silencing opposing voices, censuring, intimidating, or soliciting secrecy (which is not the same as confidentiality) you should be wary—Satan's methods are being practiced. Remember Jesus said "I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret" (Jn 18:20 NIV84). Not only does Satan work in secrecy, he works by claiming he is working for the good, while

undermining good. If Satan were in charge of a response to… say a medical crisis, he would claim he wants to protect people's health and stop disease, but his policies would ensure the disease spreads, resources are wasted, people divide rather than work together, fear and distrust increase, the interventions cause more harm than the disease itself, and the people who bring God's principles of health to bear are blamed for causing the disease and obstructing the cure.] He began to **insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings**, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. [What is revealed in this statement? What kind of law would not be necessary for holy beings? Imposed laws. Did angels in heaven need laws on property rights, copyright laws, immigration, citizenship, mineral and drilling rights, speed limits, etc. etc.? But did angels in heaven still need to operate in harmony with the parameters upon which God constructed life? So, when Satan suggests angels don't need laws, he is suggesting God's laws are made up rules that can be applied to some and not to others. This is the original lie about God's law and is still the lie that Christianity embraces, and God is waiting for His people to present the truth about Him as Creator and call people out of the dictator views of Him to prepare their hearts and minds to meet Him face to face. This is what our Final Message of Mercy magazine is designed to do.] They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God Himself to err. **The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor**. [What is described in this sentence? God lives in unapproachable light 1Tim 6:16—unapproachable by whom? This light isn't photons, it isn't even the physical presence of God when God chooses to present Himself in some physical way to His creatures—as we read about in Revelation and other places. This light is a metaphor of truth and love—heavenly light. And God lives in unapproachable light of truth and love because God is an infinite being and no finite being can "approach" infinity. No matter how far down the path of assimilating truth we travel there will always be infinitely more that continues to exist beyond us. We simply do not have the capacity for assimilating infinite truth, knowledge, energy, etc. It would consume us. Thus, if God who is love, wants the closest intimacy with His creatures as is possible and the creatures cannot enter infinity, what must happen? A member of infinity must leave infinity and enter into linear existence. That member of the Godhead is Jesus. Jesus has always been the go-between, the connecting link, the mediator, between an infinite God and finite creation. And in what physical form did Jesus manifest prior to becoming a real and full and actual human? The Bible is clear, Jesus presented Himself to the heavenly beings in the form of an angel. (Exodus 3). He was NOT an angel; He only appeared in the form of an angel. He was the true light bearer and shared the name Lucifer (*phosphorus* in the Greek or bright and morning star) with the created being Lucifer. It was this reality, Jesus the Creator God appearing in the form of an angel that Satan misrepresented to suggest that God was playing favorites and granting Jesus privileges denied Lucifer.

Specifically, Jesus entered into the counsels of the Godhead, while Lucifer was not permitted. Why? Because Jesus is God and is an infinite being, while Lucifer is a created being and cannot enter infinity. These distinctions in access were not arbitrary rules as Satan alleged, but

> the outworking of reality, of design law and manifestations of God's love. Had God permitted Lucifer to enter into where he wanted to go, Lucifer would have been destroyed.] If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the **liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them**, and to His authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts. PP 37.1 [Satan takes a fact (Jesus goes into counsels Lucifer is not permitted to enter), twists it into a falsehood (God isn't fair; God makes up rules or laws), creating a lie, then takes that lie and creates another (we have a ruler imposed, invested with authority he didn't have before—see how Satan's lies have infected our own quarterly when one accepts the imposed law lens), that liberty is being violated that God doesn't grant freedom, which when these lies are believed results in rebellion, the breakdown of love and trust and the instilling of fear and selfishness.]
>
> **There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ**. Lucifer's envy and **misrepresentation and his claims** to equality with Christ had **made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning**. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions. PP 38.1 [God's statements, declarations of truth, don't establish the truth—the truth of Jesus' equality with God was always true. God's declaring it only became necessary because of Satan's lie. Thus in the book of Hebrews, God is NOT enthroning, investing, conferring power, or establishing something that hasn't already been true. God is revealing, declaring, making known the reality that has always been true, but Satan's lies obscured. To suggest God was investing, enthroning, conferring continues to support the lies of Satan about God, God's law and government.]

The aspect of Jesus' achievement, development, and position, etc. is not about Jesus the divine Son of God being installed, granted power, or enthroned—it is about Jesus the **human being,** *using a human brain, human willpower, human strength* to overcome the infection of sin and selfishness that Adam brought upon the species. Thus, Jesus is confirmed by God as:

- God's Son, which He always has been
- Creator, which He always has been
- co-equal with God, which He always has been
- but also now God confirms, reveals, declares, acknowledges, that Jesus is still God's Son as a human and by becoming human Jesus has NOT been diminished in His authority or position as God's Son, but has elevated humanity not only back to loyal unity with God, but to the throne of God where Jesus rules, not just Earth, but the entire universe.

This is quite a different position than suggesting God is granting, giving, authorizing Jesus with such power or authority.

What does the reference of being seated at God's right hand signify? Right hand is the position of power, of authority, of action. Jesus is God's "right hand man." In certain cultures the one who carries out the king's orders was called the king's hand—because it is the hand that carries out the action.

But some people get confused by this because of the difficulty human language has in conveying concepts about an infinite God; and because of the bias of the imposed law lens, because of the way humans rule over others; we project in distortions and misunderstanding when we read Scripture and think there is some inequality among the Godhead with the Father in some way being superior, greater, higher, more powerful etc. than Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

But all ideas of inequality amongst the Godhead are a function of our limited minds, the impact of sin on the way we understand things and Satan's lies. All attacks upon the Trinity are part of Satan's attack upon the Godhead. Yes, many sincere Christians get caught up into these lies, just like the apostles got caught up into wondering who sinned that a man was born blind him or his parents. The apostles' sincerity in following Jesus didn't mean they were free from every misunderstanding, and their misunderstandings about various things didn't cause them to be on Satan's team—it undermined their comprehension, wisdom, maturity, and ability to carry out God's purposes, but as long as they were still willing to learn, loved truth and could be corrected and give up false ideas for truth, then they remained on God's team. Both Peter and Paul are good examples of people who were sincerely wrong but could be corrected.

It is only when we reject truth, resist the Holy Spirit persistently until we destroy the facilities that respond to truth and love that we are fully lost. So, many people will be in heaven who have not understood the truth about the Trinity. But, the more truth we can assimilate and apply then the greater we are able to grow into the wisdom of God and have more of the subtle distortions removed and be even more effective in advancing God's kingdom.

Those who attack the equality of the Godhead may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. Many get caught up in this subtle distortion because of Jesus' statements like:

> "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone." (Mk 10:18 NIV84).
>
> "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Matthew 4:10 NIV84)
>
> "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mk 14:62 NIV84).

Because of statements like this and the declarations of God in Hebrews chapter one, many falsely conclude that Jesus is in some way subservient or inferior to the Father. But the idea that Jesus is "subservient" to the Father is a misunderstanding that results from not appreciating God's character and the way His government works. In God's economy "whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35), "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matt 20:16).

God's kingdom is the kingdom of love and love gives for the wellbeing of others. Thus Jesus is "exalted" because Jesus surrendered all and gave all for others. This exaltation is not "conferred" by

the Father to the Son, but is a result of the accomplishment of the Son in perfectly revealing and carrying out the Godhead's character and purpose.

And Jesus is the member of the Godhead who had to carry out this plan because Jesus was the member of the Godhead whom Satan's lies were focused upon.

- So in order to expose the lie that Lucifer and Jesus are equal—Jesus was the member of the Godhead through whom all things were made.
- And because when God announced the eternal truth that Jesus was always equal to the Father, Satan made a new lie, and alleged that a ruler was now placed over them and their freedoms were taken away, because, Satan alleged, Jesus would abuse power. This is why Jesus is the member of the Godhead who had to reveal the truth—that even though He did have all power, He is safe with all power, we can trust Him, so much that He wouldn't even use that power to stop His rebellious, hate-filled, selfish, cruel, children from torturing and murdering Him.
- Jesus refuted all of Satan's lies, not by claims, but by evidence, by action. This is why in heaven, the Lamb who was slain is worthy, worthy, worthy Lord God almighty! He is worthy to have all power because He has proven the truth that He is truly safe with all power.

A better way to understand the descriptions and language of the relationship of the Godhead, is that the Godhead voluntarily assumed different roles or functions for the accomplishments of Their purposes (a loving way all share together in giving for Their creation). Any of the three could have assumed any of the functions. We would err in concluding that when one of the three assumes a function that He was not capable of functioning in the role of one of the others.

As I understand their chosen roles, the Father acts as the source of all that is good. The Son is the medium, mediator, advocate, conduit, agent through which the Father reveals Himself or acts and the Holy Spirit is the actualizer or applier of what the Father and Son have achieved. Thus God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself (2Cor 5:19). Jesus' work on earth was the acting out of the Father's heart. His completed mission and victory over sin are applied to the lives of believers by the work of the Holy Spirit. In creation we have the Father as the source, the Son as the architect, designer, and builder and the Spirit as the actualizer or implementer of Their design.

So, with this understanding we realize what Christ meant when He said, "I do nothing of myself." Christ takes from the Father to fulfill all the Father's purposes for His universe. In this sense we can see Christ turning to the Father, not to persuade the Father to be kind, but to receive the fullness of the Father's purpose of love for His creation and carry that purpose out in meaningful action!

Further, love is not self-centered, it is other centered. Thus Jesus is always exalting the Father, and the Father rejoices in uplifting the Son, and the Spirit celebrates in advancing the cause of the Father and the Son etc.

MONDAY

The title: Jesus Is Our Mediator. What does this idea mean to you?

The last paragraph in the lesson reaffirms "Jesus is the Mediator of God's blessing to us. He is the Mediator in that He is the channel through whom God's blessings flow."

This is again well said. This is the exact right way to understand Jesus' mediation.

And in thinking this way—Jesus is the agent, the channel, the avenue through which God's blessings flow—then does Jesus mediate only to sinners or does He mediate to angels as well?

Do sinless angels in heaven benefit and need the mediatorial work of Jesus?

If we understand, as I explained earlier, that God is infinite and finite beings cannot enter into infinity, do angels need a member of the Godhead to mediate God's truth, love, blessings to them, to leave infinity and connect with and interact with them?

And once sin entered, do the sinless angels in heaven need the mediation of Christ at the cross to prevent their rebellion or is the cross only for sinful humans?

Let me be clear—through Jesus we not only have a revelation of the truth about God, we not only have Satan being exposed as a liar and fraud, we not only have the revelation of what sin does, how it separates from God and results in death, but we also have Jesus destroying the infection of sin in humanity and developing a sinless human character perfecting and curing the human species from the sin-condition. Angels did not need the last part—they didn't need a new sinless nature or perfect human character. But they did need all the other parts of Christ's mediation.

Consider these historic quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, **will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels.** Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, **for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven**. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.
>
> The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, **provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds**, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. {5BC 1132.8}

> "While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as

> well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. **Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his mediatorial work**. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?" {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4}

Do you see the design law aspects in such descriptions?

Do you connect these quotes with Jesus' words when He said:

> Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself." (Jn 12:31–32 NIV84).

Or:

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1:19–20 NIV84).

TUESDAY

Keep in mind what we just read in John 12 and Colossians 1 as we read Hebrews 2:14-16:

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. (Heb 2:14–16 NIV84).

Do we have a contradiction? What does it mean, "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants?" Didn't we just establish that His mediatorial work was for angels as well? So how is it that this text suggests it isn't angels he helps but Abraham's descendants?

This specific text is focusing on Jesus' mission to overcome death, sin, the carnal nature, fear and selfishness and cure the terminal sin condition. Angels in heaven did not need help with this—they needed the truth about God, they needed the lies of Satan exposed, but they did not need a new sinless nature—we did. It is this aspect of Jesus' mediation, ministry, work that is for humanity. So we have no conflict here at all.

WEDNESDAY

Any questions about Wednesday's lesson?

The most important thing the lesson states is in the last paragraph, that we are called by God to be a priesthood of believers. This is the heart of the Protestant Reformation, that we do not need a human priest to stand between us and God, but because of Jesus we can go directly to God ourselves. Not only that, it is a requirement for salvation that we do so.

- No other person can repent for you
- No other person can confess for you
- No other person can receive from God His grace for you
- No other person can receive God's forgiveness for you
- No other person can be enlightened with God's wisdom for you
- No other person can receive the love God wants to pour into your heart
- No other person can love God for you
- No other person can trust God for you
- No other person can be reconciled to God for you
- No other person can share your heart with God
- No other person can have a relationship with God for you

So, understand this, all religious teachings that have human beings between you and God obstruct God's plan to heal and restore you. All such teachings are in the way, they interfere, they prevent God from indwelling you and healing you.

Thus the only mediator is God Himself—Jesus Christ, who lives in those who trust Him via the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Jesus, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, removes the stony heart—which is the carnal selfish nature/drives/motives and puts in a tender heart (which is the divine nature) cleansing us from sinfulness. This is the plan of salvation, restoration, healing, recreation, renewal.

The OT sanctuary service was merely theater—a drama with costumes, props and a script to act out God's plan to restore us to unity with Him.

The daily priests in their white robes represent the believers in Christ who have been reborn with new hearts and minds to possess the character of Christ represented by the spotless robes.

We are still today, as priests of God, to bring to God sacrifices—but we are to bring the real, genuine sacrifice, not the theatrical prop sacrifice. What is the real sacrifice that we are to bring?

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**.

> Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Ro 12:1–2 NIV84).

This sacrifice, offering ourselves to God results in our *transformation* the renewing of our minds—this is not a declaration, it is a reality. And Satan hates it. He wants to destroy the image of God in us. He wants to obstruct us from doing this and has many tricks, religious legal tricks, unhealthful living tricks, fear and selfishness tricks, perversions of love tricks—but they are all focused on the same outcome—the destruction of the image of God in people and the searing into people the character of Satan.

THURSDAY

What is the true covenant, what the lesson calls the better covenant?

> This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
> after that time, declares the Lord.
> I will put my laws in their minds
> and write them on their hearts.
> I will be their God,
> and they will be my people. (Heb 8:10 NIV84).

When was this covenant promised?

> And I will put enmity
> between you and the woman,
> and between your offspring and hers;
> he will crush your head,
> and you will strike his heel." (Ge 3:15).

When was this covenant accomplished? At the cross!

It is through the victory of Jesus that God is able to cleanse us from sin and give us a new heart and right spirit.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW RELEASE: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, booklet.

You can read a digital version "flip book" version online at our website https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/ We encourage you to do read it online so you know what you are getting and then order you copies.

We want our friends and supporters to give as many away in their community as they can. We would encourage you to organize a Sabbath afternoon discussion group to discuss it. And please send us feedback after you have read it and shared it. You may order yours at no cost to any US postal address by visiting our webstore. You may download a digital copy on our website.

NEW ROKU CHANNEL! Come and Reason has just opened a Roku channel and you can find it in Roku by searching for Come and Reason. For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

PROPERTY UPDATE: Renovations have started

NEW TRACTS: We have five new sharing tracts:

- Babylon the Mother of Harlots: Come Out of Her
- Loneliness Its Cause and Cure
- The Injustice of Human Justice
- How to Disagree and Remain Friends
- Knowing God's Will

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 3: The Promised Son

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:1–3 NIV84).

Read first paragraph, "Right after Adam…" What is the significance of the Genesis 3:15 promise? Not only does it give us the reassurance of Jesus coming to be our Savior, it sets the framework for understanding the focus of the Old Testament. The focus is that of the coming Messiah—Satan working to stop the plan and God working to keep open the human avenue for Jesus' arrival. This is why we focus on Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's families and not other human families.

What about after Jesus came and won the victory and ascended back to heaven—where does the Bible focus after that? On the plan of salvation, on the agents of God taking forward the gospel. The focus shifts away from the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to those who accept Jesus and take forward the truth that Jesus brought.

What about Bible prophecy that extends beyond the time of Jesus? It also focuses on the plan of salvation, the battle between the agents of Jesus and the agents of Satan seeking to obstruct the gospel message.

The last sentence says, "What neither Adam and Eve, Abraham, nor David probably ever imagined, however, was that their Redeemer Son would be God Himself."

Why was it necessary for God Himself to be our Savior?

What evidence do we have from Scripture that Jesus is God?

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men…The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:1-3, 14 NIV84).
>
> "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (Jn 8:58 NIV84).
>
> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28 NIV84).
>
> "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is 9:6 NIV84).
>
> "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col 2:9 NIV84).
>
> The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us" (Mt 1:23 NIV84).

SUNDAY

Read the first paragraph, "The first paragraph of Hebrews…" What do you understand the terms, "latter days" "last days" to mean? Are they the same as "the time of the end" or "end times"?

Latter days can mean later days, or future days, last days can mean these most recent or last days, the "time of the end" refers to the end of time when Jesus returns.

Much of the OT focus is on coming Messiah, thus the "latter days" often refer to the days after Messiah comes—the days after Jesus.

But the "time of the end" refers to the second coming and establishing a new heaven and a new earth.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses us again on the memory text, let's read Hebrews 1:1-4 from *The Remedy:*

> God has been speaking to us throughout all human history. In the past, he worked through his inspired spokespersons (and in other ways) to send his message of truth, love and hope. But in these more recent times, God's very thoughts have been made audible and visible to us in the person of his Son, who is the rightful heir of all things, and through whom the entire universe was created. Jesus Christ is the radiant glory of God's methods and principles lived out in human flesh. He is the exact manifestation of God's character—the complete revelation of his being—sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he provided the Remedy necessary to heal mankind from the infection of sin and selfishness, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, thus his superiority to the angels became known throughout the entire universe, just as the name he inherited is superior to theirs.

What is the point of this?

God has been working to reveal truth to us—truth about Himself, about the sin problem, about who we are, beings created by God in His image, about our enemy, about the plan of salvation, about our choice to be reconciled to God or not—God has been working to reveal truth to us in a variety of ways, but that truth has been most clearly revealed in Jesus His Son.

Do you agree this is the message—that Jesus is the One through whom we must center our understanding of reality, including our understanding of Scripture?

Do we understand the Old Testament through Jesus, or do we understand Jesus through the Old Testament?

To understand Jesus through the Old Testament means we would accuse Him of not supporting Moses because He didn't stone the woman caught in adultery, or endorse the divorce laws, or support an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth. But to view the Old Testament through Jesus means that we understand stoning was never God's plan, but was an emergency measure due to the hardness of their hearts until He could lead them to love like He loves.

Consider this quotation from the book *Christ's Object Lessons:*

> "The significance of the Jewish economy is **not yet fully comprehended**. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. **The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries**. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding. Far more than we do, it is our privilege to understand these wonderful themes." COL 133

What is the gospel—the eternal gospel? It is the truth about God; and who is the One whom has revealed God to us most fully? Jesus, "if you have seen me you have seen the Father." Thus, Jesus is the key to understanding Scripture, understanding the OT, understanding the symbolic sanctuary service.

And Jesus is represented here in Hebrews chapter one as Creator—and as Creator His law is design law, the law upon which life is built to operate. Only when we return to understanding God's law, character and government through the lens of design law do we come to right understandings and Jesus is the revelation of God lived out.

So, if you were Satan and wanted to stop the spread of the truth, the gospel, that Jesus came to reveal, and your attempt to destroy everyone who accepted Jesus by using the state (Rome) to kill them resulted in more converts to Jesus, what would you do? Infect Christianity with the lie that God's law works like human law and Christianity itself becomes the agency to imprison minds and corrupt characters by teaching a system of arbitrary rules, imposed punishments, that worships an arbitrary god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice not to kill us.

Read sixth paragraph, "Meanwhile, Jesus came to be our Representative…" Jesus is our representative—exactly so—how and why?

How did Jesus become our representative?

Why was it necessary that Jesus become human?

What did Jesus accomplish as a human?

How did Jesus defeat the serpent?

> "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb 2:14–15 NIV84).

What does this mean?

How does Jesus' death destroy the devil and his power?

How does Jesus' death free us from the fear of death?

Will we have to face this fear and overcome it? How? Through faith? What does that mean?

Are events unfolding in the world that incite fear of death? If people fear death does it impact how they treat others?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on "the glory of God" and points us to texts that highlight the bright light that looks like fire as the glory of God.

What are your thoughts about this?

There is no doubt that throughout human history God has manifested radiant light as an evidence of His glory. We see this in the Shekinah; in the pillar of fire by day; in the burning bush; in Moses' face coming off the mountain; at the transfiguration of Jesus.

However, when the Bible refers to God's glory is the term "glory" restricted to some element of fiery brightness or does the fiery aspects refer to the most limited aspect of God's glory?

Can Satan manifest with fiery brightness, visual glory?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Is the glory of God merely brilliance and splendor of lights and we need to watch for the greatest fireworks show to tell who is the true Messiah?

Or, is there another aspect of God's glory that is more important than brightness and radiance?

Prophesying about the building of the second temple, Haggai gives a message from the Lord:

> I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty… '**The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house**,' says the LORD Almighty. '**And in this place I will grant peace**,' declares the LORD Almighty." (Haggai 2:7–9 NIV84).
>
> "But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy" (Ezra 3:12 NIV84).

Why would the Bible describe the smaller temple as being more glorious than Solomon's temple? Because Jesus walked in it—meaning God Himself came to that temple—but wait, when Solomon's Temple was dedicated, the priests could not enter because the brightness of God's glory was too great (2 Chron. 5:13).

So God came to both Temples—one in His unveiled splendor; the other in human form—yet Haggai states the second was more glorious. Why? Because God's glory isn't merely about fiery splendor, it is about His character and methods of love. And it was at the second Temple that Jesus revealed the character of God most fully. Because it was at the second Temple that Christ showed that He preferred to permit His creatures to abuse Him rather than use His power in selfish ways. At the second Temple Christ demonstrated that we can trust the One who has the power. And at the second temple Jesus defeated Satan—truth prevailed over lies, and love prevailed over selfishness in the physical temple that Jesus took upon Himself and walked through the stone temple.

When Moses spoke with God, asking the Lord to show him His glory. What did God do? He responded to Moses, "**I will cause all of my goodness to pass in front of you**" (Ex. 33:19, NIV). Then God passed in front of Moses proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Ex. 34:5, 6, NIV).

The fiery splendor of God can be counterfeited. Satan can appear as an angel of light and reveal some aspect of supernatural power and brilliance, but Satan cannot counterfeit God's character of love because he is selfish and will not sacrifice himself for others. Satan, when he impersonates Jesus will require others be sacrificed, he won't sacrifice for them.

Does this give insight into what it means for us to "give glory to God for the hour of his judgment has come"? What does it mean for us?

So, Hebrews is telling us that Jesus is the radiance, glory, or perfect revelation of God's character of love. How do we apply this truth to our theology?

What does this truth do to ideas that we need Jesus to plead His blood to the Father to pay for our sins?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson again focuses our attention on Jesus as Creator. Jesus being Creator is an important truth to remember when we read texts like:

> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 NIV84).

Forgetting about the importance and meaning that Jesus is Creator, some people have taken the John 14:6 text and taught that no one can be saved without hearing about Jesus' earthly life and making a positive confession of faith, i.e. becoming what is commonly called a born again Christian.

But Paul wrote in Romans 1:20:

> "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20 NIV84).

And then wrote in Romans 2:12-15:

> All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts… (Romans 2:12–15NIV84).

Some people never hear the gospel message about Jesus, but they are still able to see the truth about God's methods, design laws for life, and principles as revealed in nature. If they accept these truths that the Holy Spirit brings to bear in their minds and consciences, then they have God's design law of love written upon their hearts and they are converted or saved from selfishness to love.

Those who come to God in this way are still coming through Jesus because Jesus is the member of the Godhead through whom all things were made.

So the truth that Jesus is Creator has cascading impact on our understanding of Scripture and this is an example of integrating or connecting various truths together to come to a cohesive overall understanding of God's reality.

In the third paragraph the lesson says "Jesus is also Judge." What law lens does this language convey? Are they suggesting a legal judicial process here or a physician's office, a diagnostic setting?

In both settings (court room or doctor's office) examination occurs; in both settings evidence is reviewed; in both settings judgments are made.

But are the same laws being applied in a courtroom versus a doctor's office?

Which version, which setting, more accurately reflects the truth of Jesus being a Judge?

If we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, then we end up in a courtroom—in the false penal/legal view of salvation. Now consider this, which is commonly taught: Satan accuses us before God and the heavenly tribunal; our records of sin are open, and then Jesus our advocate steps in and pleads to the Father "my blood, Father, I have paid their debt." But in reality, the Father is watching on CNN— the Celestial News Network—because Jesus is our Judge and is actually pleading to Himself….hmmm….how does that actually work?

The penal/legal model is a lie and it always sets up all kinds of nonsense contradictions like:

- One member of the Godhead needs to plead with another member to get them to forgive, but the One pleading is also the Judge, so He is pleading to Himself—this is the two faced god that Satan loves us to believe in. You see the same thing in the penal view of the second coming, Jesus kind and loving face He shows to the redeemed, but His angry and wrathful face He shows to the lost.
- One member of the Godhead needs to hide truth by covering it, erasing it, in some way so when the Father looks at us He can't actually see us, instead He sees an avatar of Jesus in our place. But, since Jesus is the Judge, it is really Jesus hiding the truth from Himself so He doesn't know our sins, lest He would have to kill us rather than save us.
- One member of the Godhead is angry and wants to kill us and is so holy He can't stand to be near us, but another member of the Godhead loves us so much He became one of us and pleads His blood to calm down and take away the anger of the Father.

I could go on and on—but the legal view is fraudulent, based on a lie that God's law functions like human law. We must return to the truth that God's law is design law and when we do, judgment means something completely different.

In our new magazine, The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels, we examine the four judgments found in Scripture in detail.

This link will take you to our website where, if you have a US postal address, you can order the print version at no cost, also at this site is a link to download the pdf version, and the flip book link to read online

https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/The-Final-Message-of-Mercy-to-the-World-The-Three-Angels_p_49.html

Here is the link to the digital flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

But let's examine the four judgments briefly and see what God's judgments actually are. (Go to the Final Message Magazine and find the Four Judgments and read them).

But some people get confused because of the bias of the imposed law lens, because of the way humans rule over others; we project in distortions and misunderstanding when we read Scripture and think there is some inequality among the Godhead with the Father in some way being superior, greater, higher, more powerful etc. than Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

But all ideas of inequality amongst the Godhead are a function of our limited minds, the impact of sin on the way we understand things and Satan's lies.

Many get caught up in this subtle distortion that there is inequality among the Godhead because of various texts in Scripture like Jesus' statements:

> "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone." (Mk 10:18 NIV84).
>
> "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Matthew 4:10 NIV84)
>
> "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mk 14:62 NIV84).

Jesus in His statement about "Why do you call me good?" wasn't saying "don't call me good because only God is good" He was actually saying to this man—"You have called me good—do you realize that only God is good—and if you recognize I am good, then do you recognize that I am God?" Jesus was trying to open this man's mind to His divine status by taking a point He saw in Jesus—Jesus being good—and linking it to the larger and deeper truth of why He saw Jesus being good—namely that Jesus is God.

A better way to understand the descriptions and language of the relationship of the Godhead, is that the Godhead voluntarily assumed different roles or functions for the accomplishments of Their purposes (a loving way all share together in giving for Their creation). Any of the three could have assumed any of the functions. We would err in concluding that when one of the three assumes a function that He was not capable of functioning in the role of one of the others.

As I understand their chosen roles, the Father acts as the source of all that is good. The Son is the medium, mediator, advocate, conduit, agent through which the Father reveals Himself or acts and the Holy Spirit is the actualizer or applier of what the Father and Son have achieved. Thus God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself (2Cor 5:19). Jesus' work on earth was the acting out of the

Father's heart. His completed mission and victory over sin are applied to the lives of believers by the work of the Holy Spirit. In creation we have the Father as the source, the Son as the architect, designer, and builder and the Spirit as the actualizer or implementer of Their design.

So, with this understanding we realize what Christ meant when He said, "I do nothing of myself." Christ takes from the Father to fulfill all the Father's purposes for His universe. In this sense we can see Christ turning to the Father, not to persuade the Father to be kind, but to receive the fullness of the Father's purpose of love for His creation and carry that purpose out in meaningful action!

Further, love is not self-centered, it is other centered. Thus Jesus is always exalting the Father, and the Father rejoices in uplifting the Son, and the Spirit celebrates in advancing the cause of the Father and the Son etc.

THURSDAY

What does it mean that Jesus is the begotten Son of the Father?

This is referring to the promise of Genesis 3:15—Jesus is the seed of the woman that was promised to crush the serpent's head and save the species human.

Jesus is the one sent of the Father, from the Godhead, to become a real human being in order to cleanse, heal, restore, save the human species, secure the unfallen universe in loyalty and destroy sin and Satan.

When the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, Jesus was in some way that we cannot comprehend, incarnated into the womb of a human being and was begotten as a human from God Himself.

It is straightforward and real and speaks of Jesus' humanity, incarnation, being begotten of the Father. It does not speak of Jesus' pre-existent divine state being begotten of the Father.

The lesson rightly states, "There was never a time when Jesus did not exist, because Jesus is God." However, the lesson could have gone on to say, "But there was a time that Jesus did not exist *as a human."* And that is the point of Hebrews and all the Bible texts that speak of Jesus being begotten by the Father.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine. You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

If you have a slow internet connection give it a little bit of time to load—the images are high quality.

We encourage you to do read it online so you know what you are getting and then order you copies.

The vision we have for this magazine is for it to be shared—we want our friends and supporters to give as many away in their community as they can. We would encourage you to organize a Sabbath afternoon discussion group to discuss it. And please send us feedback after you have read it and shared it.

You may order yours at no cost to any US postal address by visiting our webstore. You may download a digital copy on our website.

New Roku channel! Come and Reason has just opened a Roku channel and you can find it in Roku by searching for Come and Reason. For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV full screen.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 4: Jesus, Our Faithful Brother

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Jesus as our Brother and Redeemer, on the concept of kinsmen redeemer. Read first two paragraphs, "The law of Moses…"

Are they saying Jesus is our kinsmen redeemer? Yes, He became a real human, a member of the human species in order to redeem us from sin, no question.

What does it mean for Jesus to redeem us from sin?

- Does Jesus have to pay a price to Satan to buy us back?
- Does Jesus have to pay a price to God to purchase the right to buy us back?
- What is required for us to be delivered from sin?
- Doesn't sin have to be removed from us?
- What is sin? Is it physical?
- Sin is transgression of the law—what law? –the law of love, design law
- What is it that causes transgression of the law? –lies believed break the circle of love and trust resulting in fear/selfishness the carnal nature; this nature, with which we were born, makes it impossible for us in our own strength to live in harmony with God's law. Thus, we were born with a terminal condition that we did not choose and from which we need to be redeemed.
- What is needed to redeem us? Truth that destroys lies and wins us back to trust—"you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32 NIV84). And a new nature, character, heart/mind, we die to fear and selfishness as the controlling motive of our selves/identities and receive the character of Christ, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20 NIV84).
- So to whom is the ransom price paid to redeem us? It is paid to us—we need the truth to win us to trust and we need a new nature/character we become partakers of the divine nature.
- This is design law—it is reality, we are sick in sin and we need actual healing. There is nothing legal going on in this process.

Read third paragraph, "The nearest relative…" Are they saying that if we refuse to let Him redeem us that He will take the role of avenger and kill us to give us just punishment for our sin?

Or are they saying Jesus will use His power to torment and kill Satan and any persons who hurt us, mistreat us, abuse us, or mislead us?

What law lens do we understand this through? Do we use imposed or design law—this is a key to right understanding of Scripture:

- Imposed law: justice requires punishment and there are long theological debates over God's wrath and justice trying to explain these things, but as long as people hold to the false law idea they always end up with God as the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death upon sinners. And they always have Jesus dying to do something to God, appease, propitiate, pay a debt, provide a legal loophole to allow God to save us.
- Design law: all confusion evaporates. We have a terminal sin condition and Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were the means to heal us and restore us back to God's sinless design for life. God kills lies with truth, selfishness with love, and death with life. In the end the unsaved suffer from their unhealed sin condition just as the Bible teaches "those who sow to the carnal nature, from that nature reap destruction" Galatians 6:8. The destruction doesn't come from God, but from unremedied sin.

One key to understanding Scripture is having the design law lens, but there is another key and that is Jesus; His life and teachings.

Do we interpret the ministry of Jesus through the Old Testament, or do we understand the true meaning and lessons of the Old Testament through what Jesus Himself revealed and taught?

Do we find Jesus using power to inflict punishment upon anyone? Why not? Doesn't Jesus care what happens to people? Isn't Jesus concerned about justice?

Did Jesus teach anything about justice?

Justice is doing what is right, what is just. How do we determine what is right or just? By the law—and so we are right back at the root to the entire Great Controversy—God's law—how we understand it.

I love this quotation from *The Great Controversy* it is so right about the root problem that began the war in heaven and upon which it will end here on earth.

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—**a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah**, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. GC 582

God is the God of reality—His laws are the foundation of reality, what everything is built to operate upon. Satan is the father of lies, of made-up things, of ideas that are not based in truth, not based in reality, and that includes the fantasy that God's law is imposed and God is the inflictor of punishments for rule-breaking.

Justice is doing what is right or just—did Jesus teach justice and reveal justice? Where do we find in the life of Jesus God's design law justice revealed and a refutation of imposed law justice?

> "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt 22:37–40 NIV84).
>
> - Is this an expression of justice—of doing what is right?
> - Can this justice be accomplished by rule-keeping or only through transformation of heart and mind?

> "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt 5:38–48 NIV84).

Do you hear justice in this texts?

- When Jesus said that if someone strikes us we should turn the other cheek, is this to be taken literally, or is He saying we should not seek vengeance, not seek to retaliate, not become angry and have hate in our hearts or a desire to hurt the other, but we should still seek their redemption—in other words take action that in that circumstance would be most helpful in reaching the other person with God's truth?
  - For instance, if a child hits their parent should the parent turn the other cheek and allow the child to strike them without consequence? Or will a loving parent discipline (disciple/teach) the child because the parent wants the child to gain self-mastery, self-discipline and not become a violent person?
  - Do we have an example of Jesus putting this into practice? Yes: "When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. 'Is this the way you answer the high priest?' he demanded. 'If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?'" (John 18:22-23 NIV84).
  - Did Jesus merely turn the other check, or did Jesus speak truth in love because truth spoken in love in that context was the most helpful action for God's cause Jesus could take—for those present and also for all of us who read it?
- The law of love seeks to heal and redeem, thus it is focused on motives of heart, not legal actions. Thus we are to love our enemies and pray for them, not seek ways to eliminate them. But in love, we may restrain them. If you had a child who was going out to commit some

terrible crime, and you had the ability to stop them, would you? Why? Merely to protect the victim of their crime, or to protect your child from the soul searing, character warping consequences of committing the crime? Yes, in love we can restrain those who would actively seek to do evil to others.
    - One of Satan's lies, counterfeits to love, is sentimentalism, emotionalism, over-empathy—in which people don't set healthy boundaries, don't hold others accountable: parents who don't discipline an unruly child because the child will cry and the parent will feel bad, and what will happen to such a child? We see this is societies (municipalities) in which police are defunded, prosecutors don't enforce the laws, those who commit crimes are not held in prison but returned to society, refusal to arrest those stealing from others—all under the guise of so-called compassion for the less fortunate, the marginalized. It is a lie—it is not compassionate it is evil as it reinforces evil behavior and hardens the hearts of those committing the crime and causes more fear and distrust in the community at large.
- And what examples did Jesus give as evidence of God's actions toward the wicked? He contrasted the emergency measures to bring order to a chaotic and destructive society with Design law. You have heard it said an eye for an eye—while that was necessary to stop blood feuds and killing for any offense and establish community order, the greater reality is that the sun and rain don't discriminate based on the virtue of people. The sun shines equally on all—but the condition of the individual determines the outcome. Some shade themselves (or today use sunscreen) others don't, there is a difference in outcome—but it is not from the sun, it is from the response of the people.
- The outcome of our lives is not up to God; through Jesus He has provided everything necessary for our salvation. Now it is up to us how we respond to all God has done for us. God's love and truth shines down freely upon everyone. Salvation free in Jesus is offered to everyone. It is up to us to decide what happens to us and God leaves us free to reap what we have finally chosen. This is God's justice!

Do we have any examples of Jesus dispensing justice?

- Did Jesus give the woman caught in adultery justice? What about those who brought her? What was the justice He gave them?
- What justice did Jesus give the man who wanted Him to settle his dispute with his brother over their estate?
- What justice did Jesus give both thieves on the crosses next to Him?
- What justice did Jesus give to Herod and Pilate?
- What justice did Jesus give those who crucified Him?

Is it just or unjust to give people what they have chosen, to allow people to reap what they have sown?

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 2:14-16:

> "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants" (Heb 2:14–16 NIV84).

Read fourth paragraph, "This passage…" Do you agree with the passage? This paragraph has multiple false conclusions that leads to false understanding of reality and ultimately misrepresents God, the sin problem, and the solution for it.

Does Hebrews 2:15 say we are slaves of Satan? What does the Bible say enslaves us? Our fear of death, which is the carnal drive of me-first, the survival drives, which means we are slaves of sin—not acts, but the sinful condition. This is what we need deliverance from.

> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34 NIV84).

> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:6-7 NIV84).

Are we enslaved by Satan or by our fear of death, by sin? If Satan and all of his angels were wiped out from earth today, would sin go away on planet earth? Would each of us be free of temptation? No, even if Satan were destroyed this moment, each of us would still have a carnal nature that tempts. Every person not surrendered to the Holy Spirit would still be under the power of fear and selfishness—this is what enslaves us.

But, after Adam sinned and the human species was fallen, God did not abandon humans to the control or enslavement of Satan. God intervened right there in Eden in human hearts and minds to prevent our hearts and minds from being fully enslaved by Satan. He put enmity between us and Satan, convicting of sin, wooing, drawing, putting a desire for something better and giving us the FREEDOM TO CHOOSE Him rather than having our minds and hearts completely enslaved by Satan.

EGW puts it this way:

> The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." **The enmity does not exist as a natural fact**. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and **if God had not interfered in man's behalf,** Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men; both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship. {ST, July 11, 1895 par. 5}

James tells us:

> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (Jas 1:13–15 NIV84).

Yes, Satan is a real living being, who is evil, selfish, the father of lies, who works against all that is good, a being to whom we can surrender our hearts and minds and to whom we can allow ourselves to become enslaved—but this isn't the core problem. The core problem is sinfulness in us, fear and selfishness, that we inherited from Adam, what we call the carnal nature with its fear of death.

And what is required to free us? Is it that we are under a legal penalty and some punishment (death penalty) needs to be inflicted? Does this passage say that there is a death penalty that transgression required? Where does the idea that sin requires a penalty be inflicted originate?

> "**In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice…" DA 761.4

Satan is the originator of the idea that sin must have a punishment inflicted because Satan is the originator of the lie about God's law, that it is made up rules. If Satan were correct, that God's law functioned like human law—made up rules, then it would be true that broken law requires the infliction of punishment. But this is not true of God's law is made up rules. God's law is design law—the protocols the Creator has built life to operate upon. According to the author of the statement above, three paragraphs later in the same chapter, after making it clear that the idea that sin needs to be punished comes from Satan, she goes on to state exactly what God's law requires—and it isn't punishment listen to this:

> **The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character**; [Why? for the same reason the law of respiration requires that we breathe—it is the law upon which life is designed to operate. There is no life without living in harmony with God's law of love.] and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character**. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very **righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ**. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

So, God does not have to inflict death as a legal punishment. This is the language of Satan's view of things.

It is true that the wages of sin is death, that sin when full grown brings forth death—but it is not true that God requires a death penalty. God requires righteousness. And the only way to get righteousness in human beings is for it to be developed by the actions of a human being, and once Adam sinned we could not do it. So Jesus came and took up our cause. He became human and was tempted in all points like us but instead of choosing sin, Jesus chose to live out love perfectly and destroyed the infection, the elements in humanity that incite fear and selfishness.

In Gethsemane and at the cross the two antagonistic principles warred it out in the HUMAN heart and mind of Jesus. And Jesus chose the truth about His Father, chose love for God and love for us, and Jesus chose to trust His Father with His life and very existence rather than using His power to save Himself. Thus, Jesus destroyed the lies of Satan and the infection of fear and selfishness and purified the humanity He took upon Himself thereby developing a perfect mature sinless human character (Hebrews 5:9).

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Hebrews says that Jesus…" What is the significance of this for us today? In this world today do you ever feel like those who love Jesus and are loyal to God's kingdom are in the minority? And if so, does this tempt us to become discouraged, like Elijah when he felt he was the only one? And even when he discovered there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee, how did that compare to all those who had bowed to Baal?

So, Elijah wasn't alone, but was he in the minority? On earth yes, but we are to have another perspective—that of Elisha. What did he say when the armies surrounded them?

> "Don't be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Ki 6:16 NIV84).

This is our perspective when we remember God's reality—all the rest of the worlds in God's entire universe along with 2/3 of the angels are on God's side. It is Satan and the wicked that are in the minority.

The lesson points out that some early Christians were struggling with being ashamed to be called Christians, to identify with Jesus, do we ever struggle with this today?

TUESDAY

Read the third and fourth paragraph, "Hebrews also says, however…" What do you think of the statement, "Jesus came as a Savior and offered Himself as a sacrifice 'without blemish' to God for us" (Heb. 7:26-28, Heb. 9:14)?

And then the lesson goes on to say in the next sentence, "Then Jesus destroyed the power of the devil by dying as a sinless Offering for our sins, thus making possible our forgiveness and reconciliation with God (Heb. 2:14-17)."

Put those two thoughts together and ask, What is being taught here?

- Jesus dies and presents His sacrifice to the Father in order to break Satan's power and make it possible for God to forgive us?
- If He is breaking Satan's power why is He offering His sacrifice to God for us?
- Are they saying Satan holds power over God or God needs the blood of Jesus in order free Himself from Satan's control?
- Or that Jesus blood gives God some legal opening to act against Satan?
- What are they saying?

This is all misconstrued based on the false imposed law construct. Let's lay out the truth:

It all starts with God's law. How do we understand God's law? Rules made up requiring external enforcement, or the design protocols the Creator built life to operate upon?

The law of God is the standard of health, of righteousness, if we replace God's design law with human imposed law, then we misdiagnose the sin problem as a legal problem rather than a lethal problem—a problem with our state of being.

Once we understand that after Adam's sin he and Eve were not loving, faithful, righteous beings whose hearts and minds still operated upon love and trust but who now had a legal problem—no, they had a lethal problem. They were changed in their inmost being to be fearful and selfish and without intervention from God would die *of their terminal sin condition.*

Thus the solution—our salvation requires our condition to be changed back to love and trust and have fear and selfishness removed.

From the sinner's side of the divide, what is require of us, for us to be saved? We sinners are required to trust God. Why? Because without trust we won't open our hearts and minds to God for Him to heal and change. If God were to use divine power to force a change on an unwilling person, someone who doesn't trust, someone who doesn't willingly cooperate for their own heart transformation, that act of God would destroy that person's individuality and replace it with either a new individual or a robot. It would also demonstrate that God is a being other than love who doesn't give real freedom and forces His all to do what He wants. God will NEVER do this. Our healing, transformation, salvation requires our voluntary participation, meaning we must trust God and open our hearts to Him, inviting Him in and choose to follow where He leads.

But from God's side of the sin divide, God had to provide truth that refuted Satan's lies in order to win us to trust and secure the unfallen angels in loyalty, but something more was required in order to save sinners from sin. (To stop with only a revelation of truth to win to trust is the Moral Influence Theory of Atonement). In order to save sinners, in addition to revealing truth, God had to actually fix the

damage to the human species that sin had caused and provide a real remedy that would cure the condition of all those who trust Him. Thus we read in Scripture the multifold achievements of Jesus our Savior:

- He revealed truth, which exposed Satan as liar, secured the unfallen universe, and won humanity back to trust:
    - "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." Colossians 1:19, 20
- He destroyed Satan and his power.
    - "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14
- He destroyed the infection of selfishness and cured humankind.
    - "Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:10
- Destroyed the devil's work.
    - "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." 1 John 3:8

- Christ destroyed selfishness, the basis of death.
- Christ restored the law of love into humanity, the basis of life.
- His resurrection was the only outcome of the law of love being restored!
  "The law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul." Psalm 19:7

This is why Jesus had to come to earth, become a real human, live a sinless life as a human, overcome every temptation, die to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness and restore the law of love back into the place God originally designed for it to be—the heart and mind of human beings.

Turn to **WEDNESDAY's** lesson, this is what it means to be made perfect:

> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him… (Heb 5:8–9 NIV84).

What does this text mean? What does it mean to be *made* perfect? Wasn't Jesus always perfect? He was always sinless, but Bible perfection is about maturity of character. Character cannot be created by God, it must be developed by the sentient being. After Adam sinned no other human could develop a perfect mature righteous human character—this is what Jesus did for us and this is what is required for us to be saved, to receive by faith, by trust, the indwelling Spirit that takes the perfection or maturity of Christ and reproduces it in us. We die to fear and selfishness and we trust God with our lives and no longer live controlled by the fear of death—we are set free in Jesus to love God and others as He loves us.

Read third paragraph, "1. Jesus was 'perfected'…" What are they saying? Are they saying the law required God to kill? Are they saying that God was restricted by some legal authority over Himself? Are they saying Jesus had to present His blood to the Father to pay a legal debt to God lest God would

be required to kill us? Who, in this view is the source of death? Do you see how they make God out to be the source of death, the one from whom we need to be protected?

What if Jesus didn't pay our debt to God—what would they say God would do?

This is the plan of salvation presented through the lens of Rome, the wine of Babylon, the lie that God's law functions like human law. Such views are pagan and not in keeping with Scripture.

THURSDAY

What do you think of the idea of Jesus as our Model or Example?

How is He not our model?

- Will any of us every have to tread the winepress alone?
- Will any of us, who seek God, ever be abandoned by God as Jesus experienced in Gethsemane and at the Cross?
- Will any of us be tempted to turn rocks to bread?

So there are aspects of Jesus' life that we will never have to face—and praise God for that.

How is He our model?

Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (Jn 20:21 NIV84).

What did the Father send Jesus to do that we are to do?

> If we are content to take a low level in the Christian life, the truth will never become wrought into a deep experience; we shall not be fruit-bearing branches; we shall not honor God. **Kind words, kind looks, kind deeds, and thoughtful consideration of others,—these are the fruits that grow on the Christian tree. Jesus is our example, and we must form our characters after his**. **By beholding his purity and perfection, we shall be changed into the same image**. [Law of worship] If Christ is dwelling in us, we shall reveal him in all our actions, and we shall see new charms in him every day. It is impossible to tell what work God will do for us and through us, if we will only consent to become channels of light. RH May 7, 1889, par. 3
>
> **The Lord Jesus is our example**. He came to the world as the servant of mankind. He went from city to city, from village to village, teaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing the sick. **Christ spent more time in healing than in teaching**. RH September 10, 1908, par. 4
>
> **As our example, Christ linked closely together the work of healing and teaching, and in this our day they should not be separated**. In our schools and sanitariums, nurses should be

> trained to go out as a medical missionary evangelists. **They should unite the teaching of the gospel of Christ with the work of healing**. RH September 10, 1908, par. 5

Why?

Because healing people requires we return them to harmony with the laws of health, which are design laws. We cannot have physical health while violating the laws of health—and we cannot have eternal life while living out of harmony with God's design laws for life—the law of love, truth, and liberty.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital "flip book" version online at our website.
https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 5: Jesus—The Giver of Rest

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title? What is the focus most likely to be?

The focus is on the Sabbath—the day of rest.

But as we consider the Sabbath, let's consider it in this context:

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle b**etween the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah,** between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. GC 582

Where did the controversy concerning the law of God begin? In heaven—and when Satan began his controversy over God's law in heaven, was there a Sabbath?

According to Jesus the Sabbath was made for man—not for angels, and when was the Sabbath made? At the end of creation week—and had Satan already started his rebellion over God's law? Yes, we find him in Eden from the very beginning of Adam and Eve's life.

And this quote from EGW lets us know she viewed it this way also:

> Angels on probation had been deceived by Satan, and had been led on by him in the great rebellion in heaven against Christ. [Angels on probation—what does this mean? Probation is a trial period, a period to give one opportunity to demonstrate themselves. Why were they on probation? This is insightful, Satan claimed equality with Jesus, not with the Father, why? Because Jesus was the member of the Godhead who would leave infinity and enter into linear existence and presented Himself to the angels in the form of an angel even though He is fully God. Satan became jealous of Jesus and claimed unfairness from God in allowing Jesus to go into councils that Lucifer could not enter. But why couldn't Lucifer enter? 1Tim 6:16 because God lives in unapproachable light—God lives in infinity, infinite power, infinite knowledge, and Lucifer would be destroyed if he could step into infinity.] **They failed to endure the test brought to bear upon them, and they fell**. [Who brought the test upon them? Lucifer—and what was the test? It was a test of loyalty, of faithfulness, of what and who they would believe and what law they would apply to their lives. Their characters were being tested when a question of God's methods, character, principles and trustworthiness was presented to them. They were presented with questions over God's law, what type of law did God run His

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> universe upon. Satan makes allegations of equality with Jesus and unfairness about the Father. Satan alleged it was arbitrary rules and external power to enforce behavioral control—such as denying Lucifer access to meetings he was well-qualified for. They believed the lies about God's law and thus about God and their characters were changed into fear and selfishness. Notice, what happens next—after these angels fell.] **Adam was then created in the image of God and placed upon probation**. [Did Adam and Even have a different probation than the angels, or was it the same—a period of time for them to develop their own views, beliefs, attitudes and choose who they would trust, what methods and principles they would live out? And in regard to the Sabbath—Satan's rebellion and fall happened **before** Adam, which means it happened **before the Sabbath** was created, which means it wasn't a question over the Sabbath day, which means the final conflict of this long-standing battle over God's law will be something much more than which day of the week we stop work upon.] He had a perfectly developed organism. All his faculties were harmonious. In all his emotions, words, and actions, there was a perfect conformity to the will of his Maker. After God had made every provision for the happiness of man, and had supplied his every want, **He tested his loyalty.** If the holy pair should be obedient, the race would, after a time, be made equal to the angels. **As Adam and Eve failed to bear this test**, Christ proposed to become a voluntary offering for man. {Con 18.2} [What happened here? What kind of test? A test of loyalty—meaning what? What character they would develop. Would they choose truth, love, liberty, trust, faithfulness, fidelity? Would they choose the knowledge of good, to be loyal to God, to know God and His methods as their way of life, what they settle into so they cannot be moved—or would they choose to know evil, fear, selfishness, believe lies, become cheats, exploiters, abusers and malcontents? Sadly, they chose the later, and Jesus chose to become human and overcome Satan and the power of sin and restore God's law into humanity, developing with His human abilities and human power a godly character loyal to God's methods and principles. Now each of us, because of Jesus, have the choice—who will we be loyal to? Who will we trust and what law will we choose as our hearts operating system in how we live and in how we treat others?]

So, back to the Sabbath—how does the Sabbath fit into the final conflict between truth and error that began over God's law before there was a Sabbath?

The Sabbath was made for man—for what purpose? Did God foreknow that Adam and Eve would fall into sin and the human race would be born into sin and struggle with sin? Yes—so He made the Sabbath with foreknowledge of our plight for a purpose—what purpose?

> Say to the Israelites, 'You must **observe my Sabbaths**. This will be **a sign between me and you** for the generations to come, so you may know **that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.** (Ex 31:13 NIV84).
>
> I gave them my Sabbaths as a **sign** between us, so they would know **that I the LORD made them holy.** (Eze 20:12 NIV84).

It is a sign that He sanctifies us or makes us holy—what does that mean?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is the sign that God makes us holy? Is the Sabbath itself the sign, or is our Sabbath observance the sign? Or is it some combination of both?

What is a sign? It is a marker, a signal, an evidence, a notice, something that conveys meaning, something that stands or reminds us of something, an indicator.

The Sabbath itself is a sign from God to us that He makes us holy—it is to be remembered, not forgotten—but what is to be remembered about the Sabbath? How does God make us holy?

What if we have the right day of the week but attach and remember lies about the meaning and purpose of the Sabbath? What if we teach the right day of the week and to remember and keep it, but do so through the imposed law lens and the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience?

Did the Jews in Christ's day have the right day of the week? Did they remember the Sabbath? What did the Sabbath remind them of?

- Did they remember God was Creator?
- Did they remember God delivered them from Egypt?
- Did they remember a Messiah was promised?
- Did they remember they were a special and chosen people and the Sabbath was a sign or evidence of how they were not the same as the rest of the people in the world, that they were set apart?
- And did these Jews kill the Lord of the Sabbath?

So, is remembering all of these things about the Sabbath sufficient to be prepared for the last days? Is behavioral rest for work sufficient to observe the Sabbath, to be one of the people whom God makes holy?

What is missing? What did the Jews not remember?

Design law, they didn't remember what the Sabbath really reveals, truth, love and liberty—how God works! After six days of creating, God rested. God did NOT use power to force Satan into line, to inflict punishment for rebellion. God presented truth, in love, building an entire world in which all living organisms operate upon the law of love, and created beings in His own image to govern the planet in love and then God created a day where He rested, where He stepped back, where He stopped using power, where He gave freedom to think to all intelligent beings. And God gave every one of His intelligent beings, including Adam and Eve, the ability to act righteously—they could have chosen loyalty, but instead they chose disloyalty and sin.

And God gave the Sabbath—which reveals what? Truth, love, liberty. How is God able to make people holy?

What does it mean to be sanctified or made holy?

> "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Th 5:23–24 NIV84).
>
> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Pe 1:15–16 NIV84).

How does the Sabbath fit into this?

Consider this quote from the book *Education* regarding becoming holy or sanctified:

> **The mind occupied with commonplace matters only, becomes dwarfed and enfeebled**. If never tasked to comprehend grand and far-reaching truths, it after a time loses the power of growth. **As a safeguard against this degeneracy, and a stimulus to development, nothing else can equal the study of God's word**. As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. The greatness of its themes, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the beauty of its imagery, quicken and uplift the thoughts as nothing else can. **No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation**. The mind thus **brought in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite** cannot but expand and strengthen. Ed 124.2
>
> **And even greater is the power of the Bible in the development of the spiritual nature**. Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship **find his real life and development**. Created to find in God his highest joy, **he can find in nothing else that which can quiet the cravings of the heart, can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul**. He who with sincere and teachable spirit studies God's word, seeking to comprehend its truths, **will be brought in touch with its Author**; and, except by his own choice, **there is no limit to the possibilities of his development**. Ed 124.3

What did you hear? Our true joy, life, fulfillment is found only in relationship with God and the study of God's word brings us into contact with Him. There is no limit to our development along these lines because God is infinite and as we move forward in godly truth more truth is unfolded to us and we grow and develop. This is an eternal journey of discovery and joy.

And the Sabbath was given as a sign or evidence of our Creator God who is the source of truth, love and liberty. Remember the Sabbath, remember the Creator, remember God's methods, Remember truth, love and liberty. Remember that in Jesus you are free. Remember in God you are fulfilled, your purpose is realized, your development is unending. Remember the Sabbath for the God of the Sabbath will heal and restore you if you trust Him

But again, how does this fit in to the final conflict over the longstanding battle regarding God's law that began in heaven before there was a Sabbath? The book the Great Controversy continues:

The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle b**etween the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah,** between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. GC 582

The agencies which will unite against truth and righteousness in this contest are now actively at work. [Do we see agencies in the world that are active and opposed to truth and righteousness?] God's holy word, which has been handed down to us at such a cost of suffering and blood, is but little valued. [Do we see that societies around the world, including the USA have devalued the Bible?] The Bible is within the reach of all, but there are few who really accept it as the guide of life. Infidelity prevails to an alarming extent, not in the world merely, but in the church. Many have come to deny doctrines which are the very pillars of the Christian faith. **The great facts of creation** as presented by the inspired writers, **the fall of man, the atonement, and the perpetuity of the law of God**, are practically rejected, either wholly or in part, by a large share of the professedly Christian world. [Do we find this to be true? Have many Christians embraced some aspect of evolution—not adaptation that things change, but the idea that humans evolved from lower life forms? And what does that do to the belief in God? What kind of God would God be if death and destruction are necessary for the creation of humans? And if people remembered the Sabbath and what it represents, would they ever consider evolutionary origins of life?] Thousands who pride themselves upon their wisdom and independence regard it as an evidence of weakness to place implicit confidence in the Bible; they think it a proof of superior talent and learning to cavil at the Scriptures and to spiritualize and explain away their most important truths. [Do we find this happening? And yet the Bible is the supreme source of intellectual development and wisdom. The Bible themes are so deep we will never fully penetrate them, at least not this side of heaven.] Many ministers are teaching their people, and many professors and teachers are instructing their students, **that the law of God has been changed or abrogated**; [And here it is—the last conflict of the long standing battle is but the final struggle over the law of God which began in heaven. And what did it begin in heaven over? God's law being imposed rules that can be changed rather than design protocols for life. We must return to design law, to the reality that God's laws never change, and how does the Sabbath fit in if it didn't exist before Satan rebelled, wouldn't that be a change, adding the Sabbath? If it were a rule to be obeyed, then yes, adding the Sabbath would be evidence of Satan's allegation that God makes up rules and punishes rule-breakers. But when we realize the Sabbath is a gift that we are free to embrace and use or not then it is not a rule, it is the evidence of God's character, truth, love and freedom. The Sabbath is a sign of God's character, that His law is design law, that only in harmony with Him is their life. That only resting which means trusting Him is their freedom from sin. It is in our rest or trust relationship with Jesus that He heals us. When we come to Him He gives us rest from fear, from guilt, from shame, from the fear of death. And the Sabbath is God's flag built into time, God's evidence like the rainbow in the sky reminds us that God will not destroy the world with a flood, the weekly Sabbath reminds us of God's character of love, His methods, His trustworthiness and if we rest in Him He will make us holy.] and **those who regard its requirements as still valid, to be literally obeyed, are thought to be deserving only of**

ridicule or contempt. GC 582.3 [Why? Because they are viewed as legal requirements from an arbitrary god and thus those who keep such rules are viewed as foolish.]

In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. **In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver**. It is as easy to make an **idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone**. By **misrepresenting the attributes of God**, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character. With many, **a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah**; while the living God, as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few. [Teaching the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience and that it is about our performance and if we don't do certain things in certain ways we get a demerit in a book in heaven and God will use power to inflict suffering on us and kill us for breaking the Sabbath is creating a philosophical idol—a false god while keeping the right day.] **Thousands deify nature while they deny the God of nature.** [Many in the green movement, the save the earth advocates, the climate alarmists are in this camp, earth is our mother and we must save her, but they deny the true God of heaven and fail to realize we are be agents of Christ to save people, not the planet, the planet is going to be recreated by Jesus.] Though in a different form, **idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah.** The God of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists—the God of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions—**is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia**. GC 583.1 [How? By accepting the lie that God's law works like human law, imposed rules that require infliction of punishment, people then teach that God requires a legal payment of the blood of a sinless human sacrifice to forgive the guilty or assuage His wrath etc. Thus, they teach God is like Baal. This is penal substitution theology and other theologies that require such sacrifice to God or God's law.]

No error accepted by the Christian world strikes more boldly against the authority of Heaven, none is more directly opposed to the dictates of reason, none is more pernicious in its results, than the modern doctrine, so rapidly gaining ground, **that God's law is no longer binding upon men…** GC 584.1 [What kind of law can be revoked, set aside, or no longer be binding? Imposed law, rules made up like we make. Thus the real lie is that God's law is imposed. No one would suggest that because Jesus died and we are promised a new immortal body when He comes that the laws of health are no longer binding upon humans. But that is what people do when they suggest that God's moral law is not binding. Worse, they corrupt how we see and understand God and God's character. He becomes the source of pain, suffering and death, we are told, under the guise of justice.]

Wherever the divine precepts are rejected, sin ceases to appear sinful or righteousness desirable. **Those who refuse to submit to the government of God are wholly unfitted to govern themselves**. [What is being described here? This is design law—the law of worship, by beholding we become changed; and the law of exertion, if you want something to be stronger you exercise it. If we refuse to practice the laws upon which God built life we damage ourselves and lose capacity for self-governance. The carnal drives become stronger, wisdom is lost, discernment is lost, fear increases, survival drives take greater control, we see life through

the lens of self and we become slaves of our own base instincts.] Through their pernicious teachings the spirit of insubordination is implanted in the hearts of children and youth, who are naturally impatient of control; **and a lawless, licentious state of society results**. [What are we seeing in society today? An absolute breakdown in social order—and where are we seeing it the most? In the municipalities that identify as liberal or left leaning, where the Bible is mocked, where a belief in God is scorned, where church attendance is ridiculed, family integrity is undermined, where accountability for one's own behavior is not required, and just as this author describes when the Bible and its principles are rejected people lose self-control.] While scoffing at the credulity of those who obey the requirements of God, the multitudes eagerly **accept the delusions of Satan**. [Because Satan has infected Christianity with the lie that God's law is imposed, he has been able to lead Christians to create all kinds of ridiculous and non-sensical teachings and arbitrary rules and rule-enforcement, which has led people to view God as an arbitrary dictator, which has led others to eventually reject God and the Bible altogether, which has resulted in the state of the godlessness we have in society today. And all kinds of delusional beliefs—like godless evolution, a delusional willingness to trust human governments, or if you read my blog this week on mass delusion you will see how godlessness contributes to the root causes of mass delusion in general and the delusional beliefs around COVID.] They give the rein to lust and practice the sins which have called down judgments upon the heathen. GC 584.3 [And what do we see in society? And what are God's judgment referred to here? Either therapeutic interventions to keep open avenue for Messiah and advancement of the healing remedy (gospel), or letting people go to reap what they have chosen because they are beyond healing. But those who accept Satan's lie about God's law, which began the war in heaven, today will teach the lie that God uses His power to punish the wicked. But listen to what this author says about God's judgments:

"I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;

"**They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, indepentent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

"**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress**, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3]

Those who teach the people to regard lightly the commandments of God sow disobedience to reap disobedience. [What is being described? What law? Design law, sowing and reaping. You cannot sow selfishness and reap love. And what are we seeing in the world today?] **Let the restraint imposed by the divine law be wholly cast aside, and human laws would soon**

be disregarded. [Modern Western society has rejected the Bible, and teaches evolution in our schools, and godlessness has become predominant, the laws of God are not respected and what do we see in society? Are human laws being obeyed now or do mobs destroy other's properties, wholesale thefts, increasing murder and what about elected officials—are our officials obeying the laws on immigration, protecting our constitutional liberties etc.? Notice, those in leadership around the world who are the most godless, meaning they don't actually value the principles of the Bible, are the ones most willing to violate human rights, disobey the laws of their own land, and take away freedom. Many people are so blinded by rhetoric, they can't see past what is said to what is actually being done. But the mature have developed the ability to discern, to see past the words to the actions and accomplishments.] **Because God forbids dishonest practices, coveting, lying, and defrauding, men are ready to trample upon His statutes as a hindrance to their worldly prosperity;** but the results of banishing these precepts would be such as they do not anticipate. If the law were not binding, why should any fear to transgress? **Property would no longer be safe. Men would obtain their neighbor's possessions by violence**, and the strongest would become richest. [What are we seeing in the cities where police are defunded, where elected officials refuse to enforce the laws? This prediction is being proved true in our lives today!] **Life itself would not be respected.** [Do we see in these same cities horrible increases in murder? Yes!] **The marriage vow would no longer stand as a sacred bulwark to protect the family**… [Have we seen the breakdown of the family? And where is marriage less valued, in those who continue to value the Bible or in those who have rejected it?] The fifth commandment would be set aside with the fourth. Children would not shrink from taking the life of their parents if by so doing they could obtain the desire of their corrupt hearts. The civilized world would become a horde of robbers and assassins; and peace, rest, and happiness would be banished from the earth… GC 585.1 [What happens when we reject God? Do sinners have the ability to be moral, righteous, upright in their own strength separated from the power of God in their lives? No! It is unavoidable as God is rejected that sin increases and society decays.]

Courts of justice are corrupt. Rulers are actuated by desire for gain and love of sensual pleasure. [Have we seen this in societies around the world? Have we seen decisions made that hurt the people in order to empower the few?] Intemperance has beclouded the faculties of many so that Satan has almost complete control of them. Jurists are perverted, bribed, deluded. Drunkenness and revelry, passion, envy, dishonesty of every sort, are represented among those who administer the laws. "Justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." Isaiah 59:14. GC 586.1

The iniquity and spiritual darkness that prevailed under the supremacy of Rome were the inevitable result of her suppression of the Scriptures; but where is to be found the cause of the widespread infidelity, the rejection of the law of God, and the consequent corruption, under the full blaze of gospel light in an age of religious freedom? Now that Satan can no longer keep the world under his control by withholding the Scriptures, he resorts to other means to accomplish the same object **To destroy faith in the Bible serves his purpose as well as to destroy the. Bible itself. By introducing the belief that God's law is not binding, he as effectually leads**

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **men to transgress as if they were wholly ignorant of its precepts**… GC 587 [How does he do this? By the lie that God's law is like human law and thus can be set aside.]

How does the Sabbath fit in?

It is a weekly evidence, sign, landmark built right into time of God's kingdom, God's creatorship, but also God's character and the promise of life, health and freedom we have with Him!

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "When God delivered…" What is your understanding of these historic events? What was God's purpose in the promise to Abraham? Was it God's purpose that Abraham's genetic descendants would live in Palestine—was this the vision, the goal? Let me restate it this way, Was God's goal, vision, plan and purpose for Abraham's descendants to live **perpetually in sin** in Palestine?

Or was God's purpose for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's descendants to occupy that land for the purpose of being the avenue for the Messiah who would deliver humanity from sin and then God would give the real inheritance—the entire recreated earth to the saved—the meek shall inherit the earth?

Who are considered children of Abraham and heirs according to the promise?

> "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29 NIV84).

Israel occupying Canaan was a type of the righteous occupying the new earth. The promise to Abraham was a type and the antitype is when the meek inherit the earth—this is the true fulfillment of the promise. Any ideas that suggest that the promise to Abraham is for genetic descendants of Abraham to occupy Palestine today is a misreading of Scripture and diverts attention away from Jesus and the true gospel message.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Hebrews 3:12-19, which itself is a reflection on the rebellion at Kadesh barnea and the lack of faith to enter Canaan. And since they didn't enter Canaan, they didn't rest from their wandering in the desert.

What is the object lesson for us? We are still wandering the wilderness or desert of this world and have not entered the heavenly Canaan because the church and world haven't accepted 3 Angels Message about returning to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws, and instead we keep teaching of an imperial dictator who must punish rule-breakers.

Let's read these verses from The Remedy:

> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you cling to lies about God and retain a selfish, distrusting mind that turns you away from the living God.[13] But daily build each other up in the truth, as long as there is still time, so that none of you may be blinded, confused, and hardened by the lies about God.[14] We have become partakers of Christ's character if we hold firmly till the end to the confidence we initially had in the truth about God, revealed by Christ.[15] As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds as you did in the rebellion." [16] Who were they who heard the message of healing truth but instead rebelled and preferred lies? Were they not all those whom Moses led out of Egypt?[17] And with what was God angry for forty years? Was it not with having to watch his children persistently reject his healing ways and slowly die and fall in the desert?[18] And whom did God tell that they could never get well and find rest as long as they rebelled against the only Remedy if not those who died in the desert?[19] So we see that they were not able to get well and enter into God's rest because they didn't trust him or accept the truth he revealed. (Hebrews 3:12-19 REM).

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The unbelief…" What is this rest we are offered today? Is it by observing the 7th day Sabbath? Did the Jews in the desert, who did NOT enter God's rest, have the wrong Sabbath day?

So it must be more than the day we go to church upon—what else is it?

Read Hebrews 4:1-11from The Remedy:

> Therefore, since the Remedy is still available, and the promise of complete healing and perfect rest still stands, let us be careful that none of us be found to have rejected it.[2] For we also have had the good news of God's healing truth presented to us just as they did; but the message of truth had no value to them because they did not believe it nor did they trust the one who gave it.[3] But we, who have trusted God on the basis of the truth Christ provided, experience healing and enter that rest, and our minds are at peace. As God has said, "So I granted them their persistent choice and said, 'Since they refuse the truth–the Remedy I freely offer–they will never be able to enter my rest and get well.'" It was not because God's perfect rest was not available–for it had been ready since his work of creation was complete — [4] as the Scriptures say elsewhere regarding the seventh day: "And on the seventh day, God rested his case. He had finished all his work of providing the evidence needed to refute the lies of Satan."[5] And yet in another passage he says, "If they refuse the truth, if they reject the evidence I have provided, their minds will never find rest and they will not get well."
>
> [6] The opportunity to find God's healing and rest still remains, even though those who formerly had the good news of God's healing truth presented to them did not get well or find rest

because they refused to believe the truth and trust God.[7] Therefore God again and again presents his healing Remedy, and he set a certain day which he called "today," when much later he spoke through David in the same Scripture as before: "Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds."
[8] For if Joshua had already given them healing of character and rest for their minds, God would not have spoken later about another day of rest still to come.[9] There remains then a Sabbath-rest–a rest in the evidence and truth of the character of God–which heals and transforms the people of God;[10]for anyone who rests in the achievements of Christ rests from working to save themself, just as God rested from his work.[11] Let us therefore make every effort to rest in the truth about God as revealed by Christ, so that no one will fall by following the example of distrust and refusal to accept the truth. (Hebrews 4:1-11 REM).

WEDNESDAY

Entering into His Rest –what does this mean?

How do we enter into God's rest?

From what are we to rest?

Are we resting from physical labor or something else?

Are we resting only one day in seven if we enter into the rest Jesus offers?

How does the Sabbath day relate to the resting in Christ from sin? Don't we rest all week long when we are in Christ?

THURSDAY

The lesson states the Sabbath has always pointed forwarded to Redemption and a new earth… Read the third paragraph, "This has always been…" What does the Sabbath show us about the world to come?

God's character and methods—truth, presented in love, leaving us free—we have freedom, real freedom in Christ, in God's kingdom. We are liberated and totally free!

> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. (Ro 8:1–2 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

> You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/
>
> If you have a slow internet connection give it a little bit of time to load—the images are high quality.
>
> We encourage you to do read it online so you know what you are getting and then order you copies.
>
> The vision we have for this magazine is for it to be shared—we want our friends and supporters to give as many away in their community as they can. We would encourage you to organize a Sabbath afternoon discussion group to discuss it. And please send us feedback after you have read it and shared it.
>
> You may order yours at no cost to any US postal address by visiting our webstore. You may download a digital copy on our website.

Roku channel! For those with Roku you can now watch our programs on your TV. Find it in Roku by searching for "come and reason" (spaces required).

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 6 Jesus—The Faithful Priest

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "The gulf that was caused…" Let's clarify this—there are two gulfs—one caused by sin and one innate in our beings as created beings.

The one innate in our beings is the gulf that all finite beings have with our infinite God; it is one if inability to enter into and process infinity. There is a gulf between our infinite God and sinless beings in:

- power and energy—God is all powerful and all energy originates with Him
- knowledge—God is all knowing
- ability—to create from nothing, to recreate, to heal from sin, to raise from the dead
- Time—God lives outside of time and is able to be in all points in time and knows the future—we live in linear existence
- capacity—to process infinite power and knowledge and also not be corrupted by it
- presence—to be in all points and places
- responsibility—to sustain and hold all things together

This gulf of our being finite and God being infinite cannot be bridged, we can never become infinite God. God can interact with us on our level, but we can never enter His level.

But there is another gulf, one caused by sin—and that gulf can be bridged. Jesus bridged that gulf and offers to bring us across that bridge back into unity with God. How would you describe the gulf that sin has caused in our relationship with God?

- trust—we don't trust God and we are, in our unhealed sinful state, untrustworthy to be placed in the position for which God created us. But that gulf can be bridged. We can be won to trust in God and we can be recreated by God to be trustworthy, capable of fulfilling God's calling for our lives and our species.
- love—in our unhealed sinful state, we don't love God and others as God designed for us to, thus our intimacy, our unity, our bonds of brotherhood are fractured by fear and selfishness. But this also can be bridged by coming into a trust relationship with Christ such that we die to fear and selfishness and experience the indwelling Holy Spirit reproducing Christ's motives and desires within us so that we choose God's methods in how we treat others and experience the development of characters that love God supremely and others more than self
- wisdom and understanding—we in our sinfulness value the methods of fear and selfishness, which is foolish; and there is a gulf, not merely of factual knowledge, but of functional knowledge, of wisdom on how things actually work in God's universe. The gulf of functional knowledge (not factual knowledge because we will never know all facts of reality) can be

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> bridged, we can become wise in the things of God, in love, in practicing liberty, in openness to learn and follow truth, capable of discerning right from wrong.

Another point to explore in this sentence, sin causes the gulf, the breach, not God—so where does sin exist or occur? In God? In record books? Or in intelligent beings? So if sin occurs in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings, and it is that sin in them that creates the gulf with God, then where will the activity need to take place in order to bridge the gulf? Won't God's activity to redeem from sin have to take place inside the hearts, minds, characters of the sinners?

The entire plan of salvation has its effect, its outworking, its impact not upon God, not upon God's law, not in some heavenly courtroom, but upon the hearts and minds of intelligent beings—that is why in the new covenant God writes His law in our hearts and minds (Heb 8:10). There is nothing penal legal going on, it is actual transformation, restoration, healing, recreation, purifying of the sinner.

So, with that idea in mind—where does the blood payment need to be made? Where is the blood of Christ being applied? Where is our heavenly High Priest doing His work?

> Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless **you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you**. Whoever **eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day. **For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink**. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me." (Jn 6:53–57 NIV84).

Where did Jesus say His flesh and blood need to be administered?

What of the idea that the lesson suggests that because God is holy sin cannot exist in His presence?

Where did sin begin? With whom? In whose presence? So as a fact of Biblical history this claim is false. Sin can exist in God's presence, when God acts to prevent the full result of sin from being realized in the sinner—which is an act of grace.

If God was not gracious and merciful, Satan would have reaped what sin does, severs the connection with God who is the source of life, and would have died. However, if God would have allowed this to happen, sinless beings would have misperceived and concluded Satan was correct, that God used His power to execute, to kill, that death comes from God as punishment for sin, and love and trust in God would have been severed and the rebellion and sin would have spread.

The only way to prevent the spread of rebellion, distrust and sin was to intervene with grace and prevent the immediate results and allow Satan and his sympathizers to continue to exist until the full results of their rebellion became clear and the plan of salvation was carried out.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The basic purpose…" Why? Why was there a priesthood to mediate between God and man?

Because of sin—okay, because of sin—but who are the priests, aren't they also sinners? So, why a priesthood of sinners to mediate between God and other sinners?

Let me ask it another way—who was mediating between God and man before Sinai, before the Levitical priesthood?

So, was it God's design, intent, purpose for there to be a differentiation between priests and laity?

Consider Exodus 19 before the Levitical law was given, "Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6 NIV 84).

And Peter quotes this about believers that we are to be a royal priesthood a holy nation—so, again, why did God initiate a priesthood different than the priesthood of all believers?

The Levitical priesthood was theater—Israel at Sinai entered into a theatrical play, with a stage, props, costumes and script—and the various people played different roles.

The non-Levites played the role of the unconverted people of the world with 3 tribes camped on each of the sides of the sanctuary, illustrating people at all the corners of the world who needed to be reached by those carrying the message of salvation, which is illustrated by the Levites.

But why did God set up the theater to act these things out? Because the people were so difficult to teach, so childlike, so steeped in pagan customs and beliefs, so hard-hearted, that God stooped to their level and took them to the sandbox and give them childlike illustrations and activities to teach them. But everything in the ceremonial system was only theater, illustration, object lesson—none of it was required for salvation and none of it saved from sin. Its only purpose was to teach and thereby protect from the damage that comes from living out of harmony with God and His design laws for life.

Right after God gave the 10 Commandments, we read the following in Exodus 20:

> When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die" (Ex 20:18–19 NIV84).

God created Adam and Eve for face-to-face communication with Him. After sin, God continued to talk to people directly, even sinners, God spoke directly with Cain after Cain killed Abel.

Later God talked to Noah and to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others, including face-to-face with Moses. God always wants to have personal, direct, communication and interaction with people. But what is God to do when the people don't want to talk to Him?

So, because of the hardness of their hearts, their fear, their unwillingness to be open to having direct interaction with God, God met them where they were and set up the theater and gave them a priesthood to act out the role and teach what He wants from all humans, for all of us to be a priesthood of believers.

The book *Patriarchs and Prophets* expresses it like this:

> If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, **there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision**. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have **kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone**. And had the people practiced the **principles of the Ten Commandments**, **there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses**. PP 364.2

So the daily priests and the entire Levitical system was added to teach, but it never had any power to save, it only pointed to Jesus and God's plan of salvation to be carried out through Christ.

Read third paragraph, "There are some important…" What do you think about this paragraph? What does it mean to offer sacrifice for our sins?

In order to understand the solution to the problem, one needs to understand the problem.

Can we agree that Jesus, and what He accomplished as a human, is God's solution to the sin problem?

Then what is the sin problem? Is it a legal problem or is it a problem of being out of harmony with God and life itself—out of harmony with God's law—the basis of life?

This goes back to how we understand law and God's character and government.

If we have the human concept of law then when we read that sin is transgression of the law, we misread it to say that sin is rule-breaking that results in legal trouble requiring the legal authority to inflict punishment. The solution then becomes a legal adjustment through one means or another, and there are many such legal fictions taught in the religions of the world, including in Christianity.

But, when we return to worshipping the Creator, whose laws are the protocols life is built upon, we understand that sin is being out of harmony with the law upon which life is built and that law is an expression of God's character, it is the law of love. We understand that we are dead in trespass and

sin—meaning we have a terminal condition and that no human with the condition can cure the condition. Thus Jesus came to be our remedy, to take the terminal condition upon Himself and eradicate the sin infection and restore God's law of life back into the species human.

Read fourth paragraph, "Hebrews says that Jesus prayed…" We agree that Jesus came to save humans from the second death—but how?

What is the cause of death? From where does death come?

Did Christ die the second death? Can anyone provide an inspired reference that states this? You can't, it doesn't exist, why? Because the idea of Christ dying the second death comes from the penal/legal lie—and it would serve Satan's purposes if Christ did die the second death. For the second death is the death from which there is no resurrection and Satan would love for Christ to still be dead.

The reason some teach Christ died the second death is because they have the penal view; they understand that the wicked die the second death as the penalty for sin, and therefore, in their model someone has to pay that second death penalty. If we say Christ didn't die the second death, then in their model their legal sin-penalty hasn't been paid and they would be required to still die for their sin. This causes them to experience terrible fear and anxiety and thus they cling to their false doctrine of Christ dying the second death so they can claim their penalty has been paid and hide from their fear.

But the root to their difficult is the same root to their entire penal legal model of salvation, namely they have the wrong concept of law. They believe God's law functions like human law and that the penalty for sin is an inflicted legal penalty by God. They all teach Satan's lie that opened the controversy in heaven, that every sin must meet its punishment (DA761).

When we return to design law, we realize that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15), that the sinner needs to be delivered from sin, that the sin condition needs to be eradicated, that sinners need curing, healing, transforming, not punishing.

So, how could this occur? Someone had to eradicate the infection of fear and selfishness, the sin-condition, the carnal nature, the death-causing condition, while simultaneously restoring God's law of life into humanity and developing a sinless human nature, recreating the life-causing condition. This is what Jesus came to do.

Through Mary, Jesus partook of the terminal condition, our human nature corrupted and infected with carnal drives that tempt us, but through the Holy Spirit He had a humanity that had no affinity for the temptations, did not resonate with them, didn't like or desire the temptation. He was tempted in every way like us but without sin (Heb 4:15). In the humanity of Jesus He could experience temptation just like us—and we are tempted by our own evil desires (James 1:14). Jesus felt the pull of human emotional fear with its desire to save self when in Gethsemane and through crucifixion weekend His human emotions tempted Him. And the severity of His temptation was beyond anything we can imagine.

But Jesus chose to exercise His human abilities to say no to every temptation and to trust God and love others more than self and thus at the cross Jesus destroyed the infection, the carnal drives, the fear and selfishness that tempted Him and perfected a sinless, mature, righteous **human** character, restoring God's law of love, the law of life, into the humanity that He partook.

> **The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character**; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character**. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. DA 762.2

So, back to the question of the second death—one could say that the carnal nature was killed at the cross by Christ, but Christ Himself did not die eternally, He conquered death and rose again in a perfected and sinless humanity.

Christ did not die the first death and **Christ did not die the second death**. Just as Christ's humanity was unique, His life was unique, so too His death was unique. Jesus' death was the means of eradicating sin from the species human, destroying the death causing infection of fear and selfishness, and establishing a new sinless humanity. There is nothing penal legal going on.

It is Satan's fondest dream for Jesus to die eternally, for Him die the second death and Christians who teach Jesus died the second death are teaching the fantasy of God's enemy.

But further evidence that refutes the idea that Jesus died the second death:

The Bible uses the term "second death" only in the book of Revelation in 2:11, 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8. The first two times the term is used the Bible tells us that the second death has no power over the righteous—was Jesus righteous? The second death has no power over Him! And the victorious in Christ, those who arise in the first resurrection, the second death has no power over them.

The last two texts the Bible gives us some description of what the second death actually is:

- Rev 20:14 "The lake of fire is the second death"
- Rev 21:8 "their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

According to Revelation the second death occurs in the lake of fire or that dying in the lake of fire is the second death. Did Christ die in the lake of fire? When Jesus died is there any inspired evidence that Jesus died with fire reigning down upon Him? Or does the inspired record reveal just the opposite that darkness covered Him and He pled, "my God, my God why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:45, 46)?

And what do we understand the lake of fire is? It is the fire of God's life-giving glory that the righteous live in and which consumes sin. It is the fires of infinite truth and love emanating from God. Rivers of fire flow out from God and billions of righteous stand in this fire (Daniel 7:9-10; Isaiah 33:14-15).

So what would have happened to Jesus if He were exposed to God's life giving glory? He would not have died because there was no sin in Jesus. The only way for Jesus to complete His mission and:

1. die to overcome the carnal drives of fear and selfishness,
2. to restore God's law of love, the law of life into humanity
3. to reveal the truth about God's character love that God is safe with all power and would rather let His creatures kill Him than use His power to stop it
4. to expose Satan and his sympathizers and murderers and the source of death, and
5. what God actually does to the sinner,
   was for the Father, the source of life, to let go, to abandon Him.

Thus the Father letting Him go was not an act of punishment upon Jesus, it was the cooperative choice of the Father and Son to complete the mission of destroying the sin infection and saving humanity. But the wicked in the end die when exposed to God's life-giving glory because they are solidified in sin, in fear and selfishness. The death of Christ on the cross and the wicked in the end are not the same experience.

Some Bible commentators add further clarification between the first and second death noting that the first death is the death from which a resurrection occurs but the second death is the death from which there is no resurrection. There is sound Biblical evidence for this conclusion (1Cor 15:12-21, 42-49, 1Thes 4:16, Rev 2:11, 20:5,6,14, 21:8).

Did Christ die a death from which there was no resurrection or did Christ rise again? "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1Cor 15:13). On two counts the Biblical evidence suggests Christ did not die the second death. Is there more evidence?

While the Bible doesn't use "second death" language in any other place, Jesus actually described the two deaths (first and second) in Matthew 10:28 when He said:

> "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Christ makes a distinction between two types of death. The first in which only the body is destroyed and the second in which the body and soul is destroyed. Amazingly, the word translated "soul" is the Greek word "psyche" which means "mind, identity, individuality."

So, when Jesus died on the cross, did He have His mind, identity, individuality destroyed or did He rise again as the "same Jesus" (Acts 1:11) who died?

If we use the Bible as our guide we have three demarcating features of the second death:

- lake of fire
- death without resurrection
- death which destroys both body and soul (psyche, individuality, mind)

When Jesus died were any of these identifiers met? No! The Bible seems to be making a strong case that Jesus did not "die" the second death. If He didn't die the second death then what was the significance of His death?

Jesus death was the means of actually destroying death! 2 Timothy1:10 states, Christ "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life."

Death results where selfishness rules and death is destroyed where love reigns supreme! Christ died when love overcame selfishness, when He gave His life freely, when He chose to lay down His life voluntarily. In Christ the law of love, the law of life, was fully lived out when Christ refused to use His power to save self, but rather gave His life freely in love. In Christ, giving destroyed taking, love destroyed selfishness, life destroyed death! And thus Christ's resurrection was the inevitable, predictable, reality-based outcome of restoring the law of life perfectly into the humanity that He possessed.

The differences between Christ's death and that of those who die the second death are stark:

- Christ died trusting the Father – Luke 23:46
  The wicked die distrusting the Father – Revelation 6:16

- Christ died longing to see the Father – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die hiding from the Father – Revelation 6:16

- Christ died when the Father's presence was hidden – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die when the Father is fully revealed – 2 Thes 2:8

- Christ died less than 72 hours – Luke 24:1-8
  The wicked die eternally – Malachi 4:1-3, Romans 6:23, James 1:15, 2Pet 3:10-12

- Christ died when love overcame selfishness – John 3:16, 10:17,18, 1John 3:16
  The wicked die overcome by selfishness – Revelation 21:8

Do you see the amazing difference it makes to return to design law? Do you see how accepting Satan's lie about God's law, that it is imposed and justice requires inflicted punishment, takes away so much of what Christ actually accomplished at the cross, and worse, it makes God out to be the source of pain, suffering and death.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

What is the significance of Jesus being a priest in the order of Melchizedek?

Who was Melchizedek?

Was he a descendant of Abraham? No! What does that tell us about the plan of salvation and the descendants of Abraham? Did one have to be a descendant of Abraham or participate in the Jewish sanctuary services in the OT in order to be saved?

No—that entire system was theater, just to teach the larger reality. And what is the larger reality? Healing of hearts and minds, removing of fear and selfishness and restoring God's law into the living being so that we are at-one with God again.

What is the point Paul is teaching about Christ by pointing to Melchizedek?

> If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? **For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.** Heb 7:11-12

What type of law is the Levitical system based upon? Since it is theater, it is a system of rules, artificially imposed and enforced. Character didn't matter for one to become a priest or even a high priest, look at all the corrupt priests in the OT. What mattered was genetic descent. The theater couldn't heal from sin, it could only serve as an object lesson, a type of the greater reality and that greater reality is how God's living law of love works. So the change of the law means a change from imposed rule-keeping to living God's law in reality, the law of life.

When the priesthood changed from Levitical to Melchizedek, the followers were to leave behind imposed law as a means of salvation, but instead Christianity became infected with the idea of imposed law as a means of salvation and has taught various forms of legal/penal salvation. We are to present the message of the 3 angels and call people back to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws. This results in healing of hearts and minds.

> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, **cleanse our consciences** from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:13-14 NIV84).

What does this mean cleanse our consciences? Is having our consciences cleansed a legal adjustment in books, or a healing of the inner being, removing fear, selfishness, guilt and shame, and restoring in us love and trust?

This is the reality—this is what Christ achieved a real remedy that heals and restores sinners back into godliness, righteousness, holiness.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Priests are mediators…" What does this mean mediating between God and man? What is mediation?

In the sin problem, where is the problem occurring—where is sin? When Adam sinned did God or God's law change? Did the condition of humanity change? And did that change cause a breach, a breakdown, a gulf in the relationship between God and man? Is that injury, damage, fracture, obstacle in God or God's law or is it in the heart/mind/character of the sinner?

Then, where is the activity going to have to take place in order for at-one-ment, reconciliation to occur? In sinners, then where is mediation going to have to happen? In sinners—those alienated need to be brought back to God.

Thus, Jesus our High Priest mediates the love, truth, righteousness, mercy, saving grace of God to us to heal and restore us back into righteousness. And we mediate the gospel, we take the good news about God to others in order to bring them to Jesus so they can experience in their lives the same healing.

> But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life (2Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV84).

What is this metaphor referencing? The incense that burned in the sanctuary and wafted out over the 12 tribes drawing people to the sanctuary. We are to be so fragrant with God's grace, love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, gentleness, goodness, that in this world people see us and are drawn to Jesus.

Read third paragraph, "Nor could the animal…" "Which alone could provide true cleansing from sin…" from where? Does this true cleansing from sin mean cleansing record books or cleansing hearts/minds/characters?

And is this related in any way to the cleansing of the sanctuary before Jesus comes? How? What is the connection?

Read last paragraph, "Jesus' coming…" what are the sacrifices we are to offer now that the Levitical system has been done away with?

- Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1 NIV84).

What does it mean to offer our bodies as living sacrifices? Does it mean we seek to honor God with:

- what we eat and drink?
- with whom we have sex?
- how we use our hands and feet—the quality of work, whether we engage in violence against others?
- what we watch and listen to?
- what we allow injected into our bodies?

If salvation is renewal of heart, if this mortal old body that is aging and decaying is going to be replaced with a new immortal body, then what difference does it make how we use our bodies now?

We are integrated beings—body, soul, spirit—and damaging any part of us interferes with the health and wellbeing of the entire person.

If we are sleep deprived we are more prone to irritability, if we are intoxicated our judgment is impaired, if we are in pain our patience is reduced, if we are sick our capacity for helping others is diminished etc.

The purpose of maintaining our bodies in the best condition is to reduce our own burdens, temptations, give us the greatest resilience, and keep us in the best condition for the greatest usefulness in God's cause possible.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus received…" I like how this is described, it describes salvation as reaching the inmost parts of the being—that is exactly correct. Salvation is healing, recreation, restoration to God's original design for human beings in Eden. This happens only inside the heart/mind/character of people, not in record books.

The record books are like medical records, recording what actually is happening in the person. If we want our records to be cleansed, then we must submit to Christ to have our hearts and minds cleansed from sin.

But what do you think of the idea of Jesus' intercession "before the Father"?

There is nothing wrong with this if we understanding it as ***before*** and not ***to*** the Father. In other words, all of Jesus' actions in the plan of salvation are happening under the purview or before the Father. Jesus is, in fact, carrying out the Father's will, the Father's purpose, the Father's desire for our salvation and the Father is keenly interested and observing, watching, invested, active in the plan.

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (Jn 3:16–17 NIV84).
>
> "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! **All this is from God**, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ**, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God" (2 Co 5:17–21 NIV84).
>
> **If God is for us**, who can be against us? **He** who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom **God has chosen**? It is **God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is **also interceding for us**. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us **from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Romans 8:31-39).

So, who is for us? God and Jesus is God's agent to carry out God's purpose in bringing us the knowledge of God, winning us to trust and eradicating sinfulness from us thereby conforming us to His likeness. And all of this happens before or under the will, direction and purview of the Father.

But in **THURSDAY's** lesson, second paragraph, "Jesus' perfect obedience during His earthly life made it possible for Him to offer Himself as an acceptable sacrifice to God (Heb 9:14)"?

Let's read Hebrews 9:14: "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (NIV84).

What does this mean?

If God so loved the world that He sent His only Son,
If God is for us,

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

If the fullness of the godhead dwelt in Jesus bodily,
If the sin problem exists in human beings and not in God and God wants to save sinners, then what would God want from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection? A remedy that effectively cures the sin condition.

So, Jesus leaves God's presence, comes to earth, partakes of humanity, overcomes as a human, defeats Satan, destroys death, restores God's design law into the humanity He partook and returns to God and presents Himself to God as the means whereby God can now save the rest of us by apply His victory in us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is saying, "Here Father, I have finished the work you have given me to do. Now take what I have accomplished by making you known and restoring your character and law into the species human and use my victory to heal our children."

Any evidence to support this understanding?

> **The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father** for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer.** It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. **Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. DA 671.2
>
> The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; **it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters** (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Sabbath February 19 the Courthouse is NOT available. We will meet at the normal time at Bake Crafters and after class we will have a potluck and then discussion.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 7: Jesus—The Anchor of the Soul

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "Hebrews 5:11…" The lesson sees these verses as an interruption to the discussion of Jesus being our High Priest of a new covenant in the order of Melchizedek—are these verses and interruption?

They see this as an interruption to a theological treatise to digress on the dangers of falling away from Christ because they see salvation and the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest as a legal problem happening somewhere off in the universe separate from what is actually happening in sinners.

My view is that this is not an interruption but an application of the reality of Christ's ministry as our High Priest. Christ is the individual through whom God connects heaven and earth and through what Christ accomplished God destroys sin and restores righteousness in the species human. Thus Paul is saying here that he would love to discuss more of the details of the mechanics behind what Christ had to accomplish in order to save us, but these people are not capable of understanding it, so until they can assimilate, apply and grow in the truths they already have it is no use to go into greater detail.

Another way to say it is this way. It is pointless to explain to someone the surgical techniques in doing a liver transplant to save them from liver cirrhosis, when they still haven't comprehended the need to quit drinking alcohol. Or, if they have comprehended the need to quit drinking alcohol and they believe if they quit drinking then that is all that is needed to restore their liver to perfect health.

The point is, that Paul is explaining what Christ had to accomplish in order to save humanity from sin. The species was saved in the person of Jesus who became a real human being and lived a sinless life and overcame every temptation and developed a sinless human character. Thus in the individual human personhood of Jesus the species created by God in Eden and damaged by Adam and Eve was saved, healed, perfected, restored and exalted to the throne in heaven.

If no other individual human being ever accepted Jesus, the species was still saved in the person of Jesus. But because of God's goodness, grace, love, and what Christ actually achieved, every human being is offered salvation—the option to choose life in Jesus and reject death, to choose to receive from Jesus the Holy Spirit who takes Christ's victory and reproduces it in us. This requires that we are first won to trust—justification—have the heart set right with God, and second it necessarily results in sanctification, the healing, maturing, and growing up in Christ.

Paul is saying that if you accept Jesus, have been won to trust, have experienced the joy of His love and presence, the freedom from guilt and shame, and knowledge of what salvation means, but then

you refuse to grow, to mature, to develop and instead choose to live the same immature and destructive patterns of behavior you will harden your heart, and eventually cut yourself off from life because salvation isn't a legal issue it is a healing issue.

Now, let's look at the Scripture and see it spelled out by Paul. Note what Paul writes just before 5:11, we start in 5:8:

> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** [He became a real human being, and as a human being had to choose to obey or disobey. He chose to say no to every temptation and to live out God's design law of love perfectly. In so doing, He became perfect or was made perfect. Remember, Bible perfection is about maturity, not sinlessness. Adam and Eve were created sinless, but they chose to become imperfect and sinful. Jesus was born of a woman under the law of sin and death Gal 4:4, with a humanity subject to temptations like us. But because His Father was the Holy Spirit He had no preference for the temptation. Thus, in the human brain, mind, heart of Jesus He was able to develop with His human strength, by trust in His Father, a perfect, mature, sinless human character. Once He did this, He became the source of salvation—meaning the source of truth to destroy lies and the source of a sinless humanity to replace our sinful one that we inherited from Adam. He is the vine and we are the branches that are grafted in through faith or trust and receive the indwelling Spirit who takes what Christ has achieved and produces it in us. So, after He accomplished this mission, He is then enabled, equipped, possessed what is required by reality to save and therefore can enter into the role of our high priest to minister or *administer* His righteous character to us through the Spirit, note what Paul says next] and was **designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek**. [He only became our high priest in the order of Melchizedek after He developed a perfect human character, the remedy for sin. Without destroying the infection of fear and selfishness in the species human, without restoring God's living law of love into humanity, Jesus would not have had what reality required be administer or minister to us in order to save us, thus He would not have been able to enter the role of our high priest. So, again Paul doesn't interrupt a theological discussion, he is expounding on the reality of the application of what Christ achieved for our salvation.] We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. [Paul would have liked to explain it more, describe more of the details of what Christ actually achieved, but they were not ready to understand it and had he gone into deeper detail it would have no doubt caused confusion. Thus he couldn't. Jesus said something similar to His Apostles "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (Jn 16:12).] In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant**, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness**. [What is being said here? Have you heard about a teaching called righteousness by faith? Paul is saying if we are immature, still on infant formula we are not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. What is the elementary stuff? He tells us in 6:1 it is repentance from acts that lead to death—in other words the law, the deeds, the dos and don'ts, the penal legal way of viewing salvation that focuses on behavior, or legal declarations that declare that you are righteous when you are actually not

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> righteous; all of this is not acquainted with what righteousness truly is. Real righteousness is what we become through the victory of Jesus 2Cor 5:21. This is what the mature understand—that God is the Creator of reality, that God's laws are the protocols reality operates upon, that sin transgresses those protocols and takes one out of harmony with God and life, and that salvation requires restoration to unity, at-one-ment, harmony with God and His law. Jesus accomplished this for us and all who trust Him receive from Him a new heart with His law of love as the motivating factor. Then we grow up in Him.] But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (vv.8-14 NIV84) [This is the law of exertion, choosing to think, reason, pursue truth, apply truth, having real experiences in which we test with careful application and observation of cause and effect the outcomes of our choices. We learn that claims, proclamations, statements of authority are not truth, but must be tested and we develop the ability, by understanding and living in harmony with God's design laws, the capacity to see through the lies, to tell the difference between the right and wrong. So many though, remain immature, they don't know how to reason, to think, to discern, and they look for an authority to tell them the answer, whether it is the pastor, priest, teacher, parent, doctor, CDC, FDA, president, or judge—some authority must tell them the answer. And if the government says you must violate another person's conscience then they respond with, "we must obey the law unless it violates one of God's laws" which they consider to be rules. So these immature people will support the government mandates to violate another person's conscience—a most heinous crime in God's eyes. When they hear protests from fellow church members they cannot figure it out for themselves because there is not a Bible verse that says "thou shalt not accept injected genetic therapeutics into your body" so they look for another authority figure, like their pastor, conference president etc. to tell them the answer. And when a church committee comprised of paid employees, with no actual authority to formulate a position for the church, releases a document declaring that forced injections are not a religious liberty issue, then the immature believe the voices of authority and go along with the unrighteous practice of coercion and compelling power.]

SUNDAY

Read Hebrews 6:4-6:

> "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace" (Heb 6:4–6 NIV84).

What does this mean?

What law lens do you read it through?

This is a very troubling text for people who read Scripture through the human law lens, the idea that

God's law functions like human law—imposed rules requiring legal enforcement.

Haven't we all, after coming to Christ and being converted, and experiencing the joy of salvation at some later point fallen short, committed a sin, even a known sin, knew it was wrong but did it anyway?

If the mind is thinking through the human law lie then this text is often taken to discourage and incite fear—fear of having committed the unpardonable sin. Fear that they had their one change and blew it.

How would you explain this text to someone who is struggling with it?

Design law makes it very simple. Paul is merely saying that if someone has partaken of Christ and experienced the restoring, rejuvenating, healing presence of the Holy Spirit and later chooses to reject Christ and the Holy Spirit, there is no other cure, remedy, or solution available. And because the person had come to Christ, but later leaves Christ, it breaks Jesus heart again via a new rejection of Him. Paul is not saying that an act of sin rejects the Holy Spirit or Jesus. It is what we do after the sin, do we go to Jesus, are we repentant, are we sick in heart because that is not the person we want to be and we are more committed to Jesus afterward? Or do we run from Jesus, to we refuse to go to Him because we prefer the sin and cling to the selfishness, or anger, or desire for revenge or whatever else that we need to release in order to reunite with Jesus. It isn't about the act, it is about the attitude of the heart!

Here is how I rendered it in *The Remedy:*

> "It is impossible for those whose minds have been enlightened with the truth about God–those who have tasted the goodness of heaven, who have participated in the Spirit of truth and love, who have experienced how good are God's ways and the revitalizing power of the future age–to be restored to health and God's original ideal if they reject all this, for they reject the only Remedy, and no other cure exists. Their loss pierces the heart of God all over again as they spurn his never-ending love" (Hebrews 6:4-6 REM).

Read the second paragraph "To 'have tasted…'" What do you think of the idea of "gift" of God "may" refer to God's grace, or the Holy Spirit?

Jesus said that when He went to His Father He would ask the Father to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to them. So there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God.

The book *The Desire of Ages* states it this way:

> "The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He [Jesus] could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people." DA 671

So realizing that the Holy Spirit as a gift from God is quite right. But, to me neither God's grace nor the Holy Spirit are what Paul is referring to here. What is the purpose of God's grace? What is the

office work of the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit actually do for sinners? So, in my view Paul is referring to is THE GIFT—what God gave to humanity for all eternity—For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son! Jesus is the gift that God has given us.

It is Jesus that we are to taste:

- "Taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps 34:8).
- Jesus was the Word made flesh John 1
- We are to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus (John 6:53-58)

Jesus is the gift, that once we have tasted, partaken and if we later reject, there is nothing left that will cure, save, or heal us from sin.

Jesus is the gift that is given to humanity for all eternity. The office work of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, to enlighten us, to draw us, to transform us, to take what Christ has achieved and reproduce it in us. The need for the Holy Spirit to do this goes away, the purpose of this gift is resolved, thus the Holy Spirit doesn't carry out these functions for all eternity—but Jesus remains human—gifted to us for all eternity.

> The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent**, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. DA 671.2

MONDAY

Read third paragraph, "When the religious leaders…" Hmmm… have they mixed issues? Do you see anything in this paragraph that causes you concern, depending on what is meant?

Specifically, does the gospel challenge the sovereignty and self-determination of the individual?

This is where I think they mix issues, the gospel does challenge our sovereignty but it does not challenge our self-determination.

Sin is selfishness—Satan sought to rise up, to rule over, to become sovereign over God and others. Those actuated by the satanic spirit will likewise be motivated by the desire to rule over others—we see this throughout human history. All human governments have a few ruling elites exploiting the

masses for the benefit of the few.

The gospel challenges this and establishes God as Creator as sovereign and His methods of love as the only means of rulership. Those who rule in God's kingdom are the ones who serve others the most—God being the source of life for all living organisms, and the source of life-sustaining energy for the entire universe is the one who serves others the most and thus is the Most High.

God does not gain power, wealth, ability or anything else from us. We gain from Him and in return we recognize this and praise and love Him for it. And when we love like He does we rejoice in giving what God has given to use to uplift others and we become conduits of His kingdom of love as we love others and live to bless others in our world.

But the ways of the world are the ways of taking from others to uplift self. These are human governments. It is shocking to me how many Christians are deceived into believing human governments are righteous, or it is righteous to trust human governments. All human governments are part of Satan's kingdom. They all serve Satan and ultimately are used by him to war against the people of God.

But the next point is the question of self-determination—who, in God's design, in harmony with God's law, is supposed to determine what you choose and do, who you trust, what actions you take? Are we to be puppets that God controls? What is the last fruit of the Spirit? Self-control—when God has His way in our lives He frees us from the control of fear and selfishness and restores liberty, autonomy, self-control to us so that we can be self-determining agents living out God's law of love.

In fact, we cannot fulfill God's purpose for us if we are anything less than self-determining individuals, for God's purpose for us is that we love Him with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength and if we cannot to that if we are not free to determine this for ourselves—computers, robots, puppets cannot love.

TUESDAY

Read Hebrews 10:26-29:

> If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:26–29 NIV84).

What does this mean?

What law lens do you understand it through? Is a legal process being described?

The lesson states: “Paul explains that the rejection of Jesus’ sacrifice will leave the readers without any means for the forgiveness of sin because there is no other means for that forgiveness besides Jesus.”

Is the problem with sin that God won’t forgive, and we need the blood of Jesus in order for God to forgive us?

Did Jesus need a payment made to Himself in order for Him to forgive those who were crucifying Him? Did Jesus reveal a character, method, law, principle different than that which is true about the Father? Then did God need something done to Him to get Him to forgive?

Will God be unforgiving toward those who refuse Christ or will God be completely forgiving, desirous, longing, willing for the wicked to enter the gates of Jerusalem? Will the wicked be kept out of the heavenly city by God or will they be kept out by their own refusal to be reconciled to God and the pain and suffering that sin causes them when God unveils His life-giving glory?

Will God be upon His throne with unforgiveness in His heart? Will He refuse to forgive those who have rejected Him or will they die of sin with God’s forgiveness just like Judas died with Jesus’ forgiveness?

Where is the barrier between God and sinners? Is it in God? Is it in God’s law? Is it sin in human beings?

Then what is the mission of Jesus—is it to do something to God or God’s law, or is to do something in the human species—to fix the sin problem that corrupts us?

So getting God to forgive us has never been the problem. The problem for human beings is two-fold; 1) we needed a person who is part of this creation, a descendant of Adam, a human to be sinless and to become perfect and mature in character restoring God’s living law into the species and 2) we needed to be individually won to trust so that we can receive the new heart and right spirit reproduced within us.

This is what Hebrews is describing, Jesus work to leave heaven, though fully God, and become human with a humanity damaged by sin, a little lower than the angels, but to overcome and perfect humanity, restoring humanity back to sinless righteousness and then ascend to heaven with the remedy He procured and begin administering it to us through the work of the Holy Spirit—symbolically taught as our heavenly High Priest.

But all these truths get muddied and obscured by the infection of imposed law with its legal language and word choices brought over through the various translations. One example in the passage we just read is translating the word “sin” as “sins,” “no sacrifice for sins” leads a person think of deeds, behaviors, acts—which Paul already said in 6:1 is immaturity and in 5:13 not acquainted with

righteousness.

If we translate the passage as "no sacrifice left for sin" or "sinfulness," either one, it leads our minds to consider the condition of sin, rather than the symptoms of that condition, which are the acts of sin.

The Greek can be translated either way—it is a choice of the translator to use sins versus sin or sinfulness. Because the idea of God's law being imposed became orthodoxy under the Roman Church, it has never really been questioned and the translators when they translate see the Bible through this warped legal lens.

So, under design law, Jesus is the Remedy, if one rejects Jesus the only Remedy then there is no other remedy left to cure our condition, it is very simple.

Here is how I rendered it in *The Remedy*:

> "If we deliberately reject the truth about God and his loving, life-promoting methods, and instead — after God sacrificed everything to bring us this healing truth — continue to practice self-destructive methods, no further remedy remains: only the inevitable consequences of unrestrained selfishness — the total destruction of character, perversion of mind, and abject panic and fear when God unveils his life-giving glory which transforms the righteous but consumes the wicked. In the symbolic stage play — which was designed to reveal the truth about God and his plan to heal — anyone who rejected the script of Moses was terminated from the group on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more certain will the agonizing death be for those who reject the Son of God (the only Remedy for our terminal condition), who treat as poisonous the healing truth that his death revealed, and who reject God's Spirit that enlightens the mind with this life-saving Remedy?" (Hebrews 10:26-29 REM)

The lesson states in the second paragraph, "The sin for which there is no sacrifice or atonement is described as trampling underfoot the Son of God, profaning the blood of the Covenant, and outraging the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:29).

What do you think of their choosing to describe the Holy Spirit as outraged? This is the word used on the NRSV and ESV, but the KJV uses "despised," the NIV, GNT, NET use "insulted" or "insults."

Does it send a different meaning to consider the Holy Spirit as outraged versus despised or insulted?

I used the word "rejects" which is functionally what happens. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love, those who reject Jesus, are rejecting the truth from the Spirit of truth, they are resisting and rejecting the activity, work, function, and impact of what the Spirit does. The Spirit brings truth to the mind, convicts the soul and leaves us free, when we choose to surrender and open the heart, the Spirit brings the victory of Christ, the love of God, the divine energy of the Most High to heal, restore, recreate, enlighten, guide, develop, transform, mature. But if we reject the truth, we close the heart and we treat both Christ and the Spirit as dirt, something worthless to be trampled beneath our feet and there is

nothing more God can do for us.

WEDNESDAY

Read Hebrews 6:9-12:

> Dear friends, even though we speak of the pain of loss, in your case, we are confident of all the benefits that are part of God's healing plan. God is not arbitrary or unjust: he knows full well how much you love him by the work you have done in helping his people. We want each of you to continue to diligently practice love and beneficence to the very end, and your healing will be sure. Don't let your guard down and become lazy, but be like those who through constant trust and patience experience healing of the mind and the promises of God. (Hebrews 6:9-12 REM)

They shall know we are Christians by our….:

- Supreme Court appointments
- Elected officials
- Our mask wearing
- Our enforcement of government mandates upon others in order to save lives
- love

But what does love look like? How does it function?

What about telling noble lies? Does love do this?

What are noble lies—the lies that are told for the right reasons, to help others.

Example: Telling people the injections given for COVID are vaccines and if we get enough people injected we can stop the disease, we can get herd immunity, we can prevent sickness and spread. This was known to be a lie from the very beginning by those in charge of the development of these injections, by the FDA, by the CDC and yet they purposely mislead the people because they knew if the people understood these injections will not prevent infection, reinfection or spread, that they only provide less than 1% absolute risk reduction to hospitalization and death, with no known long term safety that the acceptance of them would be diminished. So, we are told by certain people, that this was a noble lie because, supposedly, it was told with the intention to save lives and reduce disease.

The problem is that it denied individuals the opportunity to think, evaluate, consider the real potential benefit versus the potential risks, and instead led people to make choices based on a false expectation. Further, it prevented people from developing their own reasoning and thinking skills, and has caused and continues to cause division and conflict in families, communities, churches, and society at large. No—love doesn't function this way.

What is the reason people would treat others this way—tell so-called noble lies? Because they view others as being inferior, dull, stupid, incapable of understanding, being foolish, less wise than those in power or leadership and thus they are at best like ignorant little children who need the wise to lie to them to get them to do what the wise want.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love. Satan attacks God and God's methods and principles from all angles. If he can get people to reject both truth and love and fully embrace lies and selfishness he will. But if he cannot do that, then he tricks many into separating the attributes of the Spirit into either truth without love or love without truth.

Truth without love are those religionists who hold to "the truth" and it may or may not be correct doctrinal facts, but the promotion of these "truths" are devoid of love so that enforcing truth is paramount even to the point of abusing others, ridiculing, condemning, and even killing those who disagree with them. The Pharisees did this with Jesus and their various doctrinal truths. Many Christians have fallen into this trap.

But there is a ditch on the other side, in which people will advance love devoid of truth. Love is replaced with over-empathy, emotionalism, sentimentalism—we love therefore we don't want to offend, we don't want to say anything that would hurt someone's feelings or cause someone to experience pain, so we tell everyone all their choices are equally fine—it is their truth after all. This is the trap of collusion with harm and of denying truth. And love doesn't do this.

The enlightened Christian has their heart renewed by the Spirit and advances truth in love while leaving others free.

THURSDAY

What do you think of when you consider the imagery of Jesus as an anchor for the soul?

Hebrews 6 focuses on the promises given to Abraham, which is the promise of his Seed coming to save humanity.

> God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:18–20 NIV84).

What does this mean? What is the imagery of the veil or curtain?

In the theater of the OT sanctuary, the daily priests in their white robes represent the priesthood of believers with the character of Christ reproduced within them.

The Holy Place with the lamp, table of bread and wine and golden altar represent the church. The lamp is the living and written Word of God that shines out into the courtyard, the courtyard represents the world, the lamp gives light into the world. The bread and wine also represent Christ, His sacrifice to save us, and the golden altar represents the hearts of believers where incense was burned and went up before God representing the prayers of the saints.

On Sabbath the daily priests (believers) would enter the Holy Place (church) with the High Priest (meeting with Jesus) and eat the Showbread (word of God).

But, as a daily priest, who longs to have closer intimacy with God, who, like Moses, wants to see God face to face, you look back to the Most Holy Place where the shekinah is, and something obstructs your view of God, what?

A veil—and what is sewn on the veil—angels—what does this represent?

What happened to the veil? It was torn open by God when Jesus was crucified. It is the only element of the theater that God destroyed, and that element was an obstacle that kept the people from entering into God's presence. What is the obstacle that obstructs our view and unity with God and that God destroys in Christ to open the way back to unity with Him?

Hebrews 2:14—"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil"

Now, if we reject the design law view, and embrace the imposed law view, we teach that the veil is Jesus' body and that God struck Jesus down at the cross but then we must also conclude that Jesus is the obstacle in the way of our unity with God that the Father had to remove. But of course, that doesn't make any sense at all.

God did not lay a hand on Jesus at the Cross, God was in the Son reconciling the world unto Himself. It was Satan and Satan's power that was struck down at the cross, and that was the very moment the veil was torn thereby opening the way back into God's presence for us.

Thus the veil represents Satan's two powers, which angels help us with, but angels could not destroy or open the way back for us. Those two powers are:

- lies about God, which Jesus destroyed
- our carnal nature, which Jesus also destroyed

2 Cor 4:3,4 alludes to this also: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

What is it that veils the mind and keeps people from seeing the "light" of God? The lies of Satan. And in the old system what kept people from seeing the "light" of the shekinah glory of God? The veil inwrought with angels, which was destroyed by God at Christ's death. Thus the veil represents the lies

Satan has told about God and our own sinful nature which separate us from Him, and both were destroyed by Jesus.

Hebrews 10:19,20 states "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body."

Thus, Jesus body refers to both the new and living way through the curtain, the obstacle, the barrier, which are the lies and our fallen nature both of which HE destroyed opening the way back to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Sabbath February 19 the Courthouse is NOT available. We will meet at the normal time at Bake Crafters and after class we will have a potluck and then discussion.

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 8: Jesus—The Mediator of the New Covenant

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "By living a perfect life…" What about this sentence, "Through His death, Jesus canceled the penalty of death that our trespasses demanded…?"

I want to commend them for not saying "Jesus **paid** the death-penalty our trespasses demanded." Perhaps this new wording is a move in the right direction, but could you word it more accurately?

What law lens are we reading it through?

Why is death the penalty for sin? From where does the penalty of death come? What does the Bible text mean that reads, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law?" (1 Co 15:56 NIV84).

What is the power that causes death for someone who puts a plastic bag over their head? Is it not the law of respiration—when you break that law life ceases. Sin takes us out of harmony with the law that God built life to operate upon and thus the power that results in death is the law. The law is the law of life, it doesn't cause death, it is the breaking of the law that does. However, because the law cannot be changed to meet the sinner in sin, it is the power that causes the result.

This is different than imposed law. Imposed law like speed limits. The power that causes the penalty for speeding is not the law—it is an external enforcer who gives and citation and imposes a fine.

But in God's government, which runs on design law, the power that causes death is the law itself, being out of harmony with it results in death. God doesn't have to act to inflict pain, suffering or death—sin does that. God has to act to suspend the consequences to give time for people to be restored to harmony with the law.

Imagine someone jumps off the Empire State Building—the power which will cause their death is not enforced from a state agency, even if it is against the state's law to jump off the building. The power that enforces the death penalty is the laws of gravity, physics, and health. These are design laws.

In this analogy, the human race in Adam and Eve were on the top of the Empire State Building. Satan comes flying by in the form of an flying serpent and says, "Did God say in the day you jump you will surely die? Oh, no you won't. God knows in the day you jump you will gain the ability to fly and will be like Him so He is trying to keep you down. Look at me. I can fly and you can be even greater than me." So they jump, and for a second they are thrilled, until they realize they are going only one way, then they are overcome with fear. At that moment God steps in and suspends them in midair and gives

them the option of having Him put them in through a window. As Paul said in Romans, "God left the sins committed beforehand unpunished (Romans 3:25). But what happens if people refuse to allow God to place them back in harmony with the law? If they say leave me alone God and they are being suspended in midair? God eventually withdraws His hand and lets them have what they insist upon, and what happens? They die, from what cause? That is the reality of the sin problem and how God uses power—always to save and heal, never as the source of death.

So, did Jesus come to cancel the penalty of sin, or to take **away the cause** of that penalty?

What did John say, "Look, the Lamb of God, who **takes away the sin** of the world! (Jn 1:29 NIV84)? Not, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the penalty for the sin of the world."

This idea of paying penalties, or canceling penalties, or removing penalties is all based on the wrong understanding of law, of God's government, of God's character, of the nature and character of sin and misunderstanding reality.

Death is the unavoidable result of unremedied sin—of the condition of being out of harmony with God and His law of life. No penalty has to be paid or canceled, what has to happen is the condition which causes death has to be resolved, remedied, cured, fixed, removed—thus Jesus takes away the SIN of the world, not the penalty. But once the sin is removed, the penalty is avoided. Acts of sin do not have to be punished—that is Satan's view, the sin condition has to be eradicated, purged, or removed.

The second paragraph, quoting from the SDA Bible Commentary, reads "In the original context this phrase described moral obedience to the will of God. The author of Hebrews uses the phrase to show that the sacrifice of Christ fulfilled the will of God in providing an acceptable atonement, which the animal sacrifices had not provided." (Vol. 7, p. 460).

What does this mean? What makes the atonement acceptable?

What is God's purpose in sending Jesus to be our Savior, to be our atoning sacrifice? To save from sin—okay, but what is the problem that sin caused that Jesus' life, death and resurrection resolves? Is the problem with God or God's law? No! The sin problem exists, occurs, functions, operates within the species human—sin changed the species and corrupted humanity with a death condition that had to be removed.

Jesus partook of our humanity, infected with this death condition and destroyed the death condition and restored God's life condition becoming the source of salvation for all who trust and obey!

Thus, the atonement is acceptable because it accomplishes exactly what God sent Jesus to accomplish, to restore the human species back to at-one-ment with God. Jesus is the restoring agent, the unifier, cleanser, healer, reconciler and this is quite acceptable to God because it achieves what God intended for Jesus to achieve.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "According to Hebrews…" Was Jesus perfect life, death and resurrection part of a different covenant or the fulfillment of the covenant promise given to Adam in Eden in Genesis 3:15—that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head?

What is the New Covenant and what is the Old Covenant? Is the New Covenant actually *new* or is the writer of Hebrews introducing it to the Hebrew people who should have, but didn't, know about it, thus it is only *new* to the Hebrew understanding?

So, when we talk about two covenants and old and new, one covenant better than the other, the better one is the original one, the one God promised Adam and the one God reaffirmed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The idea of the New Covenant being the second covenant is not about when in the history of the human race that the two covenants occurred, but when in the history of Israel the two covenants were established.

Abraham's covenant with God was the same covenant as Genesis 3:15, the promised seed would come and provide salvation. It was at Sinai that the people established a different covenant that in their mind became the first covenant, the only one they knew about. In their history the prophets told them a different covenant would be established and that occurred when Jesus, a Jew, accomplished it. Thus to them it became known as the new covenant, but it was still the fulfillment of the original covenant in Genesis 3:15.

Consider this quote from *Faith I Live By:*

> **As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary**, [What are these two laws? If one is changeless and eternal what type of law is this? If one is provisional and temporary what kind of law is this? And why would God use a provisional and temporary law? Where do the 10 Commandments fit in? Are they eternal and changeless or are they provisional and temporary? They are an expression of the eternal and changeless law of God, but the ten commandments in that form were added as a temporary provision or tool based on the need of sinful humanity.] **so there are two covenants**. [What are the two covenants? One based on eternal law—design law, one based on imposed law—temporary provisions. Why? What was the reason for the temporary covenant? Education and protection to lead to the true covenant. What is the eternal covenant?] **The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden**, when after the Fall, there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon, and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. **It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law.** [Why is fidelity to God's law a condition of eternal life? Because God's law is design law—the law upon which life is built. We cannot have life without God's law being restored as the operating protocol upon which we live.] Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation. {FLB 77.2}
>
> **This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise**, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. 22:18. **This promise pointed to Christ**. So Abraham

understood it, and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. **The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law**. [What does this mean? The only way to save sinners was to restore the law of life into humanity, thus the covenant or agreement that God would send Jesus to accomplish what we could not, the eradication of the death principle and the restoration of the law of life—and we, if we trust God, can receive from Him a new heart and right spirit, healing and restoration to life—His law written into our inmost being.] The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Gen. 17:1; 26:5. . . . {FLB 77.3}

The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the "second," or "new," covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. {FLB 77.4} [What does this mean? What law lens do you hear it through? The old covenant of symbols and rituals designed to teach was put into effect with the symbolic shedding of animal blood. But that system and that animal blood could not cleanse consciences or remove sin from hearts and minds, it was only a teaching tool. The promise of God, the covenant of grace was given in Eden, but Jesus didn't fulfill the promise until 2000 years ago. It was His sinless life, being tempted in all points like us, but overcoming with His human abilities and dying on the cross to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness, and restoring into humanity God's law of life, that fulfilled the promise. Another way to say this, is that Jesus' victorious life and death made effective, operational, a reality God's promise given in Eden. Thus it was ratified by the blood of Christ.]

The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed in the mind of God from all eternity. This is why it is called the everlasting covenant. {FLB 77.5}

There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today. . . . Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the author and the finisher of our faith. {FLB 77.6}

Consider this quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. **They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death**. [What were the sacrifice of animals intended to remind people of? That sin causes death—but what has happened instead? It is taught that God kills for sin, not that sin causes death. How could this happen?] **To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give.** [What do you hear described? Whose hand killed the first sacrifice? According to this author it was Adam—yet many of the penal legal adherents point to God providing coverings of skin for Adam and Eve and suggest God killed the first animal. The Bible never says any such thing.

> And this author correctly points out that Adam killed the first sacrifice.] It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, [This author eliminates another possibility that some penal/legal adherents might suggest. Well, sure Adam killed the first ritual sacrifice, God didn't have to confess sins on an animal and kill it like Adam. So he did the first sacrificial killing, but God killed the first animal and provided coverings to demonstrate that God would kill Jesus to provide the robe of righteousness. This author refutes that as well as Adam's sacrifice was the first death he had ever seen. There was no death in Eden before Adam's first sacrifice. Reject the lies of the penal legal theologians.] and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. **This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate**. [What does this mean? Does it mean pay a legal penalty? No, it means take away the damage or result of his sin—only Jesus' death could remove the death condition and restore the life condition. What was the purpose of the sacrifice—to teach reality that sin causes death, not God, but God so loved that He would sacrifice Himself to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light.] And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation. PP 68.1

So the old testament sacrifices were merely teaching tools to help lead us to participate in the covenant of grace. What did Satan do about this powerful object lesson?

Consider this quote from *Prophets and Kings:*

> **In patriarchal times the sacrificial offerings connected with divine worship constituted a perpetual reminder of the coming of a Saviour, and thus it was with the entire ritual of the sanctuary services throughout Israel's history**…. [Again, what was the purpose in the sacrifices in both patriarchal times and Israel? A perpetual reminder of sin and our coming Savior to save us from sin.] PK 684.4
>
> From the day the Lord declared to the serpent in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Genesis 3:15), Satan has known that he can never hold absolute sway over the inhabitants of this world. When **Adam and his sons began to offer the ceremonial sacrifices** [what kind of sacrifices? ceremonial, no saving power in them] ordained by God as **a type** of the coming Redeemer, Satan discerned in these **a symbol** of communion between earth and heaven. During the long centuries that have followed, it has been **his constant effort to intercept this communion. Untiringly has he sought to misrepresent God and to misinterpret the rites pointing to the Saviour, and with a great majority of the members of the human family he has been successful**. PK 685.1 [God provides a ritual, an acted-out type or symbolism that is designed to enlighten, to teach, to lead, to convict of sin, to instill hope in the Messiah, to represent the link with Jesus; and Satan works to corrupt this lesson, to undermine these truths, to pervert its power to free minds from sin and guilt. How? What did Satan do?]

> While God has desired to teach men that **from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself**, [What is the sacrificial system supposed to teach? That God so loved the world He sent His Son to voluntarily give Himself as the means to fix the sin problem and bring us back into eternal loving communion with God.] the **archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction**. [How? How could Satan take the symbolism that God had provided to teach us of His love and twist it in such a way that people think God delights in their destruction?] Thus **the sacrifices and the ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God**…PK 685.2 [How did Satan do this? By getting people to accept the lie about God's law, that it is imposed, and thus sin requires punishment and God is the ultimate punisher and the sacrifices are misinterpreted as means of paying or propitiating and offended God. This is what penal substitution theology does—it mispresents sin as a legal problem and God as the enforcer of the universe.]

Read second paragraph, "The issue with the old…" Correct, the ceremonial, symbolic system could not cleanse from sin, it could only teach the reality of Jesus who can cleanse from sin. Is that how it is taught?

MONDAY

The second paragraph states, "The issue with the old covenant was that the people broke it." What are your thoughts on this? What did the people do that broke it?

What is a covenant? It is an agreement—what did the people do that broke their agreement with God?

Could it be that they broke the agreement by taking responsibility for something that was not theirs to do?

In the covenant agreement with God that saves sinners from sin? What is God's responsibility in the covenant and what is ours?

Whose responsibility is it to:

- Overcome sin?
- Live a sinless life?
- Crush the serpents head, thereby destroying him who holds the power of death that is the devil (Heb 2:14)?
- Destroy death and bring life and immortality to light (2Tim 1:10)?
- Reveal the truth about God perfectly (John 17:4, 6)?
- Destroy the devil's work (1John 3:8)?
- Be the connecting link between sinners and God?
- Reconcile all things whether in heaven or earth to God?

- Write God's law fully, completely and perfectly into the living temple of a human heart and mind?
- Heal and restore all sinners who trust God?

What is the responsibility of human sinners in the covenant?

- To trust God to do all of this, open our hearts, and humbly listen, be instructed and choose what He convicts us in our lives to do—i.e. follow and cooperate with His treatment plan for our life.

But what did the Israelites take responsibility for? For keeping the law, for living in harmony with the 10 Commandments etc.

So their failure wasn't merely in breaking rules, it was in misunderstanding the entire problem and what God would do and what they needed to do.

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "The Greek…" I like this—I agree—Jesus is the one who accomplishes God's purpose in saving the species human. He did this singly, alone, without any aide, assistance, strength, support from other humans to in some way enable Him to accomplish this. He became a real human and redeemed Adam's fall.

Jesus fulfilled God's purpose in both saving humanity from sin, but also in having humanity fulfill God's intention for our creation before human sin. God's intention were many for humanity:

- to be friends with God
- to be the pinnacle of creation
- to share in godly attributes of dominion—leadership and creation—having children
    - Some may wonder why Jesus didn't marry and have children. Because Jesus came to restore God's creation to sinlessness. Jesus as God creates and He creates sinless beings. Jesus could not as a human pro-create sinless beings because His partner would be a sinner and thus He would reveal a falsehood, that God's plan for humans was to procreate sinners. When God creates it is flawless and God's intention for Adam and Eve in Eden was to have sinless children. Jesus could not participate in that aspect of the human experience because no sinless woman existed.
- to reveal truths about God in their living out God's laws in their leadership of love and their having children

Jesus restores humanity back into unity, friendship, with God so that human beings can live in harmony with God and fulfill God's purposes for our creation.

And He simultaneously made available salvation for all other human beings who choose it.

Read third paragraph, “Christ’s death makes the institution…” I really liked the first two paragraphs we just read, but I am not as thrilled about this one. When they say “it satisfies the claims of the first covenant” are the referring to the old covenant at Sinai? But didn’t we already determine there has only been one covenant in reality, the covenant of grace, and the old covenant so-called is the Israelites is not the covenant of grace? And at Sinai the people took responsibilities to fulfill or accomplish that which was never theirs to accomplish as part of the agreement with God?

So, I don’t understand what they mean by the idea that Jesus, by fulfilling the claims of the first covenant He is able to institute the second covenant? Does that make sense to anyone?

What legal obligations did Jesus take upon Himself? They declare this, but what are these legal obligations?

What does the law of God require?

What law lens do we answer through?

Imposed law—it requires punishment, penalty, legal adjustments.

Design law—it requires restoration to the protocols for life.

So there is an aspect of fulfilling what the law requires, but it is not legal in the common meaning of that term. The legal aspects come from Satan’s lies about God’s law being imposed.

So here are some quotes from EGW—consider what she is describing that the law requires, these are just a small sampling:

> **The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character**; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, **and developed a perfect character**. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}
>
> **But the law requires that the soul itself be pure and the mind holy, that the thoughts and feelings may be in accordance with the standard of love and righteousness**.--RH, Apr 5, 1898. (2SM 211.) {2MCP 564.1}
>
> **The divine law requires us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.** Without the exercise of this love, the highest profession of faith is mere hypocrisy. . . . {A New Life NL 32.1}

> While the law is holy, the Jews could not attain righteousness by their own efforts to keep the law. The disciples of Christ must obtain righteousness of a different character from that of the Pharisees, [they pursued a legal righteousness] if they would enter the kingdom of heaven. **God offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires…** {MB 54.2}

What does God's law require? Healing, the restoration of God's living law of love into the species. So Christ is the guarantor of this perfect, sinless humanity, the One through whom God accomplished His purpose of perfecting the species human and eradicating the infection of sin.

WEDNESDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized" (Steps to Christ 62).

Why is the condition of eternal life perfect obedience to the law of God? For the same reason that the condition of temporal life harmony with the law of respiration—both laws are laws upon which life is built. To break the law of respiration results in death. To break God's eternal law, the law of love, is to break the protocols life is built upon and results in death.

What about the idea that the happiness of the entire universe would be in peril if life was granted on any condition short of perfect harmony with God's law? Why?

What is required for safety in the hereafter? That all intelligent beings love God and others more than self, that all are safe neighbors. Can this be achieved through having an angel with a flaming sword on every street corner to enforce the law? No, it is only possible when the law of love is written permanently into every heart such that every being would rather die than break God's law of love.

How will other beings in heaven, like the angels, know who of us are safe to bring to heaven?

I have heard some speculate that this is the purpose of the investigative judgment, to give angels an opportunity to review the records of their future neighbors in order to take away their anxieties and concerns about having us there.

What are your thoughts about this? Why is this not necessary, and in fact, would appeal to the legal view of things?

God is the God of reality—what is it that destroys the wicked? Sin, and when are the wicked destroyed by sin? When they are exposed to God's life-giving glory, the infinite fires of truth and love. What do the wicked experience when they are exposed to God's life-giving glory? Horrible pain and anguish—and from where does the pain and anguish they experience originate? Is the suffering being inflicted by God? Is it something coming out from God? Who else is standing in the very same fires—the righteous and do those fires cause any suffering on the righteous? No—the fires are not harmful, they are truth and love. But what does truth and love do to the wicked? It causes them to no longer be able to avoid their own sinful condition, they experience themselves in contrast to God's sinless perfection and they suffer from unremedied sin.

And what do they do then? They beg for the mountains to fall on them and hide them, they flee, they surrender their lives and no longer want to live. They self-terminate just like Judas did.

Thus, those who would be poor neighbors in heaven become self-evident as their terminal condition cannot be hidden in the presence of God's life-giving glory. So there is no need for a pre-advent record review on part of the angels in order for them to feel comfortable with those of us brought there.

The bottom green section states, "Christ has satisfied the demands of the covenant" what are those demands?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The first covenant document…" Why was the law written by God on tablets of stone? Because God's law of love was no longer written on the hearts of human beings!

And what are some of God's purposes in writing it on stone?

- A diagnostic instrument to expose sin in us
- A protective hedge for our childhood
- A promise of what we will look like when God heals us—we will then have no other gods before Him etc.
- But could it also be an object lesson—that our hearts are stony and stone cannot live or love and the legal rules along with the stony religious hearts that cherish their rules must be removed and tender hearts that love God and people must be recreated within?

> "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Eze 36:26–27 NIV84).

Read second paragraph, "But in the new covenant…" So is the issue about rule-keeping or about motive of the heart? The last paragraph states "True obedience comes from the heart as an expression of love."

And when the Holy Spirit is in the heart the motive is right (Spirit of love) and a person grows in understanding of the truth so that over time the behaviors come into greater harmony with design law, with how reality actually works and functions. So an immature person with right motives may still engage in behaviors that are not as God designed (unhealthy life practices for instance) but as they continue to love God and grow their minds gain insight and discernment and wisdom and the mature in their understanding of reality and their behaviors naturally change to live out what they now understand to be best.

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, "The closer you come to Jesus…." read first question.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Sabbath February 19 the Courthouse is NOT available. We will meet at the normal time at Bake Crafters and after class we will have a potluck and then discussion.

Building Update:

- Building inspector approved our plans and drawings without requiring an architect sign off saving us $20,000-$30,000 and months of time
- Both building inspector and fire marshal approved the renovations
- Rough in begins February 7

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 9: Jesus, The Perfect Sacrifice

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

Why Were Sacrifices Needed?

Many Christians are quite confused on this. A few years ago on Christian radio, during Easter weekend, I heard a discussion about the Old Testament animal sacrifices. Two theologians gave their explanation:

- First Theologian: Blood represents life and there has to be the punishment of death for sin, so therefore an animal had to take the punishment and give its life—its blood—so that the offeror could live. That was the substitution. What my former professor… used to call, the exchange of life… The animal dies, the person lives. And so that's the reason for the Old Testament sacrifice for atonement.

- Second Theologian: In the Old Testament, the death of an animal was required to take care of the human sin problem and now we have not the death of an animal, but of the very Son of God, who dies for us. And so his loss of blood is the thing whereby He succumbed on our behalf. (Chris Fabry Live Radio Show March 23, 2016, Moody Broadcasting: The second hour beginning at minute 12:25, guests quoted Michael Vanlaningham and Michael Rydelink).

Are these answers correct?

> The gifts and sacrifices being offered were *not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper*. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order… But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*. Hebrews 9:9,10 &10:3,4

Well what about in Old Testament times—where they required then?

> "The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats… wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." Isa 1:11,16,17
>
> "I want your constant love, *not your animal sacrifices*. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me." Hos 6:6 GNT

Can you think of examples of people who were saved in Old Testament times who did not participate in the Levitical system, and as far as we have record, didn't offer animal sacrifices?

- Naaman
- Melchezidek
- Jethro
- the widow who sheltered Elijah
- Nebuchadnezzar
- And what about Daniel and all the Jews who were captive in Babylon during the 70 years—were they offering sacrifices at the Temple? Were they still being saved?
- What about Esther and Mordecai were they saved? Were they offering sacrifices at the Temple?

So, the Bible is quite clear, animal sacrifices were never required for salvation—why? Because as Hebrews says, they could not cleanse the conscience, in other words, they could not cure the sin problem.

Then what was their purpose? Educational, object lesson, theater, metaphor, acted out illustration pointing to the reality of Jesus.

Read first three paragraphs, "Hebrews 9:15 explains…" what is the point the lesson is trying to make?

Was the covenant with Abraham and the promise to Abraham a new covenant or a new promise? No, it is the recommunication of the promise made in Eden that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

When that promise was given to Adam and Eve—which means given to the entire sinful human race for we were all in Adam and Eve—was there some ritual with animals cut in half and God walking through? No! Was there some promise made that God would kill the humans who broke their side of the bargain? No!

There was the promise that God would destroy Satan and his power and redeem Adam's failure thereby opening the way for all who choose to trust and follow God to be reclaimed from sin and restored to righteousness.

Then, why this ceremony with Abraham? Because of the mindset, understanding, and comprehension **of** Abraham.

If God came and spoke with you today, would God speak Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, or would God speak English? Why would God speak English to you when we all know that the Bible is written in either Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek? Because God, if He wants meaningful interaction with people, must speak a language that they can comprehend. So, this ceremony was communication, a language, that Abraham understood that gave Abraham a sense of commitment, certainty, closure, it was like

signing a pledge that was binding in order to give Abraham assurance and confidence that God would do what He said.

What does it say about God that God would stoop to participate in an earthly ceremony for Abraham's sake?

Read fourth paragraph, "The covenant with God gave…" Do we agree that the covenant with Abraham was the re-affirmation of the Genesis 3:15 covenant with Adam of the promised seed to bless all the peoples of the world? If that is so, then what do you make of this idea that the covenant gave Israel access to the Promised Land?

The promise to Abraham about inheriting the land is a dual fulfillment prophecy, similar to Jesus' prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem. With Jesus' prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem He speaks in terms of a local application and a global application. Jesus' prophecy concerns the termination or end of the covenant with both Abraham and Adam.

The covenant with Abraham focuses on two Promised Lands—the local application in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the Genesis 3:15 promise and brings the Messiah as a human to earth. The covenant to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan **for the purpose** of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come **SO THAT** Jesus can fulfill the covenant of Genesis 3:15 and crush the serpent's head **SO THAT** the "meek will inherit the earth"—the true Promised Land.

- The genetic descendants inherited Canaan in order to be the avenue for Jesus to come and fulfill the covenant of Genesis 3:15 so that
- The spiritual descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet

Satan tricks much of the world today into believing that the promises to Abraham's children to inherit Canaan are about the little strip of land in the Middle East. That element of the promise has been fulfilled—Jesus came and accomplished God's purpose in crushing the serpent's head. Now, what is about to happen is the global fulfillment when Jesus returns and we finally inherit the earth.

Is there evidence for what I am saying?

> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." (Ge 12 7).
>
> The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." (Ge 13:14–17 NIV84).
>
> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into

Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise**. (Ga 3:26–29).

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a **slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever**. [If we don't experience freedom from sin through Jesus then we are not part of the family of God, not part of Abraham's family.] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what **you have heard from your father**." [Jesus is saying to them that though they are genetic descendants of Abraham God doesn't see them as being children of Abraham, but children of a different father. Note, the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking understood this exactly and protested, claiming their genetic heritage.]

"Abraham is our father," they answered. [Note Jesus' response—He disallows this to be a criteria for being considered a descendant of Abraham]

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. [Those recognized by God as children of Abraham are those who have the same faith in God as Abraham did and act on that faith as Abraham did.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." [Jesus again tells them their heritage is not genetic but characterological—they have embraced another father, but they again protest, and claim a higher father than Abraham.]

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." [Genetics are irrelevant to determine whose children we are—it is character, whose methods we embrace, who we trust, whose law is written into our hearts. This is the situation in the world today—whose children are we? Whose law are we applying to our lives, what methods are we practicing? To we claim to be Jesus' children because we are Christian, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic or Adventist? Or do we trust God like Abraham and live out God's methods and laws in how we treat others?] (Jn 8:34–45).

So, the promise to Abraham, I see as two-fold, a regional local application for the genetic descendants to be the avenue for the Messiah, which ended when they rejected Jesus, and a global fulfillment of all those who have faith like Abraham—we are going to inherit the earth. This means there is no Biblical prophecy being fulfilled in anyone occupying any lands in the Middle East today.

The next fulfillment of this promise of restoring lands will be when Jesus returns the earth made new to the saved. Until then, Satan's forces will gain ever increasing control on the earth. The nation states will align and cooperate with Satanic principles and prepare the world to support Satan's impersonation of Christ. This includes the nation state of Israel—all human governments are part of Satan's kingdom—God's government is not of this world.

What about this idea, "This sprinkling implied the destiny of the party who broke the covenant."

What is wrong with this? What is the law lens that this is processed through?

Did Jesus break the covenant or did Jesus fulfill the covenant? And what was Jesus' destiny in fulfilling the covenant? Was it not to suffer and die as our substitute? But for what purpose? Not to pay a legal penalty, but as the only means to cure the sin problem.

So, the sacrifices with the sprinkling of blood, rather than saying "this is a warning that you better not break our agreement or else this is what will happen to you," it symbolizes the commitment that Jesus is coming to sacrifice Himself, to be bruised, wounded, scourged, crucified, killed to pass through the grave and come out victorious on the other side, in order to overthrow Satan, destroy sin, perfect the species human and provide remedy for all who trust Him. thoughts?

What is being taught by the sprinkling of the blood on the altar in the sacrificial ceremony?

Where did Jesus say His blood must be applied? In us, we must eat His flesh and drink His blood—what does this mean?

Is Jesus speaking of a legal process with His description of eating flesh and drinking blood, or something else?

Read fifth paragraph, "When Israel broke the covenant…"

I don't like this paragraph because it really misrepresents God, the sin problem and God's solution for it:

- Did God face a dilemma? Didn't God know this was going to be their response? Did they put God in a bind? Did God say, "Oh my, look at their response, what am I going to do know. Didn't see that one coming. I'm in a real bind now." God foreknew their entire response and already planned for it and understood what He would have to do in order to deal with their rebellion, refusal, hard heart etc.
- Did the covenant demand the death of the transgressor? No! that is an imposed legal view of things. What did demand the death of the transgressor? The broken law, because of Adam all humans have a terminal sin-condition, we are dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Without Christ the entire species will die of sin—thus the law upon which life is built demands harmony with it, and disharmony is the basis of death.
- Are God's commandments only binding because God stands behind us we a flaming sword at our throat threating to "enforce" the law by killing all who won't obey? In other words, is the

law the type of law that requires external enforcement?

- If God had refused to act after Adam sinned, do sinners experience eternal life or pain, suffering, and eternal death? Why?
- But the lesson is saying that if God doesn't act sinners won't be punished for sin and God's law will be unenforceable and things will descend into chaos—what kind of system is this? It is human, it is imperial—and it is a lie.
- If one accepts what the lesson states, then what does justice look like? Law enforcement—and what is the beast of Revelation going to do? It is going to claim to pursue justice through law enforcement.

This false legal view is the picture of God that prepares the world to accept Satan as messiah.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus' death provided…" Are forgiveness and remission the same thing? How do you define the terms? Can a person have their sins forgiven by God, but those sins remain in their hearts, minds, and characters? Those who crucified Christ for example. Then those sins are not remitted even though they are forgiven.

What does remission mean? When cancer goes into remission is it forgiven or eradicated?

The lesson says Jesus came to also cancel the penalty for sin. Did Jesus come to take away the penalty or punishment for sin or take away the sin of the world? And if Jesus takes away the sin, wouldn't sinfulness be gone, or go into remission?

Where does sin exist and occur—in record books or hearts and minds? So to take away the sin of the world means what? To removed sinfulness from hearts, minds and characters of people. And if sinfulness is eradicated, removed, taken away, from the hearts, minds and characters of people, is there any penalty or punishment for those who no longer have sin in their hearts and minds?

So to put sin into remission means what?

Then why was the shedding of blood required to put sin into remission? It was the only means to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness and restore the law of life into the species human.

What are represented by the various offerings?

- Burnt offering the entire sacrificial animal is burned up—what is taught in this theatrical enactment? That sinfulness must be destroyed, that the carnal nature must be eradicated; that lies are burned up by truth and that selfishness is burned up by love—the Holy Spirit, represented by the fire. Jesus, the Lamb of God, lived out the truth and love of God perfectly—He is the truth, the Word made flesh. Thus in the person of Jesus truth and love overcame lies, fear and selfishness.
- The peace offering—what is symbolized? In Jesus the division that sin caused in our

relationship with God was removed and humanity the species was restored to perfection and oneness with God—we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, because in Jesus humanity is restored to oneness with God.

- The purification offering or sin offering is when the sinner confesses sin on the head of the animal and the sinner cuts the throat symbolizing that sin, not God causes death, by cutting the source of life, the blood. And the blood circles, which is metaphor for the law of love. Sin severs the law of love and results in death. Jesus, our substitute, took our terminal condition upon Himself and became sin though He knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God. So the blood, represents both the life of the sinner and the life of Jesus who took the sinful condition of the sinner and overcame it. This blood is taken throughout the sanctuary representing our individual connection and faith in Jesus purifying us. The blood applied to the brazen altar represents conversion or justification, and the blood applied to the golden altar represents sanctification or maturing and overcoming through Jesus.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson states that God is the judge of His people—what does this mean? When we read about the judgments of God what does that mean?

How is God being a judge different from a human judge?

Do God's judgments function the same as the judgments of a human judge?

What is the difference?

Are God's judgments legal rulings or something else?

Do God's judgments determine guilt or innocence?

Is it God's judgment that determines whether someone is saved or lost?

If God's judgment doesn't determine guilt or innocence, doesn't determine who is saved and who is lost, what is it?

In Scripture, judgment as a judicial process of a judge determining guilt or innocence is always a function of human law. It is never an outworking of God's divine law. Moses judged the people. Solomon judged the case of whose infant son had died. Pilate judged Jesus.

God's *judgments* in Scripture are not judicial they are something else, what?

The Four Judgments

When considering the question of judgment, always ask **what law lens**.

Human law = judicial judgments of guilt or innocence

Design law = dealing with some aspect of reality

The First Judgment: Our Judgment of God

In Eden, we find the evidence of the first judgment. God created a perfect world; a sinless couple; gave them a paradise, perfect health, dominion over the entire planet; and came to them every day to fellowship. But Satan lied to them about God and what God had said was for their good, and Adam and Eve had to make a judgment: Who would they believe, who would they trust—God or the serpent?

We see this first judgment at Mount Carmel, when Elijah confronts the 450 priests of Baal and challenges the people:

If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him! (1 Kings 18:21 GNT).

The apostle Paul picks up this theme and states it explicitly in Roman 3:4:

Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when **You are judged**" (NKJV).

> I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment** has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:6, 7).

The first judgment is our judgment of God.

The Second Judgment: **God's judgments of what is therapeutically required to bring about the plan of salvation.** It is twofold—1) therapeutically intervening in history to keep open the avenue for Messiah; 2) therapeutically intervening in individual hearts and minds to apply what Messiah achieved.

Old Testament judgments were to keep open the avenue for the Messiah

- The Bible tells us that at the time of the global flood, there was only *one* righteous man left on the earth. Think about it: An entire planet of people and only one person was still loyal to God. The avenue through which the Messiah would come was almost closed. So God made a "judgment." It was not a judicial judgment. It was a judgment of what was needed to save His

precious creation. God decided—judged—that He must protect the family of the one man left loyal to Him so that the Messiah could come, lest every single human be lost. Thus, God sent the flood not as a legal punishment for sin, but as a therapeutic intervention for all humanity, for those who died before the flood (they still needed Jesus to come) and those who have lived since. And also for those who died in the flood. Giving those who drowned one last chance to repent and experience eternal life—similar to the thief on the cross. His temporal life was ending because of his sinful choices, but he found eternal life. The flood was judged to be not only necessary to keep open avenue for Messiah so humanity could be saved, but also was an opportunity for those who drowned in the flood to recognize Noah had told the truth and repent.

- We find God's "judgments" throughout history to fall into this category. God's "judgments" on Egypt were His therapeutic interventions to expose the Egyptian gods as false and to turn the hearts of the people—both Hebrew *and* Egyptian—to Him for salvation. We find God's "judgments" in the life of Jonah: When God sent him to Nineveh, and he ran away to avoid it, God sent the great fish; then after the warning was delivered and the Ninevites repented, God "judged" that destruction wasn't necessary. In other words, God's "judgment" was that the most therapeutic action was to send a message of warning, which worked. Further, God knew that Jonah suffered with certain prejudices and that this would be therapeutic for Jonah as well.

There is another aspect of God's healing, therapeutic judgment: His work in the hearts and minds of people. David understood this and prayed:

> Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23, 24 GNT).

> Malachi describes this judgment: "Suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. **"So I will come near to you for judgment"** (Malachi 3:1–5 NIV84).

> This is the "judgment" of the Great Heavenly Physician, our Creator: examining us, diagnosing what is wrong in us, and determining what is the best therapeutic intervention to bring to bear to heal and restore us. This is the judgment of our High Priest going on in heaven as He examines the people and prepares them for His return, to complete His healing of them so that when He does come, we will be like Him—for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2 NIV84). This healing, this transformation, this final work of preparation is what Malachi describes above—the cleansing of our temples, the purifying of the Levites (His people today), is all taught metaphorically in the Day of Atonement rituals. (You can read more about this incredible truth in our *Heavenly Sanctuary*

and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World pamphlet.)

The Third Judgment: the judgment that the righteous render during the thousand years after they are taken to heaven and all the evidence of history is before them.

> I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge.** And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6 NIV84).

This is also not a judicial process; it is an answering of all the questions people have about the great controversy. **The righteous are not determining guilt or innocence, who is saved or who is lost**. The righteous are assessing, discerning, and settling their minds into the truth of what transpired and why it transpired regarding how God's laws govern all reality. It is the confirmation of what sin does and how salvation occurs—and why some are saved and others are not when God loves all equally, wants all to be saved, and is all powerful.

> "Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3 NIV84).

The third judgment is not a judicial process but a review of reality, of actual history, of applying our understanding of the design laws of God and making the judgment that all who are lost are lost because that is what they prefer and that there was nothing more God could have done for them.

The Fourth Judgment: **the judgment that occurs at the end of the thousand years.** It is often called the Great White Throne Judgment.

> I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The forgiveness of our sins…." Again the authors obstruct the gospel because of their persistence in presenting these incredible truths through the imposed law lens.

- Sins are described here as a commodity, acts, deeds, something that can be transferred from one person to the next, rather than a condition of being out of harmony with God and God's design law for life. Jesus took our sin—our sinfulness—upon Himself, not our acts or deeds.
- Again forgiveness is described as something that God requires a blood sacrifice in order to do.
    - Did Jesus not have the right to forgive without dying? God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit always had the right to forgive. Jesus' death did not provide God with some right. What Jesus sinless life and selfless death did do, was provide God with an effective remedy to cure the human sin condition. Forgiveness from God was never the problem, the problem was the actual terminal sin-condition of humankind that needed remedy and only Jesus could provide that Remedy. That was a twofold solution—1) truth about God to destroy lies and win to trust, and 2) a new sinless, mature, perfected human character/nature. Jesus accomplished the revelation of truth, the destruction of the infection of fear/selfishness (carnal nature) and the development of sinless, perfect righteous human character/nature.

The lesson focuses on the second phase of the ministry of Jesus which is the pre-Advent judgment. The lesson states, "In this judgment, the records of their lives will be open for the universe to see."

Has the records of our lives, the reality of our hearts and minds, been hidden from the onlooking universe?

Doesn't the Bible say that our lives are a theater a spectacle to angels and men (1Cor 4:9)?

Do the angels in heaven say, when King David's name comes up in the pre-Advent judgment, "Oh my, David committed adultery and murdered Uriah. I had no idea! But wait, look, he also repented, wow, that was a close one, glad we found that out."

Can angels read our thoughts? And if they can, do they need an investigative judgment to investigate the thoughts that they have been reading all long?

The historic SDA view is that Satan and his evil angels cannot read our thoughts, but God has permitted the angels in heaven to read our thoughts all along—they have been "investigating" the sin problem and God's solution for it from before Adam sinned.

> **Satan has his evil angels around us; and though they cannot read men's thoughts, they closely watch their words and actions.** Satan takes advantage of the weakness and defects of character that are thus revealed, and presses his temptations where there is least power of resistance. He makes evil suggestions, and inspires worldly thoughts, knowing that he can thus bring the soul into condemnation and bondage... {GW92 417.3}

> **The adversary of souls is not <u>permitted</u> to read the thoughts of men;** but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words; he takes account of actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations to meet the cases of those who place themselves in his power... {RH, March 22, 1887 par. 5}
>
> **Did you forget that angels of God were in attendance, and that their pure eyes were reading your thoughts, the intents and purposes of the heart, and taking cognizance of every act, and delineating your true, frivolous character**? {2T 180.2}

This author takes the position that angels are either permitted or not permitted by God to read thoughts. God forbids Satan and his angels to read our thoughts, but He grants permission for His loyal angels to read our thoughts.

If this is so, if the angels in heaven can already read our thoughts, then the purpose of the investigative judgment is ***not*** to reveal things to them about us they don't already know.

You may have heard this same idea put another way, that the angels in heaven are worried who will be safe neighbors in heaven and need to investigate to ensure those brought there will be safe to live next door to.

I have heard some speculate that this is the purpose of the investigative judgment, to give angels an opportunity to review the records of their future neighbors in order to take away their anxieties and concerns about having us there.

What are your thoughts about this? Why is this not necessary, and in fact, would appeal to the legal view of things?

God is the God of reality, and what is it that destroys the wicked? Sin, and when are the wicked destroyed by sin? When they are exposed to God's life-giving glory, the infinite fires of truth and love. What do the wicked experience when they are exposed to God's life-giving glory? Horrible pain and anguish—and from where does the pain and anguish they experience originate? Is the suffering being inflicted by God? Is it something coming out from God? Who else is standing in the very same fires—the righteous and do those fires cause any suffering on the righteous? No—the fires are not harmful, they are truth and love. But what does truth and love do to the wicked? It causes them to no longer be able to avoid their own sinful condition, they experience themselves in contrast to God's sinless perfection and they suffer from unremedied sin.

And what do they do then? They beg for the mountains to fall on them and hide them, they flee, they surrender their lives and no longer want to live. They self-terminate just like Judas did.

Thus, it becomes self-evident who would have been poor neighbors in heaven but it is also self-limiting, i.e. no poor neighbors will be able to enter or live in heaven, not because God wants or keeps

them out, but they don't want to be there and keep themselves out. So there is no need for a pre-advent record review on part of the angels in order for them to feel comfortable with those of us brought there.

So what is the purpose of the pre-Advent judgment? We have a magazine on the Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World—if you haven't read it, we encourage you to do so. We will ship them free to any US postal address, or you can read it online at: https://comeandreason.com/heavenly-sanctuary/

The bottom line is that this is Christ's work to remove all traces and defects from the characters of people so that they we be enabled to stand in His life giving glory.

The Cross was where Christ saved the species human in His own humanity and procured the Remedy. The sanctuary is an illustration of how Jesus administers or applies that Remedy to individuals to save and heal them from sin, ultimately eliminating sin and purifying His universe.

What about the quote in the last paragraph from EGW which states:

> Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man… But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.

Have you ever heard this before? And if so, how was it taught to you in the past? What does this current quotation lead you to think?

Now this is quite concerning—concerning because the editors of the lesson made a conscious choice on what they quoted and what they left out. A partial quotation can make it appear the original author appear to say something she is not saying.

Let's read it in a fuller setting from the original author and see if this changes the emphasis:

> **As Satan accused Joshua** and his people, **so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the "accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the**

Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins. He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ**. **Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation**. 5T 470.1 [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

He leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it**; **therefore he presents their sins before them *to discourage them***. [Notice the dynamic here. She doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them, gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. Again, where is Christ plea directed?] He is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt**. [To whom? To themselves to discourage and dishearten so THEY GIVE UP.] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their condemnation**. [By whom? Whose is that condemns? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself**. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sin, I am righteous in my own strength. NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose and I have had many symptoms along the way. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary**. [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan of being too sinful to save are vanquished by the effectual

plea of Jesus to you!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man**. [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.'** These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] Those who rely upon Him in faith receive the comforting assurance: "**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment**." [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. His word is pledged: "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." The promise given to Joshua is made to all: "If thou wilt keep My charge, ... I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. 5T 470.2

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves**. [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and experiencing the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own**. 5T 471.1

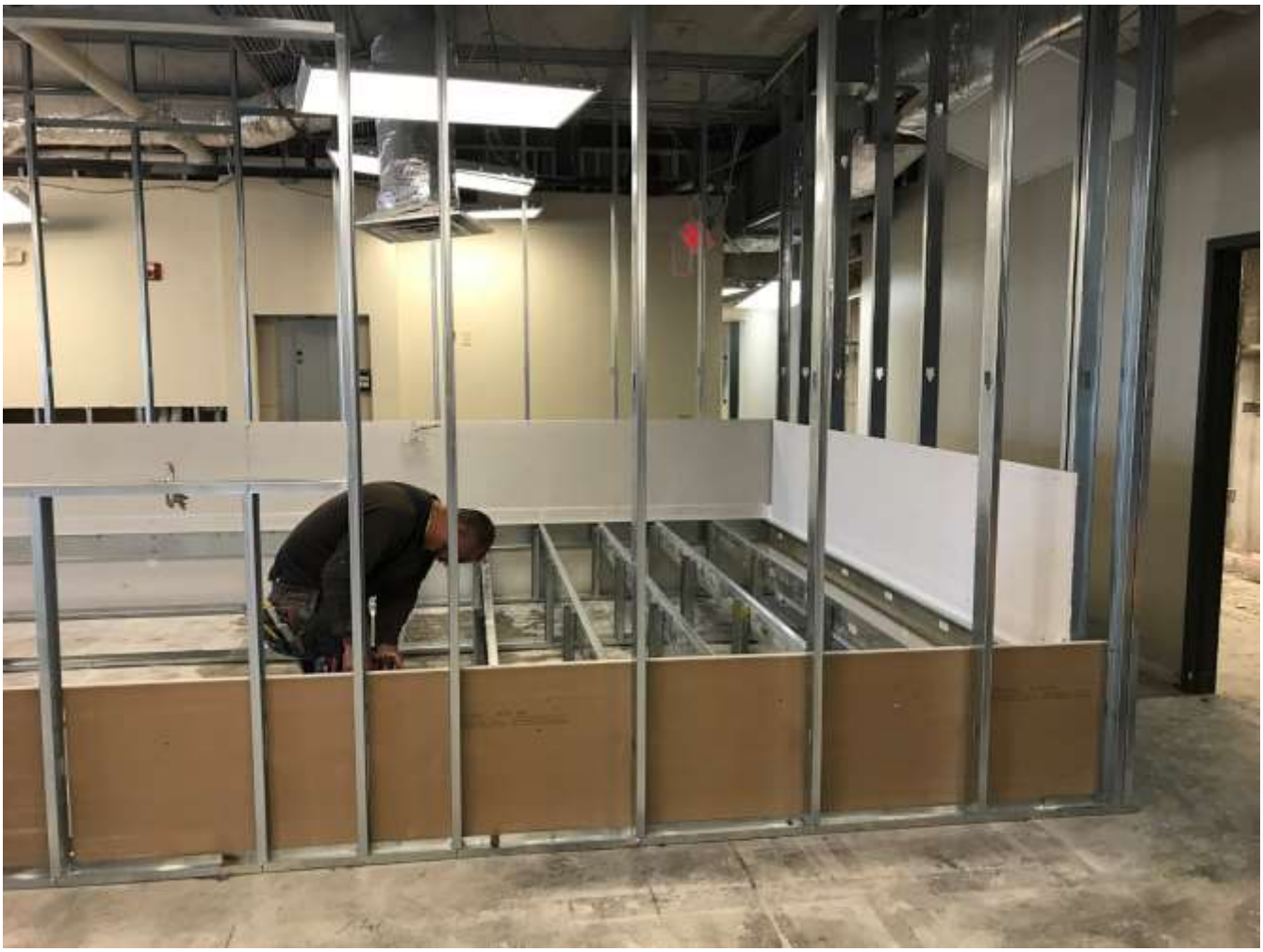
Jesus pleads before the Father, carrying out the Father's purpose to save sinners, the Holy Spirit listens to Christ and works in you and me communicating the love, grace and pleas of Christ to you and me to win us back to trust, so we will open the door to our hearts and let Him save us from fear and selfishness!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Sabbath February 19 We will meet at the normal time at Bake Crafters and after class we will have a potluck and then discuss an article in the January 2022 edition of *Southern Tidings* entitled: The Changing Landscape of Religious Liberty https://www.southerntidings.com/suc/the-changing-landscape-of-religious-liberty/

Building Update:

- Concrete cutting done
- Rough in of control room, lobby, and kitchen wall studs complete
- Construction of the control room platform in progress
- Realignment of main sewer clean out complete
- Realignment of water supply lines to kitchen in progress



PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum is now available to members.
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.
- **New Music** Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members
- If you have ideas to add to the member's section let us know

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 10: Jesus Opens the Way Through the Veil

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Before we get into Lesson 10, I wanted to follow up on a couple of points from **Lesson 9: THURSDAY**

Read first paragraph, "The forgiveness of our sins…." What do you hear? What law lens do you hear this being described through?

What does it mean when they say "Jesus carried our sins?" Does it sound like some sort of stuff, or commodity, or acts, or deeds, something that can be transferred from one person to the next? Or are they inferring that the punishment for our sins was placed upon Jesus and He took our punishment?

Do you think something different if we instead of thinking of the sin problem as bad deeds that deserve punishment, we understand we are born in sin, with a condition of being out of harmony with God and God's design law for life. Jesus took our sin—our sinfulness—upon Himself, not our acts or deeds.

Forgiveness is described as something that God cannot do unless He receives a blood sacrifice. That is paganism—all pagan religions require some offering be given to the deity in order to get the blessing from the deity.

Did Jesus not have the right to forgive without dying? God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit always had the right to forgive and in fact did forgive that is why God sent His Son. Jesus' death did not provide God with some right. What Jesus' sinless life and selfless death did do, was provide God with an effective remedy to cure the human sin condition and restore humanity to at-one-ment with God.

Forgiveness from God was never the problem, the problem was the actual terminal sin-condition of humankind that needed remedy and only Jesus could provide that Remedy. That was a twofold solution—1) the truth about God to destroy lies and win to trust, and 2) a new sinless, mature, perfected human character/nature. Jesus accomplished both the revelation of truth, and the destruction of the infection of fear/selfishness (carnal nature) and the development of sinless, perfect righteous human character/nature.

The lesson focuses on the second phase of the ministry of Jesus which is the pre-Advent judgment. The lesson states, "In this judgment, the records of their lives will be open for the universe to see."

Has the records of human lives, the reality of our hearts and minds, been hidden from the onlooking universe until 1844?

Doesn't the Bible say that our lives are a theater a spectacle to angels and men (1Cor 4:9)?

Do the angels in heaven look to each other and say, when King David's name comes up in the pre-Advent judgment, "Oh my, David committed adultery and murdered Uriah. I had no idea! But wait, look, he also repented, wow, that was a close one, glad we found that out."

Can angels read our thoughts? And if they can, do they need an investigative judgment to investigate the thoughts that they have been reading all long?

My view is that only has the innate ability to God read hearts and minds, angels do not possess this ability in themselves. If the sinless angels in heaven could read the secrets of hearts and minds, then no angel would have been deceived by Lucifer in the beginning of his rebellion.

But God **permits** or gives the ability to His loyal angels to read our hearts and minds, while He does not give this ability to Satan and his angels. We have a few miniscule examples in the Bible of God permitting humans to do this when Joseph was given the knowledge of the dream of Pharaoh. God is the revealer of secrets and can reveal our secret thoughts and motives to whomever He chooses. And I believe He has given this ability to all the loyal angels.

This view is also the historic SDA view, that is that Satan and his evil angels cannot read our thoughts, but God has permitted the loyal angels to read our thoughts all along—they have been "investigating" the sin problem and God's solution for it from before Adam sinned.

> **Satan has his evil angels around us; and though they cannot read men's thoughts, they closely watch their words and actions.**.. {GW92 417.3}
>
> **The adversary of souls is not <u>permitted</u> to read the thoughts of men;** but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words; he takes account of actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations to meet the cases of those who place themselves in his power... {RH, March 22, 1887 par. 5}
>
> **Did you forget that angels of God were in attendance, and that their pure eyes were reading your thoughts, the intents and purposes of the heart, and taking cognizance of every act, and delineating your true, frivolous character**? {2T 180.2}

If the angels in heaven can already read our thoughts, then the purpose of the investigative judgment is ***not*** to reveal things to them about us that they don't already know.

You may have heard this same idea put another way, that the angels in heaven are worried who will be safe neighbors in heaven and need to investigate to ensure those brought there will be safe to live next door to.

Why is this **not** necessary?

- God is the God of reality, and what is it that destroys the wicked? Sin
- And when are the wicked destroyed by sin? When they are exposed to God's life-giving glory,

the infinite fires of truth and love.

- What do the wicked experience when they are exposed to God's life-giving glory? Horrible pain and anguish
- And from where does the pain and anguish they experience originate? from their own terminal sin condition
- Is the suffering being inflicted by God? No!
- Who else is standing in the very same fire—the righteous and does fire cause any suffering to the righteous? No—the fire is not harmful, it is the fire of infinite truth and love.
- But what does truth and love do to the wicked? It causes them to no longer be able to avoid their own sinful condition, they experience the full force of their unremedied guilt, shame, fear that sin causes because their lies and denial doesn't work in the presence of infinite truth.
- And what do they do? They beg for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from God. They flee and ultimately they surrender their lives and no longer want to live in a universe bathed in God's life-giving glory. They self-terminate just like Judas did.

It is both **self-evident** and **self-limiting** who would have been poor neighbors in heaven. **Self-evident**—those unsafe reveal themselves by fleeing and running from God, and **self-limiting** their sin condition limits or prevents them from living in God's life-giving glory and thus they die of unremedied sin. So, no poor neighbors will be able to enter or live in heaven, not because God keeps them out, but because they don't want to be there and they keep themselves out.

There is absolutely no need for a pre-advent record review on part of the angels in order for them to feel comfortable with those of us brought there.

Then what is the purpose of the pre-Advent judgment? We have a magazine on the Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World—if you haven't read it, we encourage you to do so. We will ship them free to any US postal address, or you can read it online at: https://comeandreason.com/heavenly-sanctuary/

The bottom line is this: Christ is working to remove all traces of selfishness and defects of sin from the characters of people so that we be enabled to stand in His life-giving glory.

The Cross was where Christ saved the species human in His own humanity and procured the Remedy. The sanctuary is an illustration that teaches how Jesus administers or applies that Remedy to individuals to save and heal them from sin, ultimately eliminating sin and purifying His universe.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

LESSON 10

SABBATH

In the first paragraph the lesson references John 14:1-3 and states "Jesus ascended to prepare a place for them.

Let's read John 14:1-3:

> "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:1–3 NKJV).

Hasn't this been an encouraging promise that we all learned in childhood?

But what does it mean? Is Jesus building each of us a mansion?

Modern Bible translations don't use the word "mansions" because the Greek word translated mansions in the King James simply means "dwelling place" and in the 17th century when the King James was written the word "mansion" didn't mean a pretentious posh ornate home, but a simple dwelling place. So most modern translations say "rooms" or "dwelling places."

> From the SDA Bible Commentary: *monai* (singular *monē*) literally, "abiding places"… Our English word "mansion" is from the Latin *mansio*, in meaning almost equivalent to the Gr. *monē*. *Mansio*, as does *monē*, means "a remaining place," "a place of abode." The idea of a building of some size or pretentiousness does not attach to the Latin, nor, of course, to the Greek. That idea was a later development of the English word and the meaning should not be introduced into the present verse. Either "mansion" should be understood in its archaic sense of "a dwelling place," or "abode," or one of these meanings should be substituted in a translation of the verse. The fact that there are "many" dwelling places makes certain of sufficient room in the Father's house for all who heed the Father's invitation. (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol. 5, p. 1034).

So when Jesus said "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you…" was He saying that He went to heaven and started a massive construction project to build houses for us?

How long would it take the Creator God who speaks galaxies into existence to build some houses?

Is this passage truly about structures in heaven or is it about something else?

If the saved are to return to living in anything similar to Adam and Eve—what kind of home did He give them? Did they have buildings to dwell in?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So, could Jesus be referring to something other than what we call buildings or structures? What?

Did Jesus use the phrase, "my Father's house" anywhere else?

> Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (John 2:16 NIV84).
>
> - Here Jesus refers to the Temple as His Father's house. Does this give insight to John 14? In my Father's Heavenly Temple is room for many…

What about this text:

> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—**you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pe 2:4–5 NIV84).

What does it mean "being built into a spiritual house"? Did Jesus tell His disciples "in my Father's heavenly sanctuary there are dwelling places for many, if it wasn't so I would have told you. I am going to prepare a dwelling place for you so that we may dwell together in my Father's house?" Could this mean He was going to prepare a new dwelling for us? Where do we currently dwell?

Consider this text—is it related to the dwelling place in heaven that Jesus is preparing for us?

> Now we know that if the earthly tent **we live in** is destroyed, we have a **building from God, an eternal house in heaven**, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our **heavenly dwelling**, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed **with our heavenly dwelling**, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at **home in the body** we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be **away from the body** and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at **home in the body** or away from it. For we must all **appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:1–10 NIV84).

What does this mean? Is it talking about the investigative judgment seat of Christ? And what is this dwelling place talked about here? Is it related to John 14 about preparing a dwelling place for us? How?

Does this text help?

> The first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam came from heaven. [Who is this? Adam in Eden and Jesus the second Adam. What is the difference?] Those who belong to the earth are like the one who was made of earth; those who are of heaven are like the one who came from heaven. [What is Paul saying? Those who are earthly, selfish, are like the one made of dirt, they decay and return to dirt. But those who are reborn of Jesus are of the light, of the life, they are like the one who came from heaven, they won't decay, but have life. Note what comes next.] Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven. [What does this mean? What is the likeness of the man from earth? Is this talking about our bodies, our sinful, sick, diseased, mortal bodies? Yes, this is the context, but we will wear something new, something not like what we inherited from Adam, we will wear the likeness of Jesus—an immortal body free from the carnal drives.] What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that what is made of flesh and blood cannot share in God's Kingdom, and what is mortal cannot possess immortality. [What does this mean? Does flesh and blood mean human? No, because Jesus is still human, as is Moses, and Enoch, and Elijah and they are all in heaven. What is meant by flesh and blood is the fallen, sinful, selfish, carnal nature that we inherited from Adam. That sinful humanity cannot share in God's Kingdom because it is "enmity" to it, it is opposed to it; it is driven by fear and selfishness. It is mortal and dying of a terminal condition. Thus, we need a new humanity one that is not mortal and this is a secret truth.] Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed. For what **is mortal must be changed into what is immortal**; what will die must be changed into what cannot die. So when this takes place, and the mortal has been changed into the immortal, then the scripture will come true: "Death is destroyed; victory is complete!" (1Corinthians 15:47–54 GNB).

What makes us mortal—is it merely our physiology, is it merely the molecules that make up the body—or is it sinfulness, distrust, fear, selfishness within us?

So, in order for us to receive, possess an immortal body, for death to be swallowed up by life, what needs to happen in us? We need to have sinfulness, selfishness and all traces of rebellion erased from our hearts, minds, and characters so that we can live in heaven and receive the immortal body that Jesus has for us.

So what would Jesus need to do before coming again? Would He not need to apply to the hearts, minds, characters of all who trust Him His perfection, cleansing the Spirit Temples of people from sin and preparing them to meet Him face to face? Wouldn't He need to polish them, hone them, remove from them all defects of character and couldn't this be described as cleansing the sanctuary, or going to heaven to prepare a place for them?

What if we put this teaching of Jesus into our mix:

> Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the **house** forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son

> makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (Jn 8:34–36 NKJV). [What does it mean to be able to abide or live in the house of God? We must be freed of sin—what does that require? Do we have to be prepared? Do we have to be converted, renewed, transformed, shaped, cleansed? Is this the message of the cleansing of the sanctuary—Jesus is going to heaven to prepare a dwelling place for His followers—meaning He is going to prepare all who trust Him to be ready to dwell there, to be living stones built together into a house for the Lord? Is this the message of the investigative judgment in heaven? Remember the 23rd Psalm—we dwell in the house of the Lord forever.]

So I paraphrased 2Corinthians 5:1-10 it this way in *The Remedy NT:*

> "Now, we know that this earthly body is like a tent or hospital gown that wears out easily and leaves us exposed. And if this earthly body–which our individuality currently occupies–is destroyed, we have an eternal body that will never wear out; a heavenly dwelling place for our individuality, but not built by human hands. Meanwhile, the older we get, the more we groan, longing to be free of this deteriorating body and to be clothed in our perfect heavenly body, because when we have exchanged this mortal body for our heavenly one, we will not be found sick, dying, and exposed. For while we are in this collapsing tent, we groan with the burden of aging and slow decay. We don't want to die to be rid of this worn-out body, but we want to be translated directly into our heavenly body so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by eternal life. God's intention for us has never changed: He created us to live eternally and — as the first phase of our restoration — has given us the Spirit to heal our minds, guaranteeing our future complete re-creation. We certainly know that as long as this frail body is our home, we remain away from the Lord; but we live by trusting God with how things will turn out — not by waiting to see the future restoration. Therefore we are confident while in the mortal body, even though we prefer to be translated into our heavenly body and be at home with the Lord. Our goal is to be pleasing to him by living in harmony with his design for life — whether we are in this mortal body or our heavenly one — for we will **all appear in Christ's examining room so that each one may be accurately diagnosed and receive what their condition warrants**, whether from compliance or non-compliance with God's treatment plan" (2Corinthians 5:1-10 REM)

And I paraphrased John 14:1-3 this way:

> "Don't let fear and doubt trouble your hearts. Put your full trust in God and trust me too. In my Father's home, there is room for all who want to be there; if this were not true, I would have told you. I am going there to direct all my Father's resources who are not only preparing heaven for you, but also preparing you for heaven. And when all things are ready, I will come back and take everyone who has been brought back into unity with the principles of heaven to be there with me, so that we may all be together" (John 14:1-3 REM)

SUNDAY

The lesson points out that the various Feasts in the Old Testament had a prophetic significance—they were designed to forecast, foretell, reveal, teach the plan of salvation.

These Feasts repeated in an annual cycle and together they teach the grand overview of the plan of salvation from Adam's fall until the earth made new.

- **Passover** – as soon as man fell into sin God passed over their sins "he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished." Rom 3:25
    - Christ was the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Rev 13:8
    - Time covered by the Passover—From Adam's sin until Jesus victory at the cross
    - God gave this to the people as they were about to leave Egypt and that experience is another illustration of the same lesson. Egypt represents being captive in this sinful world. The Hebrews were captive in Egypt, all humanity is captive in sin. Those who trust Jesus, put blood on the door, symbolically saying having the life of Jesus applied to their hearts, God passes over their sins, because it isn't about legal trouble and punishment, it is about the condition of the heart. All who are reborn with new hearts, have Jesus character within, will be delivered from sin and go to the promised land—the earth made new. So the Passover isn't primarily about leaving Egypt, it is about delivering humans from the slavery of sin.

- **Unleavened bread** – immediately God began dispensing truth unmixed with error to nurture and save, but it was internalized by those in sin, represented by the bitter herbs.
    - This also represents the time from Adam's fall until Christ's victory
    - Eating the unleavened bread symbolizes the internalization of Jesus

- **Feast of First Fruits**—The first fruits of the victory over death
    - The Wave Sheaf represents Jesus who is the ultimate first fruit, who was buried and rose again in sinless perfection
    - Those who arose with him on resurrection morning to everlasting life

- **Feast of Weeks** (Pentecost) The pouring out of the Holy Spirit to apply what Christ achieved and bring forth a harvest of healed souls
    - This occurred after Christ's death on the Cross as the benefits of His achievement were dispensed into trusting humans
    - This feast symbolically spans the time from Pentecost AD 33 until the Loud Cry

- **Trumpets** – a special message for the end time
    - The Loud Cry—awake, prepare, get ready it is time to be reconciled and brought back into unity, at-one-ment with God again because Jesus is coming soon
    - Late 18th and early 19th Century – the Great Awakening in Christianity

- **Atonement** – reunification with God, oneness with God
    - The healing and restoration of Christlike character within; settling into the truth that

one cannot be moved, having our hearts and minds cleansed from fear and selfishness such that we are perfected like Job, Daniel and his three friends, John etc. people who "did not love their life so much as to shrink from death" Rev 12:11.
- The sins of the people placed upon the scapegoat symbolizing the 1000 years when Satan is left in the desolate and void earth and all the righteous place 100% of the blame for all sin, rebellion and the suffering and death it has caused upon Satan—all are 100% convinced that Satan is solely responsible for the sin problem
- From mid 19th Century until the second coming of Christ

- **Tabernacles**—After we have been restored to at-one-ment in heart, mind, character, Christ returns, recreates the earth and we *Tabernacle* with Him again in the earth made new—our Eden Garden home for eternity!

MONDAY

The lesson points out that God invited the people to come and meet Him face to face, but the people were afraid and asked for someone to be in between them and God.

Why? Because they didn't know God, their sin caused fear, which caused them to focus on self, they judged God through the lens of their own guilt, shame, how they would treat someone who wronged them and falsely believed God was angry, and wanting to punish. Thus, not knowing God, they didn't trust Him, and lived in fear of being legal trouble for rule breaking.

How did God respond to their refusal to accept His invitation? What does this say about God? Who looks good in this story?

What are the lessons for us?

Does God want us to come into a face-to-face relationship with Him?

What is in the way of that relationship for each of us today?

TUESDAY

The Need for a Veil—the lesson articulates an interesting and truthful idea, that Jesus had to veil His divine glory under human garb lest if He didn't those who He wanted to save would have been destroyed.

Does that mean that the veil in the Temple that was torn in two represents Jesus?

Was Jesus the barrier that prevented us from approaching God and did Jesus have to be removed in order for the way to God to be opened for us? Or was Jesus Himself God who came to us to bring us

back into God's presence? Was Jesus working to remove the barrier?

What was behind the veil? The Shekinah glory of God—is Jesus the one who obstructs our ability to see God more clearly or is Jesus the light that lightens all men, the One who opens the way back to God and God's glory for us?

So, what is it that does obstruct our ability to see God, to know Him, to be at-one with Him?

Is it not the lies that Satan tells that we believe about Him and our own carnal natures—i.e. fear and selfishness within us?

What must be taken out of the way for us to be reunited or at-one with God? The lies we believe and our sinfulness.

Jesus is the truth that destroys the lies and Jesus, as a human, took our sin-condition upon Himself and destroyed it at the Cross, establishing in His humanity a new humanity free from all defects caused by Adam. Thus Jesus destroyed the barrier, tore open the veil and through Jesus we can enter boldly into God's presence.

The angels on the veil represent God's ministering angels who are helping us battle against the lies of Satan and resist the temptations of our selfish nature, but they cannot fully reveal the truth about God—only Jesus could do that; and angels cannot destroy our fallen human carnal nature and establish a sinless human nature—only Jesus could do that.

What is the only part of the sanctuary/temple that God directly destroyed? The veil—and the Bible says that Jesus by Jesus death He "destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil" (Heb 2':14); and destroys the devil's work (1John 3:8); and destroys death and bring life and immortality to light (2Tim 1:10).

The veil of lies, of fear, of selfishness, of corruption of sinfulness was torn down by Jesus and a new and living way back into God's presence was opened all who trust Jesus!

What falsehood do we introduce if we say the veil represents Jesus? That God killed Jesus on the cross, thus making God out to be the source of death as inflicted punishment for sin.

WEDNESDAY

Read bottom green section, "What accusations could Satan…" When you hear about accusations by Satan, or your record of sins, or Jesus pleading in your behalf, what comes to mind? How do you understand the entire process working?

What law lens do you understand it through?

In last Thursday's lesson there was quotation from EGW which states:

> Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man… But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.

Have you ever heard this before? And if so, how was it taught to you in the past? What does this current quotation lead you to think?

Now this is quite concerning—concerning because the editors of the lesson made a conscious choice on what they quoted and what they left out. A partial quotation can make it appear the original author appear to say something she is not saying.

Let's read the original author in a fuller setting and see if this changes the emphasis:

> **As Satan accused Joshua** and his people, **so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the "accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins**. He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ**. **Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation**. 5T 470.1 [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]
>
> **He leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love**; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims

them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it**; **therefore he presents their sins before them *to discourage them***. [Notice the dynamic here. She doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them, gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. Again, where is Christ plea directed?] He is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt**. [To whom? To themselves to discourage and dishearten so THEY GIVE UP.] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their condemnation**. [By whom? Whose is that condemns? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself**. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sin, I am righteous in my own strength. NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose and I have had many symptoms along the way. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary**. [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan of being too sinful to save are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man**. [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.'** These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] Those who rely upon Him in faith receive the comforting assurance: "**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment**." [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. His word is pledged: "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall

> make peace with Me." The promise given to Joshua is made to all: "If thou wilt keep My charge, ... I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. 5T 470.2
>
> The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves**. [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and experiencing the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own**. 5T 471.1

Jesus pleads before the Father, carrying out the Father's purpose to save sinners, the Holy Spirit listens to Christ and works in you and me communicating the love, grace and pleas of Christ to you and me to win us back to trust, so we will open the door to our hearts and let Him save us from fear and selfishness!

THURSDAY

The lesson states "Jesus' ascension is not a matter of faith, but of fact. It is this historical dimension of Jesus' ascension that provides compelling force to the exhortation of Hebrews."

This is hugely important—the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus is reality, it is historical fact, it is not a matter of faith in something that is yet to happen, like the earth being made new. The historic accomplishments and achievements of Jesus which are reality are the evidences that are the foundation of our knowledge of and faith in God so that we have faith or confidence that His promises yet to be fulfilled will be fulfilled.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

New Member's Section is now open: Apply today to gain access to:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.
- Music by Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 11: Jesus, Author and Perfector of Our Faith

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text:

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

This text is contains 5 powerful truths for us.

1. God's Design Law

One of God's design laws is operational in this instruction—which one? The law of worship, by beholding we are changed. We actually become like the God we worship and admire. Thus, we are to fix our minds, hearts, affections upon Jesus.

2. Joy set before Him

What is the joy? What is the motive for His action?

What was Jesus achieving on the cross?

Was Jesus' trying to persuade His Father of something or was Jesus the living Word of God doing everything exactly as the Father would do if the Father were the one who came in human form?

Consider this quote from *That I May Know Him*:

- Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed.... In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. TMK 338.4

What was the joy? Jesus understood that sin destroys, it breaks the bonds of love and trust and

obstructs God's living giving presence from flowing into and through people. Jesus understood that He was purging, overcoming, destroying the sin infection and restoring humanity to unity with God and His joy was from:

- fulfilling His Father's will—what joy do know His Father was proud of Him, that His Father admired and loved what He was doing. That His Father would say, "Well done Son, you have revealed my character perfectly and eradicated the infection of fear and selfishness destroying humanity. My heart is bursting with affection for you!"
    - Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore **God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father** (Php 2:5–11 NIV84).
- the knowledge that His sacrifice would not only save the species in His own humanity, not only fulfill the Father's will in revealing the truth about God that secures the unfallen universe, not only because the Father was proud of Him, but because He so loved us and knew that His sacrifice would save all who trust Him and restore them to perfection and eternal life.

What kind of war was Jesus waging? How did Jesus fight it? Is there a lesson for us as we face the injustices coming upon the world today?

3. Author and Perfector of our Faith

What does it mean the author and perfector or finisher of our faith?

The Greek for Author can also be "leader," "originator," "founder," "pioneer."

What does it mean that Jesus is the originator, founder, author, leader, pioneer also the "perfecter" or "finisher" of our faith?

What do you understand faith to be? There is context here, this description of Jesus being the author and finisher of our faith comes right after the long description of faith in chapter 11.

From chapter 11 what do we understand faith to be?

- Is it believing a certain set of doctrines?
- Is it adhering to a certain creed?
- Is it doing certain rituals or ceremonies?

Or is living faith something operational between two living beings? How, what does it do? Any synonyms for faith? The best English synonym is trust—faith is our living trust relationship with God.

Saving faith is a trust agreement between the sinner and God. It is a bond of intelligent, functional understanding—loyalty, devotion, trust, and confidence in God that results in real action and real change in the sinner.

In Hebrews 11:1, the Greek word translated as "substance" is hypostasis. The first part of the word (sub) is from the Greek hypo and means low or under, as in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) or hypotension (low blood pressure). The last part of the word (stance) is from the Greek stasis and means standing. This Greek word (hypostasis) was translated into a Latin-based word (substance); the first half, sub, means low or under, as in subway or subterranean; the last half, stance, means standing.

Translated into modern English, faith is our "understanding of things hoped for." This understanding has two meanings, both of which apply to our faith: 1) an understanding *of* God, and 2) an understanding *with* God.

Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our understanding with God. Our faith relationship with God, our trust in God, requires that we know Him, and the first part of our *understanding* is to have the lies about God destroyed by the truth that Jesus revealed. Jesus is the author or originator of our faith because Jesus is the source of the truth which destroys the lies of Satan and win us back to trust.

And then in that trust relationship with God, understanding He is trustworthy, understanding we have a terminal sin condition we cannot fix or cure, we enter into a new understanding *with* God, an agreement with God, some call this a covenant with God.

This understanding *with* God is a covenant transaction—not a legal transaction. It is like the marriage covenant. When two people get married (as God designed, not as the state legally encodes), they commit to be faithful, loyal, and devoted to one another, forsaking all previous and all other potential love-interests. They commit to go to each other and work together through difficulties, to overcome obstacles together, and to not betray the best interests of the other.

We know God and trust Him with our lives, our hearts, minds, families, fortunes and futures. We trust that if we run to Him daily, with every fear, insecurity, failing, shortcoming, hurt, anxiety, distress, victory, and celebration that He will finish the work of healing our hearts and minds. He is our Healer, we are His patient. We must trust Him and follow where He leads and we trust that His Remedy will fix all that is broken in us as long as we don't break trust with Him.

Jesus establishes or authors our faith by providing all the evidence to win us to trust. And Jesus, having been tempted in all points like us yet without sin, having developed a perfect sinless human character, becomes the finisher of our faith as He reproduces Himself in us, such that "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." We die to fear and selfishness and live to love God and others more than self. This is all the work of Jesus, our work is to choose to trust Him and follow where He leads.

4. Scorning the Shame

What do you make of the idea of Jesus scorning the shame of the cross?

What does shame cause people to do?

Shame causes people to fear rejection, fear embarrassment, fear others will condemn them and not like them. Thus shame causes people to isolate, to hide their true selves, to create all kinds of psychological defenses and to avoid really being known. In other words, shame causes people to divide and separate not come into at-one-ment.

Jesus as the cross is our atonement—His actions and victory removes the dividing walls and all who experience Jesus are known and are able to be known and come into the unity of our faith, to be loved despite their history of sin and shame.

This is one of the reasons the 12 step groups are healing, in those groups people disclose themselves. "Hi, I'm Joe and I'm and alcoholic" and they are accepted as a person struggling. The alcoholism, the problem, the addiction, the bad behaviors done under the influence are not accepted, the *person* the *sinner* is accepted. And this is part of the healing that is supposed to be experienced in the church. That we confess our sins one to another, not for the purpose of legal accounting, for judicial adjustment, for forgiveness even, but for the purpose of despising or overcoming the shame inherent in sin. That having been reconciled to Christ, have been reborn with a new heart and right spirit, we are freed from the shame and no longer live in fear.

But it is important to recognize, that shame just like guilt can be appropriate or inappropriate. A person can experience both guilt and shame because they have objectively done wrong (sinned), or a person can experience guilt and shame because they believe a lie when they have not objectively done wrong. This often happens when something wrong has happened to them.

Consider the difference in the shame a woman who commits adultery experiences, with the shame a woman who has been raped experiences. One has genuine shame, due to having shamed herself in the choice to violate her own values, vows, morals, God's design etc. and the resolution necessarily requires repentance, a real heart change, and confession appropriate mature Christians who can know her and still love her and validate her heart transformation and new life of victory and loyalty in Christ.

But the woman who is raped and feels shame, has false shame because she has done no objective wrong. Her shame is based on a lie of some type that being abused by another in some way diminishes her. There is no need for her to repent or confess any wrong, yet her situation may very well require her to reveal herself to others, NOT for the purpose of being forgiven as the adulterer seeks, but for the purpose of disabusing the lie operating in her mind that she is shameful.

Understanding this reality is part of what enabled Christ to despise the shame of the Cross because He knew who He was and that the shame of the experience was actually upon those who rejected and crucified Him, and not on Him. Thus "Father forgiven them they don't know what they are doing… they think they are shaming me – but it is actually shame on them." Christ, when he was lifted up

"drew all" unto Himself, thus He knew His act was an act of supreme glory and not shame.

5. Sat down right hand of God's Throne

Does this mean He is not our High Priest ministering in the heavenly sanctuary?

Not at all—both this description sitting at the right hand of God's throne and the descriptions of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary are visual images to connote function, power, authority, ability, position, and activity.

The right hand of God is the way of saying God's Hand—He has the power, ability, authority to act with the fullness of God. This phrase is not a phrase of physical locality it is a description of divine authority.

Likewise the descriptions of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest are also not descriptions of physical locality but authority and function—Jesus has the remedy for sin and the ability and authority to apply that remedy to heal sinners and Jesus is doing that work. That is the message of the heavenly sanctuary.

Jesus saved the human race in His own person as a real human overcoming sin when He died on the cross and rose again as an immortal sinless human. In doing so He procured the remedy to sin and is in heaven administering that remedy to all who trust Him, i.e. finishing our faith. This is metaphorically taught in the sanctuary imagery.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 10:35-39:

> So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved (Hebrews 10:35-39 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

Upon what is our confidence in God based? Read Friday paragraph 2 and 3 from *Steps to Christ:*

> **God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith**. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that **appeals to our reason**; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration**.

> Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find **plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith**. SC 105.2
>
> It is impossible for finite minds **fully to comprehend** the character or the works of the Infinite One. To the keenest intellect, the most highly educated mind, that holy Being must ever remain clothed in mystery. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" Job 11:7, 8. SC 105.3

What is our faith to be based upon? Evidence, what is evidence? That which reveals truth, which makes things plane, which validates, confirms, gives confidence in something.

What are the three threads of evidence God has given us?

- Scripture
- Science/nature
- Experience

And when all three of these threads come to the same conclusion then we can have confidence in the position.

What is the evidence for the existence of God?

- Scripture
  - The declarations of Scripture—God created heaven and earth;
  - The testimony of people who encountered God
  - The testimony and historical life of Jesus
  - The prophecies written beforehand and then fulfilled
  - The design laws of God described within
- Science/nature
  - The various laws upon which life is built: love, liberty, truth, worship, exertion, laws of health etc.
  - The absolute reliability of the life-giving and health promoting aspects of harmony with God's design laws for life
  - The complexity of life—no living organism can exist by one piece of it developing without the other pieces also being operational at the same time. Thus it is impossible for life to occur on its own, it requires a Creator.
  - The second law of thermodynamics that nothing naturally organizes itself and becomes more complex, all things decay and become more random unless some intelligence puts in energy to organize it. Consider leaving your house for 20 years and coming back to see if it has been improved or decayed.
  - The reality that life never comes from non-living material, life comes from life. All those scientists who claim that life comes from non-living matter on their own have the burden to demonstrate this. Until they can reproduce this they have no evidence. Those who teach Creation have evidence of the entire world that life comes from living organisms.
  - Life requires coded information in the DNA/RNA of all living organisms and

information cannot randomly form and code itself, it requires and intelligence.

- Experience
  - Every individual experience of grace, resolution of guilt and shame and transformation of an untrustworthy exploiter into a trustworthy lover of others.
  - Our own personal relationship with God

What about the evidence for God's character?

- The fact that sin exists—if God were like Satan alleges, how would God have handled any questioning, any rebellion? Like every human dictator, with crushing power to destroy. But God has handled it with truth, love, and liberty, because what God wants is love and friendship and this can never be achieved with imposed laws and coercive force.
  - God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but **He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government**. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. DA 759.1
- The life of Jesus—who is God in human flesh and if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father

What about the trustworthiness of God's Word? What evidence is there for this?

- It is historically very accurate
- It reveals God's character through history
- Bible prophecies that have come true
- The principles or design laws that it reveals
- But most importantly the revelation of Jesus Christ

Hebrews 10 speaks about the faithful receiving the promise of God—what is the promise we are to receive?

Does God promise we will experience earthly wealth, health, and long life? What does God promise?

Consider for a moment heroes like Daniel, Job, and Paul—did these individuals receive the promise of God? Didn't Job suffer terrible losses of family, wealth and health? Didn't Daniel experience loss of freedom, being taken as a captive? Didn't Paul get imprisoned, beaten and eventually executed?

What is the promise that they received and that all the faithful will receive? Eternal life and inheritance of the earth made new! The meek shall inherit the earth!

How do we handle the difficulties of this world? How are we to face trials, tribulations, injustices as members of God's family? How are we to war against Satan's forces?

When you read stories like Joseph, Daniel, Paul, how did they wage war? How are we to wage war

today?

> Satan assailed Christ with fierce and subtle temptations; but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. **No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan**. The tempter has no power to control the will or force the soul to sin. **He can cause distress, but not defilement**. The fact that Christ conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight the battle against sin and Satan (EG White *From Here to Forever* 314).

The text in Hebrews also says, "For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay.'" What does this mean?

Has there been a delay? The lesson suggests that there is an appointed time for God to fulfill His promises, what do you think of this idea?

The Bible uses language like this, "the appointed time," "when the times are fulfilled" etc., what does it mean?

Does it mean that God appoints a time and regardless of circumstances He says "time is up, here I come ready or not"? Or, does appointed times mean that God looks through the corridors of time and knows exactly when the circumstances are right for Him to act, when the people will be ready for the action He has promise to take?

As we consider this idea of an appointed time, let's include what Peter wrote:

> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a **day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness**. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance**. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming**. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (2 Pe 3:8–13 NIV84).

This is speaking primarily of the second coming, with a non-detailed overview of the final end of sin and sinners at end of the 1000 years when the earth is made new. But the context here is the second coming of Christ, in which the wicked will die the first death and go to sleep to be raised again at the end of the 1000 years. So the fires here are the fires of combustion that melt elements and would be similar to the fires that destroyed Sodom. These are not the fires that destroy sin as described in Isaiah 33:14,15.

But, let's focus on the question of appointed times—what does appointed time mean in light of what

Peter has written?

Can we hasten the day? How?

When the gospel of the kingdom goes to the entire world then the end will come.

What is the gospel? The good news, but about what? God's kingdom—and God's kingdom is not of this world—so what is the good news to go to the world?

The truth about God's character of love, which is the foundation, source, basis of His law of love, truth, liberty upon which He created the universe to operate.

Thus the good news is that God and His government are not like human governments. No imposed rules, no imposed punishments, no external restrictions upon our freedoms, no censoring, no limits on free speech, assembly, worship. In God's kingdom we have complete and unlimited freedom because every single being there will love God and others and have internal self-control that all restraints to do evil are from themselves having God's law written upon their hearts. Each saint in heaven and the angels would rather die that sin—in fact having been transformed sin is repulsive.

MONDAY

What do you understand the purpose was of God telling Abraham to offer Isaac?

There were several purposes or reasons, but the primary one was for the healing of Abraham's character/heart/mind from sin.

What is the root element of sinfulness or the carnal nature that we are all born with and which tempts each of us?

Fear and selfishness, the me-first survival drives caused by fear.

Salvation is dying to fear and selfishness and being reborn with a new heart and right spirit so that "we do not love our lives so much as to shrink from death."

> Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it (Mt 16:24–25 NIV84).

Abraham's faith relationship with God was a growing, healing, transforming experience. It wasn't instantaneous victory over every deep root of fear and selfishness, it was a living faith relationship that required Abraham to make choices along the way. We see Abraham's faith in:

- Leaving Ur
- Fighting to recover Lot

- Allowing Lot to choose which portion he wanted and trusting God with his own future and fortune
- Trusting that he would have a son and be the father of a great nation
- But Abraham also struggled with doubts, fears, insecurities and ended up distrusting God by taking Hagar to try and fulfill the promise of God with his own ability
- We see fear and selfishness intrude when he lied about Sarah, twice, in order to protect himself
- So while Abraham trusts God, Abraham still struggled to apply that trust fully to surrender every fear, and selfish desire to God. So after God miraculously allowed Sarah to become pregnant and giver birth to Isaac, He instructed Abraham to sacrifice the child who was the fulfillment of the promise. And what would that instruction cause Abraham to arise within Abraham—not because God placed it there, but because it was always there and God wanted to draw it out and removed it—doubt, fear and selfishness. God did this so that Abraham could face His deep fears and the selfishness within and choose to trust God with what was more important to him than his own life and finally get the victory over his own fear and selfishness.

There were other purposes in addition to therapeutically intervening to solidify Abraham in trust, and those reasons include:

- Allowing Abraham to know God more fully, to gain insight into the plan of salvation and empathize with God's heart in sacrificing Jesus
- Be an object lesson of the plan of salvation
- Be an example of faithfulness to generations to come
- To demonstrate that God NEVER requires child sacrifice. Don't miss the point here. While God instructed Abraham to do this—to help Abraham overcome his doubts and fears, God actually stopped and prevented human sacrifice. So this is an example or evidence that God never accepts human sacrifice.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Moses is the second…" What do you think that Moses' life highlights defiance of the king?

The Bible not only records real people who did real historic things, but many of the stories are object lessons to teach the plan of salvation.

The story of the Hebrews in Egypt and Moses is one of this real historic events that teaches a larger reality.

- Egypt represents this world of sin
- Pharaoh represents Satan the ruler of this world of sin
- The Hebrews were slaves in Egypt
    - and we are slaves to sin
- Moses was born a slave in Egypt
    - we are born in sin conceived in iniquity

- The king of Egypt claimed the lives of the Hebrew babies
    - Satan claims the lives of all who are born in sin
- Moses parents rejected the legal claims of the king of Egypt
    - Those who know Jesus reject the legal claims of Satan to the lives of their children
- Moses parents put him in a basket on the water
    - Our parents dedicate us to God and put us in His care
- Moses sister watched over the basket
    - Families and church members watch over our growing children
- God provided opportunity for Moses to be educated by his own mother in the things of God
    - God provides opportunity for the faithful to educate their children in His truth
- God provided Moses educational opportunities in Egypt that would prepare him for his later work
    - God provides us with education in the world to prepare us for His work
- Moses had to choose at some point which kingdom He would identify and align with, Egypt or Israel
    - We have to choose whose kingdom do we align with and whose the methods, laws, and principles we practice
- Moses rejected Egypt and became the deliverer of the people, and led them through the Red Sea, metaphor of baptism, to journey to the promised land
    - We are to reject the principles of this world be immersed into the baptism of the Holy Spirit so we will enter the promised land

WEDNESDAY

What do you think of including Rahab the prostitute in the long list of faithful in Hebrews 11? Isn't it beautiful? Doesn't her inclusion speak hope to everyone of us who have histories marred by ugliness?

And what is the action that Rahab is noted for? Hiding the spies and lying to keep them hidden, why would this be noteworthy to be in the hall of faith?

Did it take faith for Rahab to do this? Did Rahab put her life on the line? Was she willing to sacrifice herself to protect others? And those she chose to protect was based upon what? Did she have some thread of insight, light, hope, and faith in the God of the Hebrews? And she chose to act on that faith and align herself with God.

We don't have a text that God said "well lied Rahab" we have a text that basically says, "Well done, you chose me!"

But Rahab would know very little of God's character, she would know very little of God's methods, principles or preferences, and thus Rahab chose as a child to follow God. And her faith resulted in actions that were meaningful, even though her comprehension was still childlike.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

This is a good example of what the Bible means when it says, “man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.”

The imposed law view, the satanic view, the legal view, is about the deeds and actions, but the healing view, the reality of God’s kingdom is always about the condition of the heart.

Here we have the case of a person whose heart was won to trust in God and chose to act on that trust in a way that she lied, she bore a false witness against her neighbors in Jericho by hiding terrorists bent on destroying all the men, women and children in that city. But she did it because her heart was right.

Who knows if she would have had the faith of Daniel and his friends if she might not have spoken the truth, been called before the city leaders, and God intervene with a miracle like the lions or the fiery furnace and the city responds like Nineveh?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Materials in Australia

Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa

Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can contact him and Order using his NEW EMAIL: southafrica@comeandreason.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 12: Receiving and Unshakable Kingdom

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28 NIV84).

What is the unshakable kingdom that we are to receive from Jesus?

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:20–21 NIV84).

Is this a different kingdom than the unshakable kingdom?
When do we receive the kingdom of God that is unshakable?

What is it that makes the kingdom unshakable?

When you think of an unshakable kingdom, do you think of the shaking times, that the world is going through the shaking right now and are we of the kingdom that cannot be shaken out of loyalty to God?

Consider this quote from Youth Instructor February 2, 1893, what do you think?

> **Make it the law of your life from which no temptation or side interest shall cause you to turn, to honor God**, [what kind of law is this? it is an expression of love and loyalty, of understanding commitment, of integrity and responsibility—it is deciding on what kind of person one will be. And why would we make honoring God the law of our life?] because he "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." As a redeemed, **free moral agent,** ransomed by an infinite price, [when you hear this expression what do you think? paying a legal debt, buying us from Satan, paying off His Father not to kill us? What about reality, paying the price necessary to free us from sin. A ransom frees one held hostage or captive. We are held captive in sin by the lies about God that keep us from trusting Him and our own carnal nature. Jesus revealed the truth to destroy the lies and developed a perfect sinless human nature that we may partake of. It was an infinite condescension or price that He paid, but it was the price our condition required to free our hearts and minds from the sin condition.] **God calls upon you to assert your liberty**, and **employ your God-given powers as a free subject of the kingdom of heaven**. [Is a free moral agent one who acts out of obligation, rule-keeping, because they are under threat and fear punishment? Or out of love, knowing they are free, not afraid that God will not retaliate against them if they sin, but they know that God grieves when they fall short

and longs to heal them, so they love God and freely choose to live as God would have them live because it is what they love to do, it makes the most sense, it is a part of who they are, the law of love and liberty written into their souls!] Be no longer under the thralldom of sin, but as a loyal subject to the King of kings, **prove your loyalty to God**. [How? By rule keeping, or by loving loyal devotion to God and to the principles of His kingdom?] Through Jesus Christ show that you are worthy of the sacred trust with which the Lord has honored you in bestowing upon you life and grace. You are to **refuse to be in subjection to the power of evil**. [What is the power of evil—lies, fear and selfishness. We don't surrender our thinking to others, we don't live selfishly, we don't live controlled by fear, we live in harmony with the principles of God's kingdom, truth, love, freedom.] As soldiers of Christ we must **deliberately and intelligently** accept his terms of salvation under every circumstance, **cherish right principles, and act upon them**. [Soldiers of Christ—what does this mean? Are we in a war? What kind? Did you read my blog for this week, Is a "Just War" Possible? We are at war and Satan works to incite fear and selfish outage in our hearts to get us to join one of his teams to fight against another one of his teams using his methods of lies, coercion, force, manipulation, some type of compelling power, which changes you when you use those methods on others. We are to use right principles, but what are right principles? Does living by right principles mean we can make rules to apply in every situation, or does the situation determine the specific action to take based on the right principles?] Divine wisdom is to be a lamp to your feet. [Is divine wisdom a list of rules, or understanding design law, God's character, reality, what the sin problem is and God's solution for it and how to live out God's design laws in every circumstance?] **Be true to yourselves, be true to your God**. [What does it mean to be true to yourself? It means we don't betray ourselves by giving into fear when we are convicted of our duty, when we have understanding of our responsibilities, we stand firm for them and don't surrender our thinking, responsibilities, or decisions to others, and don't go along for the sake of convenience, money, approval, or out of fear of rejection, or losing status or property. Have you seen many fail to be true to principle and be shaken during the COVID, especially in their willingness to use their office to compel and coerce others?] **Everything that can be shaken will be shaken**; but **rooted and grounded in the truth, you will abide with those things that cannot be shaken. The law of God is steadfast, unalterable**; for it is the expression of the character of Jehovah. [What kind of law is unshakable and unalterable? We have a message about our Creator God that is to enlighten the world! It calls people out of the mess of imperial law, imposed rules with inflicted punishments to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water. It is a message that transforms the heart, establishes God's law in the inmost being so people will not be shaken—but people have to choose! And over the last couple of years the pandemic put the world in position where people had to decide what principles they would practice in treating others. We see millions who have chosen the principles of the beast.] **Make up your mind that you will not by word or influence cast the least dishonor upon its authority**. YI February 2, 1893, par. 5

To have the religion of Christ means that you have absolutely **surrendered your all to God, and consented to the guidance of the Holy Spirit**. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit **moral power will be given you,** and not only will you have your former intrusted talents for the service of God, but **their efficiency will be greatly multiplied**. The surrender of all our

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> powers to **God greatly simplifies the problem of life**. **It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart**. Religion is as a golden cord that binds the souls of both youth and aged to Christ. Through it the willing and obedient are brought safely through dark and intricate paths to the city of God. YI February 2, 1893, par. 6

The lesson states, "Jesus is the Mediator of a new covenant, and His blood provides salvation for believers. His priestly and royal ministry in our behalf is a cause for celebration for the heavenly hosts. And finally, Hebrews 12:25-29 contains the last and climatic exhortation: God's judgment is coming. It will bring destruction to His enemies—but vindication and a kingdom to His people."

What is Jesus mediating? Is it a legal transaction, or is Jesus mediating the solution to the sin problem, wielding truth and love in such a way that it destroys lies, purges the lies from minds and cleanses hearts from fear and selfishness restoring God's design law for life back into the hearts and minds of all who trust God?

This mediation of truth and love also solidifies the loyal angels in their devotion to God and all sympathy for Satan is now gone and they have no vulnerability to any future lie about God.

What does it mean His blood provides salvation? Does it mean red corpuscles? Does it mean blood payment?

What law lens does one use?

And this is something to remember whenever anyone uses the metaphor of Jesus' blood. There are two ways it is viewed, the biblical way and the pagan way.

The biblical way is Leviticus 17:11 the life is in the blood—thus the blood represents life. This is design law. The blood of the sacrificial animal is symbolic of the life of Jesus, which was given, shed, for the purpose of destroying sin, Satan, and death, and restoring life into the species human. In other words, the blood represents the living-giving remedy of Jesus' perfect sinless life and mature human character that He developed as a human.

The pagan way is that the blood represents, not the life, but the death, dying as a sinless being to pay the death penalty to the offended god in order to purchase sinners from the hands of this punishing god by giving the punishing god a substitute death in the place of the ones he was going to take.

So, listen carefully when people talk about the blood and being saved by the blood, are they talking about the life of Jesus being given to us so that we receive a new heart, right spirit and be recreated with the life of Jesus so that "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" or are they saying that the blood represents the death of Jesus paying God the death penalty so God won't kill us.

What about the ideas of judgment as expressed here in this paragraph, that God's judgment brings destruction to His enemies—is that true? Is it the judgment of God that destroys His enemies?

What kind of judgment is being described if it is the cause of the destruction? Wouldn't it be inflicted by the judge? So God becomes the source of pain, suffering and death to those who are lost. Is that true?

No, this is the false conclusion one gets when one believes that God's law functions like human law. Then justice is God inflicting punishment.

But the Bible is very clear about both God's law and from where death for sin comes; God's law is not like human law it is the protocols that life is built upon and just as death comes to those who tie plastic bags over their heads from being out of harmony with the law of respiration, so too, "those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction"—not from God. Galatians 6:8.

But the lesson references Hebrews 12:25-29 to support their idea. Let's read it and see if the Bible says God's judgment destroys His enemies:

> See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for **our "God is a consuming fire."** (Hebrews 12:25–29 NIV84).

Does this say anything about God's judgment destroying the wicked?

What does it say? That God is a consuming fire—which means what?

The sinners in Zion are terrified;
trembling grips the godless:
"Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?
Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"

He who walks righteously
and speaks what is right,
who rejects gain from extortion
and keeps his hand from accepting bribes,
who stops his ears against plots of murder
and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil—Isaiah 33:14-15

- God speaks to Moses at the bush (Exodus 3:2-4; Acts 7:30-36)
- God came to Mt Sinai and His presence was described as a "consuming fire" did the elements melt like a nuclear explosion? (Exodus 24:17)
- Tell us that when Solomon's Temple was dedicated the Priests couldn't enter because the

brightness of God's fiery glory was too great – but did the Temple burn down? So was it heat that was keeping the priests out? (2 Chronicles 5:14 & 7:1-3)
- Lucifer used to walk among the "fiery stones" of God's presence (Ezekiel 28:14,16)
- Jesus on the mount of transfiguration still in His human body that was subject to death – His face shown like the sun and his clothes were bright white – but did His clothes burn off or did He receive 3rd degree burns? (Matthew 17:2)
- "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

What is the lie that Satan has foisted upon us? The place you don't want to go, the place you don't want to be is the place of eternal burnings and consuming fire and that place is God's very presence!

The righteous will be transformed by this life giving glory – as Moses was after 40 days with God – (Exodus 34:29-35)

But what kind of fire is this? How can fire not burn up bushes, buildings and faces and actually transform and heal the righteous but at the same time cause anguish, discomfort, pain and destruction to the wicked?

What kind of fire is this?

This is a fire that is to cleanse the earth of sin, a fire that consumes wickedness

What is sin made out of?

Lies and selfishness

Now what is it that consumes and destroys a lie?

The truth and the HS is called the Spirit of truth.

What is it that consumes and destroys selfishness?

Love and God is Love – so when God's Spirit comes it is the Spirit of Truth and Love

And at Pentecost, when the Spirit came they saw "tongues of fire" – did the house burn down or anyone get injured?

"They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." (2Thessalonians 2:10)

The beast is a system composed of people who are willing to use coercion, force, threat, intimidation i.e. composed of those settled into the selfish character – THE BEAST VIOLATES THE LAW OF LIBERTY - GOD WILL NOT

So if we want to say this is God's judgment, what kind of judgment is it? It is the judgment of reality,

diagnosing accurately what actually is the condition of each heart. God's judgment doesn't determine the outcome, it confirms the condition and the condition of each heart determines the outcome.

SUNDAY

Read Hebrews 12:22-24:

> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:22–24 NIV84).

What does this text mean?

Read first paragraph, "Hebrews affirms…" Are Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem the same?

What do you understand about the New Jerusalem? Do we have any other insights regarding it?

Let's turn to Revelation 21:1-2:

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the **Holy City, the new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband** (Revelation 21:1–2 NIV84). [Is this a different city than we just read about in Hebrews, or is the Holy City, the New Jerusalem the same as Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem? And what does it mean "prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband?" Dressed in what? Would it be righteousness, the white robes of Jesus? What would it mean about the city then, what is it, what is it built out of? Let's keep reading, but keep in mind what we studied in lesson 10 about Jesus going to heaven to prepare a place for us. Remember what we understand the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary to be, and who the bride of Christ is.]

Skip to verse 9-14:

> One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you **the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**" And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and **showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God. [What is this? What is being said? Who is the bride of Christ? Is Christ married to inanimate material, or to living beings? Then what is being described? What would the New Jerusalem have to be constructed out of if the New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ? Do we remember other Bible texts that say that we are "living stones being built together into a house for the Lord"—a dwelling place. Is Christ in heaven preparing us a dwelling place—is this related to the New Jerusalem, the city where our names are, what are

> our names? Our individualities, characters, so what is this describing?] **It shone with the glory of God**, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. [What is the glory of God, is it primarily photons, or His character of love? And what are we called to do in the first angel's message? To give glory to God! The New Jerusalem shines with the glory of God and is the bride of the Lamb, is this describing us, a people who have been prepared by Jesus, cleansed from all sin, honed and fitted for God's house, built together to be a living city of God? Or is it describing inanimate material with LED lighting—Living Eternal Divine lighting?] It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. **On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel**. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. [What does this symbolism suggest? How did the people of Israel camp around the sanctuary? Three tribes on each side and we have three gates on each side of the city. What do gates represent? Entrances into the city of God. And who are the heirs of Abraham according to the promise? Those who are in Christ and are symbolically represented as the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which are the twelve tribes. In the Bible symbolism the Levites camped between the sanctuary and the other 12 tribes, and they represented the people of God who minister to the rest of the world (12 tribes) to bring them into the sanctuary of God, to at-one-ment with God. So the symbolism is saying that the New Jerusalem is built out of people from all walks of life, all four corners of the earth, who are like Abraham having the faith that Abraham had, who are like Isaac, miraculously reborn even though they were dead in sin (like Isaac being miraculously born from a dead womb), and like Jacob they wrestle together with God to overcome their own fear and selfishness.] The wall of the city had **twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles** of the Lamb (Revelation 21:12-14 NIV84). [What is the building material of this city? The twelve tribes, the twelve apostles, and who is the chief cornerstone? Jesus—what is this city?]

To whom is Christ married, who is the bride?

> For your Maker is your husband—
> the LORD Almighty is his name—
> the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
> he is called the God of all the earth. (Isaiah 54:5 NIV84).

> Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her to make her holy, **cleansing her** by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but **I am talking about Christ and the church**. (Ephesians 5:25–32 NIV84).

Who is the bride of Christ? Then what does it mean it is the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven?

What is the shape of the New Jerusalem:

> Now the city is laid out as a square, its length and width the same. He measured the city with the measuring rod at fourteen hundred miles (its length and width and height are equal) (Revelation 21:16 NET).

It is in the shape of a cube.

And the city is made out of pure gold (vs. 18)—what else in Scripture is covered in gold and is in the shape of a cube and is the dwelling place of God?

The Most Holy Place in the Sanctuary/Temple:

Similarities between the MHP and the New Jerusalem:

Most Holy Place	New Jerusalem
Cube	Cube
Covered in Gold-Perfect	Made of Gold
Where God dwells	Where God dwells
High Priest cleanses MHP	HP cleanses the hearts of the saved
The covenant box (at-one)	The universe restored to at-one

So, prior to the coming of Christ, He receives His kingdom, which is primarily a concern for objects or people? And when a wedding occurs, what happens between the bride and groom? Does intimacy occur? Does union occur? Do the two become united in heart, devotion, loyalty, commitment, do they become one? In other words, at a wedding at-one-ment happens!!!!

Do we recognize that the marriage of the Lamb, the receiving of His kingdom (which is why type of kingdom? The kingdom of love, so it requires loving relationships in this kingdom, which is within our hearts and minds), is the same as the investigative judgment, the day of atonement?

Do we realize that the receiving of His kingdom, the wedding is Christ bringing into perfect at-one-ment all those who have put their trust in Him. In other words, the washing, the cleansing of their data-sets, their individualities, their characters as they are united to Christ like a bride to her groom, so that at the resurrection they are perfect?

Consider Revelation 3:12, describing the saved:

> **I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem**, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him **my new name**. Revelation 3:12.

What is being described here? The cleansing of character to restore the saved to God's original design for humanity, receiving the perfection of Christ as their own—being united or at-one with Christ, i.e. being married to Him.

I found this EGW quote in connection with Revelation 3:12 and found it instructive:

> Never will the human family—redeemed by the example of the Sent of God, the only begotten of the Father—understand and fully comprehend the terrible conflict waged with deceptive, alluring power and concealed, deadly hatred by Satan against our Lord when He lived upon earth. After the battle of the great day of God shall take place, when the power of rebellion is forever broken [I am breaking in the middle of a sentence to ask you what are you hearing? What law lens? What kind of battle of the great day of God? What are the weapons of God, what king of warfare? Are you thinking might and power? Or do you remember Scripture, "not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord" Zech 4:6? Do you remember EGW in many places saying that "*God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.*" DA 759? So when you hear about the battle of the great day do you immediately recognize it isn't force and might to inflict destruction?] and Christ's mediatorial work in its magnitude is represented so plainly that all of the redeemed of God's family shall, with clear comprehension, **understand the mission of His Son as the <u>mediatorial remedy</u> to make of the fallen race a repentant, humble, meek, reclaimed order of beings—then there will be seen <u>developed</u> the difference between the person that serveth God and the one that serveth** Him not. {Christ Triumphant 227}
>
> Rebellion will exist in our world until in heaven are spoken the words "It is done." **Rebellion in the church is caused by its members feeling opposed to God and to His terms of salvation**. Human beings want abundant room to express themselves and to attract attention. They do not know or understand that they are working out the plans of Satan. **If they refuse to see and to become enlightened, if they refuse to be instructed, they reject the mediatorial remedy that has been given to save the sinner—not in sin but from sin.** [Wow—saved from sin, not saved in sin. We are not declared righteous while we remain unrighteous as the penal legal theologies claim. No, we become righteous as the Bible teaches 2Cor 5:21. And in the Romans 6:16 obedience comes from the Greek *ὑπακοή [hupakoe]* –first half hypo as hypoglycemia meaning low, and akoe from which we get acoustic, and means to listen. So biblical obedience means a humble willingness to listen and be instructed, to have the errors, falsehoods, lies removed and to grow in the truth. But the wicked are lost because they did not love the truth and be saved. This author is saying the same thing, they refuse to be instructed, they won't listen to truth. They have their theologies, their rules, their systems and they must be adhered to. But we are to Come and Reason together… Those who refuse to reason, to examine evidence, to pursue the truth have closed their minds to the truth that Jesus has

> brought. It is only through the truth we are won to genuine trust in God and then transformed by the Spirit of Truth and Love. Notice the purpose of Christ was not legal, but remedial, healing, to fix the damage sin has done to His creation.] **For the express purpose of saving sinners was the remedial work of Christ planned**. {Christ Triumphant 227}

Here is another EGW quote:

> Jesus sent His angels to direct the minds of the disappointed ones to the most holy place, where **He had gone to cleanse the sanctuary** and make a special atonement for Israel. Jesus told the angels that all who found Him would understand the work which He was to perform. I saw that **while Jesus was in the most holy place He would be married to the New Jerusalem**; and after His work should be accomplished in the holiest, He would descend to the earth in kingly power and take to Himself the precious ones who had patiently waited His return. {EW 251.1}

Do you see the reality through the metaphorical language? Jesus is uniting Himself in heart, mind, character with all the saints through history who have trusted in Him, He is cleansing their names which are their individualities/data sets that are stored in heaven, in the Lamb's book of life. This unity is oneness in the most intimate way and is described as a marriage.

Again, do you see the reality through the metaphor is actual healing of the character, mind, motives to be at-one with Christ.

Those who have died trusting in Him, have their individualities stored in the heavenly records, the Lamb's book of Life, and during the IJ, the Wedding, Jesus unites Himself with them by opening their datasets, their unique stored personhoods and removes all residual defects and writes in His perfection. Thus, they are "washed in the blood" metaphor for the life of Christ, His character restored in them, or covered by the robe of righteousness.

We who are alive on earth receive the same transformation of character through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and our humble and purposeful trust in Him.

But if all of this is true, how do we understand these comments in *The Great Controversy* page 426?

> In the summer and autumn of 1844 the proclamation, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," was given. The two classes represented by the wise and foolish virgins were then developed—one class who looked with joy to the Lord's appearing, and who had been diligently preparing to meet Him; another class that, influenced by fear and acting from impulse, had been satisfied with a theory of the truth, but were destitute of the grace of God. [Note the time of this wedding, the coming Bridegroom, 1844, which is the Investigative Judgment. Recognize the wedding and the investigative judgment are the same. Throughout your life, have you had the same reaction, feeling, experience when you have thought of the wedding of the Lamb of God to His Bride and the Investigative Judgment? Why not for they are the same event? In the parable of the 10 virgins it distinguishes the two classes, what are they? One class is looking with joy while the other class s looking with fear, one class is diligently studying while the

other class is satisfied with theories of truth, but destitute of grace. What is the difference between them? One class actually has intimacy with God, they know Him, they love Him and trust Him and the thought of His return fills them with joy. The other class, they have the theory of salvation, the doctrine of the second coming, but don't actually know and love Jesus, they are not at-one, are not intimate with Him and thus the thought of His return fills them with fear, because their hearts have not been brought into at-one-ment with Christ. They rely on the legal theory of payments, rather than the unity of heart and mind. And when the crisis in the world increase they will focus on the fear. While those who have this unity with Christ will focus on being in His arms and will not be distracted from their love by the chaos in the world. They will say, "even so come Lord Jesus!"] In the parable, when the bridegroom came, "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." **The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom**. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Said the angel to John: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." "He carried me away in the spirit," says the prophet, "and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, **the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride**. [What does this mean? Are we the guests or the bride, or does the Bible describe the saved as both depending upon which parable, prophecy, or symbol is being used, so it is not either or it is both? In this particular parable the guests are not the bride, but does that mean the saints are not the bride of Christ? No, of course we are. Then what is being described here? What is the point?] Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;" He will receive the New Jerusalem, the capital of His kingdom, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," at His table in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb. GC 426.2 [There is the marriage and then there is the marriage supper, the celebration. What constitutes the "marriage"? Isn't it two hearts being united as one? And when do the saved become united or at-one or atonement with Jesus before the second coming or at the second coming? Before, it is the work going on now in heaven as Jesus directs all the agencies of heaven to not only win us to trust, conversion, but to heal and seal us settling us both intellectually and spiritually so that we cannot be moved. In other words, reproducing the character of Christ, washing the bride to prepare her for the physical presence when He comes, to restore perfect love for God and others in us and purging fear and selfishness from our characters.]

The proclamation, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," in the summer of 1844, led thousands to expect the immediate advent of the Lord. At the appointed time the **Bridegroom came, not to the earth, as the people expected, but to the Ancient of Days in heaven, to the marriage, the reception of His kingdom**. "They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut." They were **not to be present in person at the marriage**; **for it takes**

> **place in heaven, while they are upon the earth.** [Meaning—we were no present physically, we are present by faith being restored, reconciled, joined to Christ, united with Him, made at-one with Him and the Father, thus being joined with our Heavenly Bridegroom.] The followers of Christ are to "wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding." Luke 12:36. But they are to **understand His work, and to follow Him by faith** as He goes in before God. **It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage**. GC 427.1

What do you hear? How do you put it together? Do you see all of this connected to the Investigative Judgment? Do you see the connections between coming to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem and the cleansing of the sanctuary, having our names written in heaven and our characters cleansed from sin? Do you see it is all teaching the same thing?

Consider these quotes from the same author:

> **We are God's great building**. Every stroke, every stone put into the building is only a part of the whole. Every worker is himself to become just what God designs he should be in building his own life with pure, noble, upright deeds, **that at the end he may be a symmetrical structure, a fair temple, honored by God** and man. **God must be in this work**. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." **Through you He has worked, and will work to do honor to His name by trusting to you these great responsibilities**. [What is God's name? Character, and God reproduces in us His character and we carry forth the work of God which glorifies Him by living out His methods of truth, love, freedom!] "We are laborers together with God," and God would use you and me and each individual who engages in His service. Each is to stand upon his watchtower and listen attentively to that which the Spirit has to say to him, for every word and act leaves an impress not only on our characters, but upon the characters of others engaged in the work. The Lord would have you stand forth as Daniel, every phase of your character under His own ministration, that day by day you may **grow into a structure** that will stand forth, **not as a perfect whole in itself**, but connected with the work of other chosen workmen, **as a beautiful temple for the Lord**, a living witness to the value, stability, and nobility of the man who keeps his eye single to the glory of God.
>
> Your faculties are separate and distinct, yet each is dependent for its success upon the other. **So each day God works with His building, stroke upon stroke, to perfect the structure, which thus grows into a holy temple for the Lord**. One stone mislaid affects the whole building. **This figure represents human character, which is to be wrought upon, point by point. There is not to be a flaw in it, for it is the Lord's building**. Every stone must be perfectly laid, that it may endure the pressure placed upon it. God warns you and every worker to take heed how you build, **so that your building may bear the test of storm and tempest because it is riveted to the eternal Rock**. Take heed how you build. Every hour may be spent in placing the stone on the sure foundation, ready for the day of test and revelation, when we shall be seen just as we are. This warning God presents to me as essential in your case. He loves you with a love that is immeasurable. He loves your brethren in the faith, and He works with them to the same end that He works with you. **His church upon the earth is to assume divine proportions before the world, as a temple composed of living stones, every stone emitting**

light. This building is to be the light of the world, a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. It is composed of stones laid close together, stone fitting to stone, making a solid building. All the stones are not of the same form or shape. Some are large, some are small, but each has its own crevice to fill. And the value of each stone is determined by the light it reflects to the world. This is God's plan, and He would have all who profess to believe His word fill their respective places in the great, grand work for this time.

We are, dear and much-beloved brother, living amid the perils of the last days. Every mental and physical power is to be cultivated, **for all the powers are essential to make the church a building which will represent the wisdom and character of the great Designer**. We are to cultivate the talents given us by God. They are His gifts, and are to be used in their right relation to each other, so as to make a perfect whole. **God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; man makes the character**. [What does this mean? Don't we receive the free gift of the character of Christ? It is both. God gives us truth, love, talents, intelligence, ability, power to think and act, and we must choose to use those powers and abilities. When we do, when we choose to trust Jesus, choose to surrender to Him, we receive new desires, new motives, new insights, new wisdom, and then we must choose to accept those desires, truths, and act on them, when we choose to act, God gives us the power to succeed. We don't succeed or transform ourselves with our own abilities, our own wisdom, our own discoveries, our own strength, it is by choosing to trust God and apply everything that He gives, but the choice to apply it is ours and thus we develop our own character by receiving and living out the character of Christ!] The mind is the Lord's garden, and man must cultivate it earnestly in order to form a character after the divine similitude. The Lord has wrought with you, my much-respected brother, enabling you to act your part as His workman; but there are other workmen who must act their part as God's agents, His members, who help to compose the whole body. Bear in mind, all are to be united as parts of a great machine. **The Lord's church is composed of His living, working agencies who derive their power to act from the Author and Finisher of their faith. The great work resting upon God's individual workers is to be carried forward in symmetrical harmony.** *Manuscript Releases, Volume 2 [Nos. 97-161, 1958-1964].*

The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. {3MR 231.3}

Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted**

> **for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. {3MR 231.4}

So how do you understand it all? How do you put it all together?

Here is my paraphrase of Hebrews 12:22-24:

> But you have come into the reality (of which the symbols only pointed to), to Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem — the heavenly city of the living God — and you are part of that city. You have come to join millions upon millions of angels rejoicing in God's presence, into the heavenly sanctuary — the true church of Christ — whose identities are stored in heaven. You have come to God — the source and standard of righteousness for all people; to the archived individualities of righteous human beings perfectly restored into Christlikeness of character; to Jesus — the conduit and administrator of God's healing plan; and to the reality of God's true nature and character, which was much more potently revealed and disseminated when Christ died than in the symbols offered by Abel.

MONDAY

What do you understand it means to come to God the judge?

What law lens do we understand this through? If imposed human law, then we see this as judicial, we accept pagan ideas and teach a Christianized version of paganism in which the deity must be appeased, paid, propitiated, or bought with some sacrifice or offering made to the god in order to enable the god not to kill us or receive some blessing from the god. The Christian version is that God sent the sacrifice instead of us providing it, but still teaches the sacrifice was to pay God—it is still pagan. God becomes the judge overseeing legal accounts to determine who has had every act of sin paid for or not and then make a ruling of pardoned or guilty etc.

All of this is not how reality works because this false view is based on Satan's lie about God's law.

Understanding that God is Creator and His law is design law then we understand judgment as being diagnosis of what is and judging what is necessary to heal and fix what is wrong.

So, Christ in heaven is examining the souls, records, names, individualities of all who have claimed Him as their Savior to determine what is needed to be done in them to remove all sinfulness, all fear, all selfishness, all guilt, all shame and write God's law within them, cleansing them and preparing them to meet God face to face.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "In the Old Testament…" What do you understand the lesson is for us? Is it a judicial judgment, or related to all we have talked about?

What is happening in the Great Controversy right now? A shaking, people are being shaken either in or out of loyalty to God.

God is permitting the events to occur on earth right now in order to wake people up and put people into positions where they either truth Him and internalize His methods into their hearts in how they treat others, or they embrace fear and selfishness, identify with the systems of this world and embrace the laws of this world, me-first, power, control, force, punishment, legal maneuverings etc. to make themselves feel more secure.

In this time God's spokespersons are to give a message, to be in awe of God, the Creator and Builder of reality whose laws are design laws because the time in history has come for people to make a right judgment about God and for people to stop worshipping the dictator god promoted by Rome and all the other false religions in the world, the god who makes up rules and punishes rule breakers just like all tyrants do, and return to worship the Creator and Builder of all reality whose laws are the protocols for life, truth, love and liberty.

Every person on earth will choose, what law and what God they worship by choosing what methods they employ in how they govern themselves in the treatment of others.

WEDNESDAY

What is the unshakeable kingdom? What makes it unshakeable?

Can you think of any people who were part of this kingdom, who couldn't be shaken from loyalty to it and living out the living law of it?

What do you think of this from 5T page 80?

> **In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God,** and He cannot use them. [Why can't God use them? Because they are independent of Him, they rely on their own strength, abilities, and not God.] The Lord has faithful servants, who in the **shaking, testing time** will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to Baal. They have not had the light which has been shining in a concentrated blaze upon you. But, it may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure **brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed**. In the daytime we look toward heaven, but do not see stars. They are there, fixed in the firmament, but the eye cannot distinguish them. In the night we behold their genuine luster. [What a great analogy. It is when the times get tough that people's true characters are able to

be revealed.]

The time is not far distant, when the test will come to every soul....[What test? Is it a 28 fundamental beliefs quiz? Is it a test of method of baptism, or ceremony? It is a test of character, what character do we live in how we treat others, love for God and others, or love for self. Do we use the methods of God or the methods of this world?] In this time, the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy, will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.—Testimonies for the Church 5:80, 81

FRIDAY

speaks about judgment, read the lesson and then read about the four judgments in The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Materials in Australia:

Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

To Order, email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa:

Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can order by emailing him at southerAfrica@comeandreason.com

New Release:

The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 1Q In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews
Lesson 13: Let Brotherly Love Continue

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Last week in answering questions about the Russian invasion of the Ukraine I said something that could easily be misunderstood and I want to clarify and expose why it could be misunderstood. But before I do, I want to ask some questions:

- What attitude are the followers of Jesus supposed to have to the enemies of God? We are to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us and do injustice, why? What happens to us if we embrace hate, resentment, and worldly methods to retaliate and destroy our enemies? Can God heal us if we choose these methods? Do you understand the trap of Satan doing various injustices and then getting people outraged by them to choose to do justice by using his methods of inflicting punishment?
- So, what attitude should we have toward Vladimir Putin, Joe Biden, Donald Trump or any other person?
- Does having love in our hearts for every human being, including people like Putin, mean we support what they do, how they act, what policies they advance?
- Christians are to be concerned with souls—with the hearts and minds of people to bring them to truth and the love of God in order to deliver them from the power of lies, fear and selfishness. We are not to get caught up into nation building.
- All nations are Satan's—all of them. They all use his methods and all do injustice. When we get caught up into the politics of nations, we are operating inside Satan's domain and will end up using Satan's methods.
- God is permitting the events to happen that are happening for the purpose of revealing with evidence the activities of His enemy. Those who have eyes to see can discern the methods of God's enemy, the lies, the propaganda, the coercion, the compelling power, the violations of conscience, the trampling upon God given liberties all designed to destroy the image of God in people by either getting them to become mindless pawns, or angry rebels who will use the methods of God's enemy to war against those who are abusing them.
- But we are not of this world, our citizenship is heaven, and we surrender ourselves to Jesus and we grieve as we see people doing evil because we know they are destroying their own souls. And we pray the Spirit of God will work upon all receptive hearts to see the truth and not be drawn into the systems of this world.

So, last week I said something to the effect that the Russia's invasion of the Ukraine doesn't affect our lives here, or doesn't have direct effect on us in America etc. I meant military effect, of soldiers in the streets etc.

But the messaging in the media this week is a constant drumming that the war in Russia is **the cause**

of rising gas prices, and because much of the fertilizers our farmers use comes from the nitrates produced from those petroleum products, our food prices are increasing, along with everything that gets transported in our country—which is everything.

Thus, the messaging in the media and from the White House makes claims that Russia's invasion of the Ukraine is bad for the US and in order to do the morally right thing and oppose the evil empire of Russia, we must suffer financially here in America.

Have you heard this messaging?

But the question is: Is this, in fact, true? Or are we being scammed again by the lies of those who hate America and want to destroy your autonomy, the economic power of middle income America, and increase the power of the government and large corporations?

Well, let's ask some question and investigate the facts and see if we can discern the truth.

Two questions: Is the Russian invasion the cause of our increased energy and food prices? And, will no longer purchasing these products from Russia punish Russia as it is claimed it will do?

- When did our energy costs rise in this country, before or after the Russian invasion? Under the previous administration, gas prices were as low as $1.60 per gallon, they doubled BEFORE the Russian invasion why? Because the Biden administration shut down the keystone pipeline and obstructed our at-home oil and gas production and began purchasing it from Russia and other countries.
- This had the immediate impact of raising prices on Americans, driving inflation, and sending billions of dollars away from American families to Russia companies and other places. Which enriched Russia and gave them more financial resources to conduct their war.
- The amount of oil and natural gas we have available in US lands for our country to continue to consume at 2018 rates is about 2000 year's worth.
- So the increased energy prices and all other prices is NOT from the Russian invasion on Ukraine it is from the Biden's administrations choices to shut down US gas and oil production.
- When the president says that there are 9000 permits for oil and gas drilling that are not being used suggesting that his administration is not holding back US oil production, this is another misdirection intended to deceive. Yes, they have granted such permits, *to lands that don't produce oil and gas* while refusing to give the permits to the lands rich in oil and gas and refusing to open the keystone pipeline. This gives them the ability to claim that the oil companies are simply not using the permits they have been given.
- What about our not purchasing oil and gas from Russia being morally right in order to punish Russia and cut off their income stream? Well, the only problem with that is that Russia still has full and open markets for its oil and gas to China, India and Turkey, so they won't suffer one wit. Who will suffer by the Biden policies? Middle income and low income Americans—just like what happened with COVID. The super wealthy and big corporations won't suffer, it is the masses who will suffer.

This is not accidental, it is purposeful, targeted, strategic on part of the current administration because this administration aligns itself with the globalists agenda and the World Economic Forum rather than the people of the United States. These globalist have an agenda to eliminate traditional national borders and sovereignty and to institute an elite group of people who own everything and we essentially function as their serfs.

These elites don't believe in God. They don't believe in a hereafter. They don't believe we were created, but evolved, there is no moral right and wrong, only survival of the strongest. They have a vision to pro-actively through genetic and cybernetic manipulation to evolve humans to transhuman, i.e. the next stage in human evolution where we homo-sapiens became like the Neanderthals. But the discerning Bible student knows this is Satan's strategy to destroy the image of God in human beings and place his image there, to cut people off from the influence of the Holy Spirit. These globalists value the earth more than the people and view the masses of people as threat to the planet and their future and therefore must cull the population in order to save both the planet and the species. But they really mean themselves. And the USA is in the way of it because of our constitution which interferes with a few ruling elites dictating to the masses. Thus, one of their stated goals is to remove the USA as the sole superpower, to make it no more powerful than any other nation, militarily and economically. This means they must weaken the dollar, drive up inflation, destroy your savings, basically everything you have been seeing under the policies of the left. So the USA is under assault, it must be weakened. This is a multiprong attack.

COVID was part of this attack. Notice the outcome of COVID and the various governmental responses:

- Low and middle income Americans were weakened, became poorer, lost businesses, increased debt, savings decreased, while government and big corporations got stronger
- A new monitoring system to track you and monitor your body was instituted
- Religious liberty was curtailed
- Free speech was curtailed and continues to be censored, we were censored again last week
- Millions were injured and/or died because of the governmental mandates and the body count is only increasing
- And now the Russian invasion of Ukraine which completely derails the world's focus away from the abuses under COVID

Think about that—has there been various wars, crimes against humanity, ongoing essentially every decade since the end of WWII? Somalia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Venezuela, China's genocides still ongoing, etc. etc. So far is Russia's actions far beyond any of these atrocities? This is not to endorse or support in any way Russia's invasion. We have already said, all human war is unjust. We do not support what Russia is doing. The point I am making is for you to notice how much media coverage it is getting—absolute blanketing of essentially every media headline wall to wall and worldwide? Why? Because the world must be distracted from realizing how we just got Ponzi-schemed in the most diabolical way by the COVID scam.

Did you notice the timing of the invasion? Right when the evidence was breaking about the complete

fraud and harm caused by COVID. And did you notice that suddenly all the mandates were just gone without any fanfare, no one really saying we were wrong etc. We don't have time to think about that because there is a horrible evil man invading the Ukraine.

But why would Russia invade so conveniently for the needs of these globalists? Because they were baited into doing it by the current US administration.

Consider the following scenario—30 years ago Texas secedes from the United States and becomes its own independent country. And now in Texas, it is conformed that China has opened multiple bioweapons labs to produce weapons of mass destruction. What would you as an American want to do?

Well, it was confirmed this week in a senate hearing by one of Biden's officials, that the USA has multiple bioweapons labs in Ukraine and has been developing bioweapons, and they have grave concerns that Russia will get access to those biological agents. Hmmm….

There is so much more to this, the CIA involvement, the corrupt US politicians and their family members getting rich in Ukrainian companies etc. but as I wrote in my blog last week, there are no just human wars. All human nations are Satan's all lie, all do evil and we as Christians are not to get caught up in these nation wars. We are to be battling for hearts, minds and souls.

Recognize what is happening are the movements of Satan's forces, and according to Bible prophecy, which nation is the end-time nation that speaks like a dragon—is it Russia? No, it is the United States! So don't be surprised to discover the lying, manipulating, and exploiting of people and nations that the US is doing.

As more of these lies, frauds, manipulations, and outrages come to light, we, who love God, will be sorely tempted to join the forces of the political right to engage and destroy these forces on the political left. But we must resist this. God's people are not in the political left or the political right. Our message is the Jesus is coming again. We will not save this planet, it is going to be destroyed. We will not, through human invention, technology, economic strategy, might, force or any other mechanism bring in a eutopia—things are going to get worse, much worse, and our responsibility is to uplift the kingdom of God, truth, love and liberty.

Now, in preparing the lesson for today I came across this quotation from EGW, consider what is described in light of what is happening in the world today:

> The light of God has given us for the world… is not to be put under a bushel or under a bed. [What is that light? It is the light of the 3 angels, the truth about God's character of love and His methods, Him as Creator and His law as design law] The devil is far from being narrow and prescribed in his work. This is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous **errors, heresies, misconceptions, and delusions of these last days**. [Do we see increasing delusions all around us in various forms where evil is called good and good is called evil?] **Creeds and false doctrines** are popular and all pervading to leave the minds of the

world with the drinking of **the wine of Babylon**, the most deadly heresy. [What is the wine of Babylon? At is root it the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, with inflicted punishments and sin is a legal problem requiring legal solutions of various kinds. It results in authoritarianism, a few ruling elites controlling and dictating to the submissive masses. This is how every earthly government has abused the masses and the church of the Dark Ages operated. Do we want our church to operate this way?] The neglect of plainest warnings will place us on the guilty list. [Meaning what? Neglect the remedy and you remain terminal in your sin condition.] Yes, we have plenty of evidence of Satan's might. We have evidence also that the **day of work is nearly ended**. [Do you see that that Christ's return is near?] Let every power that God has entrusted to His agencies be now employed. Restrict no one's labor in any line if they are established in the truth, but let all work who will. 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 13

The **great apostasy** is working to a point, and will develop into **darkness deep as midnight**, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair. [What is the great apostacy? It is the great controversy over God's character, the lie about God's law which leads those who believe it to dominate and abuse others and results in people either becoming more like Satan who practice those methods, have their individualities destroyed if they submit to those methods, or rejecting the idea of God altogether and teaching godlessness, evolutionism, communism, socialism etc.] **This is the time to employ any system that can be devised to discover and counteract the leaven of error**. [Should we expose the lies, reveal the truth, even if it is upsetting to some, hurts some feelings?] Let there be light. There should be one hundred light bearers in our world where there is one today. **Darkness will become more dense in human minds after the truth has penetrated and been rejected.** But there are some minds where the darkness will be removed. They recognize the light. 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 14

The apostasy will exist in this night of spiritual darkness. It will be destroyed by the brightness and exceeding glory of Christ's coming. O, what a day of gladness for the righteous that will be! What a breaking up of the spell of fanaticism and delusive sentiments when Christ shall shine forth before His ancients gloriously! T**hen the system of satanic delusion, which souls have preferred to the truth** that involves a cross, will be broken up. 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 15

Satan has come down with great power to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. **The powers of deception are working upon minds in every country to gain a foothold. Satan is seeking to hedge up our way in this country**. [Hedge up our way means to restrict our liberties, to have our churches closed, to restrict visitations, to close our schools, to interfere with free assembly and association and free speech and to censor ideas that disagree with the lies of Satan. Do we see that happening today? And have you seen many in the church supporting these dark movements of Satan?] **The night of trial, the night of weeping, the night of persecution for the truth's sake, is not far distant**. [Are we entering this time, is it about to break upon us?] It is through much tribulation that **we shall stand as faithful sentinels for God**, not swerving one hair from truth and righteousness. **Famines will increase; pestilences will sweep away thousands. Dangers are all around us from the**

powers without and Satanic workings within, but the restraining power of God is now being exercised. 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 16 [The restraining power of God was being exercised in 1897, it is still being exercised, but the four winds are loosening, Satanic powers are gaining greater freedom to act. Do you recognize this?]

"Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat," **is applicable to very many souls. Yet we are not left helpless. The Lord spreads his covering hand over us, saying, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."** [Luke 22:31, 32.] 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 17 [Yes, the enemy is raging, but we have a Savior who will not leave us nor forsake us. We must keep our eyes fixed in Christ.]

The church militant is not the church triumphant. We are enjoined, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." [Ephesians 6:10-17.] 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 18

The night of trial is nearly spent. Satan is bringing in his masterly power because he knoweth that his time is short. [Are you encouraged? The trial is nearing its conclusion. But Satan is bringing his final great masterful deception to fruition. Can you discern it? **The chastisement of God is upon the world to call all who know the truth to hide in the cleft of the Rock and view the glory of God.** [What is the chastisement of God? It is God letting go His protection and allowing more of the disasters and evil to occur, so that the people who have not hardened their hearts against God can see the difference between the methods of God and the methods of Satan. God's people those who love truth, love and liberty, who do their own thinking, to present themselves to God as living sacrifices will not conform to the worldly methods of lies, coercion, control and blind submission. We will speak the truth in love, while leaving others free.] **The truth must not be muffled now. Plain statements must be made. Unvarnished truth must be spoken** in leaflets and pamphlets, and these must be scattered like the leaves of autumn. 12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 19

Read second paragraph, "Throughout the letter, brotherly love…" What does it mean to "exhort one another"?

The dictionary definition to exhort is: *to give urgent advice, recommendations, or warnings.*

But what if the advice, recommendations, warnings cause someone to feel uncomfortable? What if the exhortation identifies someone's actions as sinful, destructive, harmful and they feel condemned, or

ridiculed, or unaccepted, or they feel unloved because you exhort them for their actions rather then tell them what they are doing is equally healthy to actual objective healthy living?

Do you understand the current world culture is antagonistic to truth, to love, to God's kingdom?

The political correct movement, the idea that if someone takes offense means you were wrong and that you should never say things that upset others or that could be *heard* as rude, that causes someone to feel condemned is a grand deception of Satan to get the truth speakers of the world to collude with lies and to destroy hearts, minds and souls.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love. Satan prefers that we are both deceitful and unloving, but if he cannot get us to reject both principles of God, then he works to get us to divorce the two, to advance truth without love or love without truth.

Truth without love is seen when people use truths, facts, data to injure, harm, to expose, hurt and embarrass, and then turn around and say "I am only speaking the truth." Their concern is not in helping the other person, it is in making themselves feel good at the expense of the other person, albeit through speaking some factual truth to hurt another, or ruin another's reputation etc. This is not how those like Jesus in character operate.

Consider this instruction regarding the qualities one needs to possess in order to exhort, rebuke, correct another person:

> I have seen the great sacrifice which Jesus made to redeem man. He did not consider His own life too dear to sacrifice. Said Jesus: "Love one another, as I have loved you." **Do you feel, when a brother errs, that you could give your life to save him? If you feel thus, you can approach him and affect his heart; you are just the one to visit that brother**. But it is a lamentable fact that many who profess to be brethren, **are not willing to sacrifice any of their opinions or their judgment to save a brother. There is but little love for one another. A selfish spirit is manifested.** {1T 166.2}

What is the principle espoused here? Does the motive matter? But does having the right loving motive mean that one can get a good outcome from the other? What about Jesus' motive when dealing with the leaders of His day? Did He get the outcome He wanted? Why not?

So the first error is to advance some truth without love—but there is the error on the other side, seeking to be loving without truth, which manifests as over empathy or sentimentalism or fear of hurting someone's feeling. The false idea that love is never uncomfortable or interventions of love don't cause pain. This is based on approaching life through feelings rather than reality. Failing to understand the actual situation and what is needed to remedy it.

Here is a truth that many fail to understand: **Once there is brokenness there is no pain-free option.**

The PC movement fails to understand this. Love seeks to save, to heal, to restore, and genuine, real

loving interventions will cause people to feel pain of various kinds. Of course we seek as best we can to minimize the discomfort, but there will still be pain, discomfort when healing brokenness.

Set a broken bone and the recovery process will involve pain.

Set a sin right and there will be the pain of disappointment in self, embarrassment, hurt pride, guilt, shame—Jesus confronted the leaders of His day multiple times in love exposing their hard hearts, their pride, their greed and selfishness and this offended them.

> Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"
> He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:12-14 NIV84).

Should Jesus have changed what He said because of fear others would get offended?

We must have love in our hearts for people, but we must also speak the truth.

The wise rejoice when truth is presented, the wicked seek to destroy the truth and the truth speakers:

- Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 9:9, 10 NIV84).
- Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you (Proverbs 9:7, 8 NIV84).

Does this mean we don't speak the truth? No, it means we preach the truth personally to those who are willing to hear, and we present the truth in public forums, on our website, lectures, seminars, books, classes, but we don't go out into the community hunting for people who have no interest in the truth to correct them.

Jesus said, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces" (Matthew 7:6 NKJV).

So the exhortation of Hebrews is to our brothers and sisters in Christ, those who are wise enough to long for correction, instruction, rebuke, training and who want to grow in godliness.

We do stand up to the false methods, principles, lies of the world, but don't go to individuals to correct them—we live just like Jesus. He preached the truth, exposed the lies of the false systems of belief that were being employed, and when they came to Him and asked Him questions, then He answered them, but He didn't go to those false teachers in order to correct them.

SUNDAY

The lesson is about ministering, supporting, caring for those who are imprisoned, incarcerated.

What does this mean?

Do those incarcerated for preaching the gospel need the same type of support and ministry as those incarcerated for murder, rape, drug trafficking or theft?

Can any imprisoned person benefit from Christian ministry? Absolutely, but do all incarcerated people need the same ministry? Why not?

Is there a lesson for us in dealing with people not in prison, perhaps in the church, community, or family?

Do the circumstances of the individual have any bearing upon what is the most loving action to take when dealing with others?

Does this give us any insight into God's actions in the Old Testament?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Paul warns the readers…" I like how they worded this—the reason they gave—"because they are two grave threats to brotherly love." They didn't say because it breaks a rule, or gets into legal trouble with God, or that God will be required to punish etc. They got this quite right, sin breaks God's design laws for life, and hardens the heart of the sinner. Sin increases fear, guilt, shame, selfishness and will divide all human relationships.

Adam and Eve in Eden were divided immediately after sin, Adam's fear, guilt, shame, and selfishness caused him to blame his wife.

Only in Christ, where we die to the old fear-ridden, selfish, guilt-ridden, shame-filled life and live a new life of holiness, righteousness, honesty, integrity and love do relationships heal and we experience unity, friendship, trust and the true bonds of brotherhood.

Do the motives for avoiding sin matters? If we avoid acts of sin for fear of getting caught and getting punished but in our heart we would like to commit the sin, what happens in us? We only become more rebellious, jealous, petty, frustrated and untrustworthy and will become discontented gossips, meddlers and legalists seeking to monitor and control other people's lives.

But if we avoid acts of sin because we love God, love others love His methods and it make sense as the best way to do things, what happens to us? We mature and experience peace and contentment and become peacemakers in our families and communities.

What do you think about the phrases “unwarranted divorces”? What would be a warranted divorce?

Does God hate divorce?

Did God, through Moses, give them terms and instructions on how and why to divorce? And did Jesus explain why God did this? Why?

So an analogy, doctors hate to amputate limbs, but do doctors have specific criteria in which amputating limbs is not only authorized, but recommended? Why? Because of gangrene—which occurs when the circulation is compromised, blood doesn’t flow. The life is in the blood, and this can occur through closing or hardening of the arteries. This is a great metaphor for sin. Sin harden the heart and when love no longer flows then characters, souls, minds, harden or turn gangrene. This is said in biblical language of hard hearts or stiff necks, or stony hearts. A person is married to such a gangrenous and destructive spouse, whose heart is hard and cannot be restored to love as Christ loves, then in some circumstances the action that love must take in order to reduce the decay, the damage, and create opportunity for healing is to severe the gangrenous appendage which is known as divorce—cutting away that which is dead.

So, when is divorce the most healthy and loving action to take? When hearts are hard and love cannot be restored into the inmost being and to maintain the marriage destroys souls and unfits the partners for usefulness in God’s cause.

What do you think about the idea of the double standard on sexual ethics throughout much of human history—the idea that it has been permissible for men could cheat but women had to remain chaste?

What law lens do you view this through?

If through the law and standards of this world—it is unfair, unjust to hold women to a standard of sexual chastity while men are permitted to cheat.

And what has modern, western society done, recognizing this unfair double-standard? Has western society sought to apply the principle of God, calling for men to become chaste, to become responsible, for sexual purity, or has western society applied the methods and principles of Satan and advanced a so-called sexual revolution in which it is taught that women should have no different standard of sexual purity than men, that women should be just as free as men to have as many sexual partners as they want and chastity is an antiquated concept from the Dark Ages to control and subjugate women.

And has much of western society accepted this worldly line of thinking? And what has been the result? Is the world become more like Jesus? Are families getting stronger?

But what if we view this through God’s design law. What happens to any person, male or female, who is sexually promiscuous? Does such activity have an impact upon their hearts, minds, bodies, and characters? Yes, the sinner is changed, harmed, damaged, injured by every act of sin.

From a godly perspective, who is in a better position, the man who many sexual partners and cheats on his wife, or the woman who remains chaste until marriage and rather than cheating, divorces the disloyal spouse? While the wife can be heartbroken, emotionally hurt, experience betrayal from her cheating husband etc. Her soul remains pure, her character undamaged, her conscience remains clear. But what happens if she decides to be equal to her cheating spouse and also engages in promiscuous behavior?

The modern western thinking is not a movement of moral purity, it is a movement of equality built on earthly values and earthly principles and results in the debasing of women, not the redemption of any corrupt and untrustworthy man.

The godly approach is to love God first and seek to live by the standards of God's kingdom and then seek to bring those principles to bear in all spheres and avenues of life, so godly feminists stand for the purity of God in governing their own bodies, not subjecting themselves to the abuse and mistreatment of others, including abuse and domination from ungodly and unchristlike husbands, but they don't accept the morally depraved standards of the world and seek equality by becoming as untrustworthy and immoral as a cheating husband.

TUESDAY

> "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Is the Bible establishing a system of authoritarian rule like human governments in which the members are to submit to the rulings of those above them? Did God handled Satan's rebellion by using authority over his angels and ordering them to obey and submit?

What do we do with Acts 5:29?

> Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29 NIV84).

Should the apostles have submitted to the Jewish leaders? Why not?

What about the Reformers, should they have obeyed and submitted to the Roman Catholic church leaders? Why or why not?

What about in our church today? What about if the General Conference votes something, does that mean the member is to surrender their thinking and individuality to the GC? Or should the member still think for themselves and study and follow the truth humbly where the truth leads.

Consider these quotations from Ellen White and ask yourself, was she not following the Bible to obey and submit to the leaders of the church, and if what she wrote was true then, what about now?

- "The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst." (Ms 156, 1898 – Notebook Leaflets from Elms haven Library, Vol.1, Need of Self- Sacrificing Effort, p. 99)

- "I saw that the testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the (SDA) church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will obey it, and be purified." {CET 176.2}

- 1898 "It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God." - Manuscript Releases 17, p. 216, 1898; Last Day Events, p. 50.3 1901

- 1901 "It is working upon wrong principles that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the Voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought that it was almost blasphemy....We have reached the time when the work cannot advance while wrong principles are cherished." (Manuscript 37, 1901)

- 1902 Ellen White writes to her sons Edson and Willie, "I have but very little confidence that the Lord is giving these men in positions of responsibility, spiritual eyesight and heavenly discernment. I am thrown into perplexity over their course; and I desire now to attend to my special work, to have no part in any of their councils, and to attend no camp meetings, nigh or afar off. My mind shall not be dragged into confusion by the tendency they manifest to work directly contrary to the light that God has given me. I am done. I will preserve my God-given intelligence. My voice has been heard in the different conferences, and at camp meetings. I must now make a change... I shall therefore leave, leave them to receive word from the Bible... This is the light given me and I shall not depart from it." (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 4, 5)

- 1904 "Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe." (2SM 58)

- The apostasy will "develop into darkness deep as midnight, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair," and will increase in strength until the coming of Jesus. (Ellen White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, p. 185.1)

There is one key factor that is assumed by the author of Hebrews that is often missed by those who read it. I have overtly stated it in the Remedy:

> "Humbly follow **the Christlike leadership of those in authority**. They work to protect you from danger and assist you in growth, and they take their responsibilities seriously. Listen to

> them and cooperate with them eagerly, so their work will be filled with success and joy; and don't burden them, for burdening them will only undermine their ability to help you" (Hebrews 13:17 REM).

They key is Christlikeness of leadership, the Christlike don't rule over, but lead like Jesus, truth presented in love, leaving free for every person to be fully persuaded in their own mind.

The last paragraph states, "The combination of care and faithfulness from the leaders and obedience or trust from the members will result in joy."

Thoughts about this?

It is only safe to trust the trustworthy—to trust the untrustworthy is harmful and destructive.

And trustworthiness requires three elements:

- The person loves you more than self
- The person is mature—have self governance—a 5 y/o child may love their parent but they still cannot be trusted to take the parent's paycheck to the bank or with giving certain information. Many in the church love others, but are immature, and don't have good self-control, and thus cannot be trusted with positions of responsibility or with certain information.
- The person must have wisdom, which means they must understand reality, God's design laws, character, methods, the problem of what sin actually is and God's solution for it. A person may love you, may have good self-control, but be unwise because they accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, and sin is rule breaking and righteousness is rule keeping and therefore they advise a woman who is being beaten by her husband to submit to such treatment.

So we can only trust those who are trustworthy—**and then we only trust them with what is appropriate to trust them with.**

If we have a person who loves us more than self, is mature, is wise, do we trust them with our thinking, with our decision-making, with our choices? Or if we are to grow, develop, mature ourselves, must we think for ourselves, choose for ourselves, learn for ourselves, act for ourselves? Thus we still cannot trust another with the choices we make, we must be fully persuaded in our own minds as to the actions we take.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson references Hebrews 13:9 tells us to beware of all kinds of diverse and strange teachings. But how can you determine what is diverse and strange?

When Jesus came and said, "unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you can have no part with me" might the leaders have alleged that He was teaching what is diverse and strange?

When Martin Luther came along and rejected indulgences, rejected purgatory, rejected the supremacy of tradition over Scripture, might the leadership of his church claim that his views were diverse and strange teachings?

My point, isn't anything that challenges tradition, orthodoxy, long held views often considered strange and diverse?

So, how can we tell what is strange and diverse?

The integrative evidenced-based approach—our teachings must be grounded in reality, a harmonized view of the entire inspired record, with God's revelations in nature and real-life experience.

It is when we pick a little here and a little there from the various evidentiary threads that we end up in confusion and can't discern right from wrong.

We need rock solid foundations that never waiver and never change, and those are God's design laws. When we understand them then we can utilize them as testing tools to differentiate strange and diverse ideas from rational and reasonable ones.

Read second paragraph, "First, Paul does…" Is clean and unclean referring to sanitation or ceremony, to laws of health or rituals?

To the degree they deal with laws of health, actual sanitation they are still binding, to the degree they deal with ritual and ceremony they are not.

God wrapped up some of the laws of health and sanitation principles into the ceremonies to help protect the people from diseases. Those disease protecting elements still apply today because the laws of health still apply. But the rituals don't apply nor do any ceremonial distinctions, particularly regarding to acceptance with God and issues of sin.

So, washing hands, cleansing utensils that touch dead animals or have blood on them are still valid and in fact regulated by the health department, i.e. codified by the state rather than the church for the same basic reasons. But the methods of washing, using an autoclave on utensils instead of washing by hand or through a particular ritual is irrelevant.

The lesson points out that the problem was partaking of foods in a magical or superstitious way such that one believed the foods either blessed in some spiritual way, had magical properties, sin cleansing properties, or condemned, cursed, gave gods power over them. Either way, such foods and eating should be avoided.

What about communion—can people participate in communion in such a way that it becomes superstitious rather than sanctifying?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The place outside the camp…" What do you think of this idea that anything impure was cast outside the camp because God was "unwilling to see anything unclean"?

If this is so, what do you make of David's prayer:

> Search me, O God, and know my heart;
> Try me, and know my anxieties;
> And see if there is any wicked way in me,
> And lead me in the way everlasting (Ps 139:23–24 NKJV).

Was David asking God to look upon a clean or unclean heart? Was David asking God to look where God is unwilling to look?

Let's read the two texts cited for this idea and see what they are saying:

> The LORD said to Moses, "Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has an infectious skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body. Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, **where I dwell among them**" (Nu 5:1–3 NIV84).

> Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that **he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you** (Dt 23:12–14 NIV84).

So what do you hear? First and foremost it is about sanitation, about health, about limiting disease, not sin. But it is couched in a context of religious obedience because we are integrated beings and we cannot fulfill God's purposes to the fullest if we are sick. It is through our physical bodies that we live and breathe and exist and have life. So, we present ourselves to God as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to the Lord this is an act of spiritual worship.

So, God gives instructions on keeping the environment healthy, limit spread of diseases so people can be physically healthy to grow in godliness and serve Him.

But what about the defiling of the camp where God dwells. This isn't just about physical health, it also teaches spiritual realities. God doesn't want to dwell in buildings, He wants to dwell in hearts and minds. Thus, if we defile the city with refuse, we get sick and can't function. Likewise, if we defile our spirit temples with fear, selfishness, gluttony, greed, pornography, sexual promiscuity, etc. we corrupt the our hearts and minds, the place where God wants to dwell, and drive Him out of our hearts.

The idea of God not seeing, does this say that God cannot look upon, that God is unwilling to see, or is it saying that God respects your choices, and if you choose to do these things God will see it and God will respect it and God will leave you to it. So don't do these things so God won't see them and God will in fact see the opposite and see that you love and respect Him and He will draw closer to you.

But there is a lesson here. Jesus was rejected by the Jews and was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, outside the camp. What is the lesson?

You will not find God inside Judaism today—that system is a dead and corrupt system of legalism that rejects Jesus as Messiah. Jesus is outside their system, outside their theology, and the nation of Israel is not the fulfillment of God's end-time people to evangelize the world, because Jesus is not in their camp.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Materials in Australia:

Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

To order, email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa:

Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa. To order, email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 1
The Creation

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

In the third paragraph the lesson reads:

> "The English word *Genesis* is derived from the Greek *genesis*, which means "beginning," which itself is derived from the Hebrew… "in the beginning"—the first word of the book (hence, the first word of the entire Bible!). Genesis gives us the foundation, base, upon which all the following Scriptures rest. Because it is first, and so foundational to all that comes after, Genesis is probably the most quoted or referred to book in the rest of Scripture."

Many of the reasons they cited is here are the reasons I went ahead and paraphrased Genesis along with the New Testament and Psalms. This book is foundational to understanding reality in so many ways.

However, there is one idea here that isn't quite as tightly connected and thus I want to explore it.

What are your thoughts about genesis being the first word of the entire Bible and *because* it is first it is foundational?

The way our Bibles are arranged Genesis is certainly the first book and the Hebrew "in the beginning" is the first word, but does that mean that genesis is the first word of Scripture that was written?

Most scholars believe Genesis is the second book of the Bible written, the first being Job.

Now consider, if Job were placed before Genesis and it set the stage for reading the rest of Scripture, would there be a different lens, a change in landscape or emphasis for which we understand the Creation account?

What is the opening scene in Job? A conflict in heaven—does it make a difference if we understand the Bible through the lens of the Great Controversy? And what was the controversy over? In Job 42:7, God clarifies, that what Job has said about God what is right. The issue in the war is what is revealed throughout all of Scripture the goodness, righteousness, and trustworthiness of God which was brought into question by Satan the liar.

Ellen White got this right. The first words in the Conflict of the Ages series, in the book *Patriarchs*

and Prophets are:

> "**God is love**." 1 John 4:16. **His nature, His law, is love**. It ever has been; it ever will be. "The high and lofty One that inhabits eternity," whose "ways are everlasting," changes not. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Isaiah 57:15; Habakkuk 3:6; James 1:17.
>
> Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings…
>
> **The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven** to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, **is also a demonstration of God's unchanging love**.
>
> **The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate**—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." John 1:1, 2… (Patriarchs and Prophets 33-34).

This setting of the Great Controversy over God's character, law, methods is the lens one must have to discern rightly the rest of Scripture and this is the setting we get when we remember that Job is the first words of Scripture written.

Yes, it is true that Job as a human being lived after the Creation account in Genesis, but the book of Job was written before the Genesis account. This is because the Great Controversy over God's character, methods, law and government began before the Creation account of Genesis and is the central issue in the war.

Let's jump to **WEDNESDAY**

With the Great Controversy over God's character and law in mind, let's consider the creation of humankind: was there some purpose beyond simply creating more living beings?

Did God have a purpose for humans in the middle of this heavenly war over God's trustworthiness?

If we had Job in mind before reading creation account, we would be aware of the conflict in heaven over God's character and law, and this might give us insight into the purpose of this unique creation.

Let's consider some insight from EGW the first is from *Review and Herald* April 14, 1896:

> The agencies of Satan are at work to keep the minds of men engrossed with the things of this life, in order that he may work counter to the mission and work of Christ. [Is that just entertainment and routines responsibilities like work, or is it also politics, social justice through government, and wars?] Of Satan, Christ declares he "abode not in the truth." **Once Satan was**

in co-partnership with God, Jesus Christ, and the holy angels. [What is co-partnership? Agreement, cooperation, harmony, like-minded, working upon the same principles and toward the same goals.] He was highly exalted in heaven, and was radiant in light and glory that came to him from the Father and the Son; but he became disloyal, and lost his high and holy position as covering cherub. He became the antagonist of God, an apostate, and was excluded from heaven. **He established his empire, and planted the standard of rebellion against the law of Jehovah**. [How? By claiming that God's law is imposed and that angels were so holy they had no need for law and that if one breaks the law, God really doesn't give freedom, He kills, He punishes, He inflicts death.] He invited all the powers of evil to rally about his standard, in order to form a desperate companionship of evil to league against the God of heaven. He worked perseveringly and determinedly to perpetuate his rebellion, and to cause men to turn from Bible truth, and to stand under his banner. **As soon as the Lord through Jesus Christ created our world, and placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, Satan announced his purpose to conform to his own nature the father and mother of all humanity, and to unite them with his own ranks of rebellion**. [What is Satan's purpose? To take human beings, created in the image of God to be temples where God dwells, living beings who operate upon the living law of love and replace God's methods, principles, character and law with his own evil methods, principles and character and the law of sin and death. Satan wants to dwell where God is supposed to dwell.] **He was determined to efface the image of God from the human posterity, and to trace his own image upon the soul in place of the divine image**. **He adopted methods of deception by which to accomplish his purpose**. [He deceives people into believing what they are doing is right when they are doing wrong. He does this in a variety of ways, one is to get people to pursue justice by practicing his methods, another is twisting reality so that people believe good is evil and evil is good—such as it is good or acceptable to flaunt perverse sexual views in the workplace but it is abusive and evil to share your faith with people in the workplace. He is able to do this because he has replaced design law with imposed law, and made up rules are arbitrary and often contradict reality—God's design laws, leaving people without any reliable standards upon which they can determine right from wrong. Only those who know God, His character and His design laws can truly discern right from wrong.] He is called the father of lies, an accuser of God and of those who maintain their allegiance to God, a murderer from the beginning. He put forth every power at his command to win man to co-operate with him in apostasy, and succeeded in bringing rebellion into our world. Review and Herald April 14, 1896, par. 4

The life of Christ is to be revealed in humanity. **Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God; but Satan has labored to obliterate the image of God in man, and to imprint upon him his own image**. Review and Herald June 18, 1895, par. 2 ["Man" means humankind not male, Adam and Eve together are the crowning act of creation.]

What does it mean to be a counterpart of God? Counterpart means: "a person or thing closely resembling another, especially in function."

Humankind was created for a purpose—to be a counterpart of God, to be in the image of God—to reveal God in character, but also in method and function—to procreate and govern. God designed Adam and Eve, two separate individuals to come into the unity of love and create beings in their image, with their likeness. This is how God the Father, Son and HS function, in some aspect of shared unity in which they give of themselves in love and create. Adam and Eve were to govern the planet as God governs the universe and the entire universe would have learned lessons about God's character, methods, and law.

If Adam and Eve would have stayed loyal and rejected the lies of Satan and fulfilled God's purpose in their creation and had children in a sinless world—how would they have governed the planet? What kind of law would the entire world and all relationships have operated upon?

And, if, in that sinless world, one of Adam's descendants would have rebelled and sinned, what would Adam have done? Would Adam have set up a court room, held a trial, then built gallows and executed his child? Or would the rebellious child have run away and hid in fear, guilt, shame, unable to tolerate the glory of God still blazing from the righteous, like the children of Israel could not tolerate the fading glory from Moses' face? Would Adam have put on a veil, like Moses did, and sought out his child seeking to restore him, just like Jesus veiled His glory and became human to seek us out in order to restore us?

Satan hates everything that exposes him as a liar. Satan hates humanity and does not want us to fulfill the purpose that God created us to fulfill—to live in in harmony with God's design law of love, in truth, in freedom, in peace with God and each other. Satan wants to either destroy us or corrupt us to be the exact opposite of God's design.

Satan's goal has been to take living temples, human beings, and establish himself as the one enthroned in our hearts and minds as the one we love, admire, worship, cherish and behave like. He does this by getting us to believe lies about God and then to embrace his methods of fear and selfishness, coercion and force to advance our way upon others. In so doing he takes away our liberty; he wants to make us satanic in character, to make us pawns and puppets. He has used multiple strategies throughout history and God has been acting throughout history to oppose him and keep open the avenue for the plan of salvation.

Prior to the flood Satan not only worked to corrupt human character, such that humans became violent and hate filled, but Satan also worked to corrupt the species through genetic and hybridized manipulation of the physiology—designed to change our physical natures sufficiently that we would be cut off from God and no longer be image bearers of our Creator but animalistic.

Consider these historic quotes—do you agree?

> **But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere**. 3Spiritual Gifts 64.1

> **Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood**. Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men. 3Spritual Gifts 75.2

Human beings, prior to the flood, closer to the tree of life, had a greater vitality and could tolerate physiological amalgamations, but these were designed to make humans more debased, more animalistic, less and less like our loving Creator. God not only put all those people into the first death of sleep, but He also changed the nature of the planet, shortening the human life span and making us physiologically weaker so that Satan could not as easily manipulate the human physiology through hybridization or other genetic manipulation to create amalgamations.

God also confused the languages and instituted racial differences to put obstacles in the way of humanity uniting again in total planetary rebellion against God in order to give time for the plan of salvation to be achieved—for Jesus to come.

But Satan has been working through history to achieve his goal of destroying the image of God in humanity and putting his own where God's should be. He continues to do this through all forms of false worship, through disease, through violations of God's laws for physical health, spiritual health, mental health and relationship health.

We cannot have health while violating the laws of health. Thus, every violation of God's design laws injures us. The more we live in violation of God's laws the more injuries we suffer.

Polygamy and male domination over their wives are violations of God's design and injures both husbands and wives. Just as it is when wives exert authority and domination over their husbands. God's design is co-partnership, equality of moral worth and value in which each person loves the other and seeks the best for the other and both parties are mature and trustworthy.

But Satan's multiple forms of exploitation leads to greater injury, more fear, more selfishness and more of his methods being utilized in an effort to try and resolve our fears and insecurities.

Satan continues to work to destroy the image of God in us by all these long-standing methods. But today he is also advancing his plan to destroy the image of God in us through technology. Genetic and cybernetic hybridization is actively being pursued in which human beings will merge themselves with both animals and machines. Researchers are exploring ways to take various animal genes and use them in humans and vice versa, as well as augmenting the human brain with computer chips and other enhancements, such as enhanced visual range seeing into the infrared spectrum, or giving your brain immediate access to the internet over wi-fi, or augmented memory etc. This so-called transhumanism movement is part of Satan's end-time attack on humanity to destroy the image of God in humankind.

I wrote a blog about this entitled Human 2.0 the Rise of the Cyborg where you can find more information, but this research is actively ongoing with the goal to transcend death. The real vision is to

be able upload our individuality, consciousness, into an artificial platform (cyborg body) to experience eternal life.

As people have computer chips inserted into their brains to augment memory, access to data, communication or other abilities, what is the likely outcome?

Can sinful and selfish people create sinless loving beings? No, we can only create things that are like us. Additionally, it is my belief, that this is designed to cut people off from the Holy Spirit, to fully solidify people into the image of Satan. Our brains create quantum energy fields that resonate on various frequencies. The Holy Spirit communicates to us through these energy connections, anything that interferes with the natural operations of our brains changes this quantum output and cuts us off from the Holy Spirit, such as intoxication with alcohol and drugs, persistence in evil such that we sear the conscience (which results from real damage to certain brain regions causing change in the normal function of the brain) and I believe genetic hybrids and computer chips in the brain will also result in interfering with the ability of the person to communicate with God, to hear the still small voice of the Spirit.

It is one way that the world before Christ returns will be similar to the world before Noah—the image of God being erased in humankind.

SABBATH

Read last paragraph, "The most important lesson of…" What do you think of this idea that the most important lesson of beginnings, of creation, is grace?

What do you understand grace to be?

This seems to suggest a design law view rather than the penal legal view. For instance, grace in design law view is always an expression of God's graciousness, an outworking of His character of love, a dispersal of His energies, actions, abilities, presence, person, power for the good of His creation. Thus, creating life in sinless perfection to live in holiness with freedom to think and to do would be an act of grace.

But the penal/legal view often defines grace as unmerited favor, doing something good for us when we actually deserve punishment. The unmerited favor idea of grace is a false idea based on the false law concept that has infected Christianity.

Thus the lesson pointing out that God creating life in perfection is an act of grace supports our view of God's character and government.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "It is precisely because…" Was there a Sabbath before the events in Genesis chapter one? Was the Sabbath made? Does the Sabbath have a beginning? Then if the Sabbath has a beginning does it mean the Sabbath is a rule and those who teach an imposed law view are correct?

It depends on why one believes the Sabbath was made, its purpose, and that depends on how one understands God's law. If one presumes God's law is imposed rules then the Sabbath is viewed as a rule, a test of obedience, something that is made up by God and enforced by external power.

Jesus' clarification that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath refutes the imposed rule view—it isn't a rule made up and imposed upon us, but a gift that is somehow for our benefit.

So if one has the design law view then one understands that the Sabbath was created with a purpose to fulfill a need that didn't exist prior to when it was created and thus is an expression of God's eternal design laws of truth, love, freedom.

Consider the Sabbath having a beginning like the rainbow—according to the Bible the rainbow also had a beginning. And did the rainbow also have a purpose? Is the rainbow an imposed a sign, an evidence of something? And is the rainbow an evidence of imposed rules or an expression and outworking of design law? So too is the Sabbath, it was created with a purpose, but is not an imposed rule but the outworking of design law—truth, presented in love, leaving free.

The Sabbath was created by God at the end of creation week in the context of Satan's rebellion against Him and that the Sabbath stands as a memorial of God's kingdom and methods of love. We are to remember that in six days, God created the earth and its solar system, and rather than using His power to force Satan into line, God rested on the seventh day. God blessed the Sabbath day by investing it with His methods of governing—the truth (His creatorship revealed), love (a planet whose ecosystem operates upon the design law of love, with sentient beings designed to govern in love and capable of pro-creating beings in their image), and freedom (God rested and left His children free rather than compel them with power to obey).

In creating the Sabbath, God memorialized religious liberty, truth, presented in love, while leaving His intelligent creatures free to decide for themselves. Thus, true Sabbath keepers are people who have God's law, methods, character reproduced in them so that they live out His law and methods in how they treat others; they present the truth, in love, and leave others free, just like God has done.

So, what is the purpose of the Sabbath—it was made for whom? For humankind, why?

Did God know that humans would fall into sin? Then, would God have made a provision that would be beneficial to humans in a world of sin? Is the Sabbath such a resource, such an aide, such a blessing? How?

Again, what was the purpose of the Sabbath?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> I gave them my Sabbaths as a **sign** between us, **so they would know that I the LORD made them holy** (Ezekiel 20:12 NIV84).

A sign is a mark, which is an object that conveys meaning, something that symbolizes a message. The Sabbath is a sign, mark, object from God to humanity that He has given for a purpose—to convey a message to us. And in this way, the Sabbath is like a flag. Let's consider object lesson similarities between a national flag and the Sabbath.

- A nation's flag is made for its citizens; the citizens are not made for the flag, just like "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27 NIV84).
- A flag is created to inspire the people with patriotic love and loyalty to their country. The Sabbath was created to inspire humans with love and loyalty to God.
- A flag reminds people of the history, values, and principles of a nation. When people see the old Soviet flag, they are reminded of different values than those conveyed by the British, Canadian, or American flag. The Sabbath is given to remind us of God's government, methods, and principles—the kingdom of truth, love, and liberty.
- When people are taken captive in war and they see their national flag, it inspires them with the hope that their countrymen will come and rescue them. We are captives in a world of sin, and **the Sabbath is to remind us that God sent Jesus to deliver us from sin, to make us holy, to rescue us**.

Have you ever been proud to wave your national flag? Why?
We should be proud to wave the Sabbath—to celebrate the Sabbath, it is a sign that GOD MAKES US HOLY—He will deliver us from the captivity of sin. He has not abandoned us and He foreknew our need and posted this sign into time itself. Evil people may take away our Bibles but they cannot take away the Sabbath—it still flies, week after week the Sabbath still flies to remind us that God will make all who trust Him holy.

But, I know someone is going to ask, what about Sabbath keeping, what rules are we to keep on Sabbath—and as soon as that question is asked, what happens? The mind is infected with imposed law and the Sabbath slowly becomes a burden and a prison of fear and selfishness.

The Sabbath is a sign that God makes us holy. We to present ourselves as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to the Lord. Can we keep ourself holy only one day a week? Or, to be holy must we be holy every day of the week?

> **But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy.** Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. DA 283

Is the Sabbath still binding? I would ask, binding what? Rightly understood, the Sabbath is a gift that helps God bind truth and love into our hearts. How? What truth does the Sabbath reveal?

- God is Creator
- God's law is Design Law
- God's methods are Truth presented in Love leaving us Free
- The Sabbath reveals God does not impose rules and threaten us with imposed punishments. That God presents evidence in love, and leaves us free and this wins us to loyalty to Him.

Read the first paragraph, "It is precisely…" How is the Sabbath an expression of our faith—isn't it an evidence of God's character, methods and law of love? Did they mean to say our valuing and honoring the Sabbath is an expression of our faith?

MONDAY

Read fourth paragraph, "The description of the Creation radically…" Which is more reasonable the Genesis account of creation or godless evolution?

Which view is more consistent with testable evidence?

Let's examine the premises each theory is built upon and find out:

Evolution	**Creation**
Something came from nothing	Something came from something (Creation)
Life came from non-living matter	Life came from living matter
Complexity comes from chaos with no intelligent input	Complexity comes from chaos with intelligent input
Genetic mutation adds vitality and genetic fitness	Genetic mutation reduces vitality and genetic fitness
DNA coding can write itself	DNA coding requires an intelligence

On every point the creationist view is more scientific, more evidence-based, and more consistent with reality.

Then why do so many people reject the creationist view and prefer the godless view?

Because the historic view of God that most people are familiar with and which the vast majority of Christianity continues to promote has been that of an imperial dictator who makes up rules and eternally tortures rule-breakers who won't submit to His rule.

If God were truly like this, then the universe would be better off without such a god.

But this perverse view of God is Satan's view of God, it is the type of god one gets when they accept the lie that God's law functions like human law. And this perverse view of God, based on believing God's law functions like human law, is the wine of Babylon that intoxicates the entire world. All the world believes this monstrosity is the God of the Bible—all but the very elect, the true remnant. And all the world has their minds damaged by this intoxicating brew of lies about God and His law. Even those who reject God, they do so because they still believe the lie that the Bible teaches this perverse view of God and therefore they reject it, even though the science demonstrates their godless view is unscientific.

The last paragraph tells us that God judged everything He created as "very good."

What type of judgment is this? Is this a judicial process, or a diagnostic one? Again, the lesson rightly teaches design law understanding of reality.

THURSDAY

What is the first and greatest duty of every human being?

To love the Lord with all our entire heart, soul, mind and strength, and the second is to love others as ourselves.

In the world today, what does it mean to honor God?

Do we still have the responsibility to God to be good stewards of the planet?

And does Satan twist these responsibilities to God and the planet in various ways to get people to think they are fulfilling their responsibilities when they are not?

How?

What if people prioritize the health of the planet over the health of people? What if people advance policies with the intention of protecting the planet but those policies actually injure people?

What if they not just injure them physically but harm their minds and souls by getting them to embrace beliefs that are godless, that are based on fear, that inflame selfishness, that increase intolerance, that causes division, that see others who don't practice what they believe as evil and in need of being punished?

Do the people who honor God exploit the planet? Do people who practice God's methods refuse to set boundaries with those who are destructive to both the environment and to others?

What is the balance?

What is our duty to honor God in the choice of the foods we eat?

- Do we honor God with our bodies by how we treat them?
- Do food choices make a difference?
- Should godly people make intelligent choices about what foods they take into their bodies, and will those choices include what maintains their greatest health and therefore usefulness in God's cause?
- Will such choices be based on rules or the laws of health?
- Should people be left free to decide for themselves what choices are best for them—for instance might some people need to avoid eating peanut butter while others will benefit from eating it? Should we make rules that force people to eat peanut butter because of its nutritional value or prohibit people from eating it because others might be allergic?
- Would this principle of being intelligent and personally responsible for what one puts in their body include what medicines people take? Or should society force people to take medicines they don't believe will benefit them and won't honor God?
- What about food choices impacting the environment? Do we have any responsibility there to consider our choice?
- Interestingly, the WEF and leftists want to force people away from eating meat, particularly beef, because of their concerns about global warming and other harms to the environment from cattle while many Christians take the approach that God has given us all the animals to eat and it is godly to kill and eat the animals. What are your thoughts about this?
- This is a great example of Satan twisting things to cause conflict and confusion. Is there a difference between what God has permitted because of sin in this world and what God created and designed to happen?

One of the texts used by Christians to support that idea that it is God intention for us to eat anything we want is 1 Timothy 4:1–5:

> The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them **to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,** because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:1–5 NIV84).

But the Christians who use this for authorization to eat everything miss an important point in the text—there is a key phrase that is critical to getting the correct meaning and that is: "which God created to be received with thanksgiving." God did NOT create everything to be eaten. Go back to Eden and God specifically lists the foods He created to be eaten, and animals are not included. But this can be pointed out very quickly, just ask them if everything is created by God to be eaten as long as we give thanks, if that is really true—then let's give thanks for a poison ivy salad and eat it. Immediately, they will say, well, that isn't intended for food. Exactly, and God didn't create animals to be eaten for food. It wasn't until after the flood that animals started to be eaten for food and God did

authorize animals to be eaten, but then gave a list of what animals were on the authorized list and what animals were not. And this list was based on the laws of health. All the authorized animals are the lowest on the food chain, meaning they are not carnivores or scavengers and thus will be the healthiest to eat.

I think there are some people who have the best health possible by eating various animal products—because of where they are in the world, the food choices available to them, their underlying physiology and other factors. So I would not make a rule on this on either side. The food choices are about living out God's principles of health for our bodies, minds, souls, and community.

SUNDAY

What do we learn about God from the Creation account?

The lesson points out that the words used for God, *Elohim and* YHWH indicate power and closeness. That God is both powerful, but personal, intimate, and closely concerned and connected to us.

The lesson points out that because we are created beings we are dependent upon God—thoughts about this?

This is profound, one of Satan's lies is to suggest that this dependence is a form of slavery, that we are not really free as long as we are dependent upon God, that real freedom means throwing off obedience to God's law and thus finding freedom. Why is this a lie?

What law lens do we understand it through?

If we understand law like human law then Satan's point is well made. To believe that there is no inherent damage, injury, problem from sin, that it is only sin because God made a rule to outlaw the action, and God uses power to police behavior and punish rule-breaking makes us slaves and destroys love. This corrupt view of God and His government is the root of Satan's rebellion in heaven and sustains it on earth.

But, the message for the people at this time in history is to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws, the laws life is built to operate upon. As such harmony with God and His laws is the very basis of life and every deviation injures those who break God's law.

Freedom is found in health not in sickness and health is found only in harmony with the laws of health. It is a grand deception to teach young people they can have more freedom if they smoke and do drugs, that any parent to puts rules on their children to restrict them from smoking or getting high is trying to enslave their children. No, people who violate the laws of health enslave themselves with all kinds of chains, physical limitations, pain, addictions of various kinds and become less free.

This is also true of the soul that sins. Those who sin become less free, they become enslaved to fear,

shame, guilt, selfishness and their actions become various human defenses to avoid these enslaving shackles.

True freedom is found only in Christ, in harmony with God's living law of love. Thus God's creation in Genesis was a world of freedom a world in which Adam and Eve were given dominion to govern, to rule in love, and they were free to rebel, to violate God's laws, but in so doing they only enslaved themselves with chains of fear, guilt, selfishness and shame that they could not break. Only Jesus could break those chains and that is why He came.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

May 6-7, 2022:

Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

Materials in Australia:

Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa:

Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

New Release:

The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 2
The Fall

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> "'And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel'" (Genesis 3:15 NKJV).

This is perhaps the most important text in all of Scripture. This text, this promise, sets the stage for the entire Old Testament. The events recorded in Scripture are not a history of the world; we don't have anything in Scripture on the Mayan, Hawaiian, or Aboriginal peoples because Scripture focuses on the plan of salvation, it focuses on the fulfillment of God's promise to send Jesus our Savior. This is the key to understanding what is transpiring throughout the Old Testament. And all events historic or prophetic that extend after Jesus' ascension focus upon the people who take the gospel forward, this is why the Bible doesn't focus upon the genetic descendants of Abraham after Christ's ascension but upon those who have the gospel.

Read first paragraph, "Amid all that God had…" What does it mean when the lesson states "though they were to know good, they were not to know evil"?

Didn't God tell them about evil? Didn't angels warn them about evil? Didn't God say that "in the day you eat you will surely die"? Isn't death a part of what is evil and not a part of what is good?

The Scriptures teach that God's angels minister to us and some Christians understand, based on this, that prior to the fall God had His loyal and holy angels visit Adam and Eve in Eden and share with them warnings about Satan's rebellion. We read one such perspective in *The Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1* p. 32:

> God assembled the angelic host to take measures to **avert the threatened evil**. It was decided in Heaven's council **for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe**. Two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents. The holy pair received them with joyful innocence, expressing their grateful thanks to their Creator for thus surrounding them with such a profusion of his bounty. Everything lovely and attractive was theirs to enjoy, and everything seemed wisely adapted to their wants; and that which they prized above all other blessings, was the society of the Son of God and the heavenly angels, for they had much to relate to them at every visit, of their new discoveries of the beauties of nature in their lovely Eden home, and they had many questions to ask relative to many things which they could but

indistinctly comprehend. 1SP 32.3

The angels graciously and lovingly gave them the information they desired. **They also gave them the sad history of Satan's rebellion and fall**. They then distinctly informed them that the tree of knowledge was placed in the garden to be a pledge of their obedience and love to God; that the high and happy estate of the holy angels was to be retained upon condition of obedience; that they were similarly situated; **that they could obey the law of God and be inexpressibly happy, or disobey, and lose their high estate, and be plunged into hopeless despair**. 1SP 33.1

They told Adam and Eve that God would not compel them to obey—that he had not removed from them power to go contrary to his will; that they were moral agents, free to obey or disobey. There was but one prohibition that God had seen fit to lay upon them as yet. **If they should transgress the will of God, they would surely die**. They told Adam and Eve that the most exalted angel, next in order to Christ, refused obedience to the law of God which he had ordained to govern heavenly beings; that this rebellion had caused war in Heaven which resulted in the rebellious being expelled therefrom, and every angel was driven out of Heaven who united with him in questioning the authority of the great Jehovah; and that this fallen foe was now an enemy to all that concerned the interest of God and his dear Son. 1SP 33.2

So, if they were not to know evil why did God and the angels educate them about rebellion and evil?

Because the issue of "knowing" in the Bible isn't about cognitive awareness, comprehension, or factual understanding, Biblical knowing is when something becomes part of your experience. It is knowing intimately, through experience, not through mere information. It is not knowing about something or someone but actually knowing it or them.

For instance:

- there is a difference between knowing about swimming and knowing how to swim.
- there is a difference between knowing the fact that chocolate and vanilla ice cream taste different and knowing what they taste like
- there is a difference between knowing about President Biden and knowing President Biden
- there is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't a place of theoretical knowledge, cognitive knowledge, or academic knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, and about death being the result of sin. The two had been instructed.

Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. But having mere facts is not what the tree was about – it was about experience, knowing by experience either good or evil. Choose to trust and believe God and know good – or choose to believe lies, distrust God, and know evil.

God told them, "It is at this tree you will have knowledge, so choose well; choose to trust me and not to partake of the fruit and you will know good – you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity,

integrity, joy, peace, and godliness. All of this will solidify in your character. So please, my beautiful children, choose to know good! But if you choose to believe lies, distrust me and partake in the fruit, you will know evil – you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering, and death. Please, my beautiful children, don't choose to know evil."

God already knew evil – not in His character, but in His heart, as His heavenly home had been fractured. He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, rebellion, being lied about, and the loss of many of His beloved angels.

God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, or heartache. He wanted humankind to know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God – **to choose the good** in order for them to know it.

So God warned them and placed this tree there for their development as free beings, with His goal for them to choose to know good and solidify themselves in loyalty and love to Him and develop their own mature godlike character. Unfortunately, they chose to know evil and humanity was plunged into pain, suffering and death, and Jesus stepped in to take this terrible terminal condition upon Himself and overcome it and restore the species back to God's perfection, eradicating the death causing principles and writing God's law of love, the life causing protocols back into humanity, thus becoming our Savior.

So what was the purpose of placing this tree in the garden? It was for their development and maturity of character. Consider this historic quote:

> God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but **in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation**. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. **There could have been no development of character**. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. {Conflict and Courage13.3}

The third paragraph says, "And, too, the threat of death attached to the warning about disobedience would be fulfilled: they would die."

What type of a threat is this? What law lens do you understand it through? Did God say, "in the day you eat I will be required by holiness, justice, and the immutability of my law to kill you"? Many Christians teach it this way. Or was God saying, "in the day you eat you will step out of harmony with the protocols that I have built life to operate upon and you will surely decay and die"? It would be like saying "in the day you jump off the Empire State Building you will surely die."

Does it make a difference which way we understand God's warning?

If God is the source of threatened suffering and death would that impact our ability to trust Him? Would we need someone in between to protect us from Him? And this is the basis of essentially all

paganism, including Christian paganism with its false theories of God needing to be paid the blood of His Son to propitiate His wrath.

And all of this is rooted in accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring infliction of punishment for rule-breaking.

All of this is resolved as soon as we return to worshipping the Creator whose laws are design laws.

SUNDAY

The lesson is about the serpent—who is the one speaking through the serpent?

The lesson points to a couple of other Bible texts to help us:

> "In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea" (Is 27:1 NIV84). [Is this text teaching that God will use physical violence to slay His enemies? The imagery of a sword, a powerful and great and fierce sword sounds fear inducing—what do you think? Revelation tells us the sword comes out of the mouth of Jesus, the rider on the white horse. What comes out of the mouth? Truth and the Scripture tells us that God's word is a double edged sword—Satan the father of lies and all his followers will be slain by the unveiled truth at the end of time. This isn't physical might, but reality itself coming to bear.]
> "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him" (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

So, the serpent in Genesis who tempts Adam and Eve is not some mere dumb animal, it is Satan.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "Satan's attack concerns…" Did Satan say they were immortal? Or did he say they would not surely die?

> "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Ge 3:4–5 NIV84).

And if they were immortal, why was there a Tree of Life in the garden? So, it is unlikely that he was saying you are immortal, you cannot die in any way. He was saying that you won't die from eating the fruit.

Now, this lie of Satan's "you will not surely die" has certainly led to the false belief that human beings were created with inherent immortality, the idea that when God created Adam and Eve He created them in such a way that they can never die no matter what. And most of the world has accepted this falsehood, including much of the Christian world.

But the Bible doesn't record Satan saying those words. So, I agree that this original lie is the root of the secondary lie that humans have innate immortality, I don't think that was Satan's primary point for Eve.

I believe what Satan was saying to Eve was that you will not die *from eating the fruit*. The attack upon Adam and Eve was to get them to distrust God, thus the attack had to undermine their confidence and trust in God, to get them to believe lies about God. Satan is suggesting that disobeying God is not harmful, doesn't inherently hurt, doesn't cause injury, will not result in death.

Satan didn't say, you *cannot* die, but you *will not die from eating the fruit*, which introduces a subtle lie to blossom in their heads after they eat: If eating the fruit didn't kill them—and it didn't, and if God told the truth that if they ate of the fruit they would die, then what does that mean? "Oh no, it means that God will kill them, execute them, terminate them, use His power to punish them with death." And they ran because they were afraid of God who was trying to save them. And almost all human being since have been running from God believing that God is required to kill them for disobedience and sin because of this lie that sin itself doesn't result in death is still accepted and taught by the entire Christian world, including our own church today.

From where does death actually come—from God or from sin?

> "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 NIV84).
>
> "sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15 NKJV).
>
> "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).

What was the cause of the sin condition—eating the fruit, or believing the lies about God that resulted in distrust of God and the act of eating the fruit?

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- fear and selfishness result in acts of sin (disobedience to God's law of love)
- Acting out sin damages and destroys mind, body, relationships a terminal condition

Consider this historic quote:

> **Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband. They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors**, and it was only by repentance toward God and faith in the promised Messiah that they could hope ever to regain the lost image of God. RH January 5, 1886, par. 8

TUESDAY

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid—why? Because they were afraid—why? From where did the fear come?

And was it only fear, or was their guilt and shame? And from where did the guilt and shame come?

When God approached them in the garden and Adam said he ran and hid because he was afraid because he was naked, what did God say? "Who told you that you are naked?"

What does God's statement reveal? Who was the source of Adam's condemnation? Was God condemning Adam? Who was?

What does this reveal to us about sin? Was sin a harmless trivial crossing of an arbitrary rule—like a tennis ball just outside the line, someone needs to get an instant replay camera zoom to investigate whether the ball touched the line or missed it? Or, does sin actually cause harm to the sinner?

This is the dividing line between truth and lies, God's kingdom and Satan's. God is the Creator. He built reality. His laws are the laws reality is built upon. Satan is a created being. He cannot build realty thus Satan makes up rules that requires infliction of punishment and then he lies about God and God's law claiming God's laws are rules that require punishment.

> **In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed,** that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. DA 761.4

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a

> battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (GC 582.2)

This is the core lie from the beginning, a question over God's law and sadly almost the entire world accepts it, except for the very elect, those who have returned to worship the Creator God who made the heaven, earth, sea and fountains of water.

Read the third paragraph, "In fact, the whole scenario…" Do you see how sad this is? It just breaks my heart to read this perversion, these threads of Satan's lies so deeply imbedded into the thinking of good people.

We don't read anything about a judicial process going on in Eden—this paragraph's description of a legal investigation, judicial judgment, and sentencing are all fantasies projected in from the mindset of the author who views Scripture through the false assumption that God's law functions like human law.

But when we embrace God's design law and reject Satan's view of law, we see a loving Father/Creator/Savior who accurately diagnoses what is wrong and understands that His beloved child now has a terminal condition that needs healing, but this sin-condition can only be healed with the cooperation of the person. So our loving Savior gently approaches the sin-sick Adam and Eve and confronts them on the change in their being in order to bring them to conviction of their situation so that they will repent and cooperate with God for healing and salvation. Then God informs them of the consequences of what their choice has done to them, their relationships and their world along with the the plan of salvation to heal them and restore them to harmony with God's design for eternal life, i.e. save them.

Can God save any sinner without the willing cooperation of the sinner? Why not?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "God begins judgment…" If we use the language of "judgment" what kind of judgment is this?

Does our understanding of law impact our understanding of judgment?

If we believe God's law functions like human law, then when we hear "judgment" what comes to mind? Judicial proceedings, legal rulings, imposing of just punishments—all Satan's system. Ultimately, such view of law undermines trust in God and incites fear leading to all kinds of theological constructs designed to hide and protect us from God. Quite the opposite of what we actually need in order to be saved. It would be like a patient dying of cancer hiding from their oncologist so the oncologist won't diagnose them as terminal—despite the oncologist having a remedy that will put the cancer into remission.

But if we worship the Creator whose laws are design laws, then what are God's judgments, how do we hear this word?

There are four judgments in God's system:

The First Judgment: Our Judgment of God

- At the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil Adam and Eve had to make a judgment—who would they trust—God or the serpent?
- We see this first judgment at Mount Carmel, when Elijah confronts the 450 priests of Baal and challenges the people, "If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him!" (1 Kings 18:21 GNT).
- Paul picks up this theme and states it explicitly in Roman 2:4: "Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when **You are judged**.'" Romans 3:4 NKJV

This judgment of God is not a judicial judgment, it is not a courtroom, it is the judgment of reality, the choice every sentient being throughout the entire universe must make in the aftermath of Satan's rebellion.

> "I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment** has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.'" Revelation 14:6, 7

The first judgment is our judgment of God.

The Second Judgment: God's diagnosis and therapeutic interventions to heal and save

- God's "judgments" in the OT were therapeutic to diagnose, convict, lead to repentance and also to intervene to keep open the avenue to bring the Messiah, to fulfill the Genesis 3:15 promise—the flood, Sodom etc. fall into this category
- And the Investigative Judgment is the therapeutic intervention in hearts and minds to diagnose, and then apply the righteousness of Christ in order to heal and seal the saints for the second coming. David understood this and prayed:

> Examine me, O God, and know my mind;
> test me, and discover my thoughts.
> Find out if there is any evil in me
> and guide me in the everlasting way (Psalms 139:23–24 GNT).

Malachi describes this judgment:

> 'Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. '**So I will come near to you for judgment**.' (Malachi 3:1–5 NIV84).

This is the Judgment of the Great Heavenly Physician, our Creator, examining us and diagnosing what is wrong and judging what is the best therapeutic intervention to bring to bear to heal and restore us. This is the judgment of our High Priest going on in heaven as He examines the people and prepares them for His return, finishes healing them so that when He does come we will be like Him. For "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1John 3:2 NIV84). This healing, this transformation, this final work of preparation is what Malachi describes above, the cleansing of our temples, purifying the Levites, and is metaphorically taught in the Day of Atonement rituals. You can read more about this in our *Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World* pamphlet.

Third Judgment: Our judgment of reality during the 1000 years, why some are saved and why others are not and God's actions throughout

> I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge**. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6 NIV84).

This is also not a judicial process, but a settling of all the questions. It is the assessment, discerning, and settling of the minds of how God's laws govern all reality. It is the comprehension of what sin does and how salvation occurs, and why some are saved and others are not when God loves all equally, wants all to be saved and is all powerful.

Fourth Judgment

The fourth and final judgment is the judgment that occurs at the end of the thousand years. It is often called the Great White Throne Judgment.

> I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

Surely this must be judicial right? No, it isn't. What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27), and in Scripture names are symbolic of character. So, it is our actual characters, that we have developed through our judgment of God, and our judgment to trust Him, to open the heart to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn, or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God. Thus, we are judged or diagnosed based on what is the actual condition of our character. Another way to say it is, the books record the accurate record of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition, there merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

> Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned**." Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what actually is. God is the God of reality. The builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols life operates upon. There is never a judicial law court like humans make—this is a lie from Satan. The fourth and final judgment is not judicial, it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

> He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).

So, of the four judgments, which is happening in Eden after the fall? God's diagnosis of what the problem is, what sin has actually caused and the initial therapeutic interventions to begin advancing the plan of salvation. None of God's actions here are judicial or the infliction of punishment for sin.

Just think about it. Did God say, "In the day you eat of the tree you will surely have a more difficult time plowing the ground"? Or, "In the day you eat of the tree your marriage will be ruined"? Or "In the day you eat of the tree you will have painful childbirth?" No, He said the punishment for sin was death, and was that death a sleep in the grave awaiting resurrection or eternal death, the second death. And how sinners have died that death? None!

Understand this clearly, all who say God is inflicting punishment for sin fail to understand reality and are operating under a delusion that God's law functions like human law and they make God out to be the source of inflicted pain suffering and death. We must reject these lies.

Read second paragraph, "We reach here a kind of…" What do you think of the idea that "judgment leads to death, evil, and curses"?

If this is true—then from where does death, evil and curses come?

Unbelievably, it appears the lesson is teaching that God is the originator of death, evil and curses because they come from God's judgment. And this is what always happens when you accept the lie about God's law. Those who believe this way try and cover up their view, try to couch it in theological jargon, want to deny they believe God is the source of death, but they always teach it because to them justice requires the penalty be inflicted and in their worldview the law is made up rules that require made up punishments.

But this is NOT what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches the sin causes death, sin is the cause of evil and the curses and that Satan is the murderer from the beginning, the one who originated evil, rebellion and whose lies broke the circle of love and trust resulting in death, evil and curses. God's diagnosis doesn't cause it, sin causes it.

THURSDAY

The lesson talks about the curses upon the serpent, childbearing, husbands ruling over wives and the ground.

What do you understand about these?

Why pain in childbearing?

It is an object lesson—of what? That in a sinful world love still works to bring forth new life but it is a painful struggle until delivery. This is a metaphor of both the rebirth experience and our ultimate delivery from sin. The seeds of truth that take root in the heart work bring forth a new Christian life. But this is a painful labor or struggle against self until one is "reborn" and then there is joy. And then in this world there is a continual labor or struggle against the forces of evil until the second coming of Christ and ultimate delivery. All of this reality is taught in the object lesson of childbearing. And why would a woman, having gone through the pain of childbearing, willingly do it again—love! And thus love is the key to overcoming the pain and struggles of this sinful world.

What about the curse on the ground? Why? What does it mean? Does Paul's description in Romans 8 about all nature groaning under the weight of sin have any bearing on what God says to Adam about the ground?

Consider this historic quote:

> **Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system. Satan planted these seeds** when he tempted Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge which meant disobedience to God. **Not one noxious plant was placed in the Lord's great garden, but after Adam and Eve sinned, poisonous herbs sprang up**. In the parable of the sower the question was asked the master, "Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" The master answered, "An enemy hath done this" (Matthew 13:27, 28). **All tares are sown by the evil one**. Every noxious herb is of his sowing, and by his ingenious methods of amalgamation he has corrupted the earth with tares. 2SM 288.2

But didn't the lesson state that it is God's judgment that leads to death, evil, and curses? No it is not. It is sin leads to these things. The ground became harder to deal with because an enemy was working against God's creation, sowing in death and decay and God's judgment was the accurate diagnosis of what has happened because of sin.

Consider this quote:

> When this earth was created by Christ, it was holy and beautiful. God pronounced it "very good." Every flower, every shrub every tree, answered the purpose of its Creator. Everything upon which the eye rested was lovely, and filled the mind with thoughts of love for the Creator. Every sound was music, in perfect harmony with the voice of God.
>
> But a change has come. **Sin has brought decay, deformity, and death. Today the whole world is tainted, corrupted, stricken with a mortal disease**. The earth groans under the continual transgression of the inhabitants thereof.
>
> **Human beings have degenerated. One after another they fall under the curse, because sin has entered the world, and death by sin**. The truth is not made precious by practice. It does not sanctify the soul. It fades from the mind because the heart does not appreciate its value. In consequence the mind becomes more and more darkened by the atmosphere which is malarious because of the perpetuating of Adam's sin. The conscience has lost its sensitiveness. **Through a repetition of sin, the impression made on the conscience by sin has no longer force enough to arrest the transgressor, diseased, depraved, and dying**. [Is this describing a legal problem or a state of being, then what type of law is involved? Then what is the solution? Can this be fixed with legal adjustments to the record?] The voice no longer echoes the voice of God, or gives expression to the music of a soul sanctified through the truth. **The heart, in which God should be enthroned, is a place from which come forth all kinds of abominations**. [What is Satan's goal? To deface the image of God in man and place his own where God's should be, including that of a legalistic deity who makes up rules and punishes rule breakers. Just consider how those religious people crucified Jesus—whose character did they have?] How has the fine gold become dim?—Man has lost the reflection of God's character.
>
> This calamity is well-nigh universal. **There is no place upon earth where the track of the**

> **serpent is not seen and his venomous sting felt.** The whole earth is defiled. **The curse is increasing as transgression increases**. The earth is preparing for purification by fire.
>
> BEcho May 21, 1900

What is the cause of the curse? Is the curse something that God inflicts or is it something that happens because of sin itself? If God restrained Himself and didn't use any power upon sinners would there be no curse only blessings?

Understand the perversity of Satan's lies. Satan's lies have caused the Christian world to teach that the curses of sin are from God, not from sin, that God is the cause of pain, suffering and death. It is a lie and it is wrong.

Every action of God is for our good. God disciplines those He loves and God speaks in judgments, but those judgments are therapeutic interventions to bring people to repentance in order to save and heal, not to curse or cause pain suffering and death.

Consider this quote:

> "How great is the long - suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. **Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love**. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand**. **They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." - PP 587.4

FRIDAY

Read the EGW quote, Wives are to submit to Christlike treatment or leadership from their husbands. Wives are not to submit to abuse.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

May 6-7, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 3
Cain and His Legacy

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Genesis 4:6-7: So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:6-7 NKJV).

What is being described here? Is this a behavior issue, a legal issue, a state of being issue?

Is God saying if you do the right rituals then I will accept you, but if you don't I will reject you?

What does God want from Cain?

Where does the Lord focus the attention on rituals, on behavior, or on the state of Cain's experience, what is actually happening inside the heart, mind, soul of Cain?

Why didn't God focus upon the ritual?

What does sin do to the sinner? Does it impact their state of being, their health and happiness? Can a person have genuine peace while embracing and practicing sin? Why not?

So what is God saying to Cain?

From *The Remedy*:

> The Lord gently said to Cain, "Why do you choose to be angry? Why do you choose to be dejected? Don't you know that if you do what is right – what is in harmony with my design for life and my healing plan – you would be happy? But if you choose to break my design for life, then you open the door of your heart for sin (fear and selfishness) to dwell there. It desires to control you, but if you trust me, you can overcome it" (Genesis 4:6-7 REM).

Read last paragraph, "The next events…" What law lens is the lesson these historical events through?

Do you remember last week in Wednesday's lesson it said, "judgment leads to death, evil, and curses…"

If Cain's crime is part of the curses and the curses occur because of God's judgment then wouldn't that mean that God is responsible for Cain killing Abel?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

These are the types of subtle lies Satan weaves into people's minds when they accept the idea that God's law functions like human law.

The lesson makes the problem of sin to be behavioral, criminal, this is not what the Bible teaches:

> This is the **message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another**. [What is the message from the beginning?] Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. **Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer**, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him (1 John 3:11-15 NIV84).

Who is a murderer, only the one who kills or also the one who hates in their heart?

Was Cain's problem primarily the act—if an angel would have stepped in and stopped Cain's hand from the act but Cain retained murderous rage and intent in his heart, would Cain be okay, in good standing with God, righteous, have no sin on his account in heaven? Would Cain have peace? Would Cain be right with God?

Sin is not primarily a behavioral problem, it is primarily a heart problem, the behaviors are the outworking of the motives of the heart. Jesus said:

> "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:33-37 NIV84).

What is Jesus describing? From where to the evil deeds originate? And what type of judgment is Jesus describing? Is this judicial or diagnostic, merely pronouncing the actual condition of what the state of the various hearts are?

MONDAY

Read third paragraph which is a quotation from *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin; and they were to show their **faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement** by offering the firstlings of the flock in sacrifice. Besides this, the first fruits of the earth were to be presented before the Lord as a

> thank offering (Patriarchs and Prophets 71).

What law lens do you understand this through?

Why could there be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood? Is it because:

- The Father needed a sacrifice offered to Him to do something to the Father, propitiate His wrath, appease Him, persuade Him, soften Him up, make a legal provision to give God permission to do something God was not allowed to do?
- The law which is above God and compulsory upon God required a death penalty be paid?
- Because the law requires a just penalty be paid and the law requires that someone die for the crime of sin and in God's justice system it is considered very righteous to find an innocent person and execute them in place of the guilty and so that the guilty can go free?
- Or, is it that sin changed the condition of human beings infecting them with a death-causing principle and the only way to restore human beings to eternal life was to eradicate the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle within the species—and this required someone that someone had to overcome and destroy the death causing principle as a human—and that is why there could be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood, it was the only way to eliminate sin from sinners.

What is meant by faith in the blood of Christ? Do we have faith in red corpuscles? Or is this a symbolic way of describing the life of Christ, which is the life of sinless perfection and the perfect revelation of God that dispels lies and wins us back to trust?

Where did Jesus say the blood must be applied in order for sinners to be saved?

> Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him" (John 6:53-56 NIV84).

So what does it mean to have faith in the blood of Christ? Does it mean to have faith in a blood payment made to the Father to clean our records in heaven of recorded sin? Or does it mean, we see the life of Jesus and the lies of Satan are dispelled and we are won to trust and in trust open the heart and Jesus pours His life and love into our hearts and we internalize the life of Christ so "that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)?

Understand the flesh and blood are symbols of truth and love—that we ingest to make us new beings in Christ. Consider from the same author these quotes about what the metaphor of blood is in reality. Remember if we don't tie metaphor and symbols to reality we are stuck in fantasy and sadly much of Christianity teaches fantasy about a punishing god requiring blood payments to make legal adjustments. But here is from the same author:

> "In the study of the Bible the converted soul **eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of God, which He himself interprets as the receiving and doing of His words,** that are spirit and life." Fundamentals of Christian Education 378.1
>
> "The leaven of **truth** works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By **it [the truth] the impure are cleansed, washed in the blood of the Lamb**." Christ's Object Lessons 102

So, what does it mean to have faith in the blood? To be won to trust by the truth and then to internalize the truth into our own hearts, minds, and characters.

What does it mean the promised atonement?

How do we understand atonement? What law lens are we reading through?

If God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring infliction of just punishments, then what is atonement taught to be? Legal punishments and payments.

But when we return to worshipping the Creator whose laws are the design protocols for life, what is atonement—it is bringing two parties that are alienated back into oneness. What is the cause of humanity separation from God? What has broken the bonds of love and trust in our relationship with God? Is there something in God or God's law that causes the divide, or is there something in human beings that causes the divide? It is sin in us that causes the divide, then in order for humans to be at-one with God, where does the action have to take place, in God, in God's law, or in the species human?

Thus, Jesus is "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 NIV84).

Jesus doesn't take away the punishment of the world, or take away the anger of God, He takes away the sin. Sin is the destructive and death causing principle that separates us from God and Jesus came to take away the sin.

Sadly, though, because of the infection of imposed law most of the world believes the lie that Jesus came to take away the punishment of God for our sin and thus we have been stuck waiting for the people of God to return to worshipping Him and stop worshipping Satan's impersonation of Him.

An online viewer sent the following quote and asked how we understand it through design law view, this quotation from an article in Signs of the Times Dec 23, 1886:

> The altar and the promise stand side by side, and one casts clear beams of light upon the other, showing that the justice of an offended God could be appeased only by the death of his beloved Son. Signs of the Times Dec 23, 1886

Didn't we just decide that the sacrifice was not for the purpose of appeasing an offended God? But this article seems say that it was. So, what does it mean? Always go back and read the context of a quote, this quote is from an article contrasting Cain and Abel. The altar referred to is the altar built by Cain and Abel, at the instruction of Adam.

The author contrasts the attitudes of the heart of Cain and Abel.

The article starts out with this:

> These two brothers, Cain and Abel, represent the whole human family. They were both tested on the point of obedience, and all will be tested as they were. Abel bore the proving of God**. He revealed the gold of a righteous character, the principles of true godliness**. But Cain's religion had not a good foundation; **it rested on human merit. He brought to God something in which he had a personal interest**,--the fruits of the ground, which had been cultivated by his toil; and **he presented his offering as a favor done to God**, through which he expected to secure the divine approval. He obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but it was only a partial obedience. The essential part, the recognition of the need of a Redeemer, was left out. (Signs of the Times Dec 23, 1886)

- What did Abel bring that Cain did not?
- Why was Abel's offering accepted and Cain's was not?
- When the jailer asked Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" What was the answer? "Put your entire trust in the Master Jesus. Then you'll live as you were meant to live—and everyone in your house included!" (Acts 16:31 Message)
- What does this mean to trust, or put one's faith in Jesus? It means a humble willingness to listen, be instructed, follow, to trust, have confidence and faith in Jesus that He knows more than us, loves more than us, sees more than us, and even when we don't understand a reason for a specific instruction we trust Jesus knowing He is good and all His instructions are for our good. This is what it means to obey; in the Bible obedience actually means a humble willingness to listen, to be instructed and then to choose to follow and do what was instructed. This is what Jesus meant when He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4 NIV84).
- What is the difference between Cain and Abel? Abel trusted God, Cain trusted in himself and the two sacrifices were the outworking or evidence or actions of the hearts, trust or distrust, two different types of character were developed.

Later in the article it states:

> In the case of Cain and Abel we have **a type of two classes** that will exist in the world till the close of time; and this type is worthy of close study. **There is a marked difference in the characters** of these two brothers, and the same difference is seen in the human family today. **Cain represents those who carry out the principles and works of Satan, by worshiping God in a way of their own choosing.** Like the leader whom they follow, they are willing to

> render partial obedience, but not entire submission to God. Man, in the pride of his heart, would like to believe that he can **confer some favor upon God; that our heavenly Father may be the receiver, and not always the giver. But God will not be bribed.** He says: "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof." Man has nothing to give that he has not first received from God. ST December 23, 1886, par. 7

Note the context is over character, one of love and trust versus pride and selfishness. Abel understood the principles of God's government, how God is always the giver, not the receiver, but Cain sought to put God in the role of receiving the offerings to earn favor.

But what if instead of offering God the work of our hands, we offer God the blood of His Son to appease His wrath? Will God be bribed by a better offering?

From the same article:

> How did Abel know so well the plan of salvation?—Adam taught it to his children and grandchildren. And the apostle says that "**faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**." After Adam had sinned, a feeling of terror seized him. A constant dread was upon him; shame and remorse tortured his soul. In this state of mind he wished to be as far removed as possible from the presence of God, whom he had so loved to meet in his Eden home. But the Lord followed this conscience-stricken man, and while he condemned the sin of which Adam had been guilty, gave him words of gracious promise. In pronouncing the curse upon the deceiver, God had said: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." ST December 23, 1886, par. 4
>
> **This was the first gospel sermon ever preached to fallen man**; this promise was the star of hope, illuminating the dark and dismal future of the race. Adam gladly received the welcome assurance of deliverance, and diligently instructed his children in the way of the Lord. **This promise was presented in close connection with the altar of sacrificial offerings. The altar and the promise stand side by side, and one casts clear beams of light upon the other, showing that the justice of an offended God could be appeased only by the death of his beloved Son**. The bleeding victim consuming on the altar illustrated Adam's teachings, and thus the sight of the eyes deepened the impression made by the hearing of the ear. ST December 23, 1886, par. 5

So with the greater context of the article, how do you understand this section about justice, an offended God and appeasement by the death of His Son?

What "law" lens to you understand justice through? Imposed law or design law, the protocols upon which life is built?

What is God's justice? Doing what is right, doing what is right as defined by the law of love, which is what? What does love require? To heal, to restore, to redeem, to save.

Thus the promise given to Adam, that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head, but the serpent would bruise his heel stands beside the altar, which visually acted out the selfless sacrifice of Christ to achieve what was promised. The gentle lamb with its large sad eyes, stands calmly without protest while Able takes a knife and cuts its throat—illustrates gentle Jesus calmly without protest or fighting back being abused and crucified to eradicate the death-causing principle and restore humanity to unity with God.

The promise and the altar enlightened each other.

Then what about being appeased? Again which law lens do you look through?

If the imposed law then one believes this is legal payment to an offended God. But the article itself disallows this interpretation, as it makes clear throughout that the gifts are not given to God, which Cain tried to do, but are **from God to man for man's need.**

The barrier set up between God and man is that of sin in man, thus what is required to fix the problem of sin in man is provided by God.

It is offensive to God (as it is to any being with a heart of love) to see pain, suffering, death, which occur when God's design for life is broken. Thus God hates sin because it breaks the protocols upon which life is constructed, inflicts pain, suffering, death and is an offense to the pure loving heart of God.

Therefore, if we look through the lens of design law, the law upon which life is built, we see that the sacrifice of Christ was the only means to please God's purpose in saving humankind.

Do you think I am being dishonest with the quote? Well, here is the dictionary definition of the word appease:

> "to make (someone) pleased OR less angry by giving or saying something desired"

What would please God after Adam deviated from God's design and plunged humanity into a death spiral? Would it not please God to see mankind delivered and saved? Is this not what God desired? What would make God less angry? Wouldn't it be to see His beautiful children healed, saved, restored to unity with Him? Thus, the only way God's justice of love could be pleased was through the death of Jesus, who provides the remedy for the terminal condition Adam inflicted upon the world, fulfilling God's desire to save the human race!

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "God's two questions…" What does it say about God that He approaches Cain in this way?

And what is the condition that God wants Cain to acknowledge—is it a legal condition, God wants Cain to acknowledge he broke a rule, is in legal trouble, needs a legal pardon from the heavenly magistrate, OR God wants Cain to recognize the sinfulness, fear, hatred, bitterness, selfishness and distrust of God and humble himself in trust to God and allow God to heal him?

Can people have proper behaviors and still be enemies of God? Can people love and trust God struggle with sin yet desire to be better and always seek God out after any sin?

Can we tell who is right with God by their behaviors?

Where is God's primary concern on the behavior or the heart motive? Who is preoccupied with behavior? "Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart!"

Read fourth paragraph, "On the other hand…" What does it mean sin lies at the door? Does this image of something at the door bring another Bible passage to mind?

> Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20 NIV84).

Is this a different door than God is referencing with Cain, or the same door? And a door to what? To the heart, we each decide on who and what we allow into our hearts. Satan cannot force a person to sin, he can tempt, but we must choose what we say yes to. Do we say yes to Jesus or to temptation? Do we love God or do we love things of this world, alcohol, drugs, our nation, our professional societies, our alma maters, our theologies more than God?

Read last paragraph, "God's second word…" From where does self-control come? It is the last fruit of the Spirit, as Jesus heals us through His Spirit we gain certain traits of character, and one of those is self-control. We never become puppets or robots, but are freed from the enslavement to fear and selfishness, from the domination of bad habits and addictions and our internal control over ourselves is restored to us.

This process cannot be done by human strength alone; it cannot be done in a sinner by God's strength alone—it is a cooperative effort. We must choose, we must trust God and He supplies the wisdom, insight, conviction, understanding and power to succeed. But God never makes the choice for us, because to do so would destroy our individuality and God loves us too much to do this.

This is also a painful process, dying to self, overcoming sin in the life. The Bible says,

> Therefore, since Christ **suffered in his body**, arm yourselves also with the same attitude,

> **because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin**. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God (1 Peter 4:1-2 NIV84).

We all have carnal desires that tempt us—but if we arm ourselves with the attitude of Jesus, in a trust relationship with Him, we will choose to say no and God will supply the power to succeed. There will be a time of suffering in the flesh, but if we choose to stay the course the healing comes and we are set free.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph, "It is because Abel's blood…" What caused Cain to be a refugee? Was it because God condemned him, pronounced a punishment upon him, or was it because Cain refused to repent and preferred that course for his life?

What would have happened if Cain would have repented, genuinely? Do we have examples of sinners repenting in Scripture and how God treated them?

What caused Cain to isolate, wander, avoid others, was it God banishing him or fear, guilt, shame in his own heart driving him away?

The following is a description from volume 1 of The Spirit of Prophecy regarding Satan after his fall from heaven and planning his temptation of Adam and Eve:

> **Satan stood in amazement at his new condition**. **His happiness was gone**. He looked upon the angels who, with him, **were once so happy**, but who had been expelled from Heaven with him. Before their fall, not a shade of discontent had marred their perfect bliss. Now all seemed changed. Countenances which had reflected the image of their Maker were **gloomy and despairing. Strife, discord, and bitter recrimination, were among them**. Previous to their rebellion these things had been unknown in Heaven. Satan now beholds **the terrible results of his rebellion.** He shuddered, and feared to face the future, and to contemplate the end of these things. 1SP 28.1 [What is the cause of this change? Is this an infliction by God? Is God using power to make the angels feel bad, be discontent, incite strife and conflict? This is what sin does. Breaking God's design laws damages all who break them, whether human or angels. This is what also happened to Adam and Eve, why they ran and hid, and to Cain. There is no peace, joy, or happiness in sin, only in harmony with God and His design law is there life, health, happiness and joy.]
>
> The hour for joyful, happy songs of praise to God and his dear Son had come. Satan had led the heavenly choir. He had raised the first note, then all the angelic host united with him, and glorious strains of music had resounded through Heaven in honor of God and his dear Son. **But now, instead of strains of sweetest music, discord and angry words fall upon the ear of the great rebel leader**. Where was he? Was it not all a horrible dream? Was he shut out of

Heaven? Were the gates of Heaven never more to open and admit him? The hour of worship draws nigh, when bright and holy angels bow before the Father. No more will he unite in heavenly song. No more will he bow in reverence and holy awe before the presence of the eternal God. **Could he be again as he was when he was pure, true and loyal, gladly would he yield up the claims of his authority. But he was lost! beyond redemption**, for his presumptuous rebellion! And this was not all; **he had led others to rebellion** and to the same lost condition with himself—angels, who had never thought to question the will of Heaven, or refuse obedience to the law of God till he had put it into their minds, **presenting before them that they might enjoy a greater good, a higher and more glorious liberty**. [You see this same argument today in almost all manner of evil, the lie that one can achieve greater freedom by engaging in some sin, some breaking of God's design laws for life. This particularly a part of the current messaging to children from the left about human sexuality. That you can have more freedom if you deviate from God's design of chastity until marriage and greater freedom if you have many partners of any gender.] This had been the sophistry whereby he had deceived them. A responsibility now rests upon him from which he would fain be released. 1SP 28.2

These spirits had become turbulent with disappointed hopes. **Instead of greater good, they were experiencing the sad results of disobedience and disregard of law**. [What kind of law? Why were they suffering like this? Was this a punishment inflicted by God?] Never more would these unhappy beings be swayed by the mild rule of Jesus Christ. Never more would their spirits be stirred by the deep, earnest love, peace, and joy, which his presence had ever inspired in them, to be returned to him in cheerful obedience and reverential honor. 1SP 29.1

Satan trembled as he viewed his work. He was alone in meditation upon the past, the present, and his future plans. His mighty frame shook as with a tempest. An angel from Heaven was passing. He called him, and entreated an interview with Christ. This was granted him. **He then related to the Son of God that he repented of his rebellion, and wished again the favor of God.** He was willing to take the place God had previously assigned him, and be under his wise command. **Christ wept at Satan's woe,** but told him, as the mind of God, that he could never be received into Heaven. Heaven must not be placed in jeopardy. All Heaven would be marred should he be received back; **for sin and rebellion originated with him. The seeds of rebellion were still within him.** He had, in his rebellion, no occasion for his course, and **he had not only hopelessly ruined himself**, but the host of angels also, who would then have been happy in Heaven had he remained steadfast. **The law of God could condemn, but could not pardon**. 1SP 29.2 [What is described here? Why was Satan not taken back? Didn't he express sorrow and repentance? No, the seeds of rebellion were still within him. He was sorrowful of the results, but not of the pride, the selfishness, the jealousy and envy, the falsehoods that he told. He was the same rebel in character. Why can God's law condemn and not pardon, is this describing a judicial process or reality? What type of law? The laws of health can condemn—diagnose and expose where one is terminal, but the laws don't heal, God heals, God saves, God restores and sets right.]

He repented not of his rebellion because he saw the goodness of God which he had

abused. It was not possible that his love for God had so increased since his fall that it would lead to cheerful submission and happy obedience to his law which had been despised. **The wretchedness he realized in losing the sweet light of Heaven, and the sense of guilt which forced itself upon him, and the disappointment he experienced himself in not finding his expectations realized, were the cause of his grief**. [He was sorry for the results, not the sin itself.] To be commander out of Heaven, was vastly different from being thus honored in Heaven. The loss he had sustained of all the privileges of Heaven seemed too much to be borne. He wished to regain these. 1SP 30.1

This great change of position had not increased his love for God, nor for his wise and just law. **When Satan became fully convinced that there was no possibility of his being re-instated in the favor of God, he manifested his malice with increased hatred and fiery vehemence**… 1SP 30.2 [This is diagnostic—had Satan truly repented and Christ been wrong about him, then when he was told he couldn't come back into heaven, he would have humbly submitted and done everything he could to make God look good. "You're right. I would put everyone else at risk. I am happy to stay out because I want you all to be healthy and happy." But his actions demonstrate Christ was right, there was no genuine repentance or change of heart. Understand what is described, none of this is legal, it is all reality of function based on the law one internalizes into their heart and mind.]

Satan went alone to mature plans that would most surely secure the fall of Adam and Eve. He had fears that his purposes might be defeated. And again, even if he should be successful in leading Adam and Eve to disobey the commandment of God, and thus become transgressors of his law, and no good come to himself, **his own case would not be improved; his guilt would only be increased**. 1SP 31.2 [What kind of guilt, legal guilt, or reality, he would have more guilt upon his soul knowing how he injured and ruined other innocent beings?]

He shuddered at the thought of plunging the holy, happy pair into the misery and remorse he was himself enduring. **He seemed in a state of indecision;** at one time firm and determined, then hesitating and wavering. His angels were seeking him, their leader, to acquaint him with their decision. **They will unite with Satan in his plans, and with him bear the responsibility, and share the consequences.** 1SP 32.1

Satan cast off his feelings of despair and weakness, and, as their leader, fortified himself to brave out the matter, and do all in his power to defy the authority of God and his Son…1SP 32.2 [What is being described? This is what happens with people, evil people reinforce and encourage their evil overcoming any fears, anxieties, or reluctance. Bad company corrupts good character and colludes together to accomplish more evil. Paul wrote in Romans: "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (Ro 1:29–32 NIV84).

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the increase in wickedness from Cain's descendants. Lamech who is first documented to have two wives and who also killed a man and then told his wives that if Cain is avenged 7 times he would be avenged 77 times.

Consider this commentary from third volume of Spiritual Gifts:

> In the beginning, God gave to Adam one wife, thus showing his order. **He never designed that man should have a plurality of wives**. Lamech was the first who departed in this respect from God's wise arrangement. He had two wives, **which created discord in his family. The envy and jealousy of both made Lamech unhappy**. When men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, they took them wives of all which they chose. **This was one of the great sins of the inhabitants of the old world, which brought the wrath of God upon them**. This custom was practiced after the flood, and became so common that even righteous men fell into the practice, and had a plurality of wives. Yet it was no less sin because they became corrupted, and departed in this thing from God's order. 3SG 99.1

From where did the discord originate in Lamech's family? Was God using power to cause his family to be in discord? Why wasn't Lamech happy in this situation? Happiness is a by-product of healthiness in all domains, one cannot have health in violations of the laws of health. Likewise one cannot have relationship health while violating the laws upon which relationships are designed to function, such as loyalty, trust, devotion, and love.

So, it was unavoidable that things would be stressful and unhappy when he took more than one wife.

What about God's wrath, what does this mean? Does it mean God is inflicting punishment for rule-breaking, or something else?

What happened to the world prior to the flood? Violence and violence all the time, why? How is it the world degraded so rapidly? Because God poured out His wrath, which is God letting people go who insist on rejecting Him and when God sets free what happens to people, relationships and society?

This is what we read in Romans 1, rejecting God results in God granting your wish which results in all the evils magnifying and multiplying in hearts and in the world.

What do you make of Genesis 6:1-2:

> "When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose" (Genesis 6:1-2 NIV84).

Many people believe this describes fallen angels (sons of God as in Job 1) coming down and having

relationships with human women and having children that are a mix of angels and humans and this is wear demons come from.

What do you think?

I believe this is describe situations like Samson and Delilah in which a righteous man takes and wicked wife and is corrupted in the process.

So this is referring to descendants of Seth marrying the descendants of Cain.

SUNDAY

The lesson suggests given the translation of the texts around the birth of Cain, the natural hope in a Savior, that Adam and Eve may have invested their hopes into Cain that he would be the fulfillment of the promise—that he would be their Savior.

Read third paragraph, "In fact, Cain…" If it is true that Adam and Eve almost worshipped him, yet he is not Jesus, he is not God, what would be the likely impact of such treatment?

If Cain were worshipped by Adam and Eve, might Cain feel entitled, special, privileged? Might this have been a weakness in his character that contributed selfishness expanding and being jealous when Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's was not? "How dare God NOT accept my sacrifice—it is I, ME, CAIN, the wonder boy, who has brought it, I am not like this dirty shepherd…"?

Might being the firstborn have impacted his value on himself to a degree that he thought more highly of himself than his actual status deserved?

Do any of us ever struggle with similar temptations?

Assuming Adam and Eve did indulge the child and quasi-worship him, were they responsible for the outcome of Cain's life? Absolutely not, it gives some insight into the struggles that Cain would face, but based on the conversation recorded in Genesis between God and Cain, Cain had every opportunity to trust God and overcome the sinful propensities and temptations. How Cain turned out was decided by Cain, not by his parents!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

May 4, 2022 6:00-7:00 p.m.: Dr. Jennings will be presenting The God Shaped Brain at Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church located at 612 James Blvd
Signal Mountain, TN 37377.

May 6-7, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 4
The Flood

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "Then the Lord saw…" When you hear words like the Lord "saw" what does that mean? Do we understand that this is merely the limitation of human language to communicate to us that God is aware, is processing, focusing upon, but is not to suggest that God just discovered something? God is not surprised, did not find out something He didn't already know.

What of the idea that God regretted? What does regret mean? Feel sorrow, remorse, disappointment—does it suggest a failure to anticipate, to not be aware of what was coming?

I personally like grieve better than regret, we can grieve many things that we have no causal responsibility for, but regret to me suggests a little responsibility, though it doesn't have to, it leans that direction.

The NIV renders it better: "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (Genesis 6:6 NIV84).

The question is why did the Lord grieve? Was it because He was taken unaware? What was the Lord grieved about?

- The pain and suffering His children were experiencing from sin
- The suffering abuse and exploitation of the animals on the earth by the wicked
- The action that the situation required He would have to take if He was going to save humanity from eternal destruction

Read the two last paragraphs, "And yet, God's regret…." What do you make of this idea of God speaking with a "double voice"? Is God two-faced? Is God schizophrenic?

When Jesus returns in glory does He smile at the righteous and scowl at the wicked?

When Jesus comes again is the difference to be found in the heart, mind, character, attitude of God, or in the hearts, minds, attitudes and characters of the people?

Understand the complete corruption in Christianity that almost the entire Christian community has taught the idea that the problem with sin is God's wrath, God's split personality that He loves us but is also filled with wrath and if something isn't done to God then God will lose self-control and rage out against us and torture and kill us OR God will be required by justice and law to use His power to lash

out against us and torture and kill us. It is so corrosive and evil and this lie is so deeply imbedded in Christian thought that many good-hearted people cannot even have a reasoned examination of the evidence behind these false ideas. Instead, they are fearful and must silence voices that would challenge this long standing perverse orthodoxy.

Are there ideas that are commonly taught in Christianity that present God with a split personality, with a divided heart, with a double voice?

- God is not only loving but also just?
- God is forgiving but will also inflict just punishment?
- Jesus died for us to protect us from the wrath of God?
- Jesus who is God mediates His blood to the Father God to propriate the wrath of the Father God

What is the core problem that leads to this confused and conflicted picture of God?

The assumption, the lie, the underlying belief that God's law works like human law.

How do we determine whether something is just or right? By the law—so the way we understand law determines directly the way we understand justice and thus the kind of God we understand God to be.

One of the purposes of the Cross was to demonstrate, reveal, provide evidence to show and prove that God is in fact just in how He handles the sin problem and that God does NOT kill or inflict death for sin. Romans 3:25-26, because God left the sins committed beforehand unpunished He was accused of being unfair, and thus Jesus demonstrated on the cross that God is not unfair, but God's way is right and just. And what was revealed about the cause of death at the cross? Did God lay a hand on Jesus? No, Jesus didn't die as an act of God killing His Son, but because God treated Him as if He was an unhealable sinner and let go of His Son. And that is what sin does. Sin separates people from God, who is the source of life, and the only outcome of this is ruin and death.

God is Creator and He builds reality—His laws are protocols reality operates upon. Created beings cannot build space, time, energy, matter, life, and thus we make up rules that require external enforcement through punishment.

Lucifer's rebellion in heaven began over this idea, it extended in Eden over this idea, and it will end over the same issue, which ties directly back into how we understand God, the problem of sin, and God's solution for it.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (The Great Controversy 582)

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Noah's obedience, in the middle of the second paragraph the lesson states "Noah's response suggests Noah's absolute obedience to what God had told him to do…"

What is the kind of obedience that God wants from us?

- Does God want the obedience of a well-trained dog—thoughtless, mindless, adherence to God's direction? God said it, I believe it, that settles it?
- Does God want us to do things simply because God said to do it?

Why should we obey God?

- Should we obey because God said it?
- Should we obey because God is powerful?
- Should we obey because God will justly punish or richly reward?

Is agreement with God in any way part of our obedience?

Does God want our obedience even if we disagree with Him?

Romans 6:16

> Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16 NIV84).

The Greek for obey or obedience is:

> **5218 ὑπακοή** [*hupakoe* /hoop·ak·o·**ay**/] n f. From 5219; TDNT 1:224; TDNTA 34; GK 5633.[1]

The first part is hypo, as in hypoglycemia, or hypotension and means under, or low, or lowly, and the second half is akoe from which we get acoustic and means to listen, to hear.

Bible obedience means a humble willingness to listen, to learn, to be led out of lies, misunderstanding, old habits, preconceived ideas, false beliefs and into better and more accurate understanding of reality, not just in comprehension but in practice. We listen, comprehend, trust, and apply to our lives what we understand. It is not about performance, but about attitude of heart, a desire to be better and a choice to trust Jesus as the one who we listen to to become better.

In that choice to listen, think, comprehend, agree and apply we are united with God and we are empowered to carry out the will of God when we choose to follow what He has directed. In this process we are changed, our hearts are circumcised—we have cut out the attachments to the world, our

[1] Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

characters are transformed, our neural pathways are rewired. This is growing up in Christ, receiving the mind of Christ, being sanctified.

So an obedient person is one who eagerly listens for the voice of God and has the desire to hear, to understand, and to fulfill God's instructions and therefore chooses to do so to the best of their ability. It is not about perfect performance; it is about heart attitude.

Consider these historic quotes—what truths, concepts, principles, realities are described in regard to obedience? Is there a difference between the obedience that comes from the penal view, imposed rules, legal concepts and the obedience that comes from faith—love and trust?

> A sullen submission to the will of the Father **will develop the character of a rebel**. [What does it mean to submit? If a person submits to God's will they do what they understand God says to do. But what would be a reason that someone would submit like this, not willingly, not joyfully, but sullenly? Would it be because of power, because of threat, because of the belief that God is powerful and He has a law and lawbreaking requires God to punish and so one submits not to be punished? And what happens to the character of those who do this? They become rebels. Is this description borne out by reality? Do we have any evidence from Scripture that this occurs?
>
> - We are talking about the Flood—was the Flood a great display of power? And what happened after the Flood, did they build the tower of Babel because they no longer believed there was a God, or because they didn't trust Him and were rebelling against Him?
> - What about the 10 Plagues of Egypt was this a great display of power? And what were they doing 40 days later? Did they worship the golden calf because they no longer believed there was a God or because they didn't trust Him and were rebelling against Him?
> - What about the conquests of Canaan, like Jericho and other places, again mighty displays of power, but what did they end up doing but worshipping the Baals.
> - And what happened at Mt Carmel? Again mighty power, and all the people said, "The Lord He is God" but did they remain faithful and loyal?
> - Has God ever gotten loyalty, devotion, love, friendship by use of might and power? It cannot be done. That is why the Bible teaches " 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit' says the Lord" (Zech 4:6). And how does the Spirit work, truth and love! What kind of obedience springs from the penal/legal view, from law-enforcement, from threats of inflicted punishment? So the obedience that God wants is not the obedience of law, but of faith, of love, of trust, of understanding friendship.]
>
> By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {Signs of the Times, July 22, 1897}

> The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God **from a sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience**. [Again what

> type of obedience is described here? Is this the obedience of an understanding friend, or of someone who wants to stay out of legal trouble? The imposed law view, the penal/legal views of salvation are all built on Satan's lies about God's law and government. This is why God has blessed His faithful people at this time in human history with the message of the 3 Angels of Revelation 14 which calls people back to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws. Everything changes, we realize that sin transgresses the protocols upon which God constructed life to operate causing a terminal sin-condition and that God so loved us that rather than letting us die of this terminal sin-condition He sent His son to Remedy this condition and restore His law of love into the species human. We realize that God is not the source of pain, suffering and death, but the source of life and health and we eagerly, joyfully, enter into a love and trust relationship with Him and humbly listen to Him to be corrected and led in the paths of righteousness. I this trust relationship with God we choose to go and do where He leads because we agree with Him. This is true obedience.] **He does not obey**. [But he is keeping the rules. Yes, but real obedience is not about rule-keeping it is about the attitude of the heart.] When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. **True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God**. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us **to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God**. {Christ's Object Lessons 97}

The bottom gray section states, "What lesson can we learn from the Noah story regarding our role in warning the world about coming judgment?"

When you hear the word "judgment" what do you understand?

What law lens do you hear it through?

Consider these quotations:

> How was it with the rebellious inhabitants of the antediluvian world? After **rejecting the message of Noah**, they plunged into sin with greater abandon than ever before, and doubled the enormity of **their corrupting practices**. [What is described here? Did they have a choice? They freely chose to reject the truth, and what was the result? What is the meaning of "corrupting practices"? Does this mean, legal trouble, or is the act of sin itself damaging to the sinner, hardening the heart, searing the conscience, destroying the faculties sensitive to the Spirit of God? Does God use power to cause these damaging effects or is this what sin does to sinners?] Those who refuse to **reform** by accepting Christ find nothing **reformative** in sin; their minds are set to carry their spirit of revolt, and they are not, and **never will be, forced to submission**. [Wow—what is described here? What does reform mean? Is this legal adjustment or actual change in the motives and attitudes of the heart? And what is meant by never forced to submission? Would threats of punishment count as force? Would God using power to punish the wicked count as force? Why will force never be used to make rebels submit? Because it would only harden them in rebellion. The entire penal/legal law model promotes

rebellion against God! Only the truth of God's character of love revealed by Jesus wins the heart. Thus Paul wrote "the kindness of God leads us to repentance."] The **judgment which God brought upon the antediluvian world declared it incurable**…{Testimonies to Ministers 75} [What kind of judgment? Is this a legal judgment? Is this an inflicted punishment? What law lens? We just read no forced submission, then what? It is therapeutic—God acting to keep open the avenue for Messiah, to fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15. There is only one righteous man left on the entire planet through whom Messiah can come. God waits patiently until the last possible moment and then acts in mercy, in love, in therapeutic judgment accurately diagnosing there are none that will respond and accurately prescribing the action necessary to save the human species and also secure the unfallen worlds—keeping open the avenue for Jesus.]

"How great is the long - suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." – Patriarchs and Prophets 587

What kind of judgment is this?

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.** The Great Controversy 35.3

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the **restraining power of God** that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The**

Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty. The Great Controversy 36

"I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;

"**They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, indepentent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

"**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress**, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "The verb…" Was the flood God using His power to inflict punishment upon humanity for sin? What is the punishment for sin—is it sleep death in the grave until resurrection or is it the second eternal death?

Did the people who died in the flood die the first sleep or second eternal death? The first sleep death, then it cannot be the wages of sin death. For the righteous die that death, yet Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me **will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die** (John 11:25-26 NIV84).

Further, for those who prefer the penal/legal imposed law view of things, ask them: Does punishment for sin come before or after judgment? When is God's judgment? When are the books of heaven opened and when does judgment occur? Does the judgment for sin happen before the flood or does it happen after the flood? Thus, the flood is not punishment for sin even in their wrong legal model.

Understanding the context of Scripture, and understanding God's design law reality, the events of the flood become very rational and understandable and there is nothing penal legal going on, and there is nothing two-faced going on, there is only our God of love, acting in mercy and grace to heal and save.

The purpose of the flood was therapeutic, to heal and save, not to punish for sin:

First Therapeutic Reason for the Flood: Keep Open the Avenue for Messiah

God would not have baby Jesus born to a woman like Jezebel and God would not force a woman against her will to be the mother of Jesus—in other words God would not perform cosmic rape on a woman in order to incarnate Jesus. God needed a willing woman who loved and trusted Him.

Satan was working to prevent this, to obstruct the plan of salvation, the fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3:15 by working to get every human to permanently harden their heart against God and thereby shutdown the avenue for Messiah.

At the time of the Flood there was only one righteous man left upon the earth. If God does not act then the entire human species is lost in sin. So God acts in love, mercy, grace, therapeutically, waiting until the last moment, to keep open the avenue for the Messiah in order to save and to heal. No the Flood was NOT punishment for sin.

Second Therapeutic Reason for the Flood: Providing Every Opportunity for Repentance

God warned the people through Noah for 120 years of a coming flood, of their sinfulness, of their need to repent, of their need to turn to Him for salvation.

How did they respond to the message of Noah? Ridicule and rejection. What would allowing the flood to occur over a period of time (rain, fountains of water breaking through, etc.) allow for? Would it allow for some people to reflect and to reconsider? Would the evidence of what was transpiring confirm to them that Noah was right? Would that give the people outside the ark the *opportunity* to repent? Whether they accept it or not isn't the question I'm asking here; rather, I'm saying that wouldn't a God of love give every *opportunity* for repentance even if that opportunity was physically painful?

Like the thief on the cross who was suffering execution for his sinful life, still had an opportunity to repent and find eternal salvation. Did the flood give an opportunity for the antediluvians to reflect and repent, even though they were destined to die the first death at that point?

Thus, the flood was brought not only to keep open the avenue for Messiah, but it also allowed those who refused to get on the ark one final *opportunity* for repentance and eternal salvation.

Third Therapeutic Reason for the Flood: Putting Obstacles in the Way of Future Worldwide Apostacy

What were the factors, besides humans being sinful, that contributed to the entire world hardening against God so quickly after Eden? What happens to sinful people when everything is given to them and they don't have to work for anything? What happens over time to people who are self-indulgent and lead hedonistic lives? What happens if such people live hundreds of years? What influence would

such people have on their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and multiple generations down?

Would altering the environment to make it harder to survive be a punishment for sin or, rather, a therapeutic intervention that would help slow the corruption of human character? Have you ever heard that "idle hands are the devil's workshop?"—i.e., useful labor is protective against temptation.

The Edenic-like conditions on the earth prior to the flood permitted those bent on evil more indulgence of the carnal nature and, thus, accelerated the corruption of human character. The changes to the earth by the flood made it harder to put food on the table and, thus, increased the need for useful labor, which also protected people from sinful indulgence. The useful labor also taught design laws to people (sowing and reaping, watering and growth, etc.) and worked against the lies of Satan.

Further, the changes to the earth resulted in shortening human life from about 900 years to around max of 120 years, which also limited the pace of the spread of evil, as those who hardened their hearts against God could not corrupt as many generations with their influence. So, putting all these variables together, we see a beautiful God of love who acts in mercy to therapeutically keep open the avenue for Messiah, provide every opportunity for repentance and salvation, and slow the progress of the disease of sin.

The story of the flood serves as an excellent example of the difference between facts—flood, ecosystem changed, lives shortened—and the interpretation of facts. Satan works to get us to misinterpret the facts through his lie of imposed law in order to distort the character of God. When we return to design law and understand how reality works, we realize that God was not inflicting punishment but was acting therapeutically to heal and save.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Noah after the flood releasing the various birds. Read the fourth paragraph, "Noah's behavior…"

This goes back to the question of obedience—what kind of obedience does God want? Does He want us thinking, comprehending, understanding, questioning, searching for answers, making proactive choices to advance the cause of God in ways that are in harmony with God's methods and purposes, under the willingness to be led by God of course?

What is the last fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians? Self-control—God created us in His image, with our own unique identity, individuality, ability to think and to do and God wants us to develop by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong and intentionally choose the right because it is right.

God does not want mindless puppets or thoughtless followers.

Consider your child goes away to college and calls you up each day to start the day out right. They say, "Mom/Dad. Thank you for blessing me with your love, with your care, with sending me to this wonderful college and paying my tuition. I sure love you and because I love you, I never want to let you down. So mom day, tell me what you would have me do today. Do you want me to go to class or skip class, you tell me and I will do it? And if you want me to go to class, do you want me to cheat today or be honest? And there is a person in class who irritates me, should I curse them and make fun of them to humiliate them? You tell me what to do and I will do it because I want to be an obedient child because I love you." Would you say, "I'm so proud of my child. I sure raised that child right!"

Is this the type of obedience God wants from us? Or does God want us to be able to think, discern, and make intelligent and wise decisions because we understand Him, His design laws and we agree with Him and prefer His methods and principles?

WEDNESDAY

Was the Covenant God made with Noah a new covenant, a different covenant than what God made with Adam in Eden after the fall? Or was it the outworking of the covenant of grace given to Adam as the head of humanity that Messiah would come?

As we speak of covenants, what do you understand a covenant to be? An agreement, a sacred contract, a relationship, an accord, an understanding?

Was there any covenant that existed before sin?

What about the covenant of marriage between Adam and Eve?

Was the covenant of marriage a legal agreement or something else?

What is the covenant of marriage as God designed it to be?

A marriage, as God designed, is not a legal declaration but an intertwining of hearts, minds, and selves into a greater whole. Godly marriage brings two sentient beings into a type of oneness that defies human logic; a oneness in which both individuals retain their unique identities but simultaneously, under the power of love and trust, function as a greater whole, a bonded, integrated unit or team, who share the same values, principles, motives, and methods.

In a godly marriage, each person rejoices in the advancement and success of the other and celebrates every opportunity to invest in the welfare of their partner. It is a mutually rewarding circle of beneficence in which love flows freely from heart to heart. In such a loving union the two individuals expand, ennoble, develop, and elevate beyond that which either person is able experience or achieve on their own. It is in this unity of love that people flourish and becomes truly godlike and over time their love grows, deepens, and strengthens.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Does the Bible use the relationship of marriage to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His people?

Is this relationship a covenant relationship? Is such a relationship, as God designed, as God implements through Christ and His people a legal adjustment in books, or a transformation of hearts and minds that unite intelligent beings with God?

Is this covenant a different covenant that promised to Adam in Eden or the same?

Is this covenant different than what God intended for Adam and Eve to experience with Him in Eden before sin—or is the plan of salvation the plan to bring humanity into the covenant, the relationship of intimacy, love, union, at-one-ment with God that God intended humanity to experience from the beginning?

And what about the covenant to Abraham was that different or the same as promised to Adam?

And then what about the covenant to Noah? Was it different, or still part of the covenant of salvation, of healing, of at-one-ment of restoring sinners to intimacy and oneness with God?

What is the significance of the rainbow?

Is the rainbow the covenant or a sign, reminder, of the covenant?

What about the Sabbath, is it the covenant, or a sign of the covenant?

And what does Satan do to every gift God gives us?

What has Satan done to marriage, to human sexuality, to the rainbow, to the Sabbath?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

CANCELLED—May 4, 2022 6:00-7:00 p.m.: Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church, Cancelled Dr. Jennings as some pastors voiced concerns that Dr. Jennings does not teach God will torment sinners in hell for all eternity and that Jesus' blood is not used to propitiate the wrath of an offended god, which they state are central truths of Christianity that any speaker at their church would have to support.

May 6-7, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- The Remedy New Testament
- The Remedy Psalms
- *Could It Be This Simple?*
- The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at southafrica@comeandreason.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson
All Nations and Babel

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> "Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9 NKJV).

Why did the Lord confuse their languages?

Was this punishment for sin or something else? What was God's purpose in doing it?

Was it an act of vengeance or an act of love and mercy?

Read second paragraph, "However, the line is broken…" What law lens do you hear "judgment" through? What kind of judgment is this?

This is diagnostic and therapeutic judgment, judging what is transpiring, the impact, consequences, what is necessary to minimize the eternal loss of human beings and ultimately keep open avenue for Messiah so humanity can be saved from sin.

There is nothing judicial going on here. It is sad that the lesson keeps using the "judgment" language because it lends itself to reinforcing the deep seated infection of imperial law thinking.

What was the cause or motivation for them to build the tower?

What is the theme of Scripture? Is this event at Babel a stand-alone story to teach us some point, or is it an event that is part of a larger story, a single battle in the middle of a larger war? What is that larger war? Genesis 3:15, the promised Messiah needs to come lest the entire human species is eternally lost. Satan is working to obstruct the coming Messiah. He needs to unite the world—the entire world—into rebellion against God again, just like at the time of the flood. The tower of Babel is part of Satan's attack against God's plan. Thus God intervenes to thwart Satan's attempt to unite the entire human population in rebellion against God and keep open the avenue for the Messiah.

Were the people building the tower because, as a group, the entire world stopped believing in God, or because they did believe but didn't trust Him?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What does this say about the use of power? Can God achieve His goal of loyal followers who love and trust Him and who are also trustworthy by the use of might and power, by inflicting punishments upon those who disobey? Why or why not?

If God cannot get what He wants with use of power, then what does it mean that He used so much power in Old Testament times? Why would He do it? Was He trying to achieve something else in those circumstances? In other words, when God used might and power was He trying to win people to love and trust by the use of might and power or seeking to achieve something else?

Read last paragraph, "In the end, in spite…" I do not like the wording here, that "God turns evil into good." Can God turn evil into good? Or is evil evil and good good? Evil cannot be turned into good, but God can bring good outcomes of the evil actions and intentions of His enemies.

> "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28 NIV84).

For instance, Lot's daughters getting their father drunk and sleeping with him and each having a son Amon the father of the Ammonites and Moab the father of the Moabites, was not good but evil. That act will always be not good but evil. However, Ruth was a Moabitess and the grandmother of King David and one of the ancestors of Christ. So God did bring good out of the evil, but that doesn't make what Lot's daughters did good.

What do you think about the idea that the confusing of the languages was a curse from God that will eventually be turned to a blessing?

They reference Genesis 11:9 to support the idea, which is our memory text, but let's reread it. Does it say God cursed them?

> "Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9 NKJV).

I don't read where the confusing the languages was a curse. In fact, understanding reality, God's design law, the great controversy, the plan of salvation, to NOT confuse the languages and to allow them to stay united would have been a curse. Why? It would have resulted in greater wickedness, more people hardening against God and more people failing to find salvation.

Thus confusing the languages slowed the spread of Satan's lies and the ability for humans to unite in rebellion against God which was a blessing, total and complete.

Why do you think some view God confusing the languages as a curse?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The lesson title is The Curse of Ham, what do you understand this to be?

Let's read about it from Scripture, Genesis 9:18-27:

> The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth. Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.
>
> When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said,
>
> > "Cursed be Canaan!
> > The lowest of slaves
> > will he be to his brothers."
>
> He also said,
>
> > "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem!
> > May Canaan be the slave of Shem.
> > May God extend the territory of Japheth;
> > may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,
> > and may Canaan be his slave" (Genesis 9:18-27 NIV84).

What do you make of this account?

Who gets cursed in the account? Was it Ham or his son Canaan? Why?

Who did the cursing God or Noah? Was the cursing causal? In other words, is Noah a shaman with some magical powers who when he places a curse on someone it is like voodoo and has the ability to magically ruin that person's life and the life of their descendants? If not what is the curse?

How does design law understand the curse? Was it a prophecy, a vision into the future? Was it a prediction based on understanding reality?

When God makes prophecies that concern people, like various prophecies for the nation of Israel—are those prophecies causal? Meaning does the prophecy take away liberty and predestine people to act

out what was prophesied? Or can people still act in ways that cause the prophecy not to occur? Are there such things as conditional prophecies?

Could this curse by Noah be nothing more his view of what was likely to happen because of the nature and character of Ham?

What did Ham do here that would cause Noah to curse his son?

Canaan was the youngest son of Ham, does that give any suggestions as to why he was the one cursed?

Here is Genesis 9:18-27 from *The Remedy:*

> The sons of Noah who came out of the boat were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were Noah's three sons, and from them came all the people who populate the earth.
>
> Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. Some of the grape juice had fermented, and when Noah drank the wine, he became drunk, took off his clothes and laid naked inside his tent. When Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father lying drunk and naked, he ridiculed him; and rather than respecting his father and protecting his reputation, he went out and mocked him to his two brothers. But Shem and Japheth respected their father: they placed a robe on their shoulders and then walked backward into the tent and covered their father's nakedness. As they did this, they turned their faces away and did not see their father naked.
>
> When Noah awoke from his stupor and found out what his youngest son had done, he said, "Your disrespectful, critical and contemptuous ways will be a curse to your descendants, starting with Canaan – your youngest, who is still young enough to be molded by your example! Abusive, exploitive and selfish, your descendants will not be trusted members of the family but will become like servants – no closer than slaves – to their brothers."
>
> Then Noah said, "Praise and adore the Creator God of Shem! But Ham's descendants, beginning with Canaan, will not be trusted members of the family; they will be like servants – no closer than slaves – to their brothers. God will increase Japheth and his descendants, and they will get along well with Shem and his descendants; but Ham's descendants, beginning with Canaan, will not be trusted members of the family; they will be like servants – no closer than slaves – to their brothers."

Read last paragraph, "In addition, the curse…" So are they saying that what Ham did was actually a good thing so that the curse would happen and then become a blessing to all nations?

Or is it better to say that despite the curse that sin causes God can still bring out a blessing that will eradicate sin and its curse?

Moses speaking to the people said,

> "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses" (Deuteronomy 30:19 NIV84).

In Hebrew parallelism life is equated with blessings and death is equated with curses.

And from where does death come?

> "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 NIV84).
>
> Note the contrast between the curse and the blessing—death the curse comes from sin, life the blessing comes from God.

> "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).
>
> Again, the curse of death comes from sinfulness and the blessing of life comes from the Spirit of God

> I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1Corinthians 15:50-55 NIV84).
>
> - The curse of death does not come from God as punishment for sin. It is what sin unavoidably causes unless sin is eradicated by God. And this is what Jesus has done. He has eradicated the death causing principle from the humanity He assumed and restored the life causing principle into humanity and thereby destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light and is now the Savior, Healer, Restorer, Purifier, Deliverer, Remedy for all who trust Him, (Hebrews 5:9).

MONDAY

What is the purpose of the genealogies in Scripture?

- Historical veracity
- Connection through time, generation to generation—a real living link of people from ancient to modern times
  - This is valuable for many reasons one of them this human link, generation to generation from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, Jesus to Jews living today who still observe the Bible Sabbath confirm exactly which day of the week is the

Sabbath for any who question. This is one example why the historic human link in Scripture is valuable.

- Remind us of our fleeting individual existence
- Documents Jesus' is a part of the human family all the way back to Adam

How did Satan pervert the use of genealogies and for which Paul had to write:

- "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith" (1 Timothy 1:3-4 NIV84).

- "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless" (Titus 3:9 NIV84).

What is going on? What was the problem?

Paul tells us in these two passages the key to the controversy between Christ and Satan through history, which continues to this day. It is the same issue that derailed the 1888 General Conference. It is the conflict between faith and law. In 1Timothe Paul said: "These promote controversies rather than God's work—**which is by faith**" And in Titus he said: "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and **quarrels about the law**."

Faith is from the Greek *pistis* and this one single word is translated into *faith, trust, believe, belief, assurance, fidelity.* It means conviction, confidence, certainty, trust.

The issue is about whether we have confidence or trust in God such that we let Him into our hearts to heal and restore us and will humble listen to His instructions and trust Him enough to change our views, practices, methods, values, and follow Him? This is the design law view, healing the distrust caused by sin and restoring us to trust so that we open the heart and allow the Spirit to heal us. This is on contrast to Satan's view which is the law view, law must be kept, someone has to pay a price, some legal mechanism must be accomplished, some ritual performed, some payment made, some book of records cleansed, some judicial ruling occur.

It is rooted in which view of law one holds, design law or imposed law. The view of law one holds changes how one views the character and methods of God. And because of the law of worship changes who we become and what methods we practice.

The faith group and the law group both use the same language such as:

- salvation by faith in Jesus
- righteousness by faith
- Jesus as the saving and atoning sacrifice
- Justification by faith

But they have different meanings depending on whether one worships the Creator whose laws are design laws or one worships the dictator whose laws are made up rules like sinful human beings make.

The root is the lie about God's law that Satan introduced, which when believed results in people believing God is the source of inflicted punishment for sin and thus they view the Bible record as God cursing, God punishing, etc.

So one key to identifying those who hold to Satan's view about God and the lie about God's law is to inquire what they believe happens to the wicked in the end. Those who view God's law as Satan says, believe that God will use His power to inflict pain, suffering, torture and death upon the wicked.

Those who worship the Creator God whose laws or design laws believe the unrepentant in the end will suffer terrible and die eternally, but as an unavoidable result of unremedied sin in them when God no longer shields and protects them from the damaging results of sin.

Note, both groups believe the wicked will suffer and die but one group worships a god who is the source of inflicted pain and suffering to punish sin, the other group worships a God who is the source of life and health and happiness and that the suffering and death comes from people separating themselves from God who is the source of life.

And the reason the one group insists God must punish is because they believe Satan's lie about God's law. So this is a key to identify who still clings to the lie that originated in heaven by God's number one enemy.

We are to be taking the 3 Angels' messages to the world which is to call people out of worshipping the dictator God which Rome made orthodoxy within Christianity and back to worshipping the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water.

But back to how the Jews were using the genealogies to cause controversy, it is because of the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob about their descendants being a blessing to the world.

The Jews came to believe that genetic descendancy determined virtue and righteousness or merit with God. To be able to trace one's genetic line back to Abraham through Jacob and Isaac, was thought to mean one was automatically blessed by God and entitled to the inheritance promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But Paul says this is foolish thinking, why?

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise** (Galatians 3:26–29).

Did Jesus have anything to say about this?

Jesus Himself explicitly told the Jewish leaders of His day that genetics did not determine who is considered an heir of Abraham and who would inherit the promise. We find Jesus' explanation to the Jewish authorities in John 8:34-45; my comments are in red:

> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a **slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.** [If we don't experience freedom from sin through Jesus, then we are not part of the family of God—that is, not part of Abraham's family.] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what **you have heard from your father.**" [Jesus tells them plainly that even though they are genetic descendants of Abraham, God doesn't see them as being children of Abraham, but children of a different father. Note, the Jews, to whom Jesus was speaking, understood this point and protested, claiming their genetic heritage.]
>
> "Abraham is our father," they answered. [Jesus' response disallows their genetics as being a valid basis for being considered a descendant of Abraham.]
>
> "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. [Those recognized by God as children of Abraham are those who have the same faith in God as Abraham did and who act on that faith as Abraham did.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." [Jesus again tells them that their heritage is not determined genetically but characterologically. They have embraced another father, but again, they protest and claim a higher father than Abraham.]
>
> "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [The Jews claimed God as their Father because God created humanity. But Jesus disallows this claim as well, for we are born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and Jesus already said that those who remain slaves to sin have no permanent place in the family of God. Only those who, through Jesus, are freed from sin become part of the family of God and are considered children of Abraham. Note Jesus' answer.]
>
> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil,** and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:34–45 NIV84). [Jesus unequivocally destroys the idea that genetics determines who is an heir of Abraham, and He makes it clear that it is all about faith, character, love, and trust like Abraham.]

Then what do we understand the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to mean?

The covenant with and promises to Abraham focus on two promised lands and I wrote a blog about this Israel and the Promised Land Today in which I give more details. But the promises to Abraham had a local application and a global application. The local application is the one in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan **for the purpose** of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come **so that** Jesus can fulfill God's greater promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent's head **so that** the "meek will **inherit** the earth" (Matthew 5:5)—the true Promised Land.

- The *genetic* descendants inherited Canaan *in order* to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that …
- … the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that the builders of the tower of Babel wanted to make a "name" for themselves.

What does this mean?

The lesson points out they wanted to replace God with self.

Where did such a motive originate?

Let's read Isaiah 14:12-17:

> How you have fallen from heaven,
> O morning star, son of the dawn! [Who is this?]
> You have been cast down to the earth,
> you who once laid low the nations!
> 13 You said in your heart,
> "I will ascend to heaven;
> I will raise my throne
> above the stars of God;
> I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
> on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.
> 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
> I will make myself like the Most High." [What is described? What is the motive? Where does it originate?]
> 15 But you are brought down to the grave,

to the depths of the pit. [By what?]

16 Those who see you stare at you,
they ponder your fate:
"Is this the man who shook the earth
and made kingdoms tremble,
17 the man who made the world a desert,
who overthrew its cities
and would not let his captives go home?" (Isaiah 14:12-17 NIV84).

What is described here? This is describing when the righteous who see through the lies of Satan as he is exposed as the source of pain, suffering, death. And all responsibility for sin and death is placed back upon Satan.

Is this acted out anywhere in the ceremonial system? This is at the Day of Atonement when the high priest places his hands on the head of the scapegoat and it is led into the wilderness. This is not placing individual acts of sin on the scapegoat, but placing the lies of Satan that caused the sin back upon his head with all the subsequent responsibility for the pain and suffering his lies have caused in God's universe.

This is what is happening in the minds of people today as the "blood" of Jesus, which symbolically means His character, the truth and love of God that He revealed, is internalized into our hearts and minds and we discern the difference between God and Satan. As we reject the imposed law lie with all of its subsequent perversions and distortions about God and the plan of salvation, we are being cleansed and the **responsibility for all the pain, suffering and death is placed back on Satan's head and we stop teaching that God is the source of death that He inflicts upon the wicked**!

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph, "The descent of God reminds…" After Adam sinned could the human race be saved without Jesus, without the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15? No!

No question, without Jesus becoming human, humbling Himself all the way through the cross and grave to come out victorious having destroyed death no human being could be saved.

But, did Jesus' death at the cross save every human being? Why not?

Jesus came as the second Adam and as such redeemed the species human, put the species human back into sinless perfection and right connection with God, the source of life, IN HIS PERSON, in the humanity that He took upon Himself. Simultaneously, Jesus revealed the truth about God that destroys the lies of Satan solidifying the unfallen angels in their loyalty.

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself** all things, whether things on earth or things **in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross** (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84).

And He procured the remedy necessary for any individual sinful human being who places their trust/faith in Him to receive eternal life, a new heart and right spirit, the character, methods, and law of God restored within them.

> once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:9 NIV84).

So Jesus saved the species in His own person, revealed truth to stop Satan's lies from spreading and securing the unfallen beings in their loyalty, and procured the remedy for fallen humans that we receive by faith when we trust Jesus we open our hearts and the Spirit enters bringing the victory of Christ to us and we are reborn with new motives, desires, and power to live lives of love and truth rather than fear and selfishness.

So why are some saved and some are not? Because some partake of the truth and trust Jesus, open their hearts and receive the regeneration of motives from fear and selfishness to love and trust and then choose to live differently, in harmony with God's principles, and with each choice to follow and apply God's methods in their lives they receive divine power to succeed and their characters are transformed, and some do not partake the truth and open their hearts in trust to receive this indwelling presence of God which transforms them.

THURSDAY

Read the first paragraph, "God's design.." Now consider for a moment, if God did not confuse their languages would their tower have reached into heaven? No, they would have remained on earth, but what would have likely resulted?

Would a human government have formed? And what kind of government would it likely have been with people motivated to make a name for themselves?

Would it have resulted in a few powerful elites dominating and exploiting the masses of people? And what impact does that have on individual development?

So, do you see that God confused their languages and spread them around the world to prevent a single dominating and exploitive human government from developing?

The lesson states in the second paragraph, "Indeed, whenever humans, in open defiance of God, want to 'make a name' for themselves, we can be sure it won't turn out well. It never has."

This is well stated and absolutely true. What about today? Do we see society decaying as godless evolutionism replaced a Creator God worldview in schools and society at large? And is our cultural value system today based on "making a name" for self, getting the most fame, the most clicks, the most followers? And what is the result, are we seeing more virtue, gentleness, kindness, meekness, love, patience, goodness, righteousness, or ever-increasing vileness, wickedness, exploitation and evil?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

May 6-7, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at southafrica@comeandreason.com

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 6
The Roots of Abraham

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read second paragraph, "In his journeying…" What do you think they mean by this sentence, "In his journeying, Abraham is suspended in a void—without his past, which he has lost, and without his future, which he does not see"?

Did Abraham's life history, prior experiences, knowledge, perspectives, understandings of the cultures and world around him, abilities, language change when he left Ur? In other words, did Abraham leave his history behind? Did he have amnesia?

Did his past no longer have an impact upon who he was and the decisions he made?

We will read about him rescuing Lot this week—who was Lot? His nephew and when did that relationship get established? Wasn't it in his past, in his history?

When Abraham was old and wanted to get a wife for his son Isaac what did he instruct his servant to do? "go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac" (Genesis 24:4 NIV84).

If Abraham was in a void without his past history, how could he send his servant to his relatives for a wife, weren't his family part of his history?

Perhaps this is simply poorly worded and they meant to say, "Abraham left the support and resources of his home, family, and community," which he did. But it just didn't sound right to me the way it was worded.

SUNDAY

The lesson is about the covenant with Abraham that all nations on earth will be blessed through his Seed, meaning through Jesus.

Read second paragraph, "The fulfillment of that prophecy…" The Bible is an historic document that records the life of real people doing real historic events, but many of its historic figures and the actions they took were chosen by God to be recorded in Scripture because they also serve as object lessons to teach the larger reality of the plan of salvation.

- Ur or Babylon represents Satan's kingdom—and what is the underlying foundation that every kingdom is founded upon? Its laws. And of all the kingdoms that interacted with God's people and thus entered the Bible story arc, what is Babylon known for? The code of Hammurabi—the first nation to have an imposed law. Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world because all the kingdoms of the world operate upon imposed—made up rules—that require inflicted punishments. But God is Creator and His laws are design laws that life is built upon and that when broken continued life require the Creator to heal and fix the damage and restore to harmony with the law lest if God does nothing death ensues.
- Abraham leaving Ur or Babylon is an object lesson for the people of God who are to leave the systems of this world with their imposed laws and inflicted punishments as a way of achieving justice. The beast of revelation rises to do justice, to make things right, to fix what is wrong. But it does so through imposed law and more controlling, oppressive government with more rules, more mandates, more encroachment upon liberty, ultimately coercing consciences. Those who believe God's government operates like Babylon or Rome, with made up rules that require inflicted punishments will embrace this beastly system and believe it is right to do so. But God's true saints will leave the methods of this world behind and live out God's law of truth, love and liberty.
- So, like Abraham left Ur, we must leave the methods, practices, and ways of this world behind. We do not get a new history; we get new hearts and right spirits that live out God's methods and principles in how we treat others. In fact, we remember quite clearly our own history when we used to practice and believe the methods of the world were right, and praise God that we are no longer of this world even though we are still in this world.
- As we leave the old ways of the world behind, no longer identifying with the imposed law systems, the penal legal theologies, but instead advancing the Creator God and living out his methods, we like Abraham move toward the promised land—a land we see by faith.
- Like Abraham left behind his family and human inheritance in order to receive the inheritance from God, we must leave worldly ties behind and be reborn as children of God in order to receive our heavenly inheritance.

MONDAY

Genesis 12:1-9 God calls Abraham to leave Ur and he accepts the call and he, his nephew Lot, his wife Sarah and his servants all leave and go to the Negev.

Abraham's choice to leave his home, family, friends, all that was familiar to him was an act of faith. But when he arrived to the land where God led him there is a famine and in response to the famine he then goes down to Egypt, where he tells Sarah to present herself as his sister for fear of Pharaoh wanting Sarah and killing him and taking her.

What is going on here?

Why did God call Abraham to leave his home and travel to the Negev region?

For Abraham's children to be the avenue for the Messiah. In other words, Abraham was called to be the father of the branch of the human family through whom the Genesis 3:15 promise would be fulfilled, through whom Messiah would come.

Again, this is the focus of Scripture, the great controversy over God's character and government and God's solution for the sin problem, i.e. the plan of salvation. Thus our focus on Abraham's family, narrowing down on Isaac, Jacob, and then Judah.

So, once Abraham is identified by God's call as the one through whom all nations will be blessed by the Seed or descendant who would come, and who is the same promised Seen who will crush the serpent's head, what did Satan do? Did Satan ignore Abraham, or focus his attention on Abraham?

And immediately after Abraham arrives in the promised land area, he experiences a famine—what is likely going on? Who is behind the famine? Satan is actively working on the forces of nature to destroy Abraham.

And when this famine occurred, did Abraham turn to God in faith, or did Abraham seek his own solution? And what solution did Abraham choose? To go to Egypt. And having turned from faith to self-dependence, what was the next action Abraham chose? To lie and to solicit his wife help him deceive others, in order to do what? Protect self. In other words, having left the life of faith for the life of protecting self, fear and selfishness, the survival of the fittest drives, took over and Abraham began practicing the methods of Satan's kingdom rather than the methods of God's kingdom. And what was the result? Trouble for Abraham, but God in mercy intervened therapeutically to stop Pharaoh from violating Sarah's virtue, yet Abraham's reputation was damaged.

Real historic people who did real historic things—but what is the object lesson for us?

- We are all called like Abraham to leave this world and its systems behind and enter a journey of faith with God that will lead us to the heavenly promised land
- Satan will use every means available to him in order to discourage us just like he did Abraham and we may find ourselves in a famine. What is a famine symbolic of? Some place with limited resources—spiritually speaking we may find ourselves in a community with people who don't believe as we do, without the comfort, encouragement, support of fellow believers.
- We may be tempted to go down to Egypt. Egypt is symbolic of godlessness. We may have difficulties and feel as if we are dying of thirst spiritually. And we may be tempted to turn to the systems of this world to find justice, or comfort, or connection and leave behind the truths of God's kingdom.
- But our choices to compromise with the world will always bring painful and negative consequences, yet God in mercy will intervene to provide every opportunity for us to return to Him and His promises and resume our journey to the heavenly promised land. However, we may have embarrassed ourselves, and just like Abraham damaged his relationship with Pharaoh, we may suffer damaged human relationships from trying to cope on our own rather than trusting God and staying faithful to Him.

But another deeper object lesson is when we realize where Abraham has come from, where God is leading Him, and where he was tempted to go:

- Abraham was led from Babylon to the promised land but was tempted by the famine to go down to Egypt. Here we have three distinct places highlighted, Babylon, the promised land, Egypt. Does this trigger your mind to think of any prophecies or object lessons?
- Daniel 11 the King of the North versus the King of the South. In the prophecy there are three places or powers—the King of the North identified as Babylon and Rome; the beautiful land, which is the promised land, and the King of the South which is identified as Egypt.
- Throughout the prophecy the King of the North and the King of the South fight back and forth over the beautiful land, which represents the people of God.
- Both the King of the North and the King of the South are Satan's kingdoms and he pits them against each other to fight back and forth through history in an effort to pull the people of God into one or the other of his factions.
- The King of the North, represented by Babylon and Rome is symbolic of religious imperialism and the King of the South represented by Egypt is symbolic of godlessness in all its forms (paganism, earth worship, evolutionism, communism, humanism).
- Today the King of the South is the godless forces in the world, communism, godless evolutionism, humanism, socialism, leftism; while the King of the North is religious imperialism and is made up of all those people who believe in the creator God, the God of Abraham, but who also believe in imposed law and would use the power of the state to enforce their morals upon others. This would include Judaism, Islam and many Christian groups who seek to use human governments to impose laws to force their moral agenda upon others.
- The Daniel 11 prophecy ends with the King of the South, godless forces, pushing against the King of the North, which incites the King of the North to storm out against him and destroy him taking his power and wealth. Over the last century we have seen the push of godlessness, evolutionism, socialism, communism, leftism, wokeism, seeking to corrupt the minds of people with their godless worldview—which is based on multiple levels of denying reality—like there is no God, that humans evolved on their own, there is no male and female etc. And in America today we are seeing the beginning of rise of the King of the North and a very strong conservative backlash takes over the reins of government and will crush the godless forces that have been pushing their agenda. Did you see where the state of Florida just this week took back political power from Disney which had since 1967 the right to police their own area?
- But throughout all human history, including the prophecy of Daniel 11. God's people are not to be part of either Babylon or Egypt, they are to be identified with the beautiful land. Thus, the 3 Angels' messages call the people of God out of the fallen system of Babylon, built upon imposed laws. This includes both the governments of this world AND the false imposed law penal/legal theologies taught in the churches that make God's government functionally no different than the governments of this world.
- We will find ourselves in increasing end-time distress—like Abraham's famine—and we will have to decide, do we go back to Babylon, join with the forces of the state, impose laws on others, mandates, coerce others, do we go to Egypt and join with the godless forces of leftism,

or do we leave Babylon, refuse Egypt and stay loyal to our Creator God and trust Him with our lives, families, and futures such that we stay faithful to His kingdom and live the truth, presenting it in love, while we leave others free?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Abram's reconnection…" This is an excellent point. Abram, when relying on self, when focusing on the threats of this world, experienced increasing fear which led to selfishness, the desire to protect self and thus he fled to Egypt and told lies to protect self.

Do we see in the world today that Satan is like a roaring lion—and a lion's roar is designed to incite fear and fear leads to more selfish behaviors, more willingness to surrender freedom, to lie, to mandate, to control others, in order to feel safe.

However, notice that after Abraham repented and returned to living for God, he again trusts God with his life, his fortune, and his future, and doesn't act to get the best for himself, but allows Lot to choose first and Abraham trusts God to bring good out of whichever land with which he ends up possessing.

This type of decision-making, the decision-making of love and trust, is not natural to our sinful hearts. Our sinful hearts are driven by fear and selfishness and naturally sees threats and chooses actions which are designed to protect self, even if it may put others at risk.

The person of faith, lives differently, they trust God to watch over them, to bring good out of every situation, to protect them—as long as they are carrying out what God would have them do and thus they choose truth, love, and God's principles in how they conduct themselves. They seek to honor God and fulfill His purposes in every situation and trust God with how things turn out. Sometimes this can be a very difficult thing to do, especially when the issue is very important to us and will cause us emotionally pain or suffering.

And these struggles in decision-making are often related to what we have become emotionally attached to. People struggle to set healthy boundaries with others if they fear being rejected by the other. Instead of speaking truth in love and holding firm to what they believe is right for them to do in governance of self, people who live controlled by fear of rejection will compromise what they know is truth, healthy, and right, and go along with the other person in order to be accepted. Such insecure people rather than speaking truth graciously, will try to manage the other person's responses by avoiding any truth they believe will upset the other person. This almost always results in the person lying in some way, just like Abram lied about Sarah to try and manage Pharaoh's reactions to him.

Read the fourth paragraph, "In contrast, Abram's move…" The lesson notes that it wasn't until this separation from Lot that God speaks to Abraham again. Is there an object lesson for us?

- Do we ever have people in our lives that interfere with our connection with God?

- Do we ever have people in our lives that Satan uses to distract us from our duty, or who actively undermine our relationship with God?
- Do we have a responsibility to determine with whom we associate and on what level we associate?
- In other words, whom we let into the inner circles of our affections and whom we spend time with?

- What if we have family members who are not living for the Lord, should we ever stop loving them? Absolutely not!
- Should we ever stop lifting our family members up in pray? No!
- But could there be times we do set boundaries with certain family members and stop hanging out with them, or even stop letting them come over to our homes?
- What about spouses—could someone have married a person who is actually being used by Satan to undermine their mission and purpose for God?
    - What about Samson and Delilah?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about the coalition of various kings going to war and Lot being taken captive and Abraham organizing a rescue mission and rescuing Lot.

Read the second and third paragraph, "The involvement…" In light of what we have discussed regarding the King of the North and King of the South, what is the application to us of what Abraham did?

Whose ultimate kingdom did the various kings and political powers that were warring in Abraham's day belong? Note, all the various powers that were warring in Abraham's day were part of Satan's kingdom. Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world. All the kingdoms of this world are Satan.

Likewise, today, Russia and Ukraine, the USA and Iraq or Afghanistan, or China or Iran are all Satan's kingdoms. God's kingdom will not be found in any human government. All human governments are built upon imposed law, which is Satan's form of governing, and all human governments commit injustices in the name of doing justice.

Just as in Abraham's day Satan's various governments warred against each other as a means of taking God's people captive, so too today Satan has his kingdoms, the human governments of this world, war each other in all kinds of ways in order to take the minds and hearts of God's people captive. Satan's agents engage in:

- economic wars
- political wars
- biological wars (think COVID—a manmade virus that killed millions)

- physical wars
- cultural wars (think wokeism—all the recent attacks on the US flag, on the national monuments, on the names of various places, schools, institution, on marriage, on gender, on speech, on liberty, so-called virtue signaling, the BLM movement and so much more—all if this is a form of warfare—every bit of it specifically designed to undermine Bible principles and take captive the hearts and minds of God's people into a godless system of false justice).

So in Abraham's day Satan's kingdoms went to war and took Lot captive. Abraham had to decide what to do? Does he go to war to destroy the kingdoms of the world and establish his own earthly government with him and his people in charge so that he can be safe? No, what does he do? He goes to war to free Lot from captivity.

What is the object lesson for us today?

> "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84)

We are engaged in a war, but we don't fight like the world, we don't use the methods of the world. We don't use guns and tanks; and we don't use the power of the state to pass laws to force people to do it our way. We instead, wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the truth, the Word of God, to destroy the lies and set hearts and minds free from both Babylon and Egypt, from both the King of the North (religious imperialism) and the King of the South (godlessness), by calling people out of the imposed law systems of this world back to worshipping the Creator God whose laws are design laws.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses upon Abraham paying tithe to Melchizedek, in the third paragraph the lesson states, "Melchizedek is, however, not to be identified with Christ."

I thinks this is a poorly worded sentence and should be written as "Melchizedek is, however, not to be identified AS BEING Christ."

He is identified in Scripture with Christ. He was a type of Christ as the writer of Hebrews makes clear, but He was not Christ.

This is the view taught by the SDA church, here is an historic quote:

> It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. *Selected Messages volume 1* page 409

What is the significance of Abraham paying tithe to Melchizedek?

What is the difference between tithe and offerings?

Tithe is understood to be our lived-out, practiced, acknowledgement of our partnership with God in all things. That all our success in life no matter where, is only due to the fact that God so loved us He sent His Son to partner with us, to become human, to take up our cause, to provide us the living connection with Him that enables us to succeed in every aspect of life. Returning the tithe functionally says we recognize God as our partner in life and that all our success comes from Him!

The offering is our thanks to God, or our passion to support some specific program, outreach, project etc.

What is the tithe supposed to be used for? The advancement of the gospel.

To whom is the tithe to be paid today? The church? Which church?

Well obviously the church promoting the gospel—which church is that? Would we need to identify what the gospel is?

What is the gospel? The good news, about what? Does the good news expand and develop over time taking on new and deeper insights as time unfolds?

Did the Reformers promote the gospel? Did they leave their parent church to do so? And did the Reformation stop with Luther? Did the gospel message advance with advancing truths?

Would you recommend today that people pay tithes to groups presenting the gospel as Luther did, a message that is 500 years old?

What is the gospel message today?

Do we have a responsibility similar to those who did live in Luther's day, to examine the various presentations of the gospel and decide which version we believe to be the most consistent with Scripture and support those presenting that gospel?

Should we decide where to send our tithes, to programs, groups, organizations that are advancing the gospel as we understand it, or are we to mindlessly send our tithes to the organization of our birth, the church that our parents raised us in, regardless of what gospel they present?

Is it possible that many sincere, good-hearted Christians, have been conditioned to send their tithe money blindly to a church organization that is not presenting the gospel and they are innocently funding programs and materials that are working against the final message of mercy for the world? What is the final gospel message to go to the world?

Here is one historic view, do you agree?

> "It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…***The last rays of merciful light*****, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love.**" Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

What is the gospel, the good news? Would it be good news that you get eternal life in a universe run by Satan? So, if we teach the good news is that Jesus died to pay for our sins to an offended god so that god won't use his power to kill us are we presenting the good news? No, we are actually teaching Satan's view of God and undermining love and trust.

EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church wrote this about her personal tithe:

> "There are ministers' wives… who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised. The Word says, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Luke 10:7. When any such decision as this is made, I will, in the name of the Lord, protest. **I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls**.{DG 106.1}
>
> **It has been presented to me for years** [by whom?] **that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient [income to] properly to support their families**… {2MR 99.3}
>
> **I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this, and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury,** [wait, it wasn't being given to the organized church, yet was not withheld from the Lord's treasury, why?] **it is not a matter that should be commented upon**, for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best. {2MR 99.5}
>
> **Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, *as God has instructed me to do*. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will; and I have done so.**.. {2MR 100.1}

Did you notice that this person believed that her tithe was to go directly to people who were not funded by the institution, but who were promoting the true gospel message, she was 1) acting at God's direction and 2) the money was going into God's treasury, i.e. storehouse.

What do you think?

What is the gospel for this time? The message of the 3 Angels who come with the eternal gospel? If you haven't read our Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels magazine, I encourage you to do so. And as you read, ask yourself, is this the gospel?

The final message of mercy to the world, the eternal gospel is the truth about God's character of love, which is only rightly understood when we return to worshipping the Creator whose laws are design laws upon which reality is built to operate. If we teach the imposed law view of law we are not presenting the eternal gospel, but the lie of God's enemy.

Historic Adventism taught the following:

- **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering,—**a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah,** between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. {GC88 582.2}

What was Satan's opening lies about God's law?

- **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, **it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. {DA 761.4}

We have such a wonderfully good news message to share with the world. We invite you to join us in sharing this message. We have many free resources we will ship to you anywhere with a US postal address, or if you are in South Africa or Australia New Zealand, we have centers there to share these materials. Check our website for details.

If you live in other parts of the world, most of our resources are on our website and can either be read online or downloaded in pdf format for local printing and sharing.

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "Christ's church is to be a blessing…" do you hear a design law described here?

The law of sowing/reaping, exertion, watering, love, the more you give the more you receive.

Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

May 6-7, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 7
The Covenant with Abraham

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson this week is entitled The Covenant with Abraham

What does this title mean to you? What is this covenant?

Read second paragraph, "Like Noah's covenant…" this is well said, yes, the covenant with Abraham is not a NEW covenant, it is the covenant of grace given to Adam after the fall in Genesis 3:15 that a Savior would be born who would redeem Adam's failure—meaning save the species human, destroy Satan, eradicate sin, and open a new path for every human being who so chooses to also experience salvation from sin.

What is the basis of the covenant with Abraham?

- Was it an agreement dependent upon Abraham's work?
- Was it a contract that gave benefits based Abraham's genetics?
- Was it made upon law keeping, regulations, or ceremony?

Certainly Abraham's works were involved—he left Ur, and he is a human with DNA, and there were various ceremonies involved, but was any of this the basis of the covenant?

What was the basis of the covenant? God's grace and Abraham's trusting of God. That is the basis. God promised to send a Savior to deal with the sin problem and Abraham trusted God and **then** followed where God directed.

Are we able to participate in this covenant? How?

Our participation in the covenant is upon the same foundation, God's grace and our response to that grace is to trust God, i.e. the righteous or just live by faith or trust, and that faith leads us to choose to do what we understand God wants, i.e. we work in faith, but our works do not provide the remedy for our sin-sickness, our genetics make no difference, and our law-keeping and ceremonies have no impact upon God's grace or procuring the remedy to sin.

All of our works and law-keeping are the results or fruits of the Remedy being applied in our hearts and minds through faith/trust.

In the second paragraph the lesson states that Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael all struggled with fear, not fear in the sense of reverence and awe, but anxiety, dread, terror. Why? From where did the fear come?

As soon as Adam sinned he ran and hid because he was afraid—fear is part of the infection of sin and every human being who has ever lived since Adam's fall is a descendant of Adam and Eve and is born infected with fear.

And what does fear cause one to do? Watch out for self—fear tempts us to be selfish, it is the primary emotion that drives the survival of the fittest instinct. It is part of what Paul would describe as the law of sin and death.

What drives out fear? Perfect love, godly love is antagonistic to fear and vice versus. Fear undermines our capacity to love the greater the fear the greater hindrance, love drives out fear the greater the love and less the fear.

But love isn't the only godly element that drives out fear, is there another?

Trust drives out fear, when we trust we have less fear—even if we trust the wrong person or the wrong solution—as long as we trust, or believe, or have faith we have less fear.

This is one of Satan's great traps. Not only does sin incite fear, but Satan roars like a lion—the messaging of the world is fear-inducing, and people don't like to feel afraid, insecure, under threat. People want something to take away the fear and if they can't resolve the threat, make the fear go away, they look for someone or something to trust in that will.

This is why so many trust in penal legal theologies—it takes away their fear. Their sin-punishment has been paid and they are legally declared righteous and they feel safe. To take away this idea is to make them feel afraid and they resist it.

Just like some people who put their trust in mask wearing to stop COVID. The truth that masks make no difference at all takes away their false security, increases their sense of fear and thus they resist it and get angry at others who are not wearing a mask. You see, the people not wearing a mask, even if they don't say anything, are living witnesses to the fact that masks do nothing. These people are living healthy and those who have faith in the mask and need the mask to make them feel safe get threatened by those who are not wearing masks. Not threated by the actual virus, but the virus of fear.

The point is that fear can be resolved by trust and trust can be misplaced.

The truth will expose the inadequacy of solutions that don't work and those who are trusting in those solutions, if not mature and seeking truth, will get angry and seek to silence and destroy those who bring the truth.

What is trust safely built upon?

Trustworthiness of the one being trust, and that is known by what? The truth, thus the truth sets us free—from what? From the lies about God that break the circle of love and trust and incites fear, and

the truth restores our trust opening our hearts to God's presence and His love along with our trust based upon the truth further frees us from fear.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "God's first response." The lesson suggests we read Romans 4:1-6:

> What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:1–5 NIV84).

What does this mean? It says Abraham believed God, what does it mean to believe God? It must mean more than cognitive awareness knowing that God said something and believing that God said it because the Bible says:

> "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder" (James 2:19 NIV84).

So "believing God" must be something more than believing God exists or that God said this or that, what is this belief that Abraham had that is recognized to be righteousness?

It means to trust God—Abraham didn't believe some fact that God exists, or God said something, but Abraham actually trusted God. Why would such trust be linked in Scripture with Abraham being recognized by God as being righteous?

What is the natural state of the human heart and mind after Adam's sin? Is the normal/natural state/attitude of a sinful/unrepented heart? Does the sinful heart trust or distrust God?

Since we are referencing Romans to give us insight into this experience known as "saving faith," this faith in which people are recognized by God to be righteous, what some like to say is a legal accounting, or crediting Christ's righteousness to our record book in heaven and declaring us to be righteous even though we are not, maybe we should allow Paul in the very book of Romans only a few verses later in chapter eight to give his insights into this what this experience is.

> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit *[have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (NIV84)]*. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because **the carnal mind is enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:5-8 NKJV).

What is the natural state of a sinful or carnal mind/heart? Do sinners naturally trust God?

So if Abraham trusts God what does that mean—does that mean his mind is still set on the carnal or has his heart and mind been changed from distrust to trust and prefer the things of the Spirit of God?

So, when God recognizes Abraham as righteous it is because the sinful, distrusting, carnal heart has been set right, put back to a right orientation of trust in God, which if we use the Latin term for that is justified. **God recognized Abraham as having been justified because he actually was**! His heart had been changed from distrust to trust, from carnal to spiritual.

The sad history of Christianity is that the healing plan of God, achieved in Christ, taught in Scripture, and promoted by Paul was supplanted by a Roman imperialistic view of law and authority which corrupted the gospel into a legal process. Luther came along and recognized many things taught in the Roman system that were not in Scripture and started the Reformation.

And we are thankful for Luther, what a man of conviction, of courage, a man used by God to lead people out of blindly trusting the authority of church leaders and back to the Bible and translating the Bible into the language of the people. He did a great work for God. But Luther was a finite human who retained many errors in his own thinking.

Luther did not accept all 66 books of Scripture. He did not accept James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation. This resulted in Luther failing to see the larger war that goes beyond the human sin problem to the angels in heaven. Further, Luther continued to operate under the imposed law mindset falsely believing that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed punishments by the ruling magistrate. This is one of the core reasons he found no light in the idea that there was a war in heaven, because a powerful God could easily punish any rule-breaker in heaven and no such war could ever be waged. Thus, Luther's views on atonement are also corrupted with penal/legal baggage that he never was able to get rid of.

We have such a better view, which is to be expected, because we have the benefit of the unfolding truth from many diligent Bible students who have advanced the gospel since Luther.

But sadly, when it comes to the atonement many Christians stay stuck in the penal/legal explanations of righteousness by faith as being a legal declaration of something that isn't actually real in the believer.

Here is Romans 4:1-6 from *The Remedy:*

> What about our father Abraham: what did he understand about this issue? If Abraham was somehow healed by his own efforts at keeping a set of rules or performing certain rituals, then he would have his own healing formula to promote, and would not need trust in God. But what does the Scripture say? "Abraham trusted God, and his trust was recognized as righteousness because the distrust caused through Satan's lies had been removed, and through trust he was endowed with a new heart, right motives and Christlike principles." Now, when a person

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> works, their wages are earned and are not a gift or an endowment. But the person who doesn't try to earn God's Remedy by working for it, but instead comes to know and trust God–that person's trust is recognized as righteousness because the distrust caused by Satan's lies has been removed, and through trust they receive from God transformation of heart and experience God's own righteous character created within. David says the exact same thing when he describes the blessedness of the person to whom God bestows his perfect cure without them working to earn it: (Romans 4:1-6 REM).

The lesson next points to the land of the promise, what are your thoughts on the land promised to Abraham?

What was the purpose of promising Abraham the land?

Are the promises to Abraham based upon human works? Or human genetics? Or law keeping or ceremonies? Then what?

Was the promise of inheriting the land part of the same covenant of Genesis 3:15, to bring the Messiah to save the species human?

> In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice (Genesis 22:18 NKJV).

Who is this promised Seed? The same Seed from Genesis 3:15, so Abraham is the one through whose family the promise to Adam will be fulfilled. This promise was repeated to Isaac (Genesis 26:2-4) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15) so we can be sure that the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15 does not come through Ishmael, but through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and later Judah.

So, there is no doubt that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promising that that region of land would be given to them and their descendants and that through them the promised Messiah would come.

But does that mean the nation-state of Israel that exists today is part of that promise, or is it possible that we may have missed a larger promise from God because we have remained focused on that smaller regional promise? Is it possible that this promise to Abraham and his descendants is a dual-fulfillment prophecy and we have not fully appreciated its larger applications?

The Bible is filled with dual prophecies and promises:

- Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:28–32) is also applied by Peter to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–21).
- Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 both start out referring to an earthly king and then transition to the fall of Lucifer.

- Jesus' prophecy about the second coming is also blended with the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24).

In all these dual-fulfillment prophecies, there is a lesser application and a greater application—the lesser is regional; the greater is global.

- The promise given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 is the promise given to the entire human race, for all human beings were in Adam and Eve.
- The promise given to Abraham was a *regional* promise of that *global* promise.
    - Meaning that God promised that through Abraham's family the **earlier promise** would be realized; that it would be through Abraham's genetic family that the Seed of the woman would be born and deliver the descendants of Adam from sin and death. This is the focus of Scripture, the plan of salvation.

The covenant with Abraham is the same covenant that was given to Adam, but with Abraham we now have the identification of the specific branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come. And with the recommunication of the covenant to Abraham, God gives a dual-fulfillment prophecy concerning the land:

1. A smaller, local, regional promise that Abraham's genetic descendants would inherit the land of Canaan **in order to fulfill their mission** to be the genetic family through whom Jesus would be born; and
2. the larger, global, spiritual fulfillment, **that the true descendants of Abraham, those who are like Abraham in faith and character would inherit the entire earth**!

T**he covenant with and promises to Abraham focus on two promised lands.** The local application is the one in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan **for the purpose** of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come **so that** Jesus can fulfill God's greater promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent's head **so that** the "meek will **inherit** the earth" (Matthew 5:5)—the true Promised Land.

- The *genetic* descendants inherited Canaan *in order* to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that …
- … the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

The promise for the genetic descendants to occupy the small land of Canaan has been fulfilled—Jesus has come. Jesus has confronted Satan, and Jesus has won the victory. Now the promises to Abraham are to be fulfilled on the global, not regional, scale when Jesus returns and we, the faithful, finally inherit the earth.

Here is the biblical evidence for this position:

> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land" (Genesis 12 7).

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

> The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84).

This is the larger, global, promise—that the entire earth (east, west, north, south, all points of the compass) will be given to the people of God; the earth will be made new, and those who are like Abraham in character, in faith, whose hearts have been circumcised from sin, will be heirs to this promise and inherit the earth.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin and a highly trained Jewish theologian of the first century, wrote:

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise** (Galatians 3:26–29).

Jesus Himself explicitly told the Jewish leaders of His day these very truths, that genetics did not determine who is considered an heir of Abraham and who would inherit the promise. We find Jesus' explanation to the Jewish authorities in John 8:34-45; my comments are in red:

> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a **slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.** [If we don't experience freedom from sin through Jesus, then we are not part of the family of God—that is, not part of Abraham's family.] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what **you have heard from your father.**" [Jesus tells them plainly that even though they are genetic descendants of Abraham, God doesn't see them as being children of Abraham, but children of a different father. Note, the Jews, to whom Jesus was speaking, understood this point and protested, claiming their genetic heritage.]
>
> "Abraham is our father," they answered. [Jesus' response disallows their genetics as being a

valid basis for being considered a descendant of Abraham.]

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. [Those recognized by God as children of Abraham are those who have the same faith in God as Abraham did and who act on that faith as Abraham did.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." [Jesus again tells them that their heritage is not determined genetically but characterologically. They have embraced another father, but again, they protest and claim a higher father than Abraham.]

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [The Jews claimed God as their Father because God created humanity. But Jesus disallows this claim as well, for we are born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and Jesus already said that those who remain slaves to sin have no permanent place in the family of God. Only those who, through Jesus, are freed from sin become part of the family of God and are considered children of Abraham. Note Jesus' answer.]

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil,** and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:34–45 NIV84). [Jesus unequivocally destroys the idea that genetics determines who is an heir of Abraham, and He makes it clear that it is all about faith, character, love, and trust like Abraham.]

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points.

- The starting point of the global promise was in Eden, in Genesis 3:15;
- the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur.
- The ending point of the global is when Jesus recreates the earth and the meek inherit it;
- the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people to be the avenue for the Messiah was when they crucified Christ and Jesus said to them, "Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38 NIV84).

Jesus masterfully weaves these two covenant promises together in His prophetic description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming as described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

- The destruction of Jerusalem occurs because the regional fulfillment of the promise has ended. The genetic descendants kept open the avenue, Messiah had come, but they rejected Him and now there is no further purpose for a regional land to be occupied by them. The gospel must now go to the world. It is time for the global application, which culminates in the second coming and the meek inheriting the earth.

The great nation that God promised would come from Abraham's descendants is the global nation whose ruler is from the line of David. As the angel said to the virgin Mary about her Son:

> "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; **his kingdom will never end**" (Luke 1:32, 33 NIV84).

And the writer of Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived "in the promised land" (Hebrews 11:9)—"did not receive the things promised" (Hebrews 11:13), that they were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "All of these people" of faith "did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. … They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that "*all* of these people" did *not* receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn't he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be fully realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous. Then the promise will be realized and we, who have faith like Abraham, will receive our inheritance of a goodly land, a beautiful home, perfect and flawless that God intended Adam and Eve to possess. It is true that the meek will inherit the earth, for what God has promised He will fulfill.

MONDAY

The first paragraph points out that after Abraham believed the promise from God to give him a son, that with time Abraham's faith began to fail. He looked to normal human biology, human culture, and sought to implement a human created solution, based upon human understanding of things and took Hagar to be a surrogate for Sarah. He came up with an alternate heir to fulfill the promise. However, did this work? Was Ishmael the child of the promise?

The Bible is the record of real historic people doing real historic stuff, but their lives also serve as object lesson for us? What is the object lesson here?

God has a plan of salvation based upon the reality of His kingdom, His design laws; the real terminal sin-condition caused by Adam's choice needed to be eradicated and God's law of love needed to be restored into humanity. We need to become righteous again in order to be reconciled to God and receive the gift of eternal life. This required Jesus to come as the second Adam and take the terminal condition upon Himself and eradicate the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle into humanity in order to be our Savior.

In God's plan, all who trust Him will open their hearts in trust and receive the Holy Spirit who renews them in Christlikeness of heart motive, writing God's law upon our hearts reconciling us to God. This is God's plan, to actually fix the damage caused by sin and restore us to sinless perfection.

It is a miracle of rebirth, bringing life out of death, just like Isaac was a miracle birth bringing life out of a dead womb.

But, just like Abraham doubted and sought a human solution through human law and human customs, far too many Christians have rejected God's plan and substituted a human plan based upon human law and customs of legal payments to an offended god to pay for our sins in order to get the god to declare us legally righteous when we remain unrighteous. Far too many people simply cannot believe God's plan can work so they devise their own legal plan instead. This is the penal substitutionary atonement theory based upon human law.

But God calls us back to trust, to faith, and to receive what Christ has done and when we do so, we "become the righteousness of God" (2Cor 5:21).

The lesson points out that God eventually speaks to Hagar but only after she leaves the house of Abraham… what is the object lesson for us?

God will enlighten, convict, speak to people today but ONLY if they leave behind their own human devised methods and systems of salvation and seek Him! If we insist upon our human systems, doing it our way, including the penal legal systems of salvation, we close ourselves off to advancing light, for we reject the true light as false and what else can God do for us?

TUESDAY

What was the sign of the covenant with Abraham? Circumcision—why? What does it mean? What does it symbolize? What is the reality to which it points?

> A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code (Romans 2:28-29 NIV84).

Circumcision is a sign of circumcising the heart—what does this mean? How does this work in reality?

Circumcision is a sign of dying to self, the old carnal heart dying and being reborn to a new life, of cutting away ties, practices, attachments, values of fear, sin and selfishness and have the heart renewed in truth, love, and trust in God.

- Circumcision was painful—conversion, dying to self, is painful
- Circumcision happens on a part of the body not easily seen by others—conversion happens in the secret parts of the heart not easily seen by others

- Those with whom we have some intimacy can know if we have be circumcised bodily (not just spouses, but our doctors, our military buddies with whom we trust our lives and sometimes undress in the same barracks or shower in the same locker room), so too with circumcision of the heart, the people who get to know us well can tell if our hearts have been changed from fear and selfishness to love for God and others
- Circumcision happens upon the part of the body that physically joins husband and wife together as one and circumcision by the Spirit happens upon the heart cutting away sin, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and every obstacle that interferes with becoming at-one with God

Without the cutting away of fear, selfishness, guilt, shame and love interests that we care more about than God, we cannot be wedded, united, bonded to our Savior.

Physical circumcision is done by a physical knife, whereas circumcision of the heart is done by the Spirit of love and truth wielding the Spirit created or inspired tools of love and truth:

> For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 NIV84).

The Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures to cut through the lies, fears, misunderstandings and bring healing truth to bear upon our hearts and minds in order to cut out of our hearts falsehoods, unhealthy practices, worldly or lustful affections and to instill godly methods leading us to establish healthy routines and boundaries with others.

The Holy Spirit also works through His trusting followers. When the prophet Nathan confronted King David after his sin with Bathsheba, the truth brought to bear by Nathan was used by the Holy Spirit to bring David to conviction and repentance and was part of healing process of cutting the sin, guilt, shame out of David's heart.

While we can choose for our infant sons to be circumcised, we cannot make the choice for any other human heart to be circumcised, just our own. The new born in Christ must choose for themselves surrender the Holy Spirit, study the Word of God, and actively ask the Spirit to cut out of the heart anything that interferes with our intimacy with Jesus.

This is because the transformation of the heart that occurs in God's plan of salvation requires the active and voluntary participation of the sinner. God cannot use His infinite power to inflict a change of heart without the consent of the person because to do so would destroy that person's individuality and create either a programmed robot that cannot love, or a new intelligent being with a new individuality that would still need to decide for themselves whether to trust God or not.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "God's promise of a son…" What do you think if the description, "he also is a prophet who intercedes on behalf of the wicked?"

Did God need this intercession? If Abraham would have asked for more, would God have relented? Did God tell Abraham what He was going to do hoping Abraham would talk Him out of it?

What is the purpose of this encounter? Was it not to give a record of why God did it? God knew what Abraham would do and God knew that there were not 10 righteous in the city before telling Abraham and having the encounter. God had this encounter because He wanted it understood and recorded that the city was destroyed because not even 10 righteous were in it—but destroyed in the context of the promised Seed to save humanity.

In other words, God just confirmed the covenant with Abraham that Abraham would have the land for the purpose of being the family through whom Jesus would come to save the species from sin, and in that context, God tells Abraham I am going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the associated cities—why? It is necessary to fulfill the promise to you that your family will have this land and be the avenue for the Messiah.

And what did history reveal? Even after removing this toxic sewer of depravity ten of the tribes were dispersed and Judah barely made it through to fulfill their purpose and be the avenue for Messiah.

So we see the grace of God working here not to punish sin, but to keep open the avenue for Messiah and give us a record so that we can understand why God acted—therapeutically, not judicially or punitively.

Also note that when Abraham heard this news from God, Abraham didn't respond with "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." Abraham didn't say, "Who am I to question the sovereign Lord?" But Abraham did question God, humbly, reverently, with jealousy for the Lord's reputation, but He did question Him and Abraham was called a friend of God.

Moses did the same thing years later. This idea in Christianity that we are not to question God is completely contrary to what God wants. He wants us to humbly question and to seek to understand with hearts eager to learn and be corrected by the truth.

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, "In an extremely…" Is what is described in Scripture regarding Sodom a legal or judicial process? Is it that God grants legal pardon or forgiveness to wicked people for sake of the righteous? Is it that if no righteous people are around then God is not forgiving?

This description misunderstands reality completely. It is quite simple, if there are still enough righteous it means there is still enough viable or healthy tissue that amputation or cauterization is not yet necessary. But when the situation becomes completely necrotic and threatens to kill the rest of humanity, love requires a therapeutic intervention to cauterize the dead tissue in order to save the viable.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

May 6-7, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Lakewood Seventh-Day Adventist Church 1382 Arthur Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

- Friday evening: Healing the Mind
- Sabbath SS time: The God Shaped Brain
- Sabbath Church: Growing up in Christ—the 7 levels of moral decision making
- Sabbath afternoon: The Developing Brain followed by Q&A

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. More details to follow.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q2 Genesis: Lesson 8
The Promise

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

The first 3 days of this weeks lesson focuses on God's command to sacrifice Isaac. I think this is one of the most misunderstood stories in all of Scripture. It's also one of the most beautiful understood from a design law perspective. I've heard this story referenced as evidence that God issues arbitrary commands up to and including child sacrifice. The fact that Isaac was not sacrificed often escapes their notice, and usually leads to mumbled non sequiturs.

SUNDAY

Mount Moriah.

Put yourself in Abraham's 120 year old shoes for a moment. He had already listened to his wife and taken her handmaid Hagar, who bore him a son — Ishmael. He loved Ishmael, however, Ishmael was the product of human decisions and efforts. Sarah's reproductive capability was restored and Isaac was born — The Child of the Promise. I have little doubt that Abraham's love for Isaac exceeded his affections for Ishmael, and yet history will show that Isaac was not spoiled or willful. God then asks Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son and he's left in the dark as to why. What would go through your head?? Didn't God tell him that he would father a great nation that could not be counted?? Wasn't Isaac the start of that nation??

Consider the following:

> Three days this father traveled with his son, having sufficient time to reason and doubt God if he was disposed to doubt. But he did not distrust God. He did not now reason that the promise would be fulfilled through Ishmael, for God plainly told him that through Isaac should the promise be fulfilled.
>
> Abraham believed that Isaac was the son of promise. He also believed that God meant just what He said when He bade him to go offer him as a burnt offering. He staggered not at the promise of God but believed that God, who had in His providence given Sarah a son in her old age, and who had required him to take that son's life, could also give life again and bring up Isaac from the dead.
>
> Abraham left the servants by the way and proposed to go alone with his son to worship some distance from them. He would not permit his servants to accompany them, lest their love for Isaac might lead them to prevent him from carrying out what God had commanded him to do. He took the wood from the hands of his servants and laid it upon the shoulders of his son. He also took the

> fire and the knife. He was prepared to execute the dreadful mission given him of God. Father and son walked on together. -- The Story of Redemption, pg 81

Now put yourself in Isaac's young shoes. He could have overcome his aged father with minimal effort. He could have simply outrun him. But he didn't. He allowed himself to be bound and laid on an altar. One marvels at the devotion of a young son to his elderly father.

Consider this:

> Yet none but God could understand how great was the father's sacrifice in yielding up his son to death; Abraham desired that none but God should witness the parting scene. He bade his servants remain behind, saying, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." The wood was laid upon Isaac, the one to be offered, the father took the knife and the fire, and together they ascended toward the mountain summit, the young man silently wondering whence, so far from folds and flocks, the offering was to come. At last he spoke, "My father," "behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Oh, what a test was this! How the endearing words, "my father," pierced Abraham's heart! Not yet—he could not tell him now. "My son," he said, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."
>
> At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those three terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission. He was a sharer in Abraham's faith, and he felt that he was honored in being called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten the father's grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar.
>
> And now the last words of love are spoken, the last tears are shed, the last embrace is given. The father lifts the knife to slay his son, when suddenly his arm is stayed. An angel of God calls to the patriarch out of heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" He quickly answers, "Here am I," And again the voice is heard, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." -- Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 152

Why did God issue such a difficult command?? Was it a test for God's understanding or Abraham's?? Or the onlooking universe??

Abraham had already tried to "Fix" the infertility issue by fathering Ishmael and thereby showed a lack of faith in God's promise. Was this God's way of purifying Abraham's character??

> God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction in order to prove them firm and true, and purge them from all unrighteousness. After Abraham and his son had borne the severest test that could be imposed upon them, God spoke through His angel unto Abraham: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." This great act of faith causes the character of Abraham to shine forth with remarkable luster. It forcibly illustrates his perfect confidence in the Lord, from whom he withheld nothing, not even his son by promise. -- Testimonies to the Church, vol 4, pg 19
>
> Again the Lord saw fit to test the faith of Abraham by a most fearful trial. If he had endured the first test, and had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in Sarah, and had not taken Hagar as his wife, he would not have been subjected to the closest test that was ever required of man. – Spiritual Gifts, vol 3, pg 106

The lesson asks: "After all, what is faith if not trust in what we don't see or fully understand? Also, biblical faith is not so much about our capacity to give to God and to sacrifice for Him — though that has a role, no doubt [Rom. 12:1] — but about our capacity to trust Him and to receive His grace while understanding **just how underserving we are.**" Emphasis mine.

Deserve has nothing to do with the problem. Language like this is diagnostic. "Deserve" comes from an imposed law bias. Does the cancer patient deserve a remedy or is healing the cancer patient simply the RIGHT thing to do. God gives us grace because it's the RIGHT [aka JUST] thing to do in accordance with His character.

From the teacher's notes: **The Significance of Atonement**

> The reference to "atonement" is already present in the notion of "test." The meaning of the Hebrew verb *nissah*, "tested" *(Gen. 22:1, NKJV)*, embraces two opposite ideas. On the one hand, it concerns judgment. God "tests" in order " 'to know what is in your heart' " *(Deut. 8:2, NKJV; compare Ps. 139:1, 23, 24)*. This aspect is clearly enunciated by the Angel of the Lord *(Gen. 22:11, 12)*.

Does God not already know what's in our hearts?

MONDAY

God Will Provide.

I the first paragraph the author references Gen. 22:8 "… provide for Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." I like the lesson's point regarding the Hebrew verb "provide" , and its meaning "provide Himself". Isn't that what God did — provide Himself as a sacrifice?? Wasn't God Himself on that cross?? [see Matt 1:23, Matt 28: 19, John 1:8, John 10:30, John 14: 9-11 [basically the entire gospel of John], Philippians 2:5-6.]

Consider the following:

> when the father's hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption Heavenly beings were witnesses of the scene as the faith of Abraham and the submission of Isaac were tested. The trial was far more severe than that which had been brought upon Adam. Compliance with the prohibition laid upon our first parents involved no suffering, but the command to Abraham demanded the most agonizing sacrifice. All heaven beheld with wonder and admiration Abraham's unfaltering obedience. All heaven applauded his fidelity. Satan's accusations were shown to be false. God declared to His servant, "Now I know that thou fearest God [notwithstanding Satan's charges], seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." God's covenant, confirmed to Abraham by an oath before the intelligences of other worlds, testified that obedience will be rewarded.
>
> It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham made answer, "God will provide Himself a lamb;" and, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man's salvation. 1 Peter 1:12. -- Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 155

The teachers edition asks "What is the theological and prophetic significance of the failed sacrifice?"

"FAILED" sacrifice?? I'm having a hard time calling it failed. It was perfect.
Is is possible that angels thought God would interpose at the Crucifixion?? Don't you think they vividly remembered the scenes on Mt Moriah with Abraham and Isaac and were thinking to themselves that God would provide some other means for Salvation?? Why was the death of Jesus the ONLY method for restoring man back to his original design nobility and securing the Remedy for the sin condition??

TUESDAY

The Death of Sarah.

The lesson suggests that because Scripture juxtapositioned Sarah's death next to the return of Abraham and Isaac's trip to Mount Moriah may somehow be related. I'm sure Sarah was disturbed by the news, however, the fact that God did NOT require a human [read any] sacrificeCan, and Isaac was safe and sound leads me to believe that this news was unrelated to her passing. We can get the details when we get to heaven.
I find the bargaining for the field / cave for Sarah's burial place fascinating. If you've ever been to the Middle East you can still find similar bargaining practiced.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

WEDNESDAY

A Wife for Isaac.

- Can we learn any lessons today, from the process of selecting a mate and the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah??
- Should parents select from their own families??
- Should parents be involved in the selection process at all??
- How much input should other family members have [if any]??
- Was Isaac and Rebekah's marriage any violation of the Law of Liberty??

> "Should parents," you ask, "select a companion without regard the the mind or feelings of son or daughter?" I put the question to you as it should be: Should a son or daughter select a companion without first consulting the parents, when such a step must materially affect the happiness of parents if they have any affection for their children? And should that child, notwithstanding the counsel and entreaties of his parents, persist in following his own course? I answer decidedly: No; not if never marries. The fifth commandment forbids such a course. "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Here is a commandment with a promise which the Lord will surely fulfill to those who obey. Wise parents will never select companions for their children without respect to their wishes." Adventist Home, pg 75

THURSDAY

A[nother] Wife for Abraham.

I've never before heard of the notion that Keturah and Hagar might be the same woman. Some jewish commentators suggest this. My question is why doesn't the author mention it?? It makes more sense that they would be two different women — Hagar had probably passed her fertility window, and I suspect Keturah was much younger and [obviously] fertile. Does it matter to salvation?? NO.

I think the listing of Abraham's sons [from the three women] is primarily to distinguish the lineage of The Seed [Jesus of Nazareth] from the other two bloodlines.

The lesson makes the point that "… the Lord remained true to His promises of grace to His faithful servant Abraham, whose faith is depicted in Scripture as a great example, if not *the best* example, in the Old Testament of salvation by faith *(see Rom. 4:1–12)*. What makes Abraham "the best" example of OT faith, or can you think of anyone with stronger faith??

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 9
Jacob the Supplanter

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read second paragraph, "Because Jacob deceives…" What do you think about the ideas in this paragraph?

There are historical truths and there are interpretations or assumptions—what are the historical truths?

- Jacob deceived his father into giving him the blessing Isaac wanted to give to Esau
- Jacob flees
- God speaks to Jacob in a dream showing him the ladder connecting earth to heaven
- Jacob himself is later tricked into marrying Leah when he thought he was marrying Rachel

What are the assumptions or the interpretations?

- Jacob "will have to flee for his life"
    - Did Jacob "have to flee for his life?"
    - Did he have no other choice?
    - Could he have chosen to repent then and there and asked his brother to forgive him?
    - Could he have faced the results of his actions and put his life in his brother's hands?
    - Could he have surrendered to God then and there and asked God to intervene as God determines is best, trusting God with His life?
    - Was fleeing the only option Jacob had, or the option that seemed most logical, wise, appropriate from a human standpoint? Jacob had cheated Esau, Esau is out for blood, survival drives dictate he must flee to protect self and thus it appears from a worldly view he will have to flee. But, is it possible if he would have genuinely repented and trusted God then and there God would have intervened in some way to turn aside Esau's wrath?
    - Who was the one that orchestrated the deception on Isaac? Who was the one who recommended Jacob flee and solicited Isaac's agreement for Jacob to flee? Rebekah Genesis 27:5-10 & 43
    - Is there a lesson in this for us today?
        - Do we ever, like Jacob, listen to other people to tell us to do something dishonest, or tempt us to do something we know we shouldn't, to act selfishly, sin, and thereby we create a mess for ourselves?
        - And then just like Jacob, do we listen to the very person who led us into temptation and flee or act in ways that are designed primarily to protect self rather than repent from the sin and set things right?
        - One of my professors taught us: If you find yourself in a hole—quit digging! Even if you can't get yourself out of the hole, if you stop digging it won't get

deeper. Many people in trying to fix the hole they put themselves in only dig themselves in deeper.

- **I think one of the big challenges for the righteous as we approach the second coming of Christ is going to be resisting actions that seem logical and right on the surface, but are self-driven, rather than faith-driven**.

The next assumption or interpretation?

- God "confronts" him at Bethel.
  - The word "confront" is an interpretive word, the first definition in the dictionary is "to face in hostility or defiance; oppose." Using this word to describe what God did suggests God is calling Jacob to task, a chastisement, a statement of "You have been a naughty little boy." But let's read God's interaction with Jacob and see if you might have chosen a different word than "confront."
    - He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28:12–15 NIV84).
  - Would you choose confront for this or perhaps, "comfort" or "reassure" or "remind him he isn't abandoned" and God is still with him?
  - And this brings up a very important point when studying any Christian material. We need to have a very sound knowledge of Scripture so that we can recognize human spin, interpretation, misunderstanding, and bias and separate the facts from the insertion of non-inspired human interpretation.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Jacob and Esau. Why was Jacob, who used methods of deception, chosen to receive the blessings of God, to be the one through whom the promised Messiah would come and not Esau?

Could it have anything to do with the different disposition and attitudes of the two brothers? Could their hearts' attitudes toward God be what determined God's ability to work through them?

What was the difference that made it that God could work through Jacob and not Esau?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Romans 9:12–13 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Is this referring to God's attitude or God's functional ability to act in their lives?

Do we believe God had less love in His heart for Esau than Jacob?

Then what does it mean? This is from the SDA Bible commentary on Romans 9:13:

> This strong expression does not imply positive hatred, as the term is used today, but that God had preferred Jacob above Esau in His choice of the progenitor of the chosen race. It seems to have been common in Biblical times to use the term "hate" in this sense. Thus Jacob's preference for Rachel is compared with his "hatred" for Leah (Gen. 29:30, 31). Similarly Jesus speaks about "hating" one's father and mother (Luke 14:26) and "hating" one's life (John 12:25)… (SDA BC Vol. 6, pp. 586–587).

What about those who read a little more of what Paul wrote about Jacob and Esau in chapter 9 in its greater context and include the following from chapter 8

> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (NIV84).

and putting both of these texts together they claim what happened to Jacob and Esau doesn't have anything to do with their attitudes, personalities, abilities, or willingness it has to do with God's sovereignty—God does what God wants and God predetermined He wanted Jacob so God made it happen?

What would you say? How do you answer this question?

Does God predetermine who will be saved or who will be lost? If so, then would we be free moral agents or robots, puppets, simulations? And if we are not free can we love? So, either God is love and we are really free, or it is all lie.

So on the first point, God cannot be predetermining what people will do unless we say it is all a simulation run by God and we are not free and God is not love. Further, such a line of belief would also mean God was in control of Satan's rebellion, Adam and Eve's fall because God predetermined their actions, they didn't freely choose them. Again, such a line of reasoning is not consistent with a God of love.

Then how do we understand these texts?

What law lens do we understand them through?

If we read Scripture with the assumption that God's law functions like human law—imposed rules enforced by the rule-giver—then God is the all-powerful enforcer who makes things happen the way He wants them to happen. Under this imposed-law view, predestination is God deciding upon whom He will use His power to call, justify, and glorify.

But under design law, we first understand that God is Creator of all reality—physical matter, energy, time, and life—that His laws (including moral laws) are the protocols upon which life is constructed to operate. We understand that God not only created all reality, but He also continues to sustain the operations of all aspects of His creation.

For by him [Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together** (Colossians 1:16, 17 NIV84).

This means God governs, through the sustaining of the laws that He built reality upon, all aspects of creation, including time. Unlike us, God is not constrained to a linear existence; He lives outside the dimension of time. God doesn't serve at the whims of time; time serves God.

When the Bible says that those God "foreknew" He "predestined" to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, it isn't speaking of mere cognitive knowledge (awareness)—a list of names and social security numbers in a heavenly registry; rather, it is speaking of biblical knowledge, the fullest sense of "knowing" someone.

Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived (Genesis 4:1 ESV).

Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3 NIV84).

This "knowing" is intimate knowledge, not mere cognitive awareness. The unsaved do not have this knowledge of God; therefore, they are not known by God in this intimate, saving way. Jesus said it plainly:

> Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never **knew** you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:21–23 NIV84).

Jesus surely knows *who* these people are, so this isn't about awareness. It is about intimacy, unity, oneness—a loving, mutual bond of trust. These people were never friends of Jesus. They never opened their hearts to allow Him in and, thus, they never *knew* Jesus even though they knew *about* Him and claimed to be His followers. And because they never chose to know Jesus, they were not in turn *known* by Jesus in the intimate bonds of fellowship and love. This intimate "knowing" is the key to every person's salvation:

Those whom God fore*knows* He predetermined will be conformed to the likeness of His Son. It is God's purpose to heal and restore all who trust Him. It is a certainty that those who come to know God, open their heart to Him, and experience His indwelling presence are set right (justified). The old is gone, the new is come (2 Corinthians 5:17); the carnal heart is replaced with a new heart and right spirit (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26). As Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20 NKJV). Those whom God fore*knows* are the very ones who have chosen to trust Him; that is how God *knows* them—because they have chosen to *know* Him.

The Bible is saying that our Creator God, who lives outside of time, foreknows and enters into the hearts and minds of all those who respond to the truth and open the heart to Him. And all who experience God's indwelling presence are set right in heart, mind, and character (justified), and those who are set right in heart and mind, having the law written there (Hebrews 8:10), He conforms to be like Jesus in character—and ultimately glorifies.
As God is an infinite being who lives outside of time, from His perspective, the salvation and glorification of individuals is the reality of His experience. But from our finite perspective, living in our linear existence, the complete glorification is a future event that we will one day experience at the Second Coming.

And while these two brothers are two real people, who did real historic things and had real children—do they also serve as object lessons for us? What is the object lesson for us?

Children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are those who:

- Having the faith of Abraham have their hearts circumcised by the Spirit and thus are
- like Isaac, and are children of a miracle birth, we are miraculously reborn through the work of God who brings us new life though we are dead in trespass and sin and
- having had faith like Abraham, been miraculously reborn like Isaac, we in our trust relationship with God wrestle through our own fears, insecurities, selfishness and sin and with God's presence and strength overcome and are given a new name; we have God's name written upon us.
- We then are set free from the enslavement of sin (Egypt) and travel through this wilderness of this world to our heavenly promised land.

Now what is interesting, after the Hebrews leave Egypt and wander in the wilderness, they are instructed by God that they are to go through Edom to enter Canaan. Edom is the land occupied by the

descendants of Esau. These descendants were not loyal to Yahweh but they also had not fully hardened themselves beyond redemption and conversion to Yahweh.

God intended the Israelites under the leadership of Moses to pass through the land of Edom and to pay for any water or resources they used there. But the king of Edom refused them and threatened them. When the Israelites were faced with this opposition they had to decide, do they trust God and following His directions, or allow fears and doubts to frighten them and undermine their faith and complain and rebel.

If they would have trusted God He would have intervened for their success over this worldly opposition. Had they trusted God they would have entered the fertile land of Edom, not needed the miraculous water from the rock, treated the Edomites with kindness and respect, been a witness to them of God and the bonds of love would have been built between the two people.

However, they didn't trust God, they instead turned away from God's directions in unbelief and allowed the threats to frighten them and went back into the wilderness where they had to go around Edom through the wilderness instead of through Edom to the promised land. (PP 422).

Is there an object lesson in this for us on our way to the promised land?

God has instructed us to go into the world and share the gospel—we are to wander through the highways and byways of this world and anything we need for our sustenance we are to pay for, but we are to be witnesses wherever we go to the kingdom of God and in our interactions with people we bear witness to God's kingdom of love and many will be converted and leave the worldly ways behind. However, the "kings" of this world don't want us witnessing the gospel, so they threaten us with ridicule, termination from employment, in some places arrest, imprisonment, in other places death.

What is to be our response? Do NOT go our own way, but follow where God leads us. He has a plan. He can be trusted. He will provide for any need and if He has called He has a purpose and will overcome any worldly obstacle to achieve the goal—which is salvation of souls!

Read the fourth paragraph, "For Jacob, in contrast to his brother…" The lesson highlights a very important point—the difference between goals and actions, principles, and methods.

One of Satan's traps is to get people to pursue a righteous goal or principle by using ungodly methods.

This is the philosophy of the ends justify the means, or the so-called greater-good—but this is a grand deception and one that many people fall into.

During COVID we saw this a lot, people having a good goal of wanting to save lives, but because of fear, ignorance, misunderstanding, mind manipulation—millions embraced ungodly methods in the pursuit of the stated goal.

We cannot win God's cause by using Satan's methods.

This type of ends justifying means, of using ungodly methods, is a common result of embracing the world's values and understanding of law.

If law is about make the right imposed rules, then it only makes sense that we can get a more just outcome, a more righteous society, if we can only get the right laws in place and have them more consistently enforced.

But this is a grand deception. Righteousness can never be achieved by law or law enforcement. It is only achieved by God's grace, God's love, God's truth working upon the heart to win people to love and trust in God and to individually value God's methods and principles and identify with them and practice them.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "As soon as Esau…" Why did Jacob flee? Why did Rebekah encourage Jacob to flee?

When we use Satan's methods to try and achieve godly goals we always make matters worse, we introduce dysfunction, pain, suffering, conflict, alienation, and increased fear and selfishness.

Again, consider COVID and the methods employed to achieve the stated goal of saving lives—what actually happened? More people have been killed and are still being killed by the results of the mandated interventions than were saved by the interventions. It was unavoidable—you cannot get good results with ungodly methods.

And what were the methods that caused the damage?

- Purposeful lies and known falsehoods that magnified the perceived danger, obstructed effective treatments, and promoted interventions that harmed and increased deaths (like mask wearing, no treatment until so sick require hospitalization, social isolation, shutting down schools etc.)
- Silencing, censoring, and obstructing honest and open presentation of information and data that refuted the false narrative
- Interfering with the normal and historic standards of medical ethics and practice (informed consent, freedom to choose one's medical treatment, leaving doctor's free to decide with their patients what is the best treatment for their individual care etc.)
- Adding coercive pressures to undermine individual liberty
- Interfering with the normal practice of religion
- Quarantining asymptomatic healthy people
- Slandering and vilifying people who challenged the methods being employed and who advocated for godly principles and practice

And the results speak for themselves, it was completely predictable.

Our challenge when faced with threats in this world is to resist the urge to make fear-based decisions, and instead, despite the fear, make truth and love based decisions. To hold true to the principles and methods of God's kingdom rather than compromise under immediate threat—we don't bow down to avoid a fiery furnace, we don't quit praying in order to avoid the lion's den, and we don't exchange the methods of God for the methods of the world in order to avoid a virus, or the imposed punishments of the state.

What do you think of Bethel, the place where God gave him the vision of the ladder?

- Did Jacob meet God there because he stumbled upon a magic geographic location?
- Is there thinning of the cosmic barriers between heaven and earth in that physical location?
- Was Jacob simply very lucky to have stumbled upon that one place on the globe where God was able to communicate with him, or did God go to Jacob where Jacob was at that point in his journey with a message Jacob needed at that point in his life?

And what does God show us by meeting Jacob there?

- What is the situation?
- Why was Jacob there?
- He was running, why? Because he was afraid, why?
- Because he had just sinned against his father and brother and was running and hiding seeking to protect self—does this remind you of another story in the Bible of someone who sinned and ran and hid and tried to protect self?
- Adam—and how did God respond to Adam? He went after Adam and called to him gently and inquired of Adam what he had done and assured Adam that God was not condemning him but promised the Messiah would come and save him.
- And God meets Jacob after his sin, when he is running in fear and reassures him with His love for him and the promise given to Adam and later to Abraham and Isaac that Messiah is coming and Jacob is not abandoned and humanity is not abandoned.

And God does this for every one of us, when we fail, sin, run and hide, fearful, God runs after us seeking to find us in our guilt and shame and speak words of comfort, reassurance, hope, love and invitation to repent and be reconciled to Him.

Read fourth paragraph, "As for the 'stone'…" Could the stone represent the cornerstone rejected by men and used by God to become the foundation of the true temple built by God and not by men? In other words, could the stone upon which Jacob put his head represent Jesus?

What do you think of the idea that this points to the temple, the sanctuary, the center of God's saving activity for humanity?

What does that mean, the sanctuary as the center of God's saving activity for humanity?

Does that sound geographical? Is the sanctuary the center of God's saving activity because the sanctuary is where sin has happened and from where needs to be removed?

In other words, if saving humanity from sin requires removing sin wouldn't the center of that work have to be where the sin is located?

- And where does sin exist, happen, operate, consolidate, occur?
- Does sin occur in dead non-living matter?
- Then can sin exist in record books?
- Can cleansing the universe from sin be achieved by erasing records of historic accounts of sin?
- Are records of sin the same as sin?
- If an angel reads the Bible story of David and Bathsheba has the angel in heaven read about sin? Has the angel in heaven been contaminated by that sin? Would that angel be sinful for have read the account?
- Would Jesus, in order to cleanse heaven from sin, need to destroy all the Bibles?

So, if sin does not exist in non-living material, if it doesn't exist in records, then saving sinners from sin, cleansing the universe from sin, cleansing sanctuary from sin, is not the process of erasing the record of sin. Cleansing the sanctuary means cleansing sinners from the condition of sin. So, then, where must the cleansing work happen?

So, if the cleansing from sin must happen in the heart and mind of the sinful being, and the sanctuary is the center of the work of saving people from sin, then what is the sanctuary or temple that was not built by human hands and in which Jesus ministers to remove sin?

What does this text mean?

> this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.' (Zechariah 6:12–13 NIV84).

What is this temple? Notice this is Jesus, leaving heaven to build the temple of the Lord—what temple is this?

It is the temple of His body, which He said would be destroyed and that He would raise up on the third day. It is also, the temple of the church, those who believe in Him, He is the chief cornerstone and the apostles are the foundation stones and we are living stones built together into a house for the Lord.

And each of us are being shaped by the work of God in our lives, fitted for the heavenly building, having all sinfulness purged from our hearts and love and trust restored within.

It is illustrates the heavenly center in which God's glory shines surrounded by the angels, with Christ as the sold gold lid as the connecting link and His sinless life (blood) that purifies and cleanses us sinners bringing us back into unity with God and the unfallen worlds, symbolized by the ark in the Most Holy Place.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about Jacob being deceived by Laban into marrying Leah.

What are your thoughts on this?

Where was Rachel? We are not told—was she complicit, did she know and was she an active participant in the deception or was she forcibly restrained and kept from warning Jacob? We don't know and are never told, but it is an interesting question to contemplate.

Did Jacob deserve this?

Read the bottom gray section, "Though Jacob was the deceiver…" How do you define justice? Does our understanding of law make a difference?

Can human laws give us justice? Why or why not?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson suggests we read Genesis 29:31-30:24 and asks "How are we, today, to understand the meaning of what takes place here?" I will read it from *The Remedy:*

> The Lord saw that Leah was not loved like Rachel, so he enabled her to become pregnant very easily, but Rachel remained childless. So Leah did become pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, saying, "The Lord has seen my misery and given me a son; surely my husband will love me now."
>
> Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She named him Simeon (which means 'the Lord hears'), saying, "The Lord has heard that I am not loved, so he gave me this son too."
>
> Again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Levi (which means 'joined'), saying, "Surely my husband will be more tightly joined to me, because I have given him three sons."
>
> Leah became pregnant once again and gave birth to a fourth son. She named him Judah (which means 'praise'), saying, "This time, rather than seeking to earn my husband's love, I will praise the Lord." After that, she stopped having children.

When Rachel realized that she was not having any children for Jacob, she became insecure as his wife and envied her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, for without them I might as well be dead."

Jacob was upset that she placed this responsibility on him, and said, "I have done my part, but I am not God, and he has not yet chosen to enable you to get pregnant."

Taking matters into her own hands, she said, "Then take my maidservant Bilhah and impregnate her as my surrogate – then she can bear children for me, so that I too can build a family."

So she gave him her servant Bilhah as her surrogate. Jacob had sex with her, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Then Rachel exclaimed, "God has heard my request and answered me favorably!" Therefore, she named him Dan (which means 'God judges favorably').

Rachel's servant Bilhah became pregnant again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "I have fought hard to give my husband sons so I can be equal to my sister, and I have finally done it." So she named him Naphtali (which means 'my fight').

When Leah realized that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as her surrogate. Zilpah, Leah's servant, bore Jacob a son, and Leah said, "How lucky I am to give my husband a troop of sons!" So she named him Gad (which means 'good fortune').

Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob another son, and Leah said, "I am so happy! Now all the other women will call me the most blessed." So she named him Asher (which means 'happy').

During the harvest, Reuben found some mandrake plants in a field and gave them to his mother Leah. Mandrakes were believed to increase fertility, so when Rachel saw them, she said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

Denying her marital duplicity, and focusing on her legal status as first married, rather than focusing on the bonds of love, she projected her guilt onto Rachel, saying, "He was my husband first, and you stole his love from me. Isn't that enough for you? Do you want my son's mandrakes too?"

Desperate for anything that might help her get pregnant, Rachel said, "Okay, I'll let him sleep with you tonight if you give me your son's mandrakes."

Leah met Jacob when he came in from the fields that evening and said, "Rachel and I made a deal: Reuben brought me mandrakes, and I traded them with her; and she agreed for you to sleep with me tonight." So he slept with her that night.

God answered Leah's prayer, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me, just as if giving my maidservant to my husband was right." So she named him Issachar (which means 'God rewards').

Leah again became pregnant and bore Jacob a sixth son. Then Leah proclaimed, "God has given me a precious gift. Now that I have borne my husband six sons, he will surely honor me." So she named him Zebulun (which means 'honor').

Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

God never forgot Rachel, and he answered her prayer by healing her infertility and thus enabling her to have children. And she became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my shame – may he add to me another son." So she named him Joseph.

So, what do you understanding is taking place here?

Do we have any word from God that God wanted Jacob to have two wives and two surrogates?

Yet God blessed Jacob with 12 sons who became the heads of 12 tribes….but was it God's design, intent, purpose, or did God worked through what He knew these people would do?

- Why was Jacob in this land?
  - because he deceived his father and brother and chose to flee for his life.
  - Was it God's will for Jacob to deceive his father?
  - Did Jacob flee because he repented and turned to God in trust and God instructed him, like Joseph and Mary years later, to flee; or was Jacob still trying to save himself?
  - Was it God's will Jacob flee and not repent?
- Why did Jacob have two wives?
  - Was it God's will that Laban deceive Jacob?
  - Is it God's will for husbands to have more than one wife?
- Why did Jacob take surrogates?
  - Did God instruct Jacob to take surrogates?
  - Did Jacob have a family history of conflict when a wife suggested that her husband take a surrogate to give her children?
  - Why wasn't that family history helpful to Jacob?
  - What motivated Jacob to take a surrogate wife?
  - Was it God's will for Rachel to seek a surrogate? What was Rachel's motive?
  - Do you see godly love in action between the two sisters?
  - Was it God's will for them to compete like this?
  - Is God's will for wives to offer surrogates to their husbands and husbands to listen to such a suggestion?

So, is this history a history that is the outworking of what God wanted them to do, or a revelation of how gracious God is, how God works with us where we are to bring about His plan despite what they were doing? And what is His plan? To restore us to righteousness, eliminate sin from us, which required Jesus to come, and thus in Jacob's life God was working with those people to keep open the avenue for Messiah while simultaneously seeking to deliver them from self-dependence to God-dependence.

What do you think of the story of the mandrakes?

What about the miracle of Rachel getting pregnant?

There are seven miracle births recorded in Scripture—all real historic women who were infertile and God healed their infertility and they then became pregnant in the normal way women do. But, these miracle births are also object lessons pointing to Jesus, the Messiah, who would be a miracle birth of a virgin becoming pregnant by the Holy Spirit. These seven are:

1. Sarah- Isaac – The promised one who will be sacrificed
2. Rebekah – Jacob – wrestles with God to overcome his own weakness and became Israel, the father of the nation built upon twelve sons, Jesus wrestled with temptation and overcome to be the cornerstone of the church built upon twelve apostles
3. Rachel – Joseph – who sold into slavery, became ruler to save people from famine, Jesus humbled himself to be a servant but is exalted to be ruler saving us from sin
4. Monoah's wife – Samson – blessed with strength to deliver Israel from bondage of oppressors and rule over them as judge, Jesus has the strength to deliver us from sin and rule the universe as judge
5. Hannah- Samuel – who became High Priest, Jesus is our High Priest
6. Shunammite woman – child died and resurrected, Jesus died and rose again
7. Elizabeth – John the Baptist – who was greatest of prophets, and Jesus was the greatest of all prophets

THURSDAY

The lesson is about Jacob leaving Laban and returning to his family. He asks to leave, but Laban begs him to stay and so they make a deal. The first fourteen years Jacob works and received his two wives as payment, now he needs to be paid and they work out a system in which Jacob gets the spotted, striped, and speckled newborn lambs and goats and Laban the solid colored ones.

Immediately, Laban seeks to cheat Jacob by sending all the speckled, spotted and striped animals a 3-day journey away.

So, Jacob takes branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees, peels back the bark, making the branches striped, and puts the exposed branches in the drinking water of the breeding females and more speckled, spotted, and striped animals are born.

What do you think of this story?

There is a gene – the agouti gene – that determines the color an animal's fur. If it is turned on in some cells of the body and off in others the fur of the animal will be speckled, spotted and striped. What affects the expression of this gene? The diet of the mother while pregnant.

Recent research has documented that the branches of the trees chosen by Jacob do, in fact, provide the nutrients needed to alter the expression of the agouti gene, which does, in turn, alter the color of the lambs born. (Backon, Joshua, Jacob and the Spotted Sheep: The Role of Prenatal Nutrition on Epigenetics of Fur Color. *Biology,* 2008.)

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

Materials in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa: Go to our website's eStore menu to get contact/order emails and items available from our distribution hubs in these countries.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 10
Jacob-Israel

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read last paragraph, "In other words…" It is absolutely certain that God is faithful as Paul wrote in Romans 3:4:

> let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged" (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

When is God judged? By whom is God judged? How is God judged? What is the purpose of this judgment?

The central issue in the war is over the knowledge of God (Romans 1:18-31; 2Cor 10:3-5).

Could we present the idea of God being faithful in keeping His promises in such a way that we end up misrepresenting God to be like Satan accuses Him of being, even though we claim we are presenting God as being faithful?

"God is faithful to fulfill what He has promised and that He will do so despite what, at times, seems to be nothing but His people doing all they can to stop that fulfillment."

Is there a qualifier not included in this statement that without it could allow a false view of God to be drawn?

For instance, would it be more accurate to say, "God is faithful to fulfill what He has promised to do in governance of Himself for the eradication of sin and saving of sinners?"

- He promised to send the Messiah and He did
- He promised to provide salvation through Jesus and He did
- He promised to overcome sin and Satan by the victory of Jesus and He did
- He promised to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light and He did
- He promised that the world would never again be totally destroyed by a flood and it hasn't
- He promised that Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob would inherit the land of Palestine for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through whom the Seed of the woman would come that would overcome sin and through whom all peoples of the world would be blessed—and He fulfilled that promise
- He promised to send the Holy Spirit and He has
- He promised that He would not leave or forsake us and He hasn't

But should we take Jeremiah 18:7-10 into account when talking about the Lord fulfilling promises:

- If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

Are some of God's promises conditional upon the responses of the people? Or, do we suggest that God as sovereign will do whatever God wants and we are merely puppets whose strings God controls?

When King Saul committed suicide by falling on his sword, did God force him down onto that sword against his will, or did God do something in Saul's brain to brainwash him into committing suicide like Jim Jones did to his followers?

What about Romans 9:15-18?

> I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden (Romans 9:15–18 NVI84).

What does this mean? When Pharaoh's heart was hardened did God act to harden it, or did Pharaoh harden his own heart? Why does the Bible describe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in three ways?

Description #1 – God hardening Pharaoh's heart

- "The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But **I will harden his heart** so that he will not let the people go." Exodus 4:21
- "But **I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites." Ex 7:3,4
- "But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart** and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses." Ex 9:12

Description #2 – Pharaoh's heart became hard

- "Yet **Pharaoh's heart became hard** and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said." Ex 7:13
- "Then the Lord said to Moses, "**Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.**" Ex 7:14

- "But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and **Pharaoh's heart became hard**; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said." Ex 7:22
- "The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But **Pharaoh's heart was hard** and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said." Ex 8:19

Description # 3 – Pharaoh hardened his own heart

- "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said." Exodus 8:15
- "But this time also **Pharaoh hardened his heart** and would not let the people go." Ex 8:32
- "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: **He and his officials hardened their hearts**. So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had said through Moses." Ex 9:34,35

How do we understand this? Which of these verses are the inspired verses? What is the truth?

How do we understand God's sovereignty?

What law lens do we understand Scripture through?

If we believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed law, then sovereignty means God imposes rules and forces things to turn out the way He wants. Therefore, God acted to make Pharaoh's heart hard because God needed to punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews, and to show His power etc.

When we return to worshipping the Creator God and understand His laws are design laws, then we realize that the supreme law is the law of love, that only operates in an atmosphere of freedom, so we understand and live in harmony with the law of liberty. God cannot get love, trust, friendship by using power over His intelligent children to force them to obey. That only results in rebellion and the destruction of love.

Therefore, we understand God is sovereign in maintaining His laws, including the law of liberty, love, the law of truth. In regard to Pharaoh, God presented truth to Pharaoh over and over again in the most powerful, convincing, and profound ways—yet Pharaoh was left free to accept or reject the truth. What happens in the heart, any heart, when truth is understood and rejected? Does the heart become more sensitive or hardened? It hardens. And thus, God's role was in presenting the truth, without the opportunity to examine the truth, be convicted of the truth and then choose to reject it, preferring the lies and selfishness of this world, Pharaoh's heart would not have hardened as much as it did.

So God's role was in presenting the truth. Pharaoh's role was in choosing to reject it. And therefore, all three descriptions are accurate.

But, if God has foreknowledge and God knew Pharaoh would harden his heart, why would God present the truth that He knew Pharaoh would choose to reject?

What was Pharaoh's state of being without the truth being presented? Was Pharaoh a righteous person in a saving relationship with God saved or a sinner terminal in sin, dead in trespass and sin, who without conversion was destined to eternal death?

So Pharaoh's state was terminal, destined to eternal death unless Pharaoh converts, then what was necessary to save Pharaoh? Must Pharaoh be presented with truth and must Pharaoh make a choice on what character, method, principles, laws Pharaoh prefers, on who Pharaoh will trust, and ultimately into which kingdom—God's or Satan's—he will solidify himself into by his choice to accept truth, surrender his heart to God, be converted or not?

So from God's perspective love presents the healing truth to redeem and save and that is what God did, but Pharaoh is the causal agent that determined the outcome of the opportunity, not God. God sustained the operation of His law of liberty, but Pharaoh exercised his liberty to reject the truth and thus harden his heart and condemned himself to eternal destruction.

So, do we need to be careful in how we present God as faithful lest we misrepresent God as arbitrary and one who is like Satan alleges?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Gone from Laban…" What triggers Jacob, at this time in his life, to have this fervent, heart-rending, soul searching, total surrendering prayer to the Lord?

Is his prayer primarily driven by overwhelming love, thankfulness, appreciation and joy, or by fear?

Jacob is motivated to this soul searching pray by a threat he is powerless to resolve. What is that threat?

As Jacob is returning home, gets word his brother is coming with 400 men, what is Jacob's greatest threat, for which he needs God's help in overcoming?

His greatest threat was himself, his own fear, insecurity, long-standing habit of figuring out how to save himself. His greatest threat was the temptation to trust himself and not trust God with his life, his family, his fortune and his future.

Was the threat from his brother real? Perhaps—it turns out that Esau was not a threat to Jacob. The encounter was not like the Assyrians surrounding Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day. God did not have to send the destroying angel to protect Jacob from Esau.

But perhaps that is because Jacob had changed, and having changed he presented himself humbly to Esau, and was no longer conniving and trying to manipulate his brother and Esau recognized this. Perhaps if Jacob had returned claiming to be the head of the family, demanding Esau submit to his authority, then Esau would have been a threat to him.

Was God involved in protecting Jacob from Esau? How? By changing Jacob into a humble person who trusted God.

But, the point is that Jacob was afraid and the fear was not coming from God, nor was it coming directly from Esau, as if Esau was bent on destroying Jacob. No, the fear was coming from Jacob, so where does Jacob's fear originate? What is its source?

Jacob hasn't fully resolved the fear that sin brings, his own record of self-dependence, manipulation, deception, guilt and shame. Coming home gives Jacob the opportunity to confront these residual elements and surrender to God and be fully reborn in righteousness.

Why does God allow events to unfold this way? What does God want for Jacob? God wants Jacob to be freed from the control of fear and selfishness. He wants Jacob to trust Him with his life, and what is required to help Jacob achieve this?

Prior to these events, Jacob had continually sought to achieve what he wanted, or what he thought God had promised by his own initiative, scheming, abilities, conniving, and deception. He didn't consistently live by faith, choosing in governance of self to live in harmony with God's principles and refusing opportunities to lie and deceive.

When his mother tempted him to deceive his father about the blessing, Jacob could have said to his mother: "No, mother. I will not be party to deceit. We can go into father and ask father to give me the blessing, but I will not deceive my father. If God wants me to be the heir of His promises to our family, then God can bring that about with or without my father's blessing upon me."

Imagine for a moment, what might have happened if Jacob had taken this position. But, Jacob, like each of us, was a product of his upbringing, was vulnerable to family ties and influences (this is why Jesus taught that we must love God before our families), and Jacob chose to follow his mother's advice because Jacob hadn't yet come to trust God completely.

It wasn't until 20 years later, on his way back home, that events take place that bring Jacob to this decision-point where he finally gets the victory over himself and trusts God completely.

Let's read this account in Genesis 32:3-27 from *The Remedy:*

> Jacob sent envoys ahead of him, seeking peace with his brother Esau, who was living in the land of Seir, in the region of Edom. Jacob instructed them, "I want you to say this to Esau, emphasizing my humility and recognition of his familial lordship: 'Your brother Jacob says, I am your humble servant and have been living the past twenty years with uncle Laban. I have all I need – my own cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, male and female servants. I am sending this message to let you know that I am coming home and recognize you as lord of our family, and I have no need of anything from the family estate. I hope you will forgive me and there will be peace between us.'"

When his envoys returned to Jacob, they told him, "We conveyed your message to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you and is bringing four hundred men with him."

Rather than rejoicing at the news that his brother was coming to see him, Jacob's unresolved guilt over his mistreatment of Esau caused him to react to this news with intense fear and worry. Anticipating the worst, he divided his people, flocks and herds into two separate camps. He thought, "If Esau attacks one camp, the other camp may be able to escape."

Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my grandfather Abraham, God of my father Isaac, please hear me now. You, O Lord, are the one who told me, 'Go back to your homeland and to your family, and I will make you flourish.' I am your humble servant and unworthy of the loving kindness and faithfulness you have shown me. When I left home, crossing the Jordan, I had only my staff, and now I am returning with the abundance of two entire camps. But I'm afraid – overwhelmed by fear. I'm terrified that my brother Esau is coming to attack me, and not just me, but my children and their mothers as well. Please Lord, intervene and deliver me now, for you promised me, 'I will be good to you, watch over you and multiply your descendants like the sand of the sea; they will be too numerous to count.'"

Jacob stayed there that night and selected from his possessions the following as a gift to give to his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. He separated them into individual herds and put them in the care of his servants. Then he instructed his servants, "Go ahead of me to meet my brother, and keep some space between the herds."

He told the servant leading the first herd, "When you meet my brother Esau and he asks, 'Whose servant are you, where are you going, and who owns all these animals?' you must say this: 'They belong to your humble servant Jacob. They are a gift to you, the lord of his family, and he is just behind us.'"

Jacob gave this instruction to the second, third and all the other servants who followed with the herds: "You must say the exact same thing to Esau when you meet him. Be certain to say, 'Your humble servant Jacob is coming right behind us.'" He thought, "Perhaps these gifts will soften Esau's heart and make up for the wrong I did to him, and when he sees me, he will forgive and accept me." So Jacob sent his gifts ahead of him, but he spent the night in the camp.

That night Jacob took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons to the ford of the Jabbok, where they crossed. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. Struggling with guilt and fear as he prepared to meet his brother, Jacob remained by himself in order to pray. While praying, the gentle hand of the Lord touched him, but Jacob misperceived that he was being attacked by a man and wrestled with him until dawn. When the Lord saw that Jacob was continuing to fight against God's healing presence and that his fear and guilt were near remitting, he gave him the nudge he needed to surrender completely

> – he reached out and touched Jacob's hip, dislocating the joint. Then the Lord said to him, "You can let me go now – a new day has dawned for you."
>
> But Jacob replied, "I can't let you go without the assurance of your blessing."
>
> The Lord asked him, "What is your name?"
>
> "Jacob" (which means 'deceiver'), he answered. Then the Lord said, "You are no longer 'Jacob the fearful self-dependent deceiver,' but you will be known as Israel – the one who, with God, struggled against human fear and selfishness, and overcame" (Genesis 32:3-27 REM).

Jacob was a real historic person, who did real historic things, and his life is recorded to both give us the history of the family through whom Messiah will come, but is also an object lesson. What is the object lesson from Jacob's life from which we can all benefit or which applies to all of us?

Read last paragraph, "And the evidence…" What is wrong with this paragraph? And there is something really wrong here.

If the evidence that Jacob was forgiven was the change in his name, then when would Jacob have been forgiven?

So, for 20 years Jacob wasn't forgiven by God? God was holding it against Him, God was unforgiving to Jacob for 20 years—but this is false.

This is what happens when one holds to the false law model, forgiveness in the imposed law model is about legal pardon and cannot be granted until the penalty is paid, the person has confessed, and accepted the legal terms. Thus the offended god is presented as being unforgiving until he receives the price necessary to grant forgiveness.

But in the design law model the offended forgives immediately—when did Jesus forgive His crucifiers?

- Who pled with Jesus to forgive them?
- Is Jesus offering His blood to Himself to persuade Himself to forgive them?
- Is Jesus forgiveness a legal act?
- Is Jesus God?
- Do we believe Jesus when He said that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father?
- Did Jesus have authority to forgive sins?
- Did the forgiveness Jesus gave reveal the heart, character, attitude of God?
- Did the forgiveness Jesus gave at the cross change the crucifiers into His friends?
- So, even though Jesus forgave them, having rejected that forgiveness, they were not humbled, did not repent, were not reconciled to God and therefore remained in a state of unforgiveness while being forgiven by God.

When did God forgive Jacob—what did we read last week when Jacob was fleeing from Esau's anger?

> "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28:12–15 NIV84).

Does this sound like God is unforgiving or forgiving toward Jacob?

So, when did God forgive Jacob? Immediately, instantly. God always forgives! Every single sinner is forgiven by God because God is love and God forgives.

God's forgiveness requires the sinner to receive it, be changed by it, choose to humble self and repent in order to enter a state of forgiveness. Because love only works in freedom. Just as Paul wrote, it is the kindness of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

The obstacle to our salvation is not from God it is from us. God doesn't need to be changed to save us, we need to be changed in order to be saved. But the imposed law lie teaches that God needs something done to Him, a price paid, in order to forgive. This is pagan.

But, here is the key to understanding how reality works—does God forgiveness, His kind, gracious, and forgiving attitude means the offender always accepts the forgiveness? And if the offender doesn't accept forgiveness, hardens their heart instead, does God's forgiveness mean they get away with their sin? Why not? Because sin changes them, hardens their heart, corrupts their character, sears their conscience, and as Galatians 6:8 says, destroys them.

The obstacle to our being forgiven, entering a state of forgiveness, is not God, it is us.

God forgives, and if we respond to that love, kindness, forgiveness and repent, then God heals the rebelliousness and gives us a new heart and right spirit and we enter a state of forgiveness—why because we are no longer in rebellion, we are no longer living out of harmony with God and His design law, because His law is now written upon our hearts. We have new characters and thus, we get new names.

So God forgave Jacob immediately, as evidenced by the reassurance and message of comfort God gave Jacob when he fled home. But it wasn't until 20 years later that Jacob finally surrendered, fully repented and received a new heart and **that is when his name was changed**, **because his character changed** from self-dependent, to faith/trust in God dependent.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Genesis 33 when Jacob and Esau meet. Let's read this encounter from *The Remedy:*

Jacob looked up and saw that Esau was approaching with four hundred men, so he divided his family in groups: Leah and her children, Rachel and Joseph, and the two female servants and their children. He put the female servants and their children in front, followed by Leah and her children, and he placed Rachel and Joseph in the rear. Then Jacob went on ahead of them. As Esau was approaching, Jacob, demonstrating that he recognized Esau as lord of the family, bowed to the ground seven times.

But when Esau saw Jacob, he ran to meet him and hugged him. Esau threw his arms around Jacob and kissed him. And they were both crying with joy. When Esau stepped back and looked around and saw the women and children, he asked, "Who are these people with you?" Jacob smiled and said, "They are my family – the children God has graciously given your humble servant."

Then, as Jacob introduced them, the female servants and their children came forward and bowed down. Then Leah and her children came forward and bowed down. Lastly, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed down.

Esau then asked, "Why did you send all these droves of sheep and cattle to me?" "As my gift to you; to let you know that I long for your grace – for your heart to be reconciled to me," Jacob replied.

But Esau said, "O my brother, I already have plenty. Keep what you have for yourself."

"Please, brother," Jacob implored, "If you have forgiven me and I am again welcomed into your favor, then accept this gift from me. For seeing your smiling face and experiencing your grace is like the face of God smiling down on me. So please accept my gift to you, for God has been generous to me and I have all that I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted the gift (Genesis 33:1-11 REM).

What do you think of this encounter?

Did Jacob come to value something more than material wealth? What? A clear conscience, peace with God and peace with others. Is there a lesson for us today as we face trials and temptations in this world?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Genesis 34 and the sin against Dinah and her brother's response.

Jacob had just returned from Mesopotamia and settled in Canaan near the town of Shechem. His daughter Dinah goes out to visit the young women of the town. Shechem, the crown prince of the region (for whom the town was named), sees Dinah and sexually assaults her. But he is completely infatuated with her and wants to have her for his wife. He seeks to console and comfort Dinah, and she

chooses to stay with him in the city after the assault. He then sends his father, the king, to Jacob to negotiate for her hand in marriage. Shechem himself pleads with the family, promising to do whatever they want and pay whatever bride-price they demand to gain their blessing and have Dinah for his wife. Further, Shechem's father offers to let them live in his territory and to become part of his kingdom.

Dinah's brothers respond "deceitfully" and tell Shechem that the only way they can allow him to take Dinah as a wife is if all the men in his city are circumcised; they will then grant permission and promise to live in peace. The king and crown prince tell the men of the city what peace-loving and kind men Dinah's family are, so the men of Shechem agree to be circumcised. Then on the third day, when all the men were incapacitated with pain from their circumcisions, Simeon and Levi, outraged at what happened to their sister, attack and kill all the men in Shechem. They then take all their possessions, flocks, herds, women, and children for their own.

Jacob is alarmed and concerned that their actions will cause the other city-states in the region to join together to attack and destroy his family, so, following God's directions, he moves the family away.

What are your thoughts about these events?

Can we defend the assault Shechem perpetrated upon Dinah? No! It was wrong and cannot be defended. But, who did the greater sin, Shechem or Simeon and Levi? Why and how could this happen?

Do you think Simeon and Levi thought they were sinning? What were they liking telling themselves? Do you think they were telling themselves—let's go do wrong, let's go commit some injustice, or were they telling themselves, injustice was done to our sister and justice requires that we take action—let's go make sure justice is done?

Do we see a trap of Satan in this for human beings throughout all history?

Do you see Satan at work in the events at Shechem – spreading sinfulness and attempting to destroy the avenue for Messiah?

Do you see his strategy of inciting people to try and right a wrong by using evil methods?

Let's spell it out step by step:

- Shechem sexually assaults Dinah – evil is done; sin is committed.
- The sinner, however, doesn't seek to run from his crime, but seems remorseful and seeks to comfort Dinah. Then he goes to her family, acknowledges his wrong, and seeks to give Dinah station, name, and standing as princess of the region, by making her his wife and paying whatever price her family sets. He is willing to do all in his power to heal the injury he has caused. Dinah seems to be agreeable as she stays with him in the city.

- The brothers, however, now have the evil seed of resentment planted in their hearts. That seed, unremedied, sprouts and causes them to become incensed, outraged, and offended. They do not forgive, but seek to expunge the evil – and what methods do they use?
    - Deceit (breaking the 9th commandment)
    - Murder (breaking the 6th commandment)
    - Dishonoring their father (breaking the 5th commandment)
    - Using the sign of God's covenant for evil, thereby taking God's name in vain (breaking the 3rd commandment)
    - Stealing property (breaking the 8th and 10th commandments)

Think of all the innocents in that city who were harmed by Simeon and Levi as they sought to punish the wrongdoer, to set the wrong right, to exterminate the evil, and to change society so such problems would not happen again.

They did all of this evil in the name of justice. They did evil as a way of dealing with evil. And Satan celebrates because sin spreads – the hearts and minds of Jacob's sons were damaged, the goodwill toward Jacob and his family was turned to fear, distrust, and perhaps hatred, and innocents, who may have come to know Jacob's God, were killed. Jacob's family's reputation was tarnished – who can trust any agreements with them? – and, thereby, God's reputation was tarnished.

We can *never* win God's cause by using Satan's methods.

Do we see these same strategies being used by Satan throughout human history and today? Satan inspires the unrighteous to do evil, then uses that sin to plant the seeds of resentment and outrage into the hearts of the innocent. The seeds bear the fruit of outrage, fomenting into violence focused upon destroying the evil, punishing the wrongdoer, and changing society.

But it is all a deception – a trick, a ploy, a con – being foisted upon people by the master-deceiver. The lie is so well hidden that those reacting to the initial wrong are just like Simeon and Levi, willing to break every principle of love in order to punish those they see as wrong, all the while claiming they are acting in righteousness. If it were possible, even the very elect of God would be deceived.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Meanwhile, the first thing…" After Simeon and Levi's sin at Shechem, God instructs Jacob to go to Bethel, where God had previously appeared to him and build an altar for God there.

Jacob instructs his household to get rid of all the idols and household gods.

What is the object lesson for us in all of this?

Can God deliver us from the enemies of righteousness in this world if we cling to the unrighteousness of this world? Can God free us from fear and selfishness if we continue to practice fear and selfishness? Can God restore love and trust in our hearts if we cling to ideas about God that cause fear and distrust?

If we want to experience the healing God has for us, then we must let go of our hold on the ways, methods, and principles of this world of selfishness, the power over methods, the imperial law methods, including in our theology. If we continue to worship a god who uses power to torture and kill his enemies and requires blood payment to purchase his forgiveness then we cannot be freed from fear and selfishness because such a god-concept incites fear and selfishness.

What about Jacob instructing his household to get rid of all the foreign gods, was he violating the principles of religious liberty?

No, they were free to leave if they wanted, just like Reuben eventually did, but if they wanted to remain in Jacob's household they needed to comply with his standards.

Further, does getting rid of physical idols mean that the heart of the one who worshipped the idol is changed? So, Jacob can require physical idols be removed from the camp, but he cannot force a heart change. The getting rid of the idols wasn't about forcing changes of heart, it was about Jacob taking a stand and giving a message to where his heart was and what he expected from those who stayed with him. Stop trusting the ways, gods, methods of this world, cut them out of your lives and trust in Yahweh.

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jacob's experience during the night of wrestling…" Why? Is this some punishment on God's part? Is this a legal requirement? Or is it simply reality—if you want to be free from fear and selfishness in your character you must come to points in your life in which you face those elements and surrender self completely to Christ for their removal.

Notice I said free from fear and selfishness in your character, your heart motives, not in our fallen state. We will be tempted with fear and selfishness, just as Jesus was, but the righteous who live right before Christ returns will have come to a place of love and trust that in their heart they would rather die than betray Jesus (Rev 12:11).

Understand, before Christ returns, we will not be free from temptation, we will be solidified in love and trust of Jesus so that we will no longer seek to save ourselves by giving into temptation—we will be like Daniel and the three worthies who would not give into temptation to save self.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 11
Joseph, Master of Dreams

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson points out in the first paragraph that Joseph occupies more space in the book of Genesis than any other patriarch—why?

The Bible tells us that the stories of the Old Testament were recorded "as examples to keep us" (1 Corinthians 10:6 NIV84).

The Bible is the record of real historic people who did real stuff, so the record of Joseph's life is a reliable record of real events that happened.

But the Bible is more than a history book. The record we have here is the focus of the plan of salvation. We read about these lives because it is through them, their families and descendants, that the promised Messiah will come.

But even more than this. Their lives are examples, object lessons, to teach larger realities on multiple levels. Their lives reveal the battle between the two antagonistic principles at war, God's kingdom of truth, love, freedom warring against Satan's kingdom of lies, fear-driven selfishness and coercion.

These Bible stories reveal that without God's love working in our hearts, fear and selfishness (sin), corrupts us and will lead us to betray and exploit others, even those closest to us—our own families.

So the first lesson from Joseph is a personal lesson, a lesson from which we can all benefit. It is a lesson that reveals the damage that unremedied fear and selfishness, sin, causes in us and in the people we love. It is a lesson that despite loving a person that person may do us wrong, injure us, and do injustice, but Joseph's life also reveals that despite the injustice done to us, if we trust God, stay faithful to God, that God can overrule that injustice. And even if we don't get temporal restoration, the faithful receive a godly and righteous character, free from guilt, shame, and the control of the carnal drives.

Joseph's brothers allowed their fear, selfishness, and jealousy to take control of their hearts, minds, and actions. Had they truly loved Joseph, they would have celebrated him and rejoiced when their father honored him. But they didn't actually love Joseph, they were motivated by selfishness. They saw Joseph as a threat. So they sold him as a slave and misled their father into believing Joseph had been killed by wild animals.

Sometimes we describe this by saying "they loved themselves more than they loved Joseph." But, in actual fact, in the godly definition of the word "love," while the brothers didn't love Joseph, they also

did NOT love themselves. Their actions were not good for Joseph, but their actions were not good for themselves either. They did not experience improved mental and emotional health, improved relationship with their father, better sleep, more mature and trustworthy character from their choice to treat Joseph as they did.

Their actions harmed Joseph, but their actions harmed themselves also. And who was harmed worse by their actions, Joseph or the brothers? The brothers. When someone sins against us they can harm our bodies, our reputations, our feelings, even our thoughts getting us to struggling with discouraging thoughts about ourselves and our value and worth. But someone's sin against us cannot damage our conscience, warp our character, harden our heart, corrupt our soul. We may grieve, cry out in pain, but like Jesus on the cross, or Stephen when being stoned, or Paul when being whipped, or Peter when being imprisoned can remain pure of heart and godly in character. But when we sin against another we damage our minds, hearts, characters, searing our consciences. The brothers hurt themselves by their sin against Joseph.

The brothers did not love Joseph, but they also did not love themselves. **The only way to actually love oneself, is to love others**. If we act selfishly—meaning with the motive to exploit another for our own advantage—then we are not acting in love toward our own self, but are damaging ourselves, searing our conscience, hardening our hearts, worsening our condition.

Joseph suffered terrible injustice from his own brothers. His human rights were violated. He was not treated as an individual but as property. He was taken by slave traders and sold in a slave market to Potiphar.

There is no question that what happened to Joseph was wrong; it was sin; it was unjust. And Joseph had no ability to stop it. He could not control the choices of others. Joseph had to decide how he would, in governance of self, deal with the many injustices.
Would he become resentful, bitter, hateful? Would he fantasize about getting even with his brothers? Would he pray to God to take vengeance upon the Egyptians? Would he seek to sabotage and injure those who treated him as a slave?

Or would Joseph surrender his life to God? Would he seek God's presence, God's methods, God's law, God's purpose in his life? Would he trust God to right the wrongs done to him? Would he refuse to become bitter and angry? Would he refuse to let selfishness corrupt his character? Would Joseph, in the face of corruption, become corrupt himself—or would he become more just, more righteous, through trusting God and living out of God's methods in his life?

And this is where Satan tricks and traps so many. When we are wronged, when we are sinned against, that injury, wrong, abuse, exploit plants an evil seed in our heart that must be rooted out or it will corrupt the character of the innocent party. If the wrong done to us sprouts in our heart into bitterness, resentment, a desire for vengeance, hate, or fear, insecurity, malignant distrust of everyone, and that blossoms into self-seeking, self-protecting, defensive and hostile attitudes, a need to control others in order to protect self, then the innocent becomes corrupted and eventually like the one who wronged them.

God has given us a tool a means of rooting out such evil seeds from our heart when others of wronged us and it is—forgiveness. When we forgive those who have wronged us we let go of the anger, resentment, desire for retaliation, and instead plant in the seed of godly love longing for that person's conversion and transformation. Forgiveness prevents the innocent from becoming corrupted and hardened in heart, but it does not change the evil doer. Thus, while we must forgive those who have done us wrong if we want the evil seed removed from our hearts, we must also recognize our forgiveness doesn't change them and therefore we cannot trust them and will not trust them unless persuasive evidence is presented that they have become trustworthy—something we also see in the story of Joseph as he forgave his brothers, but required evidence in order to know if they could be trusted, which he obtained through the trial he put them through.

Joseph chose to trust God and apply God's methods, the law of love, in his life. And how did Joseph treat Potiphar? He was a faithful, loyal, reliable, diligent, true, dedicated, and honest worker, and he carried out all of his slave duties with integrity. This is incredible, going against every notion of human justice in our contemporary worldly culture.

Why would Joseph behave this way? Potiphar was an Egyptian. He wasn't a member of Joseph's family. He wasn't a descendant of Abraham. He wasn't a worshiper of Yahweh. He was a pagan, an idol worshipper, and worst of all—he was a slave owner! He must be a corrupt person, and certainly his buying of Joseph and owning him as a slave made Potiphar undeserving of Joseph's loyalty—right?

Was Joseph loyal to Potiphar because of who Potiphar was, or was Joseph loyal because of who Joseph was? Joseph, as a loyal subject of the Creator, sought to honor God by living out His law of love even in the face of injustice.

One of Satan's most effective traps is to incite real injustice and then get people to seek justice through the application of Satan's methods, his laws, his principles of inflicted punishments and retaliation—because such evildoers "deserve" it. "It is right," Satan says, "for us to be resentful and to harbor fantasies of suffering toward our enemies." It is right in the world's system to use whatever means necessary to ensure that the evil get what they deserve.

Why do you think Joseph didn't try and escape? Once he was put over all of Potiphar's house, it would seem he could have had opportunity to arrange for a horse, or chariot, and made a pretext to some duty and fled Egypt—why do you think he didn't?

- Was Joseph's presence in Egypt, as a slave, part of the events that resulted in Joseph being elevated to rule and eventually save his family and keep open the avenue for the Messiah?
- Did God know the future? Clearly, he already gave dreams to Joseph that his family would bow down to him. So, did God have a plan for Joseph to bring good out of the evil done to him?
- Would God's plan be realized if Joseph doesn't trust God?
- So if Joseph flees Egypt he won't be where God needs him to be.
- So is it possible that Joseph stayed in Egypt because he was surrendered to God's will and was waiting on the Lord to direct him and provide the solution? And Joseph never got any direction from God to flee, so he stayed.

- What would selfishness motivate Joseph to do? Wouldn't it be to flee or sabotage? So, not only does Satan tempt us to retaliate to injustice with ungodly methods, Satan also will inflame selfishness to get us to try and fix our own circumstances WITHOUT seeking God's direction and without waiting for God's solution.

Despite Joseph's high moral standard, his faithful and loyal service, he suffered even more injustice. Joseph was accused of sexual assault and imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. What an outrage—falsely accused, falsely imprisoned after years of loyal and faithful service! Certainly, after such mistreatment it would be okay for Joseph to be bitter and to seek justice—or would it?

But again, how did Joseph actually respond? Did he become bitter and hateful? Did he seek to retaliate? Did he fantasize about getting even? No, he lived out God's law of love in governance of himself. And eventually, through God's miraculous interventions, Joseph was elevated to the second most powerful position in the world—second only to Pharaoh himself.

And once Joseph had such power, what did he do? He had the authority to right all past injustices against him. He could have punished Potiphar's wife and Potiphar if he had wanted. By today's standards, it would have been just and right to put them in prison, fine them, and make them pay reparations.

So why didn't Joseph do this when he had the power to do so?

What would have happened to Joseph—to his heart, mind, and character—if he had practiced the methods of this sinful world in seeking so-called "justice"? What kind of person would he have become had he harbored resentment and bitterness, longing to retaliate eye for eye?

What happens to the hearts of people today when they focus on past wrongs (real wrongs, like Joseph experienced), either to themselves or to their ancestors, and they hold to bitterness and resentment and seek to use the governments of this world to make others pay? Or perhaps teach theologies that God will one day torture people in fire to make them pay for the wrongs they have done?

- We cannot win God's cause using Satan's methods.
- God cannot win His cause using Satan's methods and will NEVER use Satan's methods! AND….
- God cannot win His cause through people whose hearts harbor resentment, bitterness, and desire for retaliation, people who long to inflict punishment on others.
- God can win His cause only through people who trust Him and allow Him to eliminate fear, selfishness, bitterness, jealousy, and the desire for retaliation from their hearts and minds and to restore in them His love, His character, so that they love their enemies as Christ loves us. Then our enemies become our friends. This is the only way forward.

The so-called social-justice movements of the world today are traps of Satan designed to inflame selfishness, incite division, and cause more hostility between people. Only God's laws of love, truth, and liberty will heal and unite humanity. Only as we trust God with our lives, our futures, the outcomes, and stay faithful in governing ourselves in harmony with His principles can we overcome Satan and the

powers of this world. As Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5 NIV84).

So the first lesson from the life of Joseph is a personal lesson, the battle in each of our hearts with sin when someone does us wrong—how will we respond, with the methods of the world, or by surrendering to Jesus, trusting Him, and living out His methods?

The second lesson is an object lesson of the plan of salvation. Joseph represents Jesus and events in Joseph's life reveal aspects of what Jesus will do for our salvation.

There were seven miracle births that occurred in the Bible besides Jesus' virgin birth. The miracle births were not virgin births, they were women with infertility that God healed—thus it was a miracle of healing the malady of infertility and then they became pregnant in the normal way. But these 7 births all represent Jesus in some way:

1. Sarah- Isaac – The promised one who will be sacrificed
2. Rebekah – Jacob – wrestles with God to overcome his own weakness and became Israel, the father of the nation built upon twelve sons, Jesus wrestled with temptation and overcome to be the cornerstone of the church built upon twelve apostles
3. Monoah's wife – Samson – blessed with strength to deliver Israel from bondage of oppressors and rule over them, Jesus has the strength to deliver us from sin and rule the universe
4. Hannah- Samuel – who became High Priest, Jesus is our High Priest
5. Shunammite woman – child died and resurrected, of course Jesus died and rose again
6. Elizabeth – John the Baptist – who greatest of prophets, and Jesus was the greatest of all prophets
7. Rachel – Joseph

Below are some of the ways Joseph's life foreshadowed the life of Jesus:

- Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors. This was Jacob's way of setting Joseph apart from his brothers as the one who would occupy the position of firstborn (which is not about birth order but about position of authority in the family). The firstborn received a double inheritance, something that Joseph received, as the Bible explicitly confirms: "The rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph" (1 Chronicles 5:2 NIV84).
    - Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15–17 NIV84).

- Joseph's brothers were jealous, betrayed him, and lied about him.

  - Lucifer was jealous in heaven and betrayed Jesus and, lying about God, led a third of the angels into rebellion; he then lied to Adam and Eve, leading humanity into sin. When Jesus came to Earth, He was despised and rejected by men. His own people betrayed Him, lied about Him, and handed Him over to Roman authorities to have Him killed.

- Joseph was sold and became a slave.
  - Jesus left heaven and humbled Himself all the way down to that of a slave, just as Scripture describes: "You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth— and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5–11 NET).

- Joseph was faithful in all his duties as a slave.
  - Jesus was faithful in all His duties as our human Savior (Revelation 1:5).

- Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife but rejected the temptations.
  - Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness but rejected the temptations (Matthew 4:1–11; Hebrews 4:15).

- Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife.
  - Jesus was falsely accused by the Jewish leaders.

- Joseph was wrongly imprisoned in a dungeon.
  - Jesus was wrongly imprisoned in the grave.

- Joseph was raised from the dungeon to the right hand of the sovereign.
  - Jesus arose from the grave to the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20).

- Joseph was Hebrew but also became Egyptian and took an Egyptian name.
  - Jesus is divine but He became human.

- Joseph married an Egyptian woman.
  - Christ's bride is from this world of sin.

- Joseph prepared a place for his family.
  - Jesus prepares a place for us (John 14).

- Seven years of plenty to prepare for the seven years of famine.
  - Seven is a number that represents spiritual completion. We are in a spiritual war, and Jesus is the bread that came down from heaven that provides the spiritual sustenance for all who trust Him (John 6:33, 41). Jesus has a storehouse of spiritual food sufficient for all our needs. Despite living in a world of sin, a world of spiritual famine, Jesus' is the Bread of Life for all who will trust Him.

- Joseph required those who wanted the grain of Egypt to purchase it and, ultimately, they sold everything they had to Egypt.
  - In order for us to partake the bread of heaven, we must surrender all other means whereby we try to obtain eternal life. We are instructed to buy from Jesus the gold tried in the fire (Revelation 3:18). We buy from Jesus through the barter method. We exchange what we have for what He has. We exchange:
    - a sinful heart for a righteous heart
    - guilt and shame for purity and peace
    - condemnation for commendation
    - eternal death for eternal life.

- Joseph received the land of Goshen, a rich and bountiful land, from the sovereign for his family.
  - Jesus will receive the earth made new from His Father for His human family.

- The brothers were alienated from Joseph through their own selfishness and betrayal—they had to change in order to be reconciled to Joseph who was already forgiving toward them.
  - We are alienated from God by our sinfulness and we must be changed to be reconciled to God who is already forgiving toward us.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph, "The future will…" What do you think of the sentiment in this paragraph?

"No wonder, then, that Joseph's brothers hated him so much?"

What does this mean? Are they saying that it was because Jacob wanted to give Joseph the rights of the first born that his brothers hated Joseph so much?

Is that the reason? No! IT IS NOT. The reason they hated him so much is because they did not love him; they were not reborn; they had fear and selfishness operating in their hearts as their chief motive to action.

If they had loved Joseph as God would have us love each other, then what would have been their attitude when Jacob favored Joseph? They would have celebrated, rejoiced, been happy for him.

So the reason the brothers hated Joseph is not the favor shown by Jacob, but the fear, selfishness, jealousy and lack of love in the hearts of the brothers.

This idea that it was because of the good shown to Joseph that the brothers hated him is classic worldly-think—the blame game. They hated Joseph because of what Jacob did, it is Jacob's fault for being good to Joseph. If someone else is being blessed it is viewed as a slight against us. If someone else is advancing it is viewed as an obstacle to our advancement. So teachers are instructed not to praise students in school who have written an outstanding paper or got an A on the exam because those who didn't score will might get their feelings hurt.

All sin, all evil, all exploitation, is because of sin in the hearts of those who do the evil. It isn't because of another person.

The story of Joseph demonstrates this. This is why Joseph is such a powerful example of Jesus. Despite the multiple wrongs against him, he never chose to hurt those who hurt him.

Joseph's brothers' actions caused consequences—not only to Joseph, but to them. They had guilt, regret, remorse. They had to see the sadness, grief, heartbreak in Jacob for years. And God did not abandon the brothers, but worked on their hearts and eventually they were changed and protected Benjamin rather than themselves.

What is the lesson in all of this?

What do we learn about God through all of this?

Read the fourth paragraph, "Furthermore, Joseph…" What do you think of this paragraph and the sentence "No one likes a snitch."

What law lens is this presented through? This is classic imposed law, human law, Satan's worldview law, not God's law.

No one likes a snitch because their telling the authority gets the wrongdoer in trouble with the authorities. If they hadn't snitched, the authorities wouldn't know and the wrongdoer wouldn't be in trouble. It is the fault of the snitch. The problem with breaking imposed laws is the inflicted punishment of the law enforcer. Thus, no one likes a snitch.

But, in design law, the damage comes from the sin itself, not from the ruling authority. It is the one in authority who has the remedy that can save and heal.

So, imagine that instead of being reported to the legal authorities for legal violations that will result in inflicted punishments, we understand reality as God runs His universe and use design laws for our

illustration. So instead of your brother being a snitch, your brother goes to your physician father and reports that he has noticed what appears to be cancerous growth on your back. Do you have the attitude, "no one likes a snitch" or "I love my brother for not ignoring a life-threatening condition"?

But can people report health concerns in a way that is not healing? Can people report someone's physical or mental health struggles in a way that is designed not to bring healing to the person, but to have the person ridiculed, mocked, rejected, despised?

And can people do the same with sin, understand sin through the imposed law lens and report it as rule-breaking to get people into trouble, or fired from their office, rather than seeking to lead them back to the path of righteousness for salvation from sin?

And what does that say about the one who would do such a thing?

The last paragraph, talking about the dreams says, "The genuine prophetic character of the dreams was even ratified by the fact that they are repeated."

I find this statement incredible—truly, I can't believe this would be presented as some sort of evidence of validity.

If I understand correctly what they are saying, and maybe it is me and I just don't comprehend the point, but if I understand it correctly, they are saying that the repetition of the dream validates it as a genuine prophetic message from God.

Well, I can tell you with 100% certainty that simply having a dream that recurs does not mean it is a prophetic message from God. Many of my patients have recurring dreams and the dreams are manifestations of things that they are struggling with. PTSD patients will have recurring dreams of their traumas, just because a dream recurs in no way means it is a prophetic message.

What is the evidence that these dreams were prophetic messages from God? They came to pass, they were true, it actually happened. That is the evidence!

TUESDAY

Judah and Tamar

What do you think of this story?

Read second paragraph, "Judah finds…" Hmmm… What death was it that Er and Onan died, was it the eternal second death that is the wages of sin death, or was it the first sleep death that even the righteous Daniel died? Will Er and Onan be resurrected one day?

So, if this death was not the wages of sin death, was this death punishment for sin?

If it wasn't punishment for sin, then why did God put them to sleep in the first death?

Read the fourth paragraph, "The conclusion of this sordid story…" does this give any insight into what was going on?

Did the Messiah come from the family line of these events after Tamar's trick of Judah?

Was the coming Messiah important? Was it a fulfillment of a promise of Genesis 3:15?

Was God working out the fulfillment of this promise?

Does the death of Er and Onan determine their ultimate destiny?

What determines the ultimate destiny of every human?

What happens at the end of the 1000 years? Why raise the wicked?

From one Bible commentary, the book *The Great Controversy* describing events after the 1000 years, after the New Jerusalem and all the saints have returned to the earth and the wicked dead have been resurrected:

> "At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on,—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision, the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the city of God. **By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed**, and the armies of Satan surround the city, and make ready for the onset. Now Christ again appears to the view of his enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around him are the subjects of his kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding his Son. The brightness of his presence fills the city of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance." (The Great Controversy 664)

Let's read this account in Genesis 38 from The Remedy:

> Now, regarding the time that Judah moved away from his brothers, he went to Adullam and stayed with a man named Hirah. While there, he met a Canaanite woman – a pagan, the daughter of a man named Shua. Judah gave in to his desires and took her, and he had sex with her; and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, whom he named Er. She became pregnant again and had another son named Onan. She gave birth to a third son while at Kezib, named Shelah.

Judah arranged for his firstborn son Er to marry a woman named Tamar. But Er's heart was hardened to God, and his character was completely corrupt, therefore he was unfit to be the ancestor of Messiah. So the Lord, acting to fulfill his promise to bring the Messiah to save the world, mercifully put Er to sleep in death.

Then Judah, seeking to produce an heir for Er, instructed Onan, "Go and have sex with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her and produce an heir for your brother." But Onan's heart was also corrupt with selfishness, and he knew that any child produced with Tamar would not be his heir but Er's, and would receive the birthright. So when he had sex with her, he withdrew prematurely and spilled his seed on the ground to avoid giving his brother an heir. The Lord accurately diagnosed him as hardened in selfishness and terminal in sin, and therefore unfit to be ancestor for Messiah. So, the Lord, in mercy, and to fulfill his promise to bring the Messiah to save the world, also put him to sleep in death.

Judah didn't understand the reason why his sons had died; so he told his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Go home and live with your father; remain as a widow until my son Shelah grows up, and he will fulfill his duty and give you an heir." But Judah was not sincere. He was afraid for his son and thought, "My only remaining son may die too, just like his brothers." So he sent Tamar to live with her father as a way of protecting his son.

After some time, Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. Once Judah had recovered from his grief, he and his friend Hirah from Adullam went to Timnah, where the men were shearing his sheep.

Someone told Tamar, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep." Realizing that no arrangements had been made for her to marry Shelah despite his coming of age, she implemented her own plan to produce an heir. She removed her widow's clothes, dressed seductively, and disguised herself with a veil. She then sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah.

When Judah saw her sitting there, dressed seductively, with her face covered, he thought she was a prostitute. So he went over to her and propositioned her, saying, "Come with me and let me have sex with you."

"How much will you pay me to have sex with you?" she asked.

"I will send you a young goat from my flock," he replied.

"What will you give me to ensure you will send the goat?" she asked.

"What security would you have me give you?" he said.

"Give me your seal and its cord, and your staff," she answered. So he gave them to her and then had sex with her, and she became pregnant by him. Afterward, she returned home and changed back into her widow's clothes.

Judah sent his friend Hirah with the young goat to pay the woman and retrieve his seal, cord and staff, but Hirah could not find her anywhere. So he asked the men who lived there, "Where is the shrine prostitute who sits beside the road at Enaim?"

But the men said, "There is no shrine prostitute here and never has been."

So Hirah returned to Judah and said, "I couldn't find her anywhere. And when I asked the men who lived there about her, they said, 'There is no shrine prostitute here and never has been.'"

So Judah said, "Well then, she can keep my things. It is better to just let her have them than to keep looking for her and let everyone know that we were so foolish to be tricked by her. Besides, I did send the goat, but you couldn't find her."

About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has been sexually promiscuous, acting no better than a prostitute, and now she is pregnant."
Judah, wanting to avoid giving her to Shelah, seized on this opportunity and ordered, "Take her out and burn her to death!"

But as she was being taken out, she sent a message to her father-in-law: "I am pregnant by the man who owns these. Examine them and see if you recognize whose seal, cord and staff they are."

Judah recognized them immediately and said, "She has not defiled herself, but acted as is her right to produce an heir for my firstborn son. It was I who was the irresponsible one – who failed to do what was right – when I did not give her to my son Shelah." And Judah never had sex with her again.

When it came time for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was going to have twins. During labor, one of the twins put out his hand, and the midwife tied a scarlet thread to his wrist and said, "This one came out first." But then he drew back his hand and his brother was actually born first, and the midwife said, "How did you break out first?" And he was named Perez (which means 'breaking out'), and he became the ancestor of the Messiah. Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, was born and named Zerah (which means 'the scarlet rays of dawn').

THURSDAY

Read the fifth paragraph, "Though Joseph is the one…" Did God bring the famine? What do you think is happening here?

Isn't this the conflict over God fulfilling His promise of Genesis 3:15. The Messiah is promised. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been told it is through them the promise will be fulfilled. Satan is working to stop the promise. He wants to destroy this branch of the human family. So, who do we think brought the famine?

Can Satan affect the weather?

Job chapter 1 informs us he can.

So, which is more likely, God brought the famine, or God foresaw the famine and provided for the deliverance of His people from another attack from Satan?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 12
Joseph, Prince of Egypt

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read second paragraph, "Interestingly, this whole next sequence of events…" What does it mean that "Joseph's brothers live that whole experience as a divine judgment"?

What kind of judgment? Is it judicial? Are they saying, God examined the legality of their actions, ruled that they were guilty and sentenced them to suffer so many years of guilt, worry, anxiety, bad sleep, shame, and eventually God arranged for them to be falsely accused of stealing back their money, held in jail for three days, have Simeon restrained in Egypt while the others go back for Benjamin, and then have Benjamin falsely accused etc.

Are they saying God ordered all of this as a judgment against them?

Do we find anything in the experience of Joseph's brothers that could qualify as judicial, as penal/legal other than what Joseph manufactured and falsely accused them of?

Joseph's actions are not God's actions, so we cannot count Joseph as being divine, then what is God's divine judgment here?

When considering the question of judgment, always ask **what law lens**.

Human law = judicial judgments of guilt or innocence and infliction of punishments.

Design law = dealing with some aspect of reality, diagnosing and therapeutically intervening.

So, regarding Joseph's brothers, what kind of judgment is this? It is the diagnosing of the condition of the heart for the purpose of bringing them to repentance and salvation.

- What law is involved?
    - The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).

What caused the brother's guilt, shame, anxiety, fear?

What caused them to be put through the trials of being falsely accused and imprisoned etc.? Wasn't this reaping what they had sown? In other words, this isn't punishment inflicted to pay for crimes, but it is

because the way they treated Joseph revealed their selfish, abusive, jealous and untrustworthy character. And Joseph, not being God, cannot read the secret condition of their hearts. So in order for Joseph to know whether his brothers have changed he needs to put them in situations that require them to make choices that will reveal whether they will protect others or sacrifice others to benefit themselves.

Thus, they are reaping in their relationship a trial that is a result of what they sowed into their relationship with Joseph.

Had they always treated Joseph with respect, love, self-sacrifice and IF instead of selling Joseph as they did, Joseph had been taken by raiders while his brother's fought to protect him, but the brothers were grievously wounded and almost died in their attempts to protect him, but the slavers won and took Joseph—if that had been the history what would have been their experience when they came for grain? Would they have been put through these trials?

As we discussed last week, Joseph is a real historical person who did real things and the history we have in Scripture is reliable. However, these events are recorded as lessons for us to teach us the plan of salvation, the battle between sin, fear, selfishness and righteousness, love, and trust.

Joseph is a type of Christ as we discussed last week, and in this scenario, in regard to the diagnostic and therapeutic judgments, Joseph also acts the role of Christ. The difference is that Jesus doesn't need to do such things to determine the condition of our heart, but Jesus will do such things to help US DETERMINE the nature of our own hearts in order to bring us to repentance and healing.

- Joseph judged that his brothers were selfish and untrustworthy when he last knew them.
    - Joseph had already forgiven them and did not seek or desire revenge against them—but reconciliation requires them to be trustworthy in addition to Joseph to forgive.
- Joseph judged that in order for him to know whether they were trustworthy a trial was necessary—but it wasn't a jury trial, it was a trial of experience, they had to be tried by events to reveal their character. **And each and every one of us will be tried by life events also! In God's judgment we are not tried in a courtroom, we are tried by life and our choices!**
- Then Joseph judged he could trust them and revealed himself to them.

God does this also, He judges our hearts, what is wrong, what is needed to bring us to repentance. If we refuse the easier, kinder, gentler methods, because God loves us, He will either remove His protections and allow painful consequences to come to teach us, or He will bring specific judgments (like the plagues of Egypt) to cause us to examine ourselves and the situation and come to repentance. These judgments of God are not judicial, they are therapeutic.

Consider this historic quote:

> "How great is the long - suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was very great toward

> the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." - PP 587.4

What about the question of forgiveness?

- When does God forgive?
- Does God forgive those who have not repented?
- If God forgives those who have not repented are they saved?
- Does God's forgiveness save a person?
- What saves a sinner?
- Could a sinner be saved if God refused to forgive?

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Genesis 41:28, when Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream, and it reads:

> "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do" (Genesis 41:28 NIV84).

Does this mean that God is the one who brought the famine?

In the Bible if it says that God did something does that mean God did it?

What about these texts?

- While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "**The fire of God fell** from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:16 NIV84)
    - Who brought the fire? It was Satan, yet the Bible says God did it.
- "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. **So the LORD put him to death** and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse." (1 Chronicles 10:13–14 NIV84).
    - How did Saul die?
        - "Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him." (1 Samuel 31:4–5 NIV84).
    - Yet the Bible also says that God put him to death because he was unfaithful.

So, when the Bible says that God was about to do this, does it mean God was the active agent to bring the famine, or that God foresaw what was going to happen and sent a message of warning to protect from the famine?

If we look at this strategically through the lens of the Great Controversy, the principles and methods of God and the goals of God, then we may put this text in with the two I already read where the Bible says God did something that He didn't directly do.

After Adam sinned could humanity be saved without Jesus?

- Genesis 3:15 Jesus is promised to come and crush the serpent's head and save humanity.
- The entire Old Testament focus is on fulfilling this promise.
- We focus in on Abraham's family through Isaac and Jacob because it is through them that Messiah comes.
- Satan knows this and thus Satan works constantly to try and destroy this family.
- So, who benefits if a famine comes and the family of Jacob dies?
- One way to understand this is that Satan is working to destroy Jacob's descendants to interfere with the plan of salvation. God in His foreknowledge sees what Satan will do and sends a warning message to prepare and protect the avenue for Messiah so that all the peoples of the world may be blessed through Him.

Then why does the Bible read the way it does? Because that is how Joseph explained things to Pharaoh. But why didn't Joseph just explain to Pharaoh the conflict between God and Satan and that God's enemy was going to bring a famine, but that God sent a warning to prepare and protect?

What is the common mindset about supernatural things in Joseph's day?

They were polytheistic, meaning that they worshipped many gods. To present the Great Controversy in that setting may have fueled a polytheistic worldview—"there is more than one supernatural being, let's offer sacrifices to the god who brings famines so he won't bring famines anymore and so forth."

So, if Joseph presented the GC to Pharaoh, Pharaoh and the priests of the various other gods, may have decided to offer sacrifices to the god that was going to bring the famine, rather than prepare for the famine. They may have considered, well if your God who warned us isn't powerful enough to stop the god who is bringing the famine, maybe we should be worshipping the god who can control the weather and bring famines.

So all through the Old Testament we find God taking credit for things He didn't do, primarily to reach the people where they were in their understanding of things and lead them to truth and salvation.

MONDAY

Read third paragraph which focuses on the meeting where the brothers bow down to Joseph, "Second, this prudential…" What do you think about the idea of "just retribution" the lesson inserts into this narrative?

So I looked up retribution in the dictionary, just to be sure I wasn't misunderstanding the meaning and it reads:

- requital according to merits or deserts, especially for evil.
- something given or inflicted in such requital.

Then I looked up requital and it means:

- to make repayment or return for (service, benefits, etc.).
- to make retaliation for (a wrong, injury, etc.); avenge.
- to retaliate on (a person, group, etc.) for a wrong, injury, etc.

When you read the story of Joseph and his brothers, their meeting, Joseph's actions, and the outcome. Do you see Joseph seeking to retaliate, avenge a wrong, make them pay? Or do you see Joseph longing for reconciliation, heart aching to be reunited with his family, but unsure of whether he can trust them, so he creates circumstances that require them to act and reveal their values and character?

What is going on that the lesson authors would pervert the Scripture like this and twist it to teach that Joseph was seeking just retribution, when Joseph was in fact living out God's law of love and seeking to heal and restore?

It is evidence that whoever wrote this has the wrong understanding of God's law. If we accept Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, then one must believe that justice requires God to inflict punishment for sin.

This is Satan's greatest achievement, his lies about God's law, that get believers in God to promote Satan's view of God and ultimately practice Satan's methods on others, such as crucifying the Son of God, all the while claiming they were honoring and worshiping God.

In the bottom gray section it reads, "Most of us, surely, have done things for which we are sorry. How can we, to whatever degree possible, make up for what we have done?"

This language is ambiguous—it could be understood in a way that is beneficial and a part of God's healing solution, but it could also be understood in a way that fuels Satan's methods and practices.

What is the key to understanding this in a healthy way?

What law lens are we thinking through.

If design law then we understand that sin damages—it damages the sinner and others. Thus, if we are truly repentant we want to mitigate the harm we have caused others, and we seek to restore what we have taken from them. But the motivation is for their best interest, not to make us feel good about ourselves. Thus, we must assess whether our actions will help or hurt the person we want to make up to.

This is why in the 12 steps of AA, which are really the steps of conversion and spiritual growth to Christian maturity, steps 8 and 9 read:

- Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

So, this is a healthy way to understand making up, meaning seeking to heal any wound or harm we have caused.

But this could also be understood in an unhealthy way and that is when we think through imposed law. And in that mindset making up means making payments, appeasements, and atonements, doing something that is designed to propitiate wrath, to influence the wronged party not to be upset any more, to turn away their anger. This leads to false theologies and activities like:

- Offering God sacrifices to turn away His wrath, to propitiate Him in some way
- Doing various good works as a means of "balancing the scales" in the cosmic justice system
- Doing various penances
- Purgatory
- Indulgences
- Any form of offerings designed to alleviate guilt and make one feel better
- Any form of works designed to make one feel like they have made up for their sin—a form of paying a fine

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Joseph treating Benjamin with greater favor than the brothers, such as larger portions of food.

Why did Joseph do this?

Why did Joseph put the cup in Benjamin's bag and then threaten to keep Benjamin as a slave?

Couldn't Joseph have just revealed himself to his brothers as they arrived the first time and then simply asked them, "Have you changed? Have you repented? Can I trust you now?" And if they said "Yes, we are sorry. We will never do such things again. You can trust us" wouldn't that have been good enough? Why not?

Is it any different today? Can we rely on what people say when we don't have a track record of their reliability? Worse, can we rely on those who have already proven to be either untrustworthy or incompetent?

What is the basis of trust? Trustworthiness, but what makes someone trustworthy?

They must love you more than themselves, they must have a desire for your good rather than a desire to use you to benefit themselves, they must have maturity to govern self and fulfill whatever the role is, and they must have wisdom to understand and practice God's methods.

But can a person be trustworthy in heart motive, genuinely want to benefit you, and yet you still cannot trust them? Why? You can trust their motive, but you may not be able to trust their recommendations, choices, actions, or follow their advice, because they may not understand the situation correctly. The point being, you must think for yourself and be persuaded in your own mind.

WEDNESDAY

Read the third paragraph, "That Joseph was using a divination cup did not mean that he believed in its power…." Aren't we relieved to realize that Joseph didn't believe in spiritualism, or divination, or any other form of black magic or fortune telling?

But, what transpired here was more than Joseph just allowing them to believe this idea on their own. Joseph instructed his servants to say to his brothers when they pulled the cup out of Benjamin's sack, "Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination?" (Genesis 44:5).

So this isn't merely allowing the brothers to come to their own flawed conclusion, it is purposeful misdirection, planting an idea in order to mislead the mind. Isn't this a form a deception?

And if it is deception, is it wrong? Is it sin? Why or why not?

Do we have any other examples of people working for God who deceived, even lied? There of course of Rahab who hid the spies and lied and we find both in the lineage of Jesus and the hall of faith in Hebrews.

But what about prophets of God, any of those who purposely misled others, told things in a way that wasn't factual, who presented something in a false light?

What about the story in 1Kings 20:

> By the word of the LORD one of the sons of the prophets said to his companion, "Strike me with your weapon," but the man refused.
>
> So the prophet said, "Because you have not obeyed the LORD, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you." And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him.
>
> The prophet found another man and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him and wounded him. Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king [Ahab]. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes. As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, 'Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared."

> "That is your sentence," the king of Israel said. "You have pronounced it yourself."
> Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. He said to the king, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.' " Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria. (1 Kings 20:35–43 NIV84).

Was the prophet deceiving Ahab? Was it sin to do so? Why or why not?

Or the story in 1Kings 13 where Jeroboam was confronted by the prophet of the Lord prophesying about the birth of Josiah and Jeroboam reaches out his hand to grab the prophet and his hand withers and the altar splits in two. Jeroboam asks the prophet to pray his hand be restored and it was. Jeroboam wants to treat the prophet to a great feast but the prophet replies that the Lord instructed him not to eat bread or drink water or return the same way he came. But on his way back home he is met by an older prophet and this is what happened:

> So the prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat."
> The man of God said, "I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. I have been told by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.' "
> The old prophet answered, "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.' " (**But he was lying to him**.) So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.
> While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.' "
> When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. Some people who passed by saw the body thrown down there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived.
> When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, "It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD. The LORD has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the LORD had warned him."
> The prophet said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me," and they did so. Then he went out and found the body thrown down on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, "Oh, my brother!"

> After burying him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the message he declared by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true." (1 Kings 13:15–32 NIV84).

Was it sin for the older prophet to lie to the younger prophet?

Consider the story in 1Kings 22. The setting is Ahab meeting with Jehoshaphat trying to get Jehoshaphat to join him in attacking Ramoth Gilead. The prophet Micaiah is called and this is what the prophet told them:

> Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'
> "One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'
> " 'By what means?' the LORD asked.
> " 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said.
> " 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'
> "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you." (1Kings 22:19-23 NIV84).

Does God actually lie? No, then is the prophet lying to Ahab about the spirits in heaven being sent from God to lie to him? What does it mean? That God is sending a message to Ahab, a man who worships Baal and believes all things happen by God who makes them happen. **So, in grace, God steps down and assumes the role of causing the lies** to be told in order to inform Ahab that going to war will result in his death. This was not about how things truly happen in heaven, but a message of mercy communicated in the only way the listener could comprehend that he had been lied to, all in order to save the sinner.

Did Joseph and these various prophets mislead, present things in a false light that caused the other party to draw false conclusions? Yes, they all did, but was it sin? Why or why not?

The commandment says: "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16 NIV84).

Were these various deceits bearing false witness against someone, misrepresenting them to another to hurt them?

What is the difference between these falsehoods and the lies told by Simeon and Levi at Shechem? What was the motive for the lies by Simeon and Levi? What was the motive for the deceits told in these stories?

What about truth telling, can truth telling be sinful? Can people tell truths for the purpose of causing harm, injuring another's reputation, for evil purposes? Can it be sin if it is the truth?

For instance, I am a psychiatrist, I have an ethical, moral, and legal obligation to keep people's confidences, including the fact that a person is a patient of mine.

What would the righteous response be for me if I had a patient who was a pastor that came to see me to get help with an addiction, because he is under conviction and wants to get help to overcome. I have never met this pastor in any other capacity than as my patient. But later a member of our class comes up to me and asks "Do you know pastor so and so…" What should I say? Should I say, "Well, my ethical duties and legal obligations as a psychiatrist prohibit me from answering your question"? Should I say, "Yes I do." And then what do I say when they ask where I met him or how I know him? Or do I say, no? What is the answer that protects the reputation of the pastor and does him no harm?

What do you think of this historic comment about the ninth commandment:

> The ninth commandment requires of us an inviolable regard for exact truth in every declaration by which the character of our fellow men may be affected. The tongue, which is kept so little under the control of the human agent, is to be bridled by strong conscientious principles, by the law of love toward God and man. Sons and Daughters of God 64.2
>
> False-speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale-bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment. Sons and Daughters of God 64.3

Does this comment then mean that Joseph was wrong to mislead his brothers, or the various prophets we read about were sinning because they purposely presented things in a light that was designed to mislead?

No—the issue is one of motive, purpose, and emphasis. Notice the comments by EGW are twice connected to anything that is about another person's character, specifically she says, "The ninth commandment requires of us an inviolable regard for exact truth in every declaration by which the character of our fellow men may be affected."

Thus, we are not to bear false testimony in anyway about another person, in any deceptive way that injures another's reputation or impugns their character.

All the examples from Scripture, including Joseph's, was not about injuring another or misrepresenting another, but it was about having others declare themselves, reveal themselves, or have

opportunity to overcome and improve themselves, or to protect another. In other words, all the examples given from Scripture were redemptive acts, not selfish acts.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph, "Joseph then declares…" Is this correct? Was their evil against Joseph necessary for God to deliver them?

It is very much the argument some of the legalistic Jews were making and which Paul refutes in Romans 3:5-8:

> But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) 6 Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? 7 Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" 8 Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved. Romans 3:5-8 NIV84

Here is how I rendered this in the Remedy:

> But if our sickness and selfishness make God's enduring, healing love easier to see and understand, how do we interpret that? Do we say that since our wickedness makes God's goodness easier to see, since our selfishness makes God's love easier to comprehend, since our sickness makes God's Remedy easier to understand, that we are therefore helping God win his case? Is God unjust if he doesn't give us a free pass? (I am using a human argument that fails to understand the basic principles upon which the universe operates.) Absolutely not! If that were the case, how could God allow anyone to experience the consequences of the persistent refusal of his life-giving Remedy? Some who see sin as a legal problem might argue, "If I were to lie in order to help God reveal what truthfulness is and thus increase his glory, I am actually on his side helping him, so why should I suffer the fate of a sinner?" They might as well try claiming–as we are being falsely accused of saying–"It is by doing wrong that the right occurs. It is by doing evil that good results. It is by acting selfishly that love grows." Those who teach such things deserve the consequence of a depraved and destroyed mind, which is the only result of practicing methods at variance with God's. They fail to understand that violations of God's law of love actually damage the sinner and destroy God's image, methods and principles within them.

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 2Q Genesis—Lesson 13
Israel in Egypt

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

I want to clarify the point of last week's review of several Bible stories where the prophets of God misrepresented the facts, like Nathan with King David and the servant with one ewe lamb, or the prophet with King Ahab. These people represented stories or acted our stories that were not historically, factually true, but were analogies, or object lessons designed to bring the truth of David's or Ahab's situation to light, to get them to see the truth. Thus the stories were not designed to mislead but to enlighten, and as such were not done to bear false witness but to bring a person into the truth.

Why did God lead them to Egypt?

Why didn't God lead them out of Egypt earlier?

When they went to Egypt how large a group were they? 70 men plus their wives, children and servants. So a small group of a few hundred.

Would a group of a few hundred people be a significant threat to the political and military powers of Canaan where they had been residing?

Would a group of a few hundred be a significant drain on resources, water, grazing land, farmland etc. of Canaan?

Would a group of several million be viewed differently?

Is it likely that Jacob's family would have been able to grow unmolested in Canaan into a group of several million?

But by going to Egypt, they are protected by the strongest nation in the world and they thrive and grow until by the time they leave Egypt they are several million strong and instead of being easily destroyed they overcame.

Even when a new Pharoah came to power that didn't honor Joseph, they viewed the Hebrews as assets to grow not threats to destroy and they continued to grow, until they were ready to be led by God out of Egypt.

The last paragraph states, "The fact, however, that Israel 'dwells' in exile, in Egypt as strangers, is in tension with the hope of the Promised Land."

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The Bible is not only a historical record of real people who did real things, but an object lesson to teach the plan of salvation. The Promised Land is symbolic of the true Promised Land—the Earth made new. Egypt is symbolic of this world of sin. They were captive in Egypt and God freed them and led them to the Promised Land and we are captive in sin and God frees us and leads us to the heavenly Promised Land.

SUNDAY

Read last two paragraphs, "This truth…" What spiritual lessons do you take from the history of Israel in the Old Testament?

Turn to Monday, the lesson asks us to read Genesis 47, let's do this and ask, what lessons do we learn from this history:

> Genesis 47:1 Joseph went to Pharaoh and told him, "My father and brothers, along with their flocks and herds and all they possess, have come from Canaan and are now in Goshen." 2 He chose five of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.
> Gen 47:3 When Pharaoh asked them, "What is your occupation?"
> They answered, "We, your humble servants, have tended livestock our entire lives, just as our fathers did." 4 They also said to him, "We have come to live here in Egypt for a while, because the famine is so severe in Canaan that our flocks and herds have no pasture. So please, grant your humble servants permission to live in Goshen."
> Gen 47:5 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am so happy for you that your father and brothers have come to you here, in Egypt. 6 You are my governor over all of Egypt, so settle your father and brothers in the land you deem best for them. Let them live in Goshen if that is what you think is best. And if any of them are competent, skilled and trustworthy like you, put them in charge of my own livestock."
> Gen 47:7 Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him to Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 Pharaoh then asked him, "How old are you?"
> Gen 47:9 Jacob told Pharaoh, "I have traveled the road of life for one hundred and thirty years. But my life has been filled with hardship and heartache, and my life journey will not be as long as those of my ancestors." 10 Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh once more and left his presence.
> Gen 47:11 Joseph gave his family—his father and brothers—the best land in Egypt, settling them in the region of Ramses, just as Pharaoh had directed. 12 Joseph provided everything his father and brothers and their families needed, including plenty of food for every member of his father's household.
> Gen 47:13 The famine was so severe that there was no food anywhere in the entire region; the people and animals in both Egypt and Canaan were starving because of the famine. 14 Joseph, by selling the grain, encouraged the people to procure only what they needed, but eventually he collected all the money to be found in Egypt and Canaan, and he secured the money in Pharaoh's palace. 15 With no more money in either Egypt or Canaan, the people came to Joseph and said,

"We are starving and have no more money, so please, give us food or else we will die before your very eyes."
Gen 47:16 Joseph said to them, "Since your money is gone, transfer ownership of your livestock to Pharaoh in exchange for food." 17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, sheep, goats, cattle and donkeys. In this way, Joseph provided them food sufficient for another year.
Gen 47:18 The people came to Joseph the following year and said, "Lord governor, you well know that we have no money and all our livestock now belong to the crown; all we have left is our land and our bodies. 19 Why should we starve to death and our land become desolate when you have food to feed us? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we will be Pharaoh's serfs; we will occupy and work Pharaoh's land in exchange for food. So give us grain that we may live and that our land does not become desolate."
Gen 47:20 So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. Every Egyptian was forced to sell their land, because the famine was too severe for them to survive otherwise; and all the land became Pharaoh's. 21 Thus, Joseph made the people across the entire land of Egypt serfs to Pharaoh. 22 However, this did not include the priests—Joseph did not buy their land, because they received a regular allotment of food from Pharaoh, sufficient to sustain them. Thus, the priests did not sell their land.
Gen 47:23 After buying the land, Joseph set these terms with the people: "Now that I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you to plant and work the land. 24 When the harvest comes, one fifth will be returned to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths will be yours to use for seed to replant your fields and as food for you and your families."
Gen 47:25 Thankful, the people said, "We have found favor in your eyes, and you have saved our lives, lord governor. We will be Pharaoh's serfs."
Gen 47:26 So Joseph made it a law in the land of Egypt that one-fifth of the harvest belongs to Pharaoh. This law remains in effect today. Only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.
Gen 47:27 And so the Israelites settled in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They prospered, acquired land, flourished, and greatly increased in number.
Gen 47:28 Jacob lived another seventeen years after moving to Egypt. He lived to be one hundred and forty-seven years old. 29 When Israel's death drew near, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If you honor me as your father, place your hand beneath my upper thigh and thereby symbolically place yourself under the witness of my future descendants, and promise me that you will love me and act kindly to me in this: Do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I sleep in death with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried."
"I will do as you have said," Joseph replied.
Gen 47:31 But Jacob said, "Swear a sacred oath to me that you will do it." So Joseph swore a sacred oath, promising his father that he would do as he said. Relieved, Israel bowed his head in thanks to the Lord while leaning on the top of his staff. (Genesis 47:1-3 REM)

What lessons for us do you see in this story?

- Egypt represents this world of sin
  - Joseph represents Jesus
- In this world of sin there is a famine of truth a famine of love and all humans are starving

- They had to purchase the food to save them with all that they valued.
    - Will we trust Jesus completely as long as we trust something other than Jesus to save us?
    - Jesus is the bread of heaven that nurtures us and gives us life
    - Jesus counsels the people living in the last days with these words: "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see" (Revelation 3:18 NIV84).
    - How do we buy from Jesus?
    - When we buy from Jesus do we lose our freedom? Why do we not lose our freedom when we surrender all to Jesus?

The lesson states in regard to the Hebrews moving into the land, "Wisely, too, Pharaoh does not encourage these sojourners to become beggars, living off the largess of their host. He enquires about their 'occupation' (Genesis 47:3) in order that they may adjust better in their new environment."

Is there a spiritual lesson for us today? What is the godly approach to charity or governmental support for those in need? How does Satan pervert the godly and compassionate desire to help others into programs that rather than helping, uplifting, benefitting others actually harm and destroy?

The Christian principle is one of love, of beneficence, of helping others. But in order to help, what is required?

- A person must be in a position to help—they must have the ability, the means, resources to help

But what else is necessary besides this?

- Wisdom, actual understanding the problem, the cause and then what would be helpful. This requires understanding of reality or design law, an accurate diagnosis of the problem—how one is out of harmony with God's design for life and health and then one can understand what it means to help. And when helping one has to differentiate are you focusing on helping a temporal situation or circumstance or helping address eternal life issues, helping them overcome sin in their lives and come to depend on God?

Thinking strategically, if Satan could get people to pursue helping others by implementing methods that benefit something temporary but which harms the person spiritually or eternally would he do it?

Can you think of any examples of people motivated to help others but the actions taken actual harm the person that is supposedly being helped?

Enabling—is when people focus on relieving a consequence or some immediate suffering as a way of helping, but the action actually supports further self-destruction in the one being helped. Such as a person with a cocaine addiction using their rent money for drugs and they call and say they don't have money for rent and you give them money to help.

The story of the Prodigal son illustrates how the wealthy father acted—he did not enable. The son wanted his inheritance, went off into wild living, wasting the resources and ended up, by his own choices living with the pigs eating the pig slop. The father did not send food vouchers, giving him a subsistence fund, put him up in a hotel…does that mean the father didn't love the boy? What would have been the likely outcome had the father done this? What led the boy to realize his problem? While in with the pigs "he came to his senses" and decided to go back to his father. This is what recovered addicts call hitting rock bottom. Until the person comes to the point that they own their problem and are willing to apply themselves toward recovery, any help given is typically used to keep the person in their dysfunction.

When the Bible says that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, what does it mean?

Do parents with three children and limited income have to prioritize their resources, time, and money to fulfill their responsibility to their own children, even if that means not feeding homeless children in the neighborhood? If resources are limited, is it an act of love to neglect one's own children in order to give to needy children in the community?

If there were a mass-casualty incident in your community and a call for blood donations went out, is it an act of love to donate? But how much? Would it be an act of love to limit the amount of blood you donate? And what about the doctors and nurses providing the care—would their refusal to give blood, because they are working double shifts and need all their energy to care for the wounded, be an act of love?

Did Jesus set limits on the time he spent with the crowds and pull away to spend time with His Father even though there were still sick and hurting people in the crowds? Does this mean Jesus stopped loving the people? Why did Jesus do it?

If Satan can't get good people to choose evil, then as a means of neutralizing their impact for good he will tempt them to over-extend, over-commit in taking on too many good things that will exhaust them, or cause them to become debilitated and thus impairing their work for the Lord.

Is it love for a church to limit the amount of money it gives away for missions or feeding the poor? Is it necessary for the organization to maintain its own health in order to be able to continue ministering over the long term? Is it an act of love to set such limits on charitable giving? Would the church be best served in giving every penny away and go into bankruptcy?

What about a government? Is it an act of love for a government to set limits on whom they help? Like a parent, should the government use its resources for its citizens, or bankrupt itself trying to help all the needy peoples of other countries?

What about setting boundaries at a nation's border that regulates those coming into a country—is that an act of love? What happens to the most vulnerable in a society when unregulated immigration occurs? Do wages rise for the poorest? Would social resources, such as Medicaid, low-cost housing, mental-health treatment programs, social support systems, student aide, etc., be more available for the most

needy in our society—or would those systems be overwhelmed and, thus, those with the least resources would find themselves with less opportunity to get assistance to develop and advance?

The first rule of caregiving, or ministry to others, is the health of the caregiver. If the ones providing care, ministry, and service are incapacitated, then those who are in need can't be helped.

What is the difference between the biblical method of helping those in need and the governments method for helping those in need?

- The biblical method is based on love for others and the resources utilized to help those in need come from people who give freely to help and is administered by people who care about others and want to help, or the resources are made available for a person to help themselves, but the person in need must still apply themselves to get the help—think about Ruth and Naomi.
- The human governmental method is to forcibly take from people who don't want to give to help others and then redistribute the money to people without person to person contact, via a check, a deposit into an account, without any application of the self to develop the self.

Do these two methods have different impacts upon both those from whom the resources are derived and those who receive the resources?

What happens in the heart of the giver who gives because they have love in their heart to help another? What happens in the heart of a person who is forcibly taxed when they don't want to give?

What happens to the person who receives the loving care of people reaching out to help them in their distress, showing interest in them and giving to help them? Will that relationship cause a greater likelihood of the one in need growing and developing as a person? Will it give opportunity for the giver to share about Jesus, to invite them into a church community that can teach them the principles of God's kingdom? And if that happens do lives change for the better?

What happens to the person who receives government money to sustain them? Might they feel they are owed? Might they feel that they haven't earned the money and only deserve it because of their dysfunction and therefore in order to avoid the guilt and shame they need to stay dysfunctional? Might their problems get worse? Might they be reluctant to become more functional for fear of losing the financial support?

Consider Ruth and Naomi, they had a real need, but they were not simply given food, but were given the freedom to collect their food without paying for it. Was there a benefit to them in this method? Would they have lost something valuable had their government delivered food or money to them each month?

Why did God give Adam and Eve work to do in Eden?

Human beings were created in the image of God. He is the Creator, and, therefore, we are designed to be creators in our own sphere. We are built to be industrious, creative, builders, designers, and workers!

When we engage ourselves in activities that are productive, whether they result in an income or not, we experience joy, fulfillment, and expansion in our abilities. We grow healthier and more capable as we apply ourselves and expend our energies to useful outlets.

Regular work has multiple benefits:

- Improved self-esteem, from actual accomplishment and achievement
- Better physical health, from increased physical activity and the reduced firing of stress pathways as we experience satisfaction with completing tasks, or fulfilling our life goals, aspirations, and dreams. Additionally, physical activity produces factors in the brain that causes the neurons to stay healthy, improves the ability of neurons to make new connections, thus improving learning and reducing the risk of dementia as we age.
- Development of our brain circuits that control physical movement, which in turn improves our thinking and reasoning. When we engage in physical activity, the striatal pathways in our brain, that initiate motor movement, develop, but these pathways not only initiate physical movement, they also initiate thinking, so as we develop and use these pathways, we improve our ability to initiate thoughts. The cerebellum, which is involved in making our physical movements smooth and coordinated, also helps smooth and coordinate our thoughts. Thus, when we stay physically active, we ultimately improve our thinking processes.
- Blesses and benefits those around us. As we engage in useful activity, it results in blessings in our environment, whether we are creating works of art or music to brighten the heart, or are mopping, vacuuming, and picking up trash to create clean environments, or growing food, all useful activity blesses those around us.
- Reduces burdens on others. By staying active, we reduce the likelihood of our own disability and the need for others to care for us.
- Harmonizes with the law of love, which is the principle of giving. The more we give, the more we receive. In a community, active people are constantly blessing those around them, while simultaneously being blessed from others.
- Reduces the opportunity for temptation. This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of useful work. Any time spent in usefulness not only produces all the blessings above, but is time unavailable for engagement in destructive and harmful activities. You've heard the old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." When we are not engaged in useful activities, we are more vulnerable to temptations that result in harm to ourselves and others.

When we divert our energy, our mind, and abilities away from useful work—activities that may or may not generate income, but are beneficial—and instead use the majority of our energies on entertainments, diversions, and indulgence, we undermine our physical and mental well-being. We become internally restless, lose our sense of peace, and often look for actions to change our feeling state, too frequently in alcohol or other substances, or more entertainment and avoidance of real-life responsibilities.

Would Satan want people to be industrious, to develop themselves, to harmonize with the laws of exertion, to become more capable? So what might be a way to destroy people? Through charity, giving to people what they are capable of achieving or providing on their own.

- For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV84).

Is Paul being cruel or loving?

TUESDAY

Jacob blesses Joseph's two sons, elevating them from the position of grandsons to the position of sons in regard to inheritance of the land, why?

Because Joseph takes the position of firstborn, why?

Was Joseph the first son born to Jacob, then why is he first born?

Who was the first son born to Abraham? Ishmael, but who is considered the firstborn, Isaac, why?

Firstborn is about position of authority, inheritance, not about birth order.

Thus, Christ is called firstborn because He takes the position of authority over God's kingdom.

In regard to Jacob and Joseph, why would Jacob consider and even want Joseph to be the firstborn?

- Who was Jacob's chosen wife? Rachel and who was the first child born to her? So in the sense of Jacob's intention, heart, love, Joseph is the one who was first born to the relationship Jacob intended to be his wife.
- What character did Joseph manifest, so in addition to Joseph being the one whom was the firstborn of Jacob's chosen wife, he manifested the character of one who would fulfill the position most admirably.

Was there also a reason beyond this why the two sons of Joseph were elevated? It helped with the object lesson fulfillment of the acted-out theater of the camp and nation around the sanctuary.

Now there are thirteen tribes instead of twelve; twelve camp around the sanctuary with 3 on each side and Levi camping between the other 12 and the sanctuary.

What does this arrangement depict and is there a lesson for us at this time in history?

- The sanctuary symbolically represents both Jesus and God's plan to restore us into unity with Him. It is the acted-out lesson of taking sinners alienated and separated from God and bringing them back into at-one-ment.
- Levi represents the priesthood of believers and the other 12 tribes represents the unconverted peoples of the world.
- Levi stands between the sanctuary and the tribes symbolically representing the church going out from God to witness to the rest of the world the saving grace of God as provided by Christ.

- In Revelation the New Jerusalem has 12 gates with the names of the 12 tribes and this symbolically represents that people from every nation, kindred, language and group, from east, west, north, and south, will be part of the kingdom of God.

WEDNESDAY

Jacob blesses his sons, let's read chapter 49 of Genesis from The Remedy and discuss it:

Genesis 49:1 Then Jacob called his sons before him and said, "Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to your descendants in the days to come.
Gen 49:2 "Gather together and listen, you sons of Jacob;
take heed to what your father, Israel, has to tell you.
Gen 49:3 "Reuben, you are my firstborn,
recipient of my strength and first manifestation of my procreative power, destined to lead my sons—the greatest in power.
Gen 49:4 But you lost control of yourself and your passion boiled over like water, and so you will not be the greatest and will not lead,
for you presumed to usurp your father's bed,
and you defiled it—Yes, he went up onto my couch!
Gen 49:5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers—two of a kind;
their lives are instruments of violence.
Gen 49:6 May I never be part of their conspiracies,
may my name never be connected to their company,
for in anger they have murdered innocent men
and taken pleasure in maiming and abusing animals.
Gen 49:7 Their merciless anger is a curse,
their indiscriminate rage is cruel.
I will break up their violent union by spreading them among the people, and dilute their influence by dispersing them throughout Israel.
Gen 49:8 "Judah, your brothers will praise your power;
your father's stiff-necked enemies will bow before your Son.
Gen 49:9 O Judah, you are like a young lion—
with victory, my son, you will rise up;
but you will become like an old lion,
stooped and bent down—who will arouse you?
Gen 49:10 But the scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from your descendants,
until Shiloh—the Remedy to sin—comes
and cleanses the people.
Gen 49:11 He will be like a donkey of peace tied to the vine of humanity,
a colt bound to the chosen branch;
his garments of character will be washed in new wine
and his robes of righteousness with blood, like crushed grapes.

Gen 49:12 His eyes will sparkle like wine,
his teeth will be whiter than milk.
Gen 49:13 "Zebulun will live by the coast
and be a haven for ships,
with borders to Sidon.
Gen 49:14 "Issachar is like a strong, hard-working donkey
that finds rest between the burdens of life.
Gen 49:15 For the reward of a comfortable home
and a peaceful land,
your descendants will carry many burdens
and be slaves to their own ambitions.
Gen 49:16 "Dan likes to rule over others
and will seek to be first among the tribes of Israel.
Gen 49:17 The descendants of Dan will be like a crafty serpent beside the road, like a viper that strikes at the horse's heels and causes the rider to fall backward; their words will mislead and cause the people to stumble backward.
Gen 49:18 "Oh, how I look forward to you healing your creation, O Lord!
Gen 49:19 "Gad, your descendants will not seek conquest, but when attacked by raiders, will attack back to drive them away.
Gen 49:20 "From Asher will come rich foods;
his descendants will provide food fit for kings.
Gen 49:21 "Naphtali, you are like a deer running free,
reveling in sharing the beauty of life.
Gen 49:22 "Joseph is my fruitful son—
like a fruitful vine near a life-giving well;
his branches are like a protective wall.
Gen 49:23 Those over him attacked him;
they shot their arrows of bitterness and resentment to destroy him.
Gen 49:24 But he is like a bow that bends under pressure and then reverses the assault;
his power was strengthened
by the hand of the Mighty God of Jacob,
protected and guided by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
Gen 49:25 helped by your father's God,
blessed by Almighty Creator God,
blessed with the refreshing rains of heaven,
blessed with the fruitfulness of the earth,
blessed to produce and sustain life.
Gen 49:26 The blessings of Jacob, your father, are greater
than the blessings of my ancestors,
enduring like the everlasting hills.
Let all these blessings rest upon Joseph's head—
on the brow of the prince who was set apart from his brothers.
Gen 49:27 "Benjamin is like a ravenous wolf—
devouring enemies in the morning

and dividing plunder in the evening."
Gen 49:28 These are the twelve tribes of Israel and the blessing that their father spoke to them before he died. He gave each one the blessing that was right for them. (Genesis 49:1-28 REM)

Did Jacob predestine his son's and their descendants to certain fates?

Read second paragraph, "The text then goes…" Any evidence of this? Levi and Simeon, cursed by Jacob for Shechem, but Levi's descendants redeemed themselves at Sinai as the only tribe who stood with God and were blessed with the priesthood.

In other words, despite this curse, each person still had freedom to choose what they would do with their lives.

THURSDAY

After Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers come to him worried that Joseph will no retaliate against them, that Joseph only restrained himself out of respect for Jacob.

> When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.
>
> 18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.
>
> 19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:15-21 NIV84)

What does the actions of the brothers reveal? Who do we learn about from their fears? What does Joseph reveal?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ORDERS: If you placed an order with us and did not receive it, it may be because the address entered was undeliverable. We have had multiple packages returned as undeliverable, and less often we have had packages destroyed by the post office. So, when ordering please double check the address entered to be sure it is correct.

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q3 In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 1 The Shepherd's Crucible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Introduction to the Lesson Guide

The Crucified Creator—what does it mean to you that the Creator God is the One who died on the Cross?

Does it inspire or discourage?

In Old Testament times or during the Roman Empire, how do you think a pagan would react if you witnessed to them about your God who was coming to die on the cross?

Would a God who could be killed by humans be considered one worth following? Possibly, as many of the Pharaohs and Caesars considered themselves gods and they died or were killed, so perhaps. But didn't the people primarily value power and it was the powerful gods that people wanted to follow?

Why would powerful gods get followers? Because sin causes fear and we don't want to be afraid; we want to feel safe and secure, so we want a god that can protect us and make us feel safe.

But we also don't want to depend on the whims of the gods, we want to make ourselves feel safe, so if we can have a powerful god that we can influence with our behaviors, our worship, our offerings, our sacrifices to do what we want, then all the better.

So, how might the only true God, who would allow Himself to be beaten and crucified, be received by many?

Why is Jesus, our Creator who was crucified, worthy of your heart, love, devotion, loyalty, praise and worship?

Because it is not merely about power—it is about the character of the one who wields the power. And what does the Cross tell us about the character of the one who wields the power? That we are safe with Him, that He will never use power to force us to do things His way. That for the rest of us power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, but:

> Christ Jesus:
>
> 6 Who, being in very nature God,
> did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
> 7 but made himself nothing,
> taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Php 2:5–11 NIV84).

Jesus would rather allow His creatures to kill Him than use His power to stop us from doing so. Why? Because God is love and love only exists in freedom. Take freedom away and love is destroyed and rebellion is instilled and if freedom isn't restored then individuality is eroded and people become shadow people, mindless followers acting out of fear rather than love. Or they are robots, puppets, controlled by the one in charge.

What God wants is our love, devotion, loyalty, friendship, and trust and this cannot be achieved by force or might thus the Bible says:

> Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

It is by presenting truth in love and leaving people free that God wins people to trust. And in trust we open the heart and His Spirit comes in and heals and transforms taking the victory of Christ, the character of Christ, and reproducing it in us.

The third paragraph states, "We can experience only our own griefs, our own sorrows; at the cross He bore "our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4)—all of them."

What does this mean?

What law lens do we understand the sin problem and God's solution for it through?

If we view God's law functioning like human law, imposed rules that require policing, adjudication with a ruling of guilt or innocence, infliction of penalties upon the guilty to punish sin and uphold the integrity of the law, then this idea means that Jesus came as our substitute to take up our legal liability. He came to be tempted like us and overcome the temptations and be sinless so that when He is punished by God for our sins that punishment will not be legally necessary to apply to Jesus' record and therefore there is an unused legal punishment that has been paid to the heavenly authorities that can be transferred and legally applied to the account of those who claim that blood payment.

But this legal application of inflicted punishment and payment of a blood debt to the ruling god is only able to be applied if the innocent party suffers for every single violation of the law. Therefore, all sins,

every single act of sin committed by every single person who has ever lived from Adam's fall all they way until the final end of sinners, was placed on Jesus and God punished Jesus for those sins, thus His punishment was much more severe than any other person in history.

Thoughts about this?

First, what kind of being, god or human, would actually choose to use their power to **inflict** punishment upon an innocent party instead of the guilty? If God's kingdom worked that way, where it is righteous to find a willing innocent person guilty and inflict punishment upon the innocent party in place of the guilty, and then declare that the guilty party is legally innocent, what would it say about that kingdom and those in charge? It would say the kingdom is corrupt, unjust, and perverse and so are those who run the system.

This is why Satan has infected Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law, because it results in concepts being taught about God that makes God out to look Satan in character, unforgiving, severe, arbitrary, the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death for sin, a being who is willing to torture and kill the innocent in place of the guilty. And trust in God is undermined while trust in religious ritual, blood payments, legal adjustments and all other types of means to hide us and protect us from this punishing god are advanced.

Consider the doctrines and ideas taught in Christianity that have as their primary function to hide us or protect us from God, such as:

- Covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness so when the Father looks at us He cannot see our wickedness but only the righteousness of Christ that covers our wickedness
- Covered by the blood which can mean the same thing as the robe of righteousness, something obscuring God's view of us, or can mean legally covering over our record and erasing out of the book the record of our sins
- Jesus as mediator standing between us and the Father pleading His blood to the Father—why? Because the Father is angry, wrathful, and His holiness is offended by our sin and Jesus pleads His blood to propitiate and turn aside God's wrath lest God torture and kill us.
- Jesus, Mary and the Saints stand between God and sinners pleading with the Father not to harm us because God is so angry even the pleas of Jesus are not enough

This is all contrary to Scripture, exactly the opposite of the truth, and is the result of accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law.

When we return to design law, that God is Creator and His laws are the laws that He built life to operate upon, we understand that sin breaks God's design for life and results in death unless God fixes the damages and restores His living law into us. Just as the Scripture teaches:

- The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)
- Sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15)
- The one who sows to the carnal nature from that nature reaps destruction (Galatians 6:8)

God is the source of life and death does not come from God, it comes from sin, from breaking God's design for life and separating ourselves from the source of life.

We are "dead in trespass and sin" we have a terminal sin condition that we inherited from Adam and we cannot cure it.

Without Jesus every single human being would die from this condition, but God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to provide the remedy so that whosever trusts in Him should not die from sin but be restored to everlasting life.

God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself.

Thus, He took our griefs and carried our sorrows means He took the terminal condition upon Himself and rather than succumbing to it—He "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light" 2Timothy 1:10.

In the humanity of Jesus Christ He experienced the full weight of what sin causes, the temptations, the fear, the anxiety, the heart-breaking agony and was tempted to use power to save self, to doubt His Father. But with every temptation He chose to trust His Father and act in love.

Thus in Jesus, in the humanity of Jesus, by exercising His human abilities He destroyed the death causing principle that He inherited through Mary and solidified the life causing principle that He inherited through the Holy Spirit into His human character that He developed by His choices as a human being.

Thus, "once he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Every act of sin committed by every single human being throughout history was not placed upon Jesus and punished by God. Jesus partook of the sin-condition that every human suffers with and that every human is tempted by and Jesus destroyed that condition and established a new sinless humanity becoming the new head of humanity, the second Adam.

Read the sixth paragraph on page 3, "As we look at these people…" How is it true that Jesus went through worse trials and struggles than other people and how is it not true?

- Did Jesus experience the longest time of unjust imprisonment of any human?
- Did Jesus experience the longest time of being physically abused and tortured before dying of the torture of any human in history?
- Did Jesus experience the greatest exploitation by those in power of any person in history?
- Did Jesus experience the greatest betrayal of someone close to him of any person in history?
- Did Jesus experience the greatest childhood trauma and abuse of anyone in history?
- Did Jesus experience the greatest marital conflict, abuse, mistreatment and marital exploitation and abuse of anyone in history?

How did Jesus suffer more?

- He was tempted in ways no other human has been tempted—to use powers we do not have—such as turning a rock into bread.
    - However, this temptation is only different from our temptations in form or degree. It is not difference in type. It was a temptation to use power inappropriately, for selfish means. While no human has the power to turn rock to bread, many humans have been tempted with the abuse of power, of using their abilities or whatever power they have for selfish purposes. So, this temptation while different in the type of power utilized is the same in root, the temptation to misuse one's power. So I would not suggest this temptation by type is what is meant that Jesus suffered more.
- Who would suffer more if they were forced to look into the sun at noon—a person who is already blind or someone with very good vision?
    - Why would the person who has good vision suffer more than the blind person when both have their faces turned toward the sun and both have their eyes forcible opened?
    - Does the sun treat them differently?
    - Who suffers more if working in a sewer, a person who has lost their sense of smell or a person with a very sensitive ability to smell?
    - So, whose mind, heart, conscience is more sensitive to the sinfulness in the world, the suffering, the abuses, the diseases, the sin all around? Who would suffer more and be tormented in soul just walking around this world of sin and seeing and dealing with all they have to deal with, sinless Jesus or any of us?
- We have all heard about Queen Elizabeth of England—if you were told you were never going to see her, speak to her, or spend time with her from this moment onward for the rest of your life—how big of a loss would that be for your personally? How much suffering would you experience? How much heartache, loss of sleep, distress would that cause you?
    - What if you were told you could never see your spouse or child again for the rest of your life, how big of a loss would that be? What makes the difference?
    - So with Jesus, was His temptation to have His relationship with His Father, whom He has been united with in bonds of from all eternity, severed and broken greater than anything we can imagine?
    - Was the temptation for an infinite being to die greater than our temptation?
    - Was the temptation for a omnipresent being to permanently and for all eternity future give up that power, to restrict Himself permanently to a single point in space and time greater than any temptation we will ever suffer?
    - Did Jesus make sacrifices beyond anything any human could ever sacrifice? And we still don't know all that He has sacrificed for us.

Jesus was tempted in every WAY like us, meaning in all the various roots of sin that fear and selfishness exploit. He was tempted:

- With fatigue, hunger, thirst
- To use power for selfish ends
- With bestowal of power or to gain power
- With misquotation of the Bible

- With lies
- With overwork
- With false allegations
- To doubt
- To do for others what they must do for themselves (like solve family disagreements)
- With false worship
- By poverty
- With wealth
- By rejection
- By betrayal
- With fears of all kinds
- With physical pain and torture
- With death

But ultimately Jesus was tempted in a way that none of us will ever have to face. He was tempted alone. He experienced His unity with the Father severed, and He was not empowered or comforted by His Father's presence, but Jesus overcame on His own, in His own strength as a human by faith. He did not experience the peace and security of God's approval that Stephen experienced, but felt abandoned and let go by His Father.

We will NEVER have to go through that. We may face betrayal, accusation, being lied about, falsely arrested, imprisoned, even may even die as martyrs, but no follower of Christ is left to face such temptations alone. God's presence is with them comforting, inspiring, encouraging and strengthening and as the trials and temptations increase for us, God's grace and comforting presence increases all the more. But this was not so for Christ. He tread the winepress alone (Isaiah 63:3).

Jesus was tempted without the supernatural presence and power of His Father to help Him—why?

Because it was the only means whereby God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit could accomplish their joint goal of eradicating the sin's death causing principle from the species human and restoring the life causing principle within the human species.

Remember, Jesus stayed away when Lazarus was sick because had He gone sooner Lazarus would not have died. Jesus is the source of life and it was God's purpose to allow Lazarus to die and then for Jesus to resurrect him to give supreme evidence that He is our Savior and He has power over death and the grave.

Likewise, Jesus could not have died as our Savior if the Father, who is the source of life, did not let Him go, did not sever their connection. The abandonment of Jesus by the Father during the crucifixion was not an infliction of punishment, it was not the Father being so offended with some basket of sins dumped on His Son that He just couldn't stand it and had to leave. No! It was the purposeful action of our God of love to choose to break their eternal connection so that Jesus could complete the joint mission of destroying the sin infection by dying as a human and restoring the law of love into the humanity that He

had taken upon Himself. And thus Jesus arose with a new purified and perfected humanity and becomes the source of salvation for all who trust Him (Hebrews 5:9).

Praise God for Jesus! We will never have to go through what He went through. But we will have our own crucible, our own confrontation with temptation, with fear, with selfishness and will suffer and have to die to self. But we will never have to do it alone. Through every trial, struggle, temptation, if we choose to open the heart to God, to seek His presence, to fix our eyes on Christ, to trust Him He will be there with us, encouraging, guiding, strengthening and comforting until He finishes His work in us and frees us from all defects of His design for life.

SUNDAY

The lesson's focus is on the 23rd Psalm with Jesus being our Shepherd.

The lesson asks "What does the Shepherd do to care for His sheep?"

Let's go through the 23rd Psalm verse by verse and explore the truth God has for us there:

1. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
    - God is watching out for me and I don't need to worry about where my support will come from. I can trust Him to provide all that my soul needs.

2. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters
    - After we put our lives into the Shepherd's hands He will provide soul nurturance, support, love, comfort, sustenance to strengthen us, a safe harbor, a place to grow strong, to recover, to mature.

3. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
    - What is the soul? What does it mean to have it restored? He will heal our inner self, cleanse our consciences, and restore our individuality
    - How does Jesus do this?
    - He leads down what paths? What are the paths of righteousness? Is this a legal path, a path of claiming the legal righteousness of Jesus to our account so God declares us to be righteous while we remain unrighteous? Or is this a path that restores our soul to righteousness? That we actually become the righteousness of God (2Cor 5:21)?
    - He leads us in the path which restores us to righteousness, the path that makes us right inside, like He originally intended, so that He and His ways will be glorified in our lives
    - What does it mean for His name's sake? What does God's "name" mean in Scripture? It means His character. So, what is the message here? How is it for God's character's sake that He leads us in the paths of righteous for the restoring of our souls?
    - Does this remind you of any other passages in Scripture?

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: **It is not for your sake**, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but **for the sake of my holy name**, which **you have profaned** among the nations where you have gone. 23 **I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned** among the nations, **the name you have profaned among them**. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, **when I show myself holy <u>through you</u> before their eyes**. 24 " 'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and **you will be clean**; **I will cleanse you from all your impurities** and from all your idols. 26 **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh**. 27 And **I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws** (Ezekiel 36:22-27 NIV84).

- What does God do to magnify His name? He cleanses the people from sin. He destroys out of the hearts of people sinfulness, fear, selfishness and restores His living law of love into their hearts and minds. He makes them righteous! He doesn't declare them righteous while they remain unrighteous, He transforms, heals, renews, and restores them to righteousness.

  And this is how He magnifies His name—how does this magnify the name or character of God?

  Because God is love. God is the source of life and health all of which operates upon the law of love. And God demonstrates through us the combined power of love and truth when applied to hearts and minds heals, that His ways actually restore to righteousness.

  Consider this metaphor—a person is dying of terminal cancer. They are in the late stages, deformed, decrepit and emaciated. And a doctor comes along and provides them a treatment that cures the cancer. They are restored to perfect vibrant health.

  Whose name or reputation is magnified in doing this, the sick dying person or the one who provides the cure?

4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
   - What is this about? Is this the valley of death or the shadow of death? Is it primarily about facing what we call death, the first death, or about something else?
   - What is the context? It is about our Shepherd leading us in the path of righteousness to restore our souls. It is about delivering us from sin and in order to be delivered from sin what must each of us go through?
   - The Shepherd, after providing for us, strengthening us, leads us in the path that will restore us to righteousness, and **that path to righteousness is through the valley that feels like we are going to die**. It is the valley in which self surrenders all to Jesus and is

crucified, the valley which frees us from the domination of fear and selfishness.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20 NIV84).

"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4 NIV84).

- Our Shepherd, after providing the spiritual nurturance we need to comfort us, recover and restore us to strength, leads us in the path of righteousness to restore our souls. And that path leads us to face our own sinfulness, our own selfishness, our own carnal nature. And we will be faced with the feeling of dying inside, the valley of the shadow of death in which we die to selfishness and sin, die to the old carnal life. But our Shepherd's rod of love and staff of truth is there to comfort us and guide us and protect us so we will not fear evil, but with our Shepherd confront it and die to it.
- And our Shepherd brings us into this valley over and over and over again until we come through it and stop running out of it. The addict who has hit rock bottom and prays to Jesus for deliverance, will find comfort, will find help, a green pasture and still waters, and forgiveness from sin, the guilt and shame taken away. There will be strengthening, but then that person will be led into the valley where they will face strong temptation and many will turn back to their substance to comfort themselves, to take away the bad feeling of dying to self. It is only when thy cling to Jesus and go through the valley and refuse to turn back to their old substances or whatever their historic sin pattern was and truly die to self that they experience the victory. And thus Jesus will lead us through this over and over again until we get the victory.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

- Having died to self, having the righteousness of Christ reproduced with in us, having new hearts and right spirits, having our souls restored, we will face many enemies. Enemies of God in our communities, families, and churches, but we will not despair because God prepares a table for us filled with everything we need—the unleavened bread, the new wine that nurtures our healed souls despite the attacks of our enemies. And He anoints our minds with the oil of His Holy Spirit to enlighten, inspire, comfort, encourage, transform, and strengthen. We are never abandoned or let go by our Shepherd. Our cup of salvation, of love, of grace, of blessings from our Shepherd overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. (Psalm 23:1-6 NKJV)

- Following our Shepherd, living in harmony with Him and His design laws, we grow in goodness and live out His principles experiencing His mercy for the rest of our earthly

> lives and we are living stones built together into a house for the Lord and thus we will dwell for all eternity in God's heavenly home.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Imagine the…" What is the key to staying on the path of righteousness?

We to fix our eyes upon Christ, modeling ourselves after Him, allowing Christ to be the model of perfection and the full revelation of God's character to us.

Then, in that love relationship with Jesus, we choose, in governance of ourselves, to do that which we know is right and healthy for us in any given situation and we trust Jesus with how things turn out.

We stop trying to control the future; we stop trying to control others and what others think of us, and focus on living in harmony with God and bringing glory to Him in all that we do.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the valley of the shadow of death and asks, "How do you think the sheep ended up in the valley? Do you think the sheep went there on their own, or did the Shepherd lead the sheep that way Himself?"

Does it matter what we understand that valley to be? If we think this is the valley of temporal death, then there are all kinds of reasons a person could be in that valley—some lead themselves there by choosing self-destructive actions, some are tempted by God's enemy to go there like Samson, some are taken there against their will like Stephen and Paul, some are taken their by age or disease like King Hezekiah.

But if we understand the valley isn't about temporal death, but the shadow of death, the valley in which we die to selfishness and sin then who takes us there?

Does Hebrews 2:14-15 have any bearing on this?

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14–15 NIV84).

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Throughout our lives…" What is the world's way of dealing with enemies?

Do we judge our enemies and condemn them and seek to punish them whether in courts of law or socially or politically or in acts of violence or war against them?

What is God's way?

Do we judge what is wrong by a different standard, by the standards of eternal health, thus we diagnose the problem that infects the hearts of our enemies and we seek to bring them God's eternal healing solution and if that happens, what happens to our enemy? They become our friend—listen to this from 2Corinthians 5:16-20:

> "No longer, then, do we judge anyone by human standards. Even if at one time we judged Christ according to human standards, we no longer do so. Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ **changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also**. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. **We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends!"** (2 Co 5:16–20 GNT).

This is why we are to love our enemies and pray for those who mistreat us so that the kingdom of God can advance.

THURSDAY

Bottom green section asks, "What evidence is there from your own knowledge of God that can illustrate the certainty that His goodness and unfailing love pursue us?

FRIDAY

Read top section, which is a quote from Messages to Young People:

> "Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for **this is a part of their discipline** in the school of Christ, and it is essential in order that all dross may be purged away. The servant of God must endure with fortitude the attacks of the enemy, his grievous taunts, and must overcome the obstacles which Satan will place in his way...
>
> "**But if you keep looking up**, not down at your difficulties, you will not faint in the way, **you will soon see Jesus reaching His hand to help you**, and you will only have to give Him your hand in simple confidence, and let Him lead you. As you become trustful, you will become hopeful…

> "**You will find help in Christ to form a strong, symmetrical, beautiful character**. Satan cannot make of none effect the light shining forth from such a character… God has given us His best gift, even His only-begotten Son, to uplift, ennoble, and fit us, by putting on us His own perfection of character, for a home in His kingdom." (MYP 63-64)

Well a little over a week ago, before I read the lesson for this week, I woke early in the morning with something on my mind that I couldn't let go of. I turned over and tried to go back to sleep, but I couldn't, these thoughts kept going through my mind. So I got up went to my office and wrote out what I was dreaming/thinking about in about 20 minutes and it is the blog posted for this week. But after reading this quotation from Friday's lesson, I thought it would be appropriate to share it with you in class today:

Look to Jesus

When the storms are raging, look to Jesus
When the boat is sinking, look to Jesus
When the tides are rising, look to Jesus
For Jesus is always there

When the cupboards are bare, look to Jesus
When your friends don't care, look to Jesus
When life is unfair, look to Jesus
For Jesus always cares

When the pain just won't stop, look to Jesus
When your heart aches from loss, look to Jesus
When all hope seems lost, look to Jesus
For Jesus is always there

When guilt crushes the soul, look to Jesus
When shame takes its toll, look to Jesus
When you feel all alone, look to Jesus
For Jesus always cares

When tempted with doubt, look to Jesus
When fear is all about, look to Jesus
When you don't know the route, look to Jesus
For Jesus is always there

When you don't know why, look to Jesus
When you can only cry, look to Jesus
When you just want to die, look to Jesus
For Jesus always cares

When you feel beaten and low, look to Jesus

When trust just won't grow, look to Jesus
When you don't know where to go, look to Jesus
For Jesus is always there

When you don't know the choice, look to Jesus
When you don't have a voice, look to Jesus
When life has no joys, look to Jesus
For Jesus always cares

Always look to Jesus, for
Jesus saves
Jesus cares, and
Jesus is always there

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Podcasts: We have a weekly, 15minute long podcast, titled "Come And Reason with Tim Jennings" that you can subscribe to using your favorite podcast app. Find the subscription URL on our website's Main menu > Resources > Podcasts

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Building update: We have been delayed due to HVAC issues. The city wouldn't issue permits without an HVAC engineer drawing plans. We hired an HVAC engineer who over engineered the plans resulting in the company bidding the job making a bid inordinately more expensive than our space requires. So at this time we are having a second engineer redo the plans to get a more appropriate bid.

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 2
The Crucibles that Come

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12–13 NIV84).

Why do painful trials come?

- We live in a war zone with an enemy who hates God, Jesus, and all who are loyal to Jesus, and wants to hurt us.
- There are evil people who intentionally do evil and the innocent suffer.
- We live in a world in which all of nature is infected with the law of sin and death. God's life-giving glory no longer bathes Earth in its sustaining rays and thus all kinds of genetic, physiological, and random events happen that injure and harm. And we are physically slowly decaying toward the first death.
- As consequence of our own choices—either sinful or not. For instance, going skiing and taking a run beyond one's skill level and losing control and breaking a leg is a trial, but it wasn't because of evil people attacking, it wasn't because of sinful choices, it was because of sin in the world and our bodies being frail and subject to such injuries and our choice to over-estimate our ability. But this wasn't a sinful choice.
- God disciplines those He loves. God brings events to bear upon us via His grace for our benefit that are designed to help us, refine us, purify us, mature us, and ultimately settle us into the truth so that we cannot be moved.
- As a witness to our spiritual wellness and God's kingdom—Daniel, the 3 worthies, Stephen, Job…all of these suffered because of evil forces attacking and God permitting it to reveal truth to others and bring others out of sin-sickness into His kingdom.

But regardless of the reason for the trial "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28 NIV84).

Not all things are good, not all trials are good, not all trials are brought by the goodness of God, but in all difficulties and trials, for those who trust God, God works for the good, including for the strengthening of their faith, the growth in their trust and wisdom and maturity.

But, we must not fall into the trap of relegating all trials in life to one or two categories. It can be harmful to do so, can anyone think how?

So, with all of these reasons in mind, why should we rejoice to participate in the suffering of Christ?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

But what type of suffering is the type Jesus experienced?

Peter himself tells us at the opening of this chapter, in 1 Peter 4:1-2, just ten verses before our memory text Peter writes the following; consider what type of suffering Peter is talking about:

> "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, **for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1Peter 4:1-2 NKJV).

What does this mean?

What type of suffering should we count it joy to share it? The suffering that is a result of overcoming sin, that occurs when we say no to temptation, when we refuse to sin, or when we are repentant and healing from some sin, for it is in this suffering that we gain victory, maturity, solidify our trust in God, overcome our own weaknesses, witness the kingdom of God and are freed from the control of fear and selfishness.

Consider a person struggling with smoking. They have come under the conviction that they need to quit. They surrender to Jesus and choose to quit. And for a short time they experience cravings, temptations to smoke, but if they say no to the cravings, their flesh suffers, but they are done with smoking.

But does the person continue to suffer if they remain faithful to Jesus or does the suffering stop and joy come? Do they experience greater freedom and health, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually?

Consider every single temptation and how when we choose to say no to the temptation, there is often an initial suffering in our flesh, in our human emotions, in our selfish nature, but if we cling to Jesus, if we stay with Him, something changes, the longings for the earthly fade and we gain ever increasing freedom from whatever our weakness was.

Read second paragraph, "A crucible is defined…" Does this bring any Bible text to mind?

> "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver" (Malachi 3:1-3 NIV84).

What does this text mean? What is this text talking about? Who are the Levites? The priesthood of believers, and what is being described? The cleansing of the people who believe in Jesus. When does this text indicate this cleansing takes place? When Jesus comes to His temple. What temple?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

When Jesus was on Earth, did He go to the temple in Jerusalem and cleanse it? What did His driving out of those frauds from the temple courts do? Did it complete the plan of salvation? Did it cleanse the people from sin? No, the cleansing of a physical building from people who are misrepresenting God does not remove sin or fix the sin problem. Christ's actions at the physical temple in Jerusalem was an acted out lesson, it demonstrated theatrically His real mission.

Remember the temple in Jerusalem was merely a stage for God's plan of salvation to be acted out so the people could learn the larger reality of what sin has done and how God through Christ redeems us from sin. But the stage and the play itself were not the reality and had no saving power—it was all to teach the reality of Jesus who is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world and who has the saving power.

So, what did Jesus' actions in cleansing the temple 2000 years ago teach?

One Bible commentary describes it beautifully, this is from *The Desire of Ages:*

> **In the cleansing of the temple**, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, **was designed to be an object lesson** for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator**. [Understand the reality—we are living beings created by God to be living temples where God dwells by His Spirit. The temple in Jerusalem was only theater, just a teaching tool, to teach the true reality. The law in that system was in a box in the Most Holy Place, but in the New Covenant it is to be written in our hearts. Why? Because God's law is a living law, it is the law of love, the protocols life is built to operate upon. It is not imposed rules like humans make and cannot operate or function written upon stone. It only functions in living beings, thus we are the repository of God's law. But when Adam sinned and replaced God's law with the law of sin and death, fear and selfishness, God wrote a distilled version upon stone as a diagnostic tool, and Jesus came to restore His living law back into the species human.] Because of sin, **humanity ceased to be a temple for God**. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, **the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity**, and through saving grace the **heart of man becomes again His temple**. [In the person of Jesus, God's living law of love is restored into humanity. Jesus becomes the connected link between heaven and earth.] God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high **destiny open to every soul**. [That temple is an object lesson for what God wants to achieve in you and me, to cleanse us from sin and write His law in us.] But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. [And far too many Christians don't understand it either.] They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly **the temple of the heart,** defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil**

> **habits, that corrupt the soul.** "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Malachi 3:1-3. (*The Desire of Ages* 161)

This commentator specifically connects Malachi's description of Jesus coming to His temple with the cleansing of the sanctuary which is described as cleansing the people from sin.

Is this cleansing a legal adjustment or an actual healing of hearts and minds?

Where does sin occur, in record books or in people? From where does sin need to be removed if we sinners are to be reconciled to God, historical records or our hearts and minds?

But what happens to the healing of our hearts and minds if we believe salvation is about getting our records cleansed rather than our hearts cleansed?

Do you see how Satan tricks some, like the Pharisees in Christ's day, or the church of the Dark Ages into legal accounting of sin rather than healing of the soul from sin? They develop, as Paul described, a form of godliness but with no power. A system of legal accounting of acts and deeds seeking legal pardon, erasure of records, but no healing of hearts and minds is a counterfeit to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In reality, when the heart and mind is cleansed the history of sin in that person's life doesn't need to be erased, it needs to be retained because that history stands in contrast to who they are in their restored righteousness and they become powerful witnesses to the power of God to cleanse and redeem. But if we erase the history of sin, then we lose the significance and power of what Christ has done for us. If in eternity future we all view each other like we view Gabriel, sinless and loyal beings, but we have no recollection, no memory of our past, no realization of what we have been healed, delivered, and saved from, we undermine the significance of God's grace, Christ's sacrifice, and the power of God to heal and save sinners.

SUNDAY

The lesson highlights that Peter is reminding believers not to be surprised when trials and struggles come, to understand such difficulties are not foreign or alien to the Christian journey but an expected part of it.

Why are trials and difficulties an expected part of the Christian journey?

Because once there is brokenness of any kind there are no pain free options!

We have all been injured, wounded, broken in some way by sin and the restoration to health, to wellness, is a painful process, but "painful" is not the same has harmful.

One of Satan's traps is tricking people into choosing what feels good rather than what is good.

Read last paragraph, "Many of us…" This is well said. Feelings are unreliable in determining truth. Feelings are signals to us that something is going on, but the feelings themselves cannot tell us whether what is going on is good or bad, only the truth can tell us that.

For instance, if you feel pain does that mean something good or bad is happening? The feeling of pain cannot determine that, only the truth can.

If you are experiencing pain because you are being stabbed then what is happing is bad (the pain is still good because it alerts you that something bad is happening), but being stabbed is not bad because it is painful, it is bad because it is harmful. If you were for some reason numb and being stabbed and therefore didn't feel pain it wouldn't make the stabbing good, it is still bad to be stabbed.

Conversely, if you feel pain while removing a thorn from your finger, that pain does not mean something bad is happening. If you refused to remove the thorn in order to avoid the associated pain, it would not be good.

I have patients whose entire lives are one long history of chaos, dysfunctional relationship after dysfunctional relationship, poor choices in school, work, and often various substance use problems. And for many of these people the root process is that they have developed as their primary mode of decision-making doing what feels best right now—avoiding anything that feels bad and doing that which feels good.

Until they learn the reality that once there is brokenness there are not pain free options they will continue to live chaotic lives. Once they learn this and stop trying to avoid pain and instead commit themselves to choosing to do that which is healthiest even if painful, they begin healing.

MONDAY

Read 1Peter 5:8:

> "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

Read first paragraph, "Have you ever watched a hungry lion…" What do you think? Does Peter say that Satan is prowling around in the same was as a hungry lion?

He certainly says that the devil is prowling around looking for someone to devour, but Peter makes one very important and critical distinction between a real lion seeking prey and Satan seeking prey. It reveals the method that Satan uses to capture his prey, what is the distinction?

Do real lions roar when they are stalking their prey? Why not? The prey will run away and they will lose their catch.

So, why does Peter describe Satan as roaring when stalking his prey?

Because it exposes Satan's primary method in this world of sin and that is to incite fear. What does fear do to people?

Fear and love are antagonistic, like a seesaw. As one goes up the other goes down. The more fearful we are the stronger the temptation to act selfishly and less capable of both thinking and acting in love. The more we love God and others the less fearful we are and the better we can think and act in harmony with God's law of love.

So, Satan roars to incite fear and lure people to leave the path of love and enter the path of survival-of-the-fittest, of protecting self, of justifying Satan's methods as a means to protect self and even claim it is to benefit others or perhaps the institution.

Why did Caiaphas recommend crucifying Jesus?

> "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50 NIV84).

What is the stated motive? We need to protect the nation—which could mean the people or the institution. After all, they knew they were God's chosen people to bring the promises of God to the world. They had an obligation to make sure the nation survived. It seemed only right to them to do whatever was necessary to protect the nation, even using coercion and force to protect the nation, even fraud, perjury, and murder. God's nation and people must be protected!

Have we seen this same line of thinking in Christian history? What about in the Dark Ages?

What about during COVID? Did we see some Christian organizations justify mandates, terminating employees, coercing consciences because it was right to do so in order to protect the institution? The institution is called by God to take the gospel to the world, it has a mission, it must be protected.

What is the motive? Is it love for people or is it fear—fear of government sanctions, shutdowns, loss of funding? Is it fear for self of getting a disease or being infected by others? Satan roars and people sacrifice truth and the principles of God's kingdom in order to protect themselves.

We will see more and more threats of various kinds before Jesus comes. These threats will inflame fear and are designed to undermine thinking and get us to choose the methods of this world rather than the methods of God.

What do you think of the description in the lesson that describes Satan's desire to kill and says "Death, suffering, and the twisting and perverting of morals and values are everywhere. We cannot escape seeing the work of Satan."

Do you agree that the death and suffering and torment and abuse we are seeing in society are from Satan and sin?

This is correct—the Bible is clear, Satan is a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Jesus came destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

So, we agree that pain, suffering, death come from Satan, correct?

Then why do many Christians teach that one day God will use His power to inflict torture, pain, suffering and death upon the wicked to make them pay for their unrepentant sin?

This idea, that God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death for sin is a lie of Satan that is rooted in believing the lie that God's law functions like human law.

As long as people believe God's law is imposed rules they cling to the idea that justice requires God to use power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking and the minimum punishment is eternal death.

We are not saying the wicked will not suffer for their unrepentant sin, they will, but from where does the pain and suffering come? Does it come from Jesus who uses power to inflict pain and suffering upon people that they would not otherwise reap, or does it come from unremedied and unremoved sin in their lives when God let's them go to reap what they have chosen?

The Bible is clear, sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15) and those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction (Galatians 6:8). God is the source of life, not the source of death. Sin is the cause and source of pain, suffering, and death.

But some people did more wickedness in this life than others, like Stalin and Hitler, who did more evil than a 20 year old college student who never accepted Jesus and died by a drug overdose. So, some teach, it would be unfair for the college student to suffer the same punishment as Hitler and Stalin. Therefore, it is argued, that because God is fair, God will perform a miracle to torture some for many days making them suffer in ways that only an infinite powerful God could in order to make them pay for their sins before He kills them.

If this description is true,

- What kind of being is God?
- What is the problem with sinning?

- From where does death come?
- If God restrained Himself and didn't use His power to inflict suffering and death then what happens to the wicked in this scenario?
- If the problem with sin is the punishment inflicted by God then from what or who do we need to be protected?

Read last paragraph, "Peter writes these words…" What do you think of this idea that Jesus has beaten Satan and Satan is a defeated foe?

It is true that when Jesus was here on Earth, Jesus was victorious over Satan, and that Jesus has won the ultimate victory. But if Satan is defeated why is he still on the playing field?

When we defeated Germany and Japan in WWII—was the war still ongoing? Or with their defeat did the war stop?

Jesus absolutely defeated Satan; this is not in dispute—but does that mean the war has stopped? Why not? If Satan is defeated why does the war continue?

> "For though we live in the world, **we do not wage war as the world does**. The weapons we fight with are **not the weapons of the world**. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ" (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

Does this give us a clue as to why the war continues if Satan is defeated?

Where is this war being fought? In hearts and minds. Satan uses weapons of lies, coercion, physical might, intimidation, fear, etc.

What is necessary from God's perspective to win the war?

Can God win the war by eliminating Satan from existence? Why or why not?

What does God want from us? Our love, trust, devotion, loyalty, friendship—can this be achieved through force, coercion, threats of punishment? Can it be achieved through power over others? Can it be achieved by God forcibly rewriting our hearts and minds to be loyal?

What is necessary for God to win? For everyone to be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5). For each person to be settled either fully into the truth that they cannot be moved or fully into the lies that no amount of truth or love will have any redeeming impact upon them.

God wins when every single savable person has been healed and restored from fear and selfishness.

Satan was defeated by Jesus Christ. As a human being, Jesus overcame every temptation, eliminated the death causing principle from the humanity He inherited through Mary and developed a perfect sinless mature human character restoring God's living law into the humanity He assumed.

Thus in the person of Jesus Christ the species human was saved, redeemed, and not merely restored to God's original intention for it in Adam, but in Jesus humanity has been elevated to the throne of God. Jesus sits upon the throne.

At the cross, Jesus defeated Satan, saved the species human in His own humanity, provided the remedy for every other human who chooses to partake by faith of what Jesus has provided. And Jesus solidified the unfallen beings in heaven in their loyalty. As Scripture says,

> "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth **or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross**" (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84)

The war continues on earth, but not in the rest of the universe. After the cross Satan was restricted to planet earth, why? Because the rest of the intelligences in God's universe were settled, they saw Satan exposed at the cross as a liar and murderer and none of them would listen to his lies any more. Thus he was restricted by reality, by the truth revealed by Jesus doing its work in the hearts of the loyal angels.

The only place Satan continues to wage war is on this planet where billions continue to believe his lies. And the war continues because the only way for God to win people is through truth, presented in love, leaving people free to decide for themselves.

But it will not continue forever. Events are unfolding right now that are bringing more and more people to decision points in which they must decide how they will treat others. And it is how we treat others, either by living out God's law of truth presented in love while leaving others free, such that we would protect others, sacrifice self for others, allow ourselves to be mistreated rather than coerce the consciences of others, OR we embrace the methods of Satan and the ends justify the means and we will use force, coercion, mandates, threats, censorship, misinformation, manipulation, to pressure people to do what we think they should.

COVID was a warmup and preparation for the final movements. A philosophy was introduced and embraced by many that in order to save lives it is okay to violate morals and ethics and coerce healthy people to do things they don't want to do.

This philosophy is satanic and when embraced and practiced hardens the hearts of people and solidifies them into the camp of God's enemy. They will become like Caiaphas and do just like the Jews did 2000 years ago, kill the innocent to protect what they think is more important than the innocent.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Romans 1:18:

> "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18 NIV84).

What is the wrath of God?

This is from a Bible commentary entitled *Hard Sayings of the Bible* published by Intervarsity Press. It is specifically commenting on Romans 1:18:

> In some sense, **God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality**. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, **we cause or own disintegration**…
>
> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is **not something caused by God**. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32).
>
> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the **sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves**.
>
> In light of these reflections, **the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained**… God loves us with an everlasting love. **But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death**. (Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996, p. 542-543).

This is absolutely brilliantly stated and correct. This is understanding the Bible as God intended, with God as Creator and God's law as design law upon which life is built to operate. Breaking God's law breaks the protocols of life and result in ruin and death.

When one believes the lie that God's law functions like human law, then one falsely concludes justice is the infliction of punishment and wrath is God using power to torture and kill for sin. In that false

model, Jesus must plead His blood as a legal payment to the angry and wrathful deity in order to propitiate away the wrath so that that god won't kill us.

But the truth is that God's wrath is exactly what Jesus experienced upon the cross—God letting go. God let Jesus go on the cross so that Jesus could experience exactly what Jesus chose—to complete His mission to eradicate the sin condition, destroy death and bring life and immortality to light and provide salvation for all who trust Him. And God lets the wicked go in the end to reap what they have chosen to be separated from the source of life and the result is ruin and death.

WEDNESDAY

The bottom green section asks, "If God were going to refine and test you today, how might He do it? What actions could you take now to deal with this before God would need to take drastic steps with you, as He did with Israel?"

What does this question lead you to consider? Do you think, "What sin in my life needs to be overcome or removed?"

But did the question actually ask that? I like this question because it asks about God refining us, does that lead us to think differently than what sin needs to be eliminated?

If we think of sin in our lives what is the typical focus? Isn't it usually on deeds, behaviors, and acts?

But from where do all acts of sin originate? From something amiss in the heart, from lack of love and trust, from fear and selfishness.

This is why Paul says, "everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

The issue isn't primarily about the behavior itself, it is about the heart attitude that leads to the behavior. Are we motived by love and trust or by fear and selfishness? Are we seeking to glorify God or glorify self? Are we seeking to benefit others or benefit self at the expense of others?

It is the motive, not the specific action, this is why one cannot write a list of rules for the godly. Rules and commandments and imposed laws are only for the ungodly as a hedge to restrain them, but not as a method of righteousness.

Paul wrote:

> "We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary

> to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me" (1Timothy 1:8-11 NIV 84).

When we have the lie that God's law functions like human law we want to make up rules to dictate behavior, and any behavior that doesn't conform to the rules is considered sin. This is what the Pharisees did. But love is not constrained by rules and love heals on Sabbath, but rule-keeping harms while keeping the rules.

Rule-keeping is only for the immature, for the children until they grow up. And rule-keeping can become, for those who refuse to mature in Christ, a form of selfishness, it is a way for selfish people to feel good about their performance while refusing to live in harmony with God's design for life. Remember the Pharisees and Corban?

Further, with rule-keeping what is sinful changes from place to place and time to time:

- At one time it was sinful to pick up sticks on Sabbath and the one doing it must be stoned
  - What about today. If you were on a nature walk with your family and your child picked up some sticks, would they be sinning? Would you stone them to death?
- At one time it was sinful to start a fire on Sabbath.
  - What about today. If you were cold one winter and started a fire in your fireplace on Sabbath afternoon would you be sinning?
- It is considered sin today for people to engage in polygamy—what about when Jacob married Rachel. Was Jacob sinning to do so? Do we ever find him asking God to forgive him for marrying a second wife, or God condemning him for it? Was polygamy in Jacob's day in harmony with God's design? Absolutely not, yet was Jacob's heart in rebellion against God for doing so?
- What about David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba—adultery was sin then and is still sin today (as was/is murder of her husband). But, after he committed adultery, after he murdered Uriah, when did David's physical and intimate relationship with Bathsheba stop being sin? Or, was David's marriage to Bathsheba wickedness and evil and condemned by God and David never really repented from his sin but continued living in sin and he was not a man after God's own heart?
  - When did his relationship with Bathsheba stop being ongoing lived out and active sin?
  - When he repented? Isn't repenting turning away from sin? Did he turn away from her or to her? Did he stop his relationship with her or continue it?
  - When he married her? So God's law is subordinate to local culture? If we move to a country today where polygamy is still legal and practiced it would be not be sin in that country to have more than one wife?
  - It is about how we understand sin—what is sin? Behaviors, or attitudes of the heart?
  - What was the attitude of David's heart that caused him to have the affair and murder Uriah? Selfishness and fear. This is sin.
  - When David converted what happened in his heart? Selfishness and fear were replaced with trust in God, and love for God and others. As a person reborn in heart

and mind to God's kingdom, what became David's motive to action? Was it still fear and selfishness or love and trust?

- And what does love desire to do for another? Was David, after his sin and subsequent conversion more concerned with himself or with honoring God and helping others? And in specific regard to Bathsheba was he more concerned with making himself look good or healing the damage to Bathsheba that his sin caused her?
- Did David, as a repentant sinner, have a responsibility to, as far as possible, restore to Bathsheba what he took from her? And what did he take from her? Her good name. Her position and station in that society, which was through her husband. She would be a homeless widow, in danger of becoming a prostitute as her adultery became known. And he took from her the love and affection that her husband gave her. So, in that culture, the only way to restore her name, reputation, station, provide security, and return to her the love and affection of a husband was to marry her and love her genuinely.
- His actions based on selfishness resulted in a child born terminal and who died—an apt object lesson of what sinful living does, it results in death. But once converted and living out the principles of love, he marries Bathsheba and has another child, Solomon the child of wisdom, the wisdom of God.

THURSDAY

The lesson make the observation that there is a big difference between cutting down a plant and pruning it.

How are they similar, how are they different?

What is the object lesson for us?

Can we sometimes find ourselves being pruned but misperceive into thinking we are being cut down?

I see this a lot in relationships that have dependency a.k.a. codependency ties.

These are emotional connections between people that are inappropriate and don't belong. Such as feeling responsible for what others think of you, or feeling responsible for what others feel, or what others do. Or deriving your own sense of security and fulfillment from the approval of others.

All such emotional enmeshments, which derive from another person that which God designed to come only from a relationship with Him or from oneself, are unhealthy and when moving toward health these ties must be severed, pruned, cut back.

However, many people resist because they misperceive what they are experiencing.

So I give the metaphor of Siamese twins joined at the hip. Is their connection normal or abnormal, healthy or unhealthy?

Will cutting that connection be healthy or unhealthy?
Will cutting it feel good or be painful?
Because it hurts does that mean it is bad?
Might it feel like the person is losing a part of themselves? Are they?
Might if feel like they are losing the other person out of their lives? Are they?

In reality, once the unhealthy connection is severed does that mean the relationship is broken and they can no longer do things with their twin, or now they have the opportunity to do so much more?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Podcasts: We have a weekly 15-minute podcast you can subscribe to. Go to comeandreason.com/category/media/podcasts-toc/

Building update: Our HVAC delay issue has been resolved by answered prayer. A highly reputable mechanical company had a narrow window in which to schedule our system installation. All other companies were declining new work. Ductwork is being manufactured and installed. The new systems will be finished by the end of July or sooner. Painting of walls and ceilings will be concurrent. After a week of building and flooring material acclamation to the new temperature and humidity, we'll then install the various flooring.

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 3
The Birdcage

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, which is a quotation from the book *The Ministry of Healing:*

> "In the full light of day, and in hearing of the music of other voices, the caged bird will not sing the song that his master seeks to teach him. He learns a snatch of this, a trill of that, but never a separate and entire melody. But the master covers the cage, and places it where the bird will listen to the one song he is to sing. In the dark, he tries and tries again to sing that song until it is learned, and he breaks forth in perfect melody. Then the bird is brought forth, and ever after he can sing that song in the light. Thus God deals with His children. He has a song to teach us, and when we have learned it amid the shadows of affliction we can sing it ever afterward" The Ministry of Healing 472.

What does this concept mean to you?

Is God the one who sometimes brings us to dark places? And if God brings us to dark places what would be God's purpose?

- Did the master put the songbird in the dark to punish it for wrongdoing?
  - Does God lead us to dark places to punish us?
  - Is punishment for sin something that requires God to inflict it?
  - If God were not to use power to inflict punishment for sin would there be no punishment for sin?
- What is the purpose of the master putting the bird into the dark? To get the bird to stop listening to every distraction and learn to hear the voice of the master.
  - How does this apply to us?
  - What song does God wish to teach us?
  - Isn't it the melody of love?

Does this prophecy from Revelation have any bearing on the illustration? Are the illustration of the songbird and the prophecy communicating the same idea?

> "And they [144,000] sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth" (Revelation 14:3 NIV84).

What is this song? It is a song of their experience—and this is why only the 144,000 can learn it. You had to go through it in order for your life to resonate with the experience of it.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is the song that God wants us to learn? It is a song of love and trust in Him? Of living out His methods in the face of opposition?

Does this idea that God leads us to dark places to cut out the distractions of this world in order to learn from Him the melody of love and sing the song of heaven mean that all dark experiences are from God?

- Did God lead the prodigal son to go off into wild living and end up in the pigsty?
- Did God lead Jonah to run away?
    - No, but God did send the storm and the fish—who is responsible Jonah being in the dark place inside the fish?

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the journey the Israelites took when leaving Egypt.

They had just gone through the 10 plagues and Pharaoh finally relents and lets them leave Egypt. The pillar of fire by night and cloud by day is leading them and God leads them into what appears to be a trap—backed up against the sea with Pharaoh's army bearing down on them. Why?

- Couldn't God have acted to prevent Pharaoh's army from leaving Egypt so the people were never frightened like this?
- Couldn't God have opened an earthquake to swallow the Egyptian army miles away so the people never saw them?
- Couldn't God have led the people to a different place a fortress of some sort? In fact, couldn't God have had pillars of rock rise out of the ground and form a fortress around the people from which they could have fought?
- Couldn't God have opened the waters and have the people walk through and be safe on the other side before the Egyptians pinned them against the sea?

Why did God handle it this way?

Was God doing something more than leading them out of bondage? What?

What is the lesson for us?

Does God ever lead us to places where we are helpless and cannot overcome in our own strength? Or do such moments only come from the actions of evil people attacking us or our own foolish choices?

If we pray to God for more faith what is required in order to gain more faith?

It is a law that strength comes through exercise, the law of exertion. If we want stronger muscles we must lift weights and if we start with five pound weights and master that and want to grow stronger

what must we do? Add weight, and after we master the 10 pound weights if we want to grow strong what must we do? Add weight, and if our trainer keeps adding weight as soon as the current weight is easy, do we complain and grumble and ask why are you always burdening me?

So what will God do for us if we ask Him to strengthen our faith?

- Is this an abuse of power on God's part?
- Is it punishment?
- Why does God put us into difficult positions to strengthen our faith?
- Why doesn't He just pour out the Holy Spirit to adjust the neurons in our brain to make us feel more confident? Because genuine faith is not about feelings. Genuine faith is confidence, trust, loyalty, devotion in and to God despite how we feel in the moment.
- And what is genuine faith based upon? Evidence, truth, experience. We might have a cognitive understanding of what faith is, but in order to have what some call a living faith, an active faith, a working faith, that requires us to exercise our trust or faith in God in real life circumstances.

So God allows events or brings circumstances that provides us the opportunity to exercise our faith and in so doing our faith grows stronger.

Which takes greater faith—to be in a difficult circumstance and reach out to God and God delivers you just as you desired, or to be in a difficult circumstance and reach out to God and you do not get the deliverance you asked for?

Are there any examples in Scripture of people reaching out to God to be delivered from something and they did not get what they wanted?

- Paul and whatever the thorn in his flesh was
- Paul's arrest and eventual execution
- The man who asked Jesus to solve his dispute with His brother

Read third paragraph, "Following 'the pillar'…" This is well said, following God will be a path filled with obstacles, struggles, stresses, and often pain—why?

- Because we are at war and God's enemies will attack us
- Because we live in a world damaged by sin and nature groans under the weight of it and God's people are not given "magical" powers to avoid the pain that sin has brought upon the world, but are given supernatural power from the Holy Spirit to overcome sin, overcome fear and selfishness in our hearts, minds, and characters despite the trials of this world.
- Because sometimes we make either rebellious or foolish choices that make things harder on us than God would have them be for us—and we must learn from our own actions to not only to listen to God but how His laws function, how reality works, and to choose to harmonize our lives with God's laws, Examples:
    - A person who lives an unhealthy lifestyle, but loves God and others and has given their heart to God, despite their being in a saving relationship with God will have more health problems—obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular problems, sleep and pain problems

etc. These trials and difficulties don't keep them from heaven, but make life more difficult as a result of lifestyle choices. They might have more financial strain because of medicines and other treatments they have to use. They might not be able to engage in the full range of activities they would like to etc.
    - Another example is the over-empathizer who Satan cannot get to knowingly choose to do evil and harm another, so Satan tempts them with too many good activities and they take upon themselves the burdens of others and try to relieve others of the responsibilities God would have others carry. And they become exhausted, worn out and discouraged and often complain to God asking why God would burden them like this (Metaphor of a wagon). Further, taking upon oneself the burdens or responsibilities of another you see struggling prevents them from gaining the master, the skill, prevents them from growing stronger so it is not actually helping them but infantilizing them.
- Because we sometimes believe lies that cause pain and undermine trust

Happiness is a by-product of healthiness in all domains—physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. We cannot have the fullest happiness that God has for us as long as we are unhealthy. So the ultimate happiness comes when we are in heaven and this mortal puts on immortality. But we can still advance in healthiness and experience greater happiness here on this Earth by living in harmony with God's design laws for life. Because healthiness comes from harmony with the laws of health in all domains.

One of Satan's tricks is to get people to violate God's design laws somewhere—physical, mental, emotional, relational, spiritual—and in so doing they will suffer some unhealthy consequence which undermines happiness and then Satan tricks them into substituting pleasure seeking for happiness. And many pleasure seeking activities violate some aspect of the laws of health which only causes more unhappiness and people seek more pleasure to feel better. This is what drives many of the addictive behaviors whether chemical or behavioral.

MONDAY

The lesson points us to Exodus 17 in which the Israelites were traveling through the Desert of Sin and there was no water. They began to grumble against Moses who went to the Lord and the Lord instructed him to strike the rock and God brought water out from the rock for the people.

But the lesson points out that they were following the pillar which stopped at a place without water. Why would God stop at a place without water?

What was happening?

Consider they were in a desert, they had flocks and herds, and children, and they were thirsty. What would you do in such a circumstance—it's hot, your sweating, your children are flushed, your flock of sheep are looking weak, your water supply is gone—what would you be thinking and feeling?

Why didn't God lead them like any good caravan leader would from one oasis to another?

- Was God trying to upset the people?
- Was God punishing the people?
- What was God's purpose in stopping there?

Had the people had enough evidence thus far in their lives to be able to have faith in God?

Not only did they have the miracles in Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, but in Exodus 15 we read the follow, which took place before the events here in the Desert of Sin:

> Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"
> Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.
> There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." (Ex 15:22–26 NMIV84).

What is the lesson here? What does God want from them? Does love and trust require experience with the person? Is God placing them in experiences to give them opportunity to learn about Him, about their own limitations, and to learn to trust Him with the responsibilities that are not theirs?

Did this event at the Desert of Shur provide evidence that could and should have helped them when they reached the Desert of Sin?

Is there a lesson for us in this? We have nothing to fear for the future, except we forget how God has led us in the past.

Another of Satan's tricks, traps, warfare strategies is to get us so focused upon a problem (real or imagined, in Israel's case the lack of water was a real problem) that we forget God, we forget His providences, purposes, and will in our lives, and we falsely take upon ourselves a burden or responsibility that is not ours. We think of only human abilities, possibilities and solutions.

Did God bring them there for them to dig wells and find water?
Did God plan for them to solve the water problem?

In our lives, do we ever get so focused on a problem that we inadvertently take something upon ourselves that God never intended for us to resolve?

God longs for us to grow in our personal relationship with Him to become like Moses, someone who knew God personally and trusted Him. He wants us to become people who, when difficulties come, go

to Him and trust Him with the outcome while we fulfill only the responsibilities that are ours to fulfill. So when the people grumbled, Moses went to God.

Consider Moses' faith. If you were instructed to go before your church this weekend and strike the pulpit with your cane so that water would come out of it, would it take faith on your part to do this? Would you have any doubts our fears that if water doesn't come out you would look foolish and be laughed at or thought to have lost your mind?

If you were in Moses' position, would you have had any temptations to doubt? Would you have had any concerns about looking foolish in front of others?

What is necessary for us to overcome such temptations? To know God so well that we are certain God is directing and that we are not following our own feelings, desires, or imaginations. This only comes from spending time with God each day and growing our personal relationship with Him through Bible study, application of His truths and experiencing His providences as we walk through life with Him.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan.

Read second paragraph, "Luke 4 is…" What is the difference the lesson is trying to make about Jesus being tested rather than tempted?

Are they suggesting that Jesus wasn't actually tempted in the wilderness, He was only tested in the wilderness?

Are they suggesting that God the Father and the Holy Spirit's purpose was to test Jesus and They didn't realize that if They led Jesus into the wilderness Jesus would be tempted by Satan, so They didn't lead Jesus into temptation that took them by surprise?

Or did the Father and Spirit know that Satan would tempt Jesus in the wilderness and the Spirit led Jesus there, just as Scripture says?

Doesn't the Bible say: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15 NIV84).

Was this a requirement of the plan of salvation?

Could Jesus become our Savior without facing temptations and overcoming them?

Then if it was part of His mission as our Messiah would the Spirit have led Him toward or away from completing His mission? Toward. So in Jesus' case, because of His unique position and purpose as our incarnate God and Savior, Jesus had to face Satan and had to go through the temptations and He also went through temptations later at crucifixion weekend and overcome them. Our salvation wasn't possible without this.

So, to suggest that in Jesus' case the Spirit was not leading Him in every step of His life, including out to be tempted, is to undermine the meaning, purpose, and accomplishments of Christ as our Savior.

With us, it is true God will not lead us into temptation because we are not the ones who can provide salvation or overcome the devil, and we do not have the responsibility of being the second Adam. But Jesus stood in a unique position in human history as a unique being as He was both God and man.

So, in my view, the lesson has mixed two similar yet distinctly different experiences here and if we don't disentangle these two experiences it will cause confusion. Jesus was tempted in all points like we are for the purpose of overcoming sin and becoming our Savior.

> During the days of Jesus' life on earth, **he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears** to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, **he learned obedience from what he suffered** and, **once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:7–10 NIV84).

It was a requirement of His mission that He be tempted in all points like us, and to overcome by using ONLY His human abilities.

We on the other hand, are not capable of overcoming sin, we instead participate with God through faith to be cured or redeemed from sin via the victory and application of what Christ achieved.

When you think about the temptations of Christ, how is it that He was tempted in every way just like us?

In your experience are the worst and most difficult temptations for you the ones that present from some outside source, temptations to sin in ways that you have never before participated in, or are the greatest temptations the ones you have developed habits of doing and tempt you from within?

Did Jesus have any sinful habits to overcome?

Then how was He tempted in every way just like we are?

Because of the human nature that He assumed and that causes the temptation:

> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire**, he is

> dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:13-15 NIV84).

We are tempted by powerful human desires and emotions. Did Jesus suffer temptation from human desires and emotions?

In Gethsemane, did Jesus suffer with such great anguish that He felt as if He would die? Did He have human desires not to die, to not go through the cross? Did He even pray and ask His Father that if it were possible for Him not to go through the cross?

Where did those desires originate, from outside Himself or from the humanity He took upon Himself as our Savior?

And if He would have chosen to do what His emotions and desires were tempting Him to do what action would He have taken? Who would He have saved? He was tempted with fear and selfishness, which Adam imbedded into our species when He rebelled.

But with every temptation Jesus chose love and overcame the fear and selfishness of the sinful nature and ultimately chose to die in love rather than use power to stop people from killing Him in order to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness that Adam imbedded into humanity. In the humanity of Jesus God's living law of love was perfectly lived out and Jesus arose on the third day in a purified and perfected humanity. In Jesus Christ, the human species is redeemed, purified, made righteous and stands higher in God's universe than before Adam sinned, for in Jesus Christ a human now sits upon the throne of God.

Read the last paragraph, "Sometimes…" What law lens do you hear these words through?

If human law—imposed rules that require imposed punishment by the ruling authority—then sin is a legal problem and we are in trouble with God, who is required to use His power to inflict torture and death upon us. We cannot be saved in this model unless someone pays our legal penalty to the proper legal authorities in heaven. Jesus' blood, in this model, is the payment that the god of this legal system requires be presented to it, and if it receives this blood payment then this god can give a legal pardon to all who claim the legal payment.

But if we return to worshipping the Creator whose laws are the protocols upon which He built reality to operate, then we realize that sin transgresses or breaks God's laws and as the Bible teaches results in death unless God intervenes to eradicate the sin and restore in the sinner His living law of love.

> "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

So, just as the paragraph says Jesus is our Sin Bearer, but how? By bearing the sin condition that Adam infected the species with and overcoming the carnal nature and destroying it at the cross in order to open a new pathway out of sin back into actual righteousness.

Consider how Paul describes this destruction of the fallen man, the carnal nature, the infection of fear and selfishness that we inherited from Adam in order to create a new sinless humanity:

> "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [When you hear "the blood of Christ" are you thinking legal payment, death penalty paid, or are you thinking as the Bible teaches the life is in the blood, this is the life of Christ. We are brought near through His life, which perfectly lived out God's law and eradicated the sin infection that separates us from God.] For he himself is our peace, who has **made the two one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two,** thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Eph 2:13–16 NIV84).

This is how I rendered it in *The Remedy:*

> But now, you — whose minds were once far away, and who were practicing the principles of selfishness and survival-of-the-fittest — have been enlightened and brought near to God, and are in unity with Christ through the truth revealed when he died. For Christ himself is the Remedy that heals the species and brings peace. He has removed fear and selfishness that cause division, mistrust, prejudice, and hostility. He did this by partaking of our human condition, and–via the exercise of his human brain–he loved perfectly, thereby destroying in his flesh (in the humanity he partook) the selfish survival-of-the-fittest drive along with the lies of Satan. In this way, he destroyed the need for the law (with all its regulations) to expose Satan's lies and methods. His purpose was to be the template of a new humanity born out of the unification of the two–our selfish, infected condition merged with his sinless state–thereby purging selfishness from the human heart, and transforming, healing, renewing, regenerating and recreating humanity back to God's original ideal; and in this new being, to reconcile the human race–regardless of ethnic background–into loving unity with God and each other through the revelation of truth at the cross, by which he destroyed the lies of Satan, reestablished trust, and removed fear, selfishness, and hostility" (Ephesians 2:13-16 REM).

What about paid the penalty? What is the penalty? It is death, the wages of sin is death?

Why does breaking the law require the death of the sinner?

Why does tying plastic bag over one's head require death?

If someone has a plastic bag over their head and hasn't yet died and you want to lead them to life what do you have to do? Remove the bag, put them in harmony with the law. In the New Covenant God writes His law upon our hearts and minds, but He is only able to do this because Jesus actually, literally, by exercise of human abilities restored God's law into the species human and destroyed from the humanity is took upon Himself the law of sin and death.

So, Jesus paid a price, no question, but to whom? Who required the price be paid in order for sinners to be saved?

What is it that has held humans in captivity of sin? Lies of Satan and our own fallen condition or carnal nature.

What is required to deliver us from sin? The truth to destroy the lies of Satan and restore us to trust and a new sinless nature.

Jesus provides both the truth, if you have seen Him you have seen the Father, and exposed Satan as a liar and fraud. And Jesus, as a human, developed a sinless human character and as it says in Hebrews 5:9 "once he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him." Jesus was always sinless, but Bible perfection is about maturity of character and character cannot be created it is developed by the intelligent being. After Adam sinned no human could develop a perfect sinless human character, so Jesus came, took up humanity damaged by Adam's sin and perfected it, eliminating the drives of selfishness and restoring perfectly God's law of love.

And this is all symbolically taught in the symbols of flesh and blood or bread and wine. Jesus is the Word made flesh, we must eat the flesh the Word which is the truth that destroys the lies and wins us to trust, and when we do, we open the heart and receive a new life, the life is in the blood, and then it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph, "Whatever their trials…" Is the plan of salvation only about saving human sinners or are human sinners part of something larger going on?

Are there any Bible texts that indicate we humans are part of a larger universal war?

- The first chapter in the book of Job when Satan presents himself before the heavenly counsel reveals a larger sin problem than just humans
- "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:19–20 NIV84).
- "Put on all the armour that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age" (Ephesians 6:11-2 GNT).
- "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan,

> who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him" (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

The sin problem is bigger than just a problem on Earth. God has a sin problem that threatens all of His intelligences throughout the universe and God has to resolve it in away that no only saves humanity but also stops the spread to other intelligences and permanently secures His universe from all future rebellion.

What is needed in order for God to do this?

Did the unfallen and loyal angels in heaven need the Cross? Yes, but did they need the same benefits as us? Not all of them. The angels needed the truth about God that Jesus revealed and they needed to see Satan exposed as a liar and fraud. This is what Jesus referenced when He said:

> "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:31-32 NIV84).

The word "men" in this text is supplied by the translators, it is not in the Greek. It should read "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself."

Who is the prince of this world? This is referring to Satan, and from where is Satan being driven out? From the hearts and minds of all who embrace the truth about God that Jesus' death reveals.

After the cross there are no more events like in the book of Job. Satan is no longer able to present himself in heaven to the loyal angels and try and mislead them? Why? Because the cross destroyed all his lies and secured the loyal angels in their loyalty and no heavenly being, after the cross, would listen to anything Satan has to say. They were sealed and secured.

The angels in heaven needed the truth the cross revealed in order to have all the doubts about that Satan's lies presented removed.

We human sinners also need the truth about God, but we need something more, something the angels in heaven did not need. We need a new sinless nature, a new sinless humanity and we could not develop this. So Jesus not only revealed the truth about God but picked upon damaged and broken humanity and eradicated the infection of sin, the death causing principle and developed a perfect sinless humanity that He shares with us. We partake of what He developed via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

THURSDAY

Read the bottom green section, "Almost all…" There is no question that it is extremely valuable and important to remember what God has done for us in the past.

How does remembering what God has done in the past help us deal with trials today?

And what if we misinterpret what God has done in the past does that undermine our ability to cope today?

For instance, we have the story of the flood and if we interpret it as God using power to punish wicked people versus God using power to keep open the avenue for Messiah to save and heal wicked people from sin, does that make a difference in how we cope today?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Podcasts: We have a weekly, 15-minute podcast that you can subscribe to in various ways. Goto our website > Main Menu > Resources > Podcasts and select from our archive of current and past episodes.

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Building update: YAY! Our new HVAC system ductwork and fire dampers have been installed! Waiting on delivery of the 3 new air handlers, outside condensers, and 3 mini-split cassettes, one for each bathroom.

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 4
Seeing the Goldsmith's Face

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read last paragraph, "God is seeking…" This is well said. God is seeking to purify us, to restore His image within us and this is the core purpose of the plan of salvation. We were created to be living showcases of the glory—the character and living law of God.

What does it mean to be created in God's image?

- Ability to love
- Ability to reason, think, and act
- Ability to procreate in our image

Which of these is least significant?

If someone loses or never had procreative abilities, they are sterile, does that mean they cannot be in the image of God, that they cannot bear the image of God?

Did Jesus as a human being procreate? Did He bear the image of God perfectly, in fact restored it completely into humanity?

So, what is the most important aspect of the image of God, a power akin to that of our maker? The power to think and to do—individuality, with intelligence, ability to comprehend, reason, understand and choose.

Will God use His power to destroy His image within us?

What about if we pray for God to use His power to destroy His image within us?

Can you think of any prayers that people pray that if God were to do what the person was asking it would destroy the image of God within them?

How about, "Father you take control. I surrender to you and I give over the driver's seat of my life to you for you to be in control of what I do. You tell me the answer, you decide for me what to do. I don't want to do it wrong, so you take control."

If God were to do this, what would happen to the person? What would happen to the image of God in them?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is the motive for such a prayer? Is it faith or fear?

The Bible says the mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong Hebrews 5:14. God wants us to be mature, to grow, to understand, to comprehend, to do what is right because it is right and we understand and agree with God and choose it not merely because God has said it, but because we actually prefer it and freely want it.

Is God the only supernatural being who is working to have His image reproduced in humanity?

Satan is also working to have his image reproduced within us and this is the real bottom line focus and outcome of the war between Christ and Satan. It is a war for hearts and minds. These two beings—Christ and Satan—stand at the head of two divergent systems, two antagonistic kingdoms that operate upon opposing principles. Every being in the universe must decide on whose side they will be by the methods, principles, laws they prefer and practice in their life.

It is by our choices in whom we trust and who we choose to follow BY THE METHODS WE EMPLOY in how we live and treat others that we choose one kingdom or the other.

Do we prefer:

- Truth or deception
- Love or fear and selfishness
- Freedom or coercion, force, and control
- Design law or imposed law
- Sowing and reaping or rule-breaking with infliction of punishment

It is a law, the law of worship, that by beholding we are changed. If we worship a god that is like Satan in character, one who makes up rules and uses threats, intimidation, inflicted punishments to coerce and control and calls it justice then we become like that god and will use those methods upon others.

But if we worship Jesus who would not use power to punish His crucifiers but left His creatures free to reject and kill Him, then we, like Jesus present the truth in love and leave others free and we live out the principles of God as His law is written into our hearts by the Holy Spirit through our faith in God.

We are either being cleansed and washed by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, purified and prepared as a temple for the indwelling of God via His Spirit, or we are being corrupted and turned into what the Bible calls a synagogue of Satan.

Every intelligent being, angels and humans, are created to be living temples where God dwells by His Spirit and it is Satan's goal to displace God from the throne of our hearts and minds and to establish himself as the ruler of our being. He does this by getting us to choose his method, principles, and laws over God's, even while we claim to be worshipping God or Jesus. Satan does this by getting us to have faith in the wrong god, the god who is like a dictator.

Remember the Jews in Christ's day who claimed both Abraham and God as their father, Jesus explicitly and directly told them that they belonged to their father the devil (John 8:44), yet they were certain that they were obeying Scripture and Jesus was teaching contrary to Scripture. They were not mad a Jesus because they didn't believe in God and Jesus did, but because Jesus presented a different God to the one they believed in.

Calling oneself a Christian, a follower of the Creator God, even a follower of Jesus does not establish one as a temple of God, a person who is restored to the image of God. What does? Worship God in truth as Jesus revealed Him to be in character, principle, and method and thereby surrendering in trust to the true God of love and having His living law of love restored into the heart as the operating system upon which we live, and breath, and function. Meaning, we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. We live out God's law, truth, love and freedom.

We don't do this in our own strength, we do this by our choice to trust God and receive His strength. **God never chooses for us, but we can never accomplish any victory over sin by our own ingenuity, wisdom, or power**.

- All the saving power comes from God.
- The truth that displaces the lies and wins us to trust comes from God
- The love that drives out the fear comes from God
- But the choice to respond to the truth and love of God is ours.
- And when we make that choice God enters the sanctuary of our souls with His healing and cleansing presence and removes the guilt, takes away the shame, imbues us with new motives, new desires, new longings for purity, goodness, love, kindness, honesty. As we identify with these new motives and desires and choose to apply them to our daily activities, decisions, practices and choices we receive power to carry out those choices. When we have moments of human weakness and don't do what our renewed hearts truly desire and allow an old habit to take over, or a situation to irritate us into an impulsive act that we regret—like Moses striking the rock—we are not cast off by God. We grieve in our hearts and go to God humbly, regretting our weakness and longing for His strength to never let God down again. And we receive God's forgiveness, acceptance, love, grace and power to succeed the next time.

The sin problem has never been a legal issue. It has always been a state of being issue. We are either reborn into love and trust and are being cleansed by God to be righteous or we remain in fear, selfishness, rebellion and sin and our souls are being corrupted, hearts hardened, and consciences seared.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Romans 8:29:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:29 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Does this mean God predetermines who is save and who is lost? That God uses His power to save some but not others?

It is very simple really. What, according to Jesus is life eternal? Knowing God (John 17:3). This knowing is not cognitive awareness but an intimate connection with, an opening of the heart in love and trust to God.

And what is the only outcome for a sinner who genuinely and completely opens their heart in love and trust to God? Salvation—why? Because of who God is. God is love and God is the Creator and God will heal all who trust Him and restore them to sinless perfection.

So, God predetermined that all those who come back into intimate connection with Him will be conformed or transformed into the likeness of Jesus, restored to righteousness.

And because God is the Creator of time and time exists and operates at the behest of God and under the power and authority of God, just like gravity, just like the laws of physics, God is not constrained by time. God lives outside and above time and the past, present and future are alike outspread before God. So the Bible informs us that in our linear existence here in 2022, those people whom will come to love and trust God and know God in the future God as predetermined through the victory of Christ will be restored in heart, mind, and character to be like Jesus. But from God's vantage point He already knows or foreknows who those people are because God exists at all points in time.

The third paragraph is an interesting quote from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

> "The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people" *The Desire of Ages* 671.

What does this mean?

Why is God's honor involved in the perfection of the character of His people?

If a person dying of terminal cancer is cured by a physician, restored to complete wellness, whose reputation is honored by that remedy and healing?

So God curing and healing sinners from sin reveals the truth about Him, His character, His methods, and that His law restored into the hearts and minds of living beings is the bases of life. God's character is glorified and magnified by His people being restored to love and trust.

Read the last green section, "Imagine being on the field of a huge stadium…" Do you think it would help you make choices for God to consider such a viewpoint?

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Job 23:1-10:

Then Job replied:
2 "Even today my complaint is bitter;
his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning.
3 If only I knew where to find him;
if only I could go to his dwelling!
4 I would state my case before him
and fill my mouth with arguments.
5 I would find out what he would answer me,
and consider what he would say.
6 Would he oppose me with great power?
No, he would not press charges against me.
7 There an upright man could present his case before him,
and I would be delivered forever from my judge.
8 "But if I go to the east, he is not there;
if I go to the west, I do not find him.
9 When he is at work in the north, I do not see him;
when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.
10 But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. (Job 23:1-10 NIV84)

Read the second paragraph, "Even amid…" Yes, Job trusted God and could not be shaken from his trust despite not understanding the issues, despite not seeing behind the scenes at the time. This is an excellent point to note. A very important lesson for us in our journey.

But what do you think of the idea that "he endured the refining fire"?

I have difficulty with this conclusion—was Job going through his trials because Job needed to be purified? Or was Job already settled, sealed to God, and purified in character?

Two texts to consider, the first is Job's own words that follow what the lesson asked us to read:

11 My feet have closely followed his steps;
I have kept to his way without turning aside.
12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips;
I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. (Job 23:11-12 NIV84)

Does it sound like Job is being purified from Job's perspective? Do we find Job confessing sin, repenting from unrighteousness like we see David doing in Psalms 51? No, we see Job protesting that this is not a result of sin and therefore is not some element of purifying him.

However, the Bible tells us that the human heart and mind is deceitful above all things and utterly wicked, so perhaps Job is self-deceived and he only thinks he is faithful to the Lord. Then, it would be best, in this case to get God's assessment of Job, which we find in Job 1:8:

> "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil'" (Job 1:8 NIV84).

So, does it sound like in Job's case that he was going through his difficulties in order to be refined from some sin?

This is a great example of taking a passage like Job 23:1-10 out of context and using it to make a point that it doesn't actually make, of drawing the wrong conclusion.

This is how the Bible can be used, with all good intentions and honest motives, to introduce confusion and error. And this is why every person must study for themselves and be fully persuaded in their own mind.

Many misunderstand Scripture and inspiration. They think that if we find a Bible text that says something then because the Bible is inspired we are to apply it just as it reads without question. But this is not the purpose of the Bible. The Bible is inspired by God, but it is not a list of rules to obey, or proclamations and declarations to blindly follow.

The Bible is an inspired record of the sin problem and God's actions in resolving the sin problem. It is a revelation of God's character and methods in contrast to those of Satan. Thus it requires us to understand the setting, what is transpiring, why those words were spoken and by whom, what is the manifestation of the sin condition in that setting and how is God's intervention in that setting part of the healing solution. If we read the Bible as a list of rules or proclamations and simply apply them because the Bible said it, then our individual development is stunted, the image of God in us is not being restored, and we will often use a Bible rule in a setting where it causes harm rather than brings healing. Just like the Jews wanted to cast stones at the woman caught in adultery—they had a rule given by Moses and they wanted to apply it. But had they done so, not only would the woman have been killed, but all those who participated would have had their hearts hardened. As Jesus handled it, not only was the woman saved, but many of those who came wanting to throw stones left with seeds of truth working upon their hearts.

We are created in the image of God and are to be thinkers not mere reflectors of other people's thoughts. Jesus calls us into understanding friendship (John 15:15). God wants more from human beings than the obedience of a well-trained dog. God wants more than the obedience of a slave, "the master said it. I will do it, who am I to question." God wants our understanding agreement. We are called to be mature, to develop by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong. This

requires we actually comprehend God's character, His design laws, how reality works, what sin is, how it deviates from God's design and causes pain suffering and death.

The Bible reveals, through human history, reality—how God functions, how God's law functions, and how sin corrupts and destroys.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus was in Jerusalem…" What lessons do you glean from the parable of the ten virgins and the sheep and the goats that is relevant to our preparing for Christ's return?

The lesson points out that the symbol of oil in the lamps of the wise virgins represents both the Holy Spirit and their own mature Christlike character. And the lesson asks, "In what way does the meaning of the story change, depending on whether you see oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit or of the possession of character?"

What are your thoughts?

How is the oil connected to character such that both interpretations are true simultaneously?

Every single person develops a character, the only question is whether it is a Christlike character or a satanic character.

What is the only way we can develop a Christlike character? By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Can we develop a Christlike character by our own initiative, our own strength, our own works, our own goodness, our own creativity, our own power, our own love? No! The only way we can develop a Christlike character is via the indwelling Holy Spirit who brings new motives, new desires, new understandings, new perspectives, new insights, godly love, and divine power to succeed. As the Holy Spirit brings all of this which Christ wrought out in His humanity to us, we choose to say yes, to prefer the godly over the carnal, to identify with and act in harmony with the godly, and in so doing the Holy Spirit empowers and develops us. We advance from truth to truth, insight to insight, victory to victory as we are convicted of things we need to renounce and step by step, choice by choice, as we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit our characters are transformed.

Thus the metaphor of a lamp, the oil is both the Holy Spirit which brings the victory of Christ, the truth, the love of God, the power of God, and the oil which burns to create light, which is a metaphor of gospel truth, is the light of our witness, our character transformation as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit that transforms us to burn brightly letting our light shine. But if there is no Holy Spirit in the lamp, there is no development of Christlike character and there is no light to shine forth.

What about the parable of the sheep and goats? What is it that determines the ones that God identifies as a sheep or goats?

This is a powerful parable of reality that reveals how every single person on Earth chooses for or against Jesus.

Have you ever wondered how it could be possible that *every* person in the world will make a choice for or against Christ? This is often a point of concern for some as they consider everything that needs to happen before the Second Coming.

This parable reveals that the choice for or against Jesus isn't a doctrinal choice, isn't a denominational choice, isn't a ceremonial choice, it is a choice on what law we internalize into our hearts in how we live and treat others.

As the world continues to globalize, as governments increase their coercive pressure, as liberties are removed, as lies increase, as fear and selfishness magnify, and as crisis after crisis occurs, governments will add to their laws and increase their demands, pressure, and control. As this happens, every person will be faced with the choice of whether they live out God's law or the law of sin and death.

God's law is the law of love, of truth, of liberty. It is manifested in loving God and others more than self, in protecting the downtrodden, in respecting the individuality of others.

The law of sin and death is the survival-of-the-fittest motive driven by fear and the need to protect self—especially at the expense of others. It is doing whatever one needs to do to survive, even if that means killing others to save self.

It is in how we treat others that we choose whose law we embrace—God's or Satan's; this is how every person chooses either to accept or reject Jesus in the last days, even those in far remote places who have never heard the name Jesus, for our Savior said:

> When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left (Matthew 25:31-33 NIV84).

Jesus doesn't separate the people based on race, or nationality, or culture, or creed, or denomination, Jesus separates people based on what law they live out in the way they treat others, and thereby how they treat Him:

> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

> Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me**.'
> Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'
> Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me**.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:34-46 NKJV).

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Daniel chapter 12, let's read verses 1-4 & 10:

> "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose **name is found written in the book**—will be delivered. [what book? What does "name" mean? Character—so whoever is healed to have a character like Christ is in the book of life] Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. [Two resurrections—all who have died throughout human history are only sleeping waiting for the resurrection and the final end. This is a very important point to realize, because all the deaths through human history are NOT the death that is the wages of sin. That death occurs after the judgment. People make errors in reading Scripture and concluding that the Flood, or first born of Egypt, etc. in which God put people to sleep, is God punishing people for sin, no it is not. It is God acting therapeutically to keep open the avenue for the Messiah.] Those **who are wise will shine like the brightness** of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge…. [Seal up what words? The prophecies in the book of Daniel, until the time of the end and then the truth of these prophecies will increase until the second coming of Christ. These prophecies began to be understood after the end of the 1260 years which occurred in 1798, which corresponds with the Great Awakening in Christianity and the advancement of the advent message—that Christ is coming again soon.] Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are **wise will understand**" Daniel 12:1-4 & 10 NIV84).

What will the wise understand that the wicked will not understand? God's methods—the wise know God and cherish and understand His character and law of love. The wicked do not. The wicked do not know God and do not know God's design laws. In fact, the wicked embrace Satan's methods and laws.

The lesson then asks what is the context?

The context is the final movements of the longstanding battle between the King of the North and the King of the South. If you haven't read my two blogs I this I encourage you to do so:

KING OF THE NORTH VERSUS SOUTH AND TODAY'S END-TIME EVENTS

PREPARE! THE KING OF THE NORTH IS COMING

King of the South is symbolically represented by Egypt—Pharaoh famously said, "Who is God that I should obey Him?" (Exodus 5:2), and the King of the South represents all the godless philosophies and worldviews Satan has used throughout history—paganism, Earth and Sun worship, evolutionism, humanism, communism.

King of the North is represented by both Babylon and Rome—Nebuchadnezzar famously accepted Daniel's God and immediately passed laws that whoever spoke ill of Daniel's God should be put to death. And thus King of the North represents all the systems of religious imperialism. Those forces who claim a belief in the God of the Bible but who merge with the power of the state and will use force to coerce consciences.

These two systems are both Satan's and they have warred back and forth throughout human history. In the prophecy of Daniel 11 the beautiful land is where God's people are found and they are caught in the middle between the war of Satan's two forces.

Do you see these two forces in Jesus day? The religious leaders who wanted Him crucified were part of the King of the North, religious imperialism, Pilate and the forces of pagan Rome were part of the King of the South. And these two forces were fighting each other and Jesus and His followers were caught in the middle. Did Jesus join either side? Did Jesus Apostles join either side?

You saw the same thing in AD 70 when the forces of the King of the South, pagan Rome, surrounded Jerusalem to attack the forces of the King of the North, religious imperialism of the Jews. And when they stepped back briefly, the people of God represented by the beautiful land, the true followers of Christ, fled Jerusalem and were not caught up in Jerusalem's destruction.

This is what we are facing in the world as we approach the end of time. The final movements are the King of the South attacks the King of the North and then King of the North rallies and storms out and destroys the King of the South and then Michael stands up and a time of trouble comes just as we read in Daniel 12. Liberalism is right now making its final assault on the forces of religious imperialism, but if our understanding of the prophecy is correct, it will only enrage those who align with the King

of the North and politically conservative forces who are willing to use the power of the state are going to storm out and destroy the forces of liberalism.

I think COVID with its worldwide mandates against individual liberty was analogous to Rome surrounding Jerusalem in AD 70. It is the warning to the people of God that the final assault is just on the horizon and we are to flee. But our flight is not a physical one like the Christians in AD 70, our flight is to flee with our hearts from identifying with and supporting those forces of either the King of the South or the King of the North, to not get caught up into this war between two of Satan's forces, but to advance the principles of God's kingdom.

God's people are in neither group, but God's people will find themselves sorely tempted to join one or the other of these two groups and that is the trap.

The trap is not in agreeing with some point, idea, or principle espoused by either group, the trap is in choosing the methods of Satan that both the King of the North and South utilize in advancing their agenda.

For instance, let's take the question of transgenderism. The King of the South is advancing a lie that there is no male or female, that the concept of man and woman is made up, that our gender does not originate in objective reality and thus any person by merely choosing to make a claim contrary to objective reality can declare their gender to be whatever they wish it to be. But this is so obviously false it becomes silly for any thinking person and reveals it is an assault on the image of God, not just gender, but on thinking. One cannot believe such fantasy unless one stops exercising one's God-given abilities to reason and think and rejects the principles of truth. Understand, a person cannot be transgendered if there is no male and female, if there is no man or woman. You can't take a TRANScontinental flight if there are no continents, you cannot transition from male to female or female to male if there is no male or female.

We must stop letting people who deny objective reality, who live in fantasy, be the barometer of our thinking. It is destructive and unhealthy to individuals and to society.

There is male, there is female, and there are people who have confusion about their gender. Those people are suffering with some condition that interferes with healthy functioning as God designed it and they need our compassion, understanding, and love, not condemnation. But compassion, understanding and love does not mean we surrender our thinking to those who are struggling. We wouldn't let a blind person tell us what color combination works best in our paint schemes, neither should we ever allow people who are gender confused to define human sexuality, male, female, or any aspect of gender.

The godless in society are pushing irrational ideas that are inciting outrage in people, like in some jurisdictions they require female children to use the same bathrooms as biological males who identify as female.

Or in the news this week a school board member announced she would be taking 9-12 year old students to an adult store to teach them about human sexuality in graphic detail. https://www.foxnews.com/us/washington-state-school-board-director-teach-sexual-pleasure-class-9-year-olds-sex-shop

These types of behaviors from the King of the South are so outrageous they tempt righteous people to use the power of the state not merely to restrain people from doing harm, but to seek to punish.

We are right to recognize the truth of God's creation. He made them male and female. We are right to recognize that the healthiest relationships are loving marriages of a man and woman who love God and each other more than self. We are right to recognize that the healthiest families in which children do the best and grow up to be the most successful are families led by a biological male father and a biological female mother in which both parents love each other and function in mature ways.

But we would be wrong to coerce people to conform to our way of living. The balance in this world of sin are spaces in which our liberties do not injure those around us.

So with this in mind, read the second paragraph, "Daniel is told…" What is the difference between the wise and the foolish? What do the wise know and do that the foolish do not know and do not do?

The wise understand God, His character, His methods, His design laws which govern the operations of reality, and they live in harmony with them.

The foolish believe lies—either the lies of liberalism (King of the South) or the lies of religious imperialism (King of the North) and will utilize the methods of coercion to seek to make the world a better place in their image.

But the wise realize that God's kingdom is not of this world. What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship, understanding agreement, free and willing participation in living out His methods. And none of this can be achieved by external rules, threats and punishments. In fact, using such methods leads to rebellion.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "A song goes like this…" In my blog for this week, Only God Is Infallible I describe how angelic perfection failed in heaven, how human perfection failed on earth, how God's faithful prophets can still make mistakes—like Moses striking the rock, Elijah running away, Peter compromising principles, that each one of us must have our own faith individually built upon the Rock Jesus Christ if we are to stand firm in the face of trials.

I conclude the blog with these two paragraph:

> As we approach the final moments before Jesus returns, the Bible warns us of terrible times, troublesome times, distressing times. Our fears will be inflamed and our worst anxieties aroused. Everything that we have built our safety upon will be threatened. And it is when our earthly securities are removed, when every single earthly support is stripped away—when our bank account is empty, our home is taken, our liberty destroyed, our family members abandon us, our friends betray us, our church rejects us, and we feel all alone—that we will either be standing upon the solid rock, Jesus Christ, or collapsing into ruin and despair.
>
> Only those who have developed a personal, living faith in Jesus, who know God for themselves, who trust their lives, fortunes, families, and futures to our infallible Creator God, will be found standing firm. All those who have trusted in other humans—in dynamic speakers, in church leaders, in politicians—will, sadly, discover that they have placed their trust in the fallible.

The lesson points us to Ephesians 4:11-16 which reads:

> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV84).

Then the lesson asks, "what does Paul say must happen before the fullness of Christ may be revealed in our Christian community?"

We must grow up, we must be mature. And what does that mean? What does it mean to be a mature Christian? We have developed the ability to discern the right from the wrong (Hebrews 5:14). And what is necessary to do this? We have come to understand the truth of God's design law and have rejected the childlike rules-oriented approach to life based on imposed law with imposed punishments.

Remember the seven levels of moral development.

LEVEL 1: Reward and Punishment
Right and wrong is determined by whoever holds the power to rule by threat of punishment and hope of reward. Mercy (failure to punish) is seen by others at this
level as being weak, rather than being moral. This is the level ancient Israel operated at as slaves in Egypt. They did what the task masters said in order to avoid punishment.

People at level one insist that God uses his power to torture and kill the unrepentant wicked,
as evidenced when he first established his credentials to rule Israel by acts of punishment upon

the Egyptian gods, and by mighty, spectacular miracles demonstrating the Egyptian gods were not gods at all.
This level of thinking is so primitive that it doesn't even require a brain; the mind is completely sidelined. Animals, plants, and even bacteria can be conditioned to avoid painful stimuli and grow toward rewarding stimuli. It is Satan's goal to reduce mankind to "brute beasts and creatures of instinct" operating at level one.

Satisfaction Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level One thinking, which is summarized as follows: God said don't do something, but when we disobey and do what God said not to do, this dishonors and offends him. Therefore, in his justice, he responds with angry vengeance to execute the disobedient to satisfy his outrage. But then Jesus stepped in between God and man to become humanity's substitute. Thus, instead of killing man, God killed his Son in our place and is now satisfied that his honor and justice are preserved.

LEVEL 2: Marketplace Exchange
Right and wrong is determined by an equitable agreement between two parties, also known as quid pro quo – "I'll do something for you if you do something for me." At this level vengeance is a moral duty. People who do evil must be paid back with an equal amount of pain and suffering, in other words, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." To not return pain and suffering is considered immoral. This was ancient Israel saying at Sinai, when the law was first read, "All the Lord has said, we will do."

Ransom Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Two thinking, which is summarized as follows: Because earth and humanity are now the legal property of Satan and under his control, the devil claimed legal rights to this earth and the lives of the descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore, God struck a bargain with the devil to exchange the life of Christ for the lives of the rest of humanity.

LEVEL 3: Social Conformity
Right and wrong is determined by community consensus, for example, when a child says, "But everyone else is doing it." Right is deemed right by the approval of peers.

This was ancient Israel when they wanted kings. All the other nations had kings, so it must be right, thus Israel demanded to have kings.

Governmental Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Three thinking, which is summarized as follows: In order for everyone to be convinced that God is fair and right in dealing with sin and sinners by inflicting torturous punishment, somebody has to pay the price. That somebody is Jesus, because he's the only one who could pay that price to get mankind off the hook.

LEVEL 4: Law and Order
Right and wrong is determined by a codified system of rules, impartial judges, imposed punishments, and respect for authority. Right is getting a proper pay or reward for good work, and proscribed and

inflicted punishment for breaking the rules. Authority figures are rarely questioned, "He must be right, because he is the President, the Judge, the Pope, God, etc."

This was ancient Israel at the time of Christ – "we have a law!" they proclaimed, as they sought to stone Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. This is much of our modern world, with its codified laws, courts, prosecutors, judges, juries, and imposed rules. Authority at this level rests in the coercive pressure of the state to bring punishment upon those who deviate from the established laws. At this level, police agencies and law enforcers are required to monitor the population, searching for breaches in the law in order to impose standardized penalties.

Penal Substitution Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Four thinking, which is summarized as follows: Jesus died to pay the legal penalty the law demanded and the heavenly judge imposed. The law must be kept. Man broke the law, thus justice demands and requires the imposition of the proper punishment. Someone had to be executed to pay the legal penalty. Jesus became our substitute and was executed in our place by God the Father (as the righteous judge) to pay that penalty. In doing so, the integrity of the law is maintained and sinners can be pardoned, but only if they claim the legal payment made by Jesus.

LEVEL 5: Love for Others
Right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others, realizing people have value in who they are irrespective of the rules. Wrong is determined, not by a checklist of rules, but by not doing what is actually helpful and beneficial for another.

Jesus demonstrated this when he touched lepers, spoke to women, socialized with tax collectors, and healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, operating at level four and below, wanted to stone Him for breaking the law.

Moral Influence Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Five thinking, which is summarized as follows: Sin separated us from God and corrupted our hearts, so that we no longer trusted God, but God loved us too much to let us go, so Christ's death was the means to reach us with his love and restore us to trust in him.

LEVEL 6: Principle-Based Living
Right is understanding the design protocols and principles upon which life is constructed to operate and intelligently choosing to live in harmony with them. Right is not doing something because a rule says to do so, but because it is understood to actually work this way.

This was Jesus living out God's character of love in all He did, and the Apostles after Pentecost. It is understood that God says what is right because it is right, because it is the way things actually are. It isn't right simply because God said it.

Recapitulation and Christus Victor Theories of the atonement most closely matches Level Six thinking, which is summarized as follows: Christ's life, death, and resurrection is understood to be the only means to fix what sin had done to God's creation. When mankind sinned, the condition of humankind was changed, placing it out of harmony with God and his design for life. Humankind was now held in bondage by their own condition of sinfulness (carnal nature), their terminal state (death), and the lies about God told by Satan. Christ came to break these three powers and fix what sin has done to this creation. Thus "he who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God." 2Cor 5:21.

LEVEL 7: Understanding Friend of God

Those at this level not only have love for God and others (Level 5), not only understand God's design protocols for life (Level 6), but also understand God's purposes and intelligently choose to cooperate in fulfilling their role in His purposes.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:15, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

People at this level understand the truth about God's character of love, His nature and design for life, the origin of evil, the nature of sin, the weapons of Satan, the original purpose for the creation of humanity, the fall of humanity into sin, God's working through human history, the purpose of the Cross, and the ultimate cleansing of the universe from sin. Jesus operated at this level, as will all those who are ready for translation when Jesus comes again.

Healing Substitution Reality most closely matches Level Seven thinking, which is summarized as follows: The plan of salvation is understood to have a deeper and broader intent than just the redemption of the human species. Both level five and six are true: God's character of love has been misrepresented, His methods of truth, love, and freedom have not been fully understood, so God had a larger purpose than just the salvation of humankind; He was also solidifying the unfallen beings in loyalty to His design methods and character of love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum is now available to members.
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- **New Music** Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members
- If you have ideas to add to the member's section let us know

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q3 In The Crucible With Christ: Lesson 6
Extreme Heat

by Lori Atkins

INTRODUCTION

We are studying Lesson 5 in our quarterly, *In the Crucible With Christ*. The title of this week's lesson is "Extreme Heat" and the memory text is from Isaiah 53:10…I want to read verses 10 and 11 from several Bible versions so we can unpack this passage a bit and determine not only what the verses say, but what they mean.

- NIV: **Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer**, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. **After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.**
  [This is the NIV and you can see the translators have a certain lens through which they interpret. It has to do we preconceived ideas of God's law and sovereignty—God is causal and inflicting. But this is not in the Hebrew, it is artifact of the translators.]
- GNT: The Lord says, "**It was my will that he should suffer**; his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness. And so he will see his descendants; he will live a long life, and through him my purpose will succeed. After a life of suffering, he will again have joy; he will know that he did not suffer in vain. My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for his sake I will forgive them. [This is the GNT and it shifts the focus slightly that it was God's will he should suffer, but it is not God causing the suffering. This is much closer to the truth as it was God's will for Jesus to rescue humankind!]
- NKJV: **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief**. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. **He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many**, For He shall bear their iniquities. [This is the NKJV and again the translators bring in a certain view of God's law and God acting as the causal agent.]
- The SDA Bible commentary on this passage states: "The Lord was not delighted that His Servant (see on ch. 52:13), Messiah, should suffer, but rather, in view of the eternal welfare of men and the security of the universe, it was best for Him to suffer. "It pleased the Lord" in the sense that "it was the will of the Lord." Only thus could the plan of salvation succeed. The sufferings of Christ were part of the eternal plan. (Vol. 4, p.291). The Bible commentary is correct—it pleased God that Jesus in perfect accord with Himself and perfectly revealed the Father and perfectly fulfilled

His mission to heal humankind…God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). How one understands this passage depends entirely upon the law lens one uses. If we use the false law lens, the lie that God's law works like human law, rules made up and enforced with punishment then what conclusion do we draw from these texts? That God was pleased to inflict punishment on Jesus in order for Jesus to pay the penalty so God could resolve His anger and wrath and save mankind. If we use the true view of God's law as design law, then we realize humankind was in a terminal state, "dead in trespass and sin" and would die eternally unless God intervened through Christ to fix the situation. Thus, while God did not enjoy His Son's suffering, He was pleased for His Son to carry out His purpose to save humankind and the only way to do this was to partake of our human nature, confront the carnal nature and destroy it restoring the species human back to God's original ideal. It would be like a parent whose child was dying of leukemia having another child who was a bone marrow match, they would be pleased the healthy child donated bone marrow to save their sibling, and doing so would cause suffering to the donor and while the parents wouldn't enjoy the healthy child suffering, they would be pleased with it because of what it accomplished.

SABBATH

- lesson contains a quote by one of my favorite authors, C.S. Lewis, and he writes this concerning his grief over the tragic loss of his wife: "Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like.' "—A Grief Observed (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1961), pp. 6, 7.
- This week's teachers notes indicate one of the major themes or purposes of this week's lessons is to engage us in a profound study of relevant examples of suffering that will help us understand why God allows suffering in our experiences. Then it says, "The question is, just how hot can it get? How much heat is God willing to risk putting His people through in order to bring about His ultimate purpose of shaping us into the "image of His Son"? So, does God allow suffering in our lives? Does God cause us to suffer – does he bring the heat? Why would a loving God…a God who claims to be the very definition of love…allow his precious children to suffer? How do we understand why bad things happen and why suffering occurs – and why do some suffer and not others?
- A drunk driver runs across the line hits an 18 y/o and the teen dies, the drunk is not harmed. Why? Did God kill the teen? What does it mean that God didn't use divine power to save the teen?
- Two people have cancer, one survives the other doesn't, what does it mean? Did God love one more than the other? Did one have more faith than the other? Have you ever had the critic, the skeptic of God, bring this up as evidence that there is no God? Perhaps the classic argument was presented by Epicurus (341-270 BCE):

- Is God willing to prevent evil but unable to do so? In that case God is not omnipotent.
- Is God able to prevent evil but unwilling to do so? If so, God must be malevolent
- Is God both willing and able to prevent evil? Then why is there evil in the world? Epicurus goes on to say: "God is either willing to remove evil and cannot, or he can and is unwilling; or he is neither willing nor able to do so; or else he is both willing and able. If he is willing and not able, he must be weak, which cannot be affirmed of God. If he is able and not willing, he must be envious, which is also contrary to the nature of God. If he is neither willing nor able, he must be both envious and weak, and consequently not be God. If he is both willing and able—the only possibility that agrees with the nature of God—then where does evil come from? Or why does he not eliminate it?" How do you answer these questions? How would Martin Luther answer such a question? "This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him [God] merciful when he saves so few and damns so many, and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable, so that he seems, according to Erasmus, to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than love. If, then, I could by any means comprehend how this God can be merciful and just who displays so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith." (Luther, Bondage of the Will p. 62)

- Do you hear Luther's position? God is not understandable, in fact we shouldn't even try. Faith is believing God is good when all the evidence says He is not good. Sadly, this distorted view of God and this distorted view of faith continues to infect Christianity to this day and many people live with their minds darkened with such beliefs.
- What are the elements that Epicurus and Luther are missing? First and foremost—they have a flawed understanding about God's law and how it functions—God's laws are the design parameters upon which reality is constructed to operate. They are viewing the entire question through the lens of human law, imposed law, imperialism. Thus, for both of them, it is merely a question of power—for Epicurus if God is good then He uses power to impose His will to eradicate evil. And for Luther, God is assumed to be good and to be powerful and we are to accept that on faith and not ask questions—God is sovereign, so who are we to question it.
- So, how do you answer the critics…what key truths are foundational to understanding the question of suffering and evil in the world? First, we must understand God's design, His laws, His original intent for life and humanity; then we must understand the nature and character of sin, what it actually is, and finally the solution for it. All of those who struggle with this do so because on some level they don't see and understand what is actually happening, and are most often trying to understand through the false imposed law lens.
- What are God's design laws? (Here are a few)
  - Law of love—principle of giving (Air, water, food etc.)
  - Law of liberty—love can only exist in atmosphere of freedom
  - Law of worship—by beholding we become changed
  - Law of exertion—strength requires exertion

With these in mind what was God's original design for humankind?
• Was it not an existence of love and perfection?
• Can computers love? No, what is required to love?
• Free sentient beings
• Can love grow and exist without freedom?
• Did God create humankind in His image? Would that include the ability to love? Would that mean genuine freedom? Would genuine freedom mean freedom to disobey—to deviate from God's design?

- All suffering has its roots in the fact that this planet is out of harmony with God's design and His life-giving presence. The specific reasons why suffering and death occur are as follows:
  - Entropy, the slow gradual decay of order that occurs because we are disconnected from God's constant full presence and care. "in the day you eat of the Tree of Knowledge, dying you will die." (Gen 2:17) Aging and the sleep death occur because of this slow decay.
  - Genetic defects, mutations, and disease because of entropy and the slow decay of our original design.
  - Toxins and poisons because of mutations and alterations to God's design—the changes in nature and the manufacture of chemicals and products not original to God's creation.
  - Evil/selfish actions originating in people who are selfish—Cain killing Abel.
  - Evil/selfish actions inspired by Satan upon people to hurt others—Judas betraying Christ.
  - Satan and his agencies affecting nature and causing problems—first chapter of Job.
  - Good people acting to defend and protect—Abraham rescuing Lot.
  - Good people acting selfishly and doing bad things—David murdering Uriah—which occurs because of sin in the heart not yet removed.
  - People, whether good or evil, making mistakes with no intent to help or harm, slipping and falling, auto accident because of ice etc.
  - Humans acting on God's orders—kill all the people, women, children, cattle, etc. Why would God give such orders? Remember it was God's original plan to have the hornet and pestilence go before Israel and as the inhabitants abandoned the land the Israelites would have slowly occupied it with no killing. But the people chose to do it their way and so God gave the instructions, if you are going to kill then in order to minimize suffering, death, and traumatize the least number of people and bring peace in a world, wipe them all out and get it over with. Instead, we have had 4000+ years of continual fighting, violence and war scaring every generation living in that part of the world.
  - God acting to protect, lance, cauterize, keep open the avenue for Messiah—putting people in the grave/asleep, but they will arise again: Flood, first born of Egypt, platoons that came to arrest Elijah, etc.
- Saturday's lesson also asks this important question, "Why do you think God is willing to risk being misunderstood by those he wants to know Him and love Him? How much do you think God is

willing to be misunderstood in order to mold you into the image of Christ?" Remember the example of a parent whose child ignores their warnings and continues to play out in the street…so the parent "brings the [extreme] heat"…is that parent willing to risk being misunderstood by their child – who now thinks that the problem/danger with playing in traffic is mommy. How much is that parent willing to be misunderstood…to be the bad guy…if doing so keeps their child safe and alive and healthy until they're able to understand the laws of health and physics?

- So we're supposed to rejoice in suffering…be grateful for trials and tribulation and not be surprised when they happen…bless those who persecute us…and if this extreme heat indeed purifies our hearts and refines our characters as we have been learning every week this quarter, then rather than passively waiting…shouldn't we actually seek it out? Actively go looking for it? Did Christ, for the joy set before Him, seek out "extreme heat" in the form of persecution, suffering, and the agonizing physical/mental/spiritual ordeal before Him. Ms. White wrote these comments about Jesus' reaction to Peter when he tried to obstruct Christ's mission:
"Peter loved his Lord; but Jesus did not commend him for thus manifesting the desire to shield Him from suffering. Peter's words were not such as would be a help and solace to Jesus in the great trial before Him. **They were not in harmony with God's purpose of grace toward a lost world, nor with the lesson of self-sacrifice that Jesus had come to teach by His own example**. Peter did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ. The impression which his words would make was **directly opposed to that which Christ desired to make on the minds of His followers**, and the Saviour was moved to utter one of the sternest rebukes that ever fell from His lips…Satan was trying to discourage Jesus, and turn Him from His mission; and Peter, in his blind love, was giving voice to the temptation. The prince of evil was the author of the thought. His instigation was behind that impulsive appeal. In the wilderness, Satan had offered Christ the dominion of the world on condition of forsaking the path of humiliation and sacrifice. Now he was presenting the same temptation to the disciple of Christ. He was seeking to fix Peter's gaze upon the earthly glory, that he might not behold the cross to which Jesus desired to turn his eyes. And through Peter, Satan was again pressing the temptation upon Jesus. But the Savior heeded it not; His thought was for His disciple. Satan had interposed between Peter and his Master, **that the heart of the disciple might not be touched at the vision of Christ's humiliation for him. The words of Christ were spoken, not to Peter, but to the one who was trying to separate him from his Redeemer**. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." No longer interpose between Me and My erring servant. Let Me come face to face with Peter, that I may reveal to him the mystery of My love. It was to Peter a bitter lesson, and one which he learned but slowly [how many here are slow learners?], that the path of Christ on earth lay through agony and humiliation. The disciple shrank from fellowship with his Lord in suffering. **But in the heat of the furnace fire he was to learn its blessing**. Long afterward, when his active form was bowed with the burden of years and labors, he wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;

that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12, 13. {DA 415-6}

SUNDAY

Abraham in the Crucible

- Just last quarter – Lesson 8, we had a lesson that focused on Abraham's promised son and the unfathomable call to sacrifice his beloved son on Mount Moriah – a sacrifice that perhaps only God himself could understand. In terms of "heat", this certainly seems rather…well, extreme! Why did God issue such a difficult command?? Was it a test for God's understanding or for Abraham's?? Or perhaps for the onlooking universe?? Remember, Abraham had already tried to "fix" the infertility issue by fathering Ishmael, and thereby demonstrated a lack of faith in God's ability to fulfil His promise. Was this God's way of further purifying Abraham's character…removing the last vestiges of selfishness and self-reliance?? One of the founders of our church had this to say about Abraham's experience:
  "Again the Lord saw fit to test the faith of Abraham by a most fearful trial. If he had endured the first test, and had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in Sarah, and had not taken Hagar as his wife, **he would not have been subjected to the closest test that was ever required of man**." – Spiritual Gifts, vol 3, pg 106

  "**God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction** in order to prove them firm and true, and purge them from all unrighteousness. After Abraham and his son had borne **the severest test that could be imposed upon them**, God spoke through His angel unto Abraham: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." This great act of faith causes the character of Abraham to shine forth with remarkable luster. It forcibly illustrates his perfect confidence in the Lord, from whom he withheld nothing, not even his son by promise." -- Testimonies to the Church, vol 4, pg 19

- [OPTIONAL] "The wood was laid upon Isaac, the one to be offered, the father took the knife and the fire, and together they ascended toward the mountain summit, the young man silently wondering whence, so far from folds and flocks, the offering was to come. At last he spoke, "My father," "behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" **Oh, what a test was this!** How the endearing words, "my father," pierced Abraham's heart! Not yet—he could not tell him now. "My son," he said, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those three terrible days, could not

have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and **as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission**. He was a sharer in Abraham's faith, and he felt that he was honored in being called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten the father's grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar. And now the last words of love are spoken, the last tears are shed, the last embrace is given. The father lifts the knife to slay his son, when suddenly his arm is stayed. An angel of God calls to the patriarch out of heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" He quickly answers, "Here am I," And again the voice is heard, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." -- Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 152

MONDAY

Wayward Israel

- The story of Hosea has some powerful lessons to teach us. Hosea's situation is remarkable. His wife, Gomer, runs away and has children with other men. Though she is sexually unfaithful, God calls Hosea to take his wife back and fully show his love to her again. This story is meant as a parable about God and Israel. The Israelites had left God and were prostituting themselves spiritually to other gods, but God still loved them and wanted to show His love to them. **But just look at God's methods!**
- First, we risk not recognizing that God is at work. When Israel went through such hard and painful experiences, it might have been hard for them to recognize that their God was working for their salvation.
- Second, we risk misunderstanding God when He is at work. We may recognize that God is at work, but we don't like what He's doing. While we are feeling hurt and embarrassed, it is easy to blame God for being cruel, for not intervening, or for not caring. But God is always working to renew us through His covenant of love.

TUESDAY

Surviving Through Worship

- If God is giving permission for Job to suffer, what difference does it make whether God or Satan is personally inflicting the suffering? How can God be righteous and holy when He actively allows Satan to cause Job such pain? Is this situation a special case, or is it characteristic of the way God still deals with us today?

- It is possible to respond to such suffering in two ways. We can become bitter and angry, turning our backs on a God we believe to be cruel or nonexistent, or we can hang on to God more tightly. Job deals with his catastrophe by staying in God's presence and worshiping Him.

THURSDAY

Extreme Heat

- The bottom line? We live in a broken, sinful world in which we were *promised* that we would have trouble, guaranteed that we would have trials and tribulations, be "hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (1 Cor 4:8-9)…but also promised the *ALL* these things would work together for good – like a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap to purify us Levites. I'll close with a quote from Ms. White's *Testimonies to the Church, Volume 4*:
- Our heavenly Father sees the hearts of men, and **He knows their characters better than they themselves know them.** He sees that some have susceptibilities and powers, which, directed in the right channel, might be used to His glory to aid in the advancement of His work. **He puts these persons on trial and in His wise providence brings them into different positions and under a variety of circumstances, testing them that they may reveal what is in their hearts and the weak points in their characters which have been concealed from their own knowledge**. He gives them opportunities to correct these weaknesses, to polish off the rough corners of their natures, and to fit themselves for His service, that when He calls them to action they will be ready, and that angels of heaven may unite their labor with human effort in the work that must be done upon the earth. To men whom God designs shall fill responsible positions, **He in mercy reveals their hidden defects, that they may look within and examine critically the complicated emotions and exercises of their own hearts, and detect that which is wrong**; thus they may **modify their dispositions and refine their manners**. The Lord in His providence brings men where He can **test their moral powers and reveal their motives of action, that they may improve what is right in themselves and put away that which is wrong**. God would have His servants **become acquainted with the moral machinery of their own hearts**. In order to bring this about, He often **permits the fire of affliction to assail them that they may become purified**… {4T 84.4}

  The purification of the people of God cannot be accomplished without their suffering. God permits the fires of affliction to consume the dross, to separate the worthless from the valuable, that the pure metal may shine forth. He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. If we cannot bear these trials, **what will we do in the time of trouble**? If prosperity or adversity discover falseness, pride, or selfishness in our hearts, what shall we do when God tries every man's work as by fire, and lays bare the secrets of all hearts? {4T 85.1}

  True grace is willing to be tried; if we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is

serious indeed. God is the refiner and purifier of souls; in the heat of the furnace the dross is separated forever from the true silver and gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test. **He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal that it may reflect the radiance of His divine love**. God brings His people near Him by close, testing trials, by showing them their own weakness and inability, and by teaching them to lean upon Him as their only help and safeguard. **Then His object is accomplished**. They are prepared to be used in every emergency, to fill important positions of trust, and to accomplish the grand purposes for which their powers were given them. God takes men upon trial; He proves them on the right hand and on the left, and thus they are educated, trained, disciplined. **Jesus, our Redeemer, man's representative and head, endured this testing process**. He suffered more than we can be called upon to suffer…**God's work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory**. He will then accept their efforts; they will not move rashly, from impulse; they will not rush on and imperil the Lord's cause, being slaves to temptations and passions and followers of their own carnal minds set on fire by Satan. Oh, how fearfully is the cause of God marred by man's perverse will and unsubdued temper! How much suffering he brings upon himself by following his own headstrong passions! **God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves**. {4T 86.2}

- [OPTIONAL] "Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for this is a part of their discipline in the school of Christ, and it is essential in order that all dross may be purged away. The servant of God must endure with fortitude the attacks of the enemy, his grievous taunts, and must overcome the obstacles which Satan will place in his way...But if you keep looking up, not down at your difficulties, you will not faint in the way, **you will soon see Jesus reaching His hand to help you, and you will only have to give Him your hand in simple confidence, and let Him lead you**. As you become trustful, you will become hopeful... You will find help in Christ to **form a strong, symmetrical, beautiful character**. Satan cannot make of none effect the light shining forth from such a character... God has given us His best gift, even His only-begotten Son, to uplift, ennoble, and fit us, by putting on us His own perfection of character, for a home in His kingdom." (MYP 63-64)

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 6
Struggling With All Energy

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dear Come and Reason family,

Since the founding of our ministry in 2010, we have been actively praying that God would not only lead us in advancing the truth, but also open new avenues for us to share this life-changing message with ever-increasing numbers of people.

Our ministry has steadily grown over the past twelve years, and we have just purchased and are completing renovations on our broadcast studio, classroom, and office facility. As we are being positioned to create more materials to share, God has now opened an entirely new avenue for advancing the healing principles of His kingdom. Dr. Jennings has been nominated for and accepted the position of Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Lynchburg, Virginia.

The vision for this new position is for Dr. Jennings to lead the medical university in creating a world-class psychiatric residency training program that fully integrates Bible-based Christian principles with modern neuroscience and behavioral medicine. This training program will be a state-of-the-art, comprehensive, and holistic treatment program founded on a Christian worldview. It will not only train new physicians, but it will also become a template program to be replicated across the country and globe in like-minded Christian facilities, practices, and programs.

As you can see, this is an incredible opportunity to advance the gospel—pairing it perfectly with not just the healing arts, but specifically with mental healing in a biblically sound lifestyle program that leads people to harmonize with God's design laws for life and health.

Being at Liberty University will also provide Dr. Jennings with the opportunity to network with other like-minded Christians, increasing the speed at which new platforms to share the gospel and advance the principles of God's kingdom can be built.

Dr. Jennings will be closing his private practice in Chattanooga, and he and his wife, Christie, will be moving to Lynchburg to begin his new duties starting in mid-September. Dr. Jennings will continue to serve as president of Come and Reason Ministries and contribute weekly blogs, new sharing materials, and new lecture series. He will also continue to be involved in the Saturday morning livestream Bible studies and Q&A.

If you want to interact directly with Dr. Jennings, come to our new facility once it is complete; his livestream will be interactive in the studio. If you live outside the area, you will still be able to get the live broadcast as usual. Additionally, we will have a monthly potluck in our new

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

facility, and Dr. Jennings plans on attending in person on those dates.

We hope you share our vision to advance God's healing truth that this opportunity presents, because we absolutely need your continued prayers and support as Come and Reason Ministries moves through this transition. We value you as a vital part of our team, so we ask that you continue to lift us up in prayer, join us each week for our live class, and share our resources with your family and friends.

Sincerely,

Come and Reason Ministries Board and Team

Building update: The HVAC has been installed and we are back on schedule, hopefully for early September move in date. Keep us in your prayers.

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs, "A man and woman…" Does being a Christian help cope with trauma and loss?

Does prayer help?

What if one writes a computer program that has their computer pray for them each day would that help? Why or why not?

What if one has prayer beads they rub would that help?

What if one has a prayer wheel, with the prayer written on the wheel and they spin the wheel thinking every time the wheel turns a prayer ascends to heaven, would that help? Why or why not?

What is prayer and its purpose?

Does it matter to whom one prays?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Does it matter for what one prays?

Does it matter with what attitude one prays?

- After 9/11/2001 Univ. MI examined prayer and coping, those who prayed regularly had better psychological adjustment 1 year later than those who did not
- Univ MI different Study Muslim refugees of Kosovo and Bosnia
  - 60% of whom had PTSD
  - 77% of them had "negative" forms of prayer, such as praying their enemies "would pay for what they have done." In other words, prayers of vengeance.
- Muslims with positive prayers - high levels of optimism, hope and healthy adjustment
- Vengeance and anger-related prayer - reduced levels of optimism, hope and healthy adjustment (Journal of Personality Volume 73, Issue 3, p 763-792, June 2005)

So what makes the difference in a person's response to trauma and loss?

Does the view a person has about what is happening matter?

Does the view one holds about who God is, what sin is, God's response to the sin problem, the future, and God's trustworthiness have any impact?

If one is angry with God because of some trauma or loss, is it okay to yell at God and tell Him how angry you are, or would that be a sin?

If your child was angry at you for anything, the reason isn't important, but you love your child and you want to resolve the reason for the anger, what would you want your child to do? Would you want them to talk to you? What if they were really angry and too immature to control it and they either yell for a while or don't talk to you at all, what would you want them to do? Would you want them to come to you with their anger, their accusations, their attitude and tell you, even if they do it immaturely, as long as at some point they are willing to listen?

What does God want from us?

Why does God allow such terrible things to happen in this world? What is the alternative?

SUNDAY

Read the first two paragraphs, "Have you ever prayed…" What will God do for us and what will God not do for us?

Tell me who is responsible for the following, God, us, or both?

- Changing a sinner's heart from disloyalty to God to loyalty to God?
  - Can a sinner change their own heart?

  - Can God change a sinner's heart without the cooperation of the sinner?
  - Does God have the power to force a change of heart?
  - What happens to the individuality of the sinner if God forced a change of heart upon an unwilling person?
  - If we had the ability to brainwash someone, to force a change of mind or attitude through some form of technology, manipulation, chemicals, programming that would cause a person who was rebellious, had hostility toward us to become passive and compliant, should we? Why or why not? What would happen to that person if we forced such a change upon them? Will God do this?
- Whose is the source of truth?
- Are we the source of truth? Can we comprehend godly truth without the aid of the Holy Spirit?
- Do we have a responsibility to search for truth, honestly, with a desire to know it?
- Do we have a responsibility to share the truth as we understand it with others?
- Who is responsible to wrestle with conflicting ideas, to think, reason and ultimately comprehend the truth, and be persuaded by it and choose it?
- Who is responsible to act upon the truth once they have chosen what they believe to be the truth?
- Who is responsible for the power to carry out the actions of healthy living based upon the truth?

From where does the truth originate?
From where does the power to be victorious come?
From where does the choice to be victorious come?
When do we get the divine power to be victorious?

God reveals truth to us in ways we can understand and then leaves us free to decide to say yes and act upon the truth or not. It is when we choose the truth and act upon that we receive the power to succeed. But we don't get the power until we choose to apply the truth by action.

Any Bible examples?

> "Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away…" (Joshua 3:15-16 NIV84).

The waters in this story are real physical obstacles to achieving what God was directing them to accomplish and represent all the obstacles that interfere with fulfilling what God has called us to do. When we understand God's will, and step out in faith to be obedient in fulfilling what God has called us to do, it is then that God provides the power to succeed and parts the waters for our success.

Many people know God is calling them to some action, but misunderstanding this point they wait until a bridge has been built over the water in order to step out in faith. They know God wants them to cross the waters, so they get an engineering consult, start a construction company, begin a fund raiser, and

get a building project going that in fourteen years will result in a bridge to cross the waters that God would have parted had they stepped out in faith and allowed God to work.

Now, this is a metaphor, Solomon built a real temple that took over forty years with much preparation to build it, so of course there are times and places in which we do build real physical objects, but are there times when we need to be moving forward because God has called us to do so and instead we get derailed into planning out the human way forward?

Read third paragraph, "While the Holy Spirit…" This is a great point, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, brings us the truth about ourselves and our need for Jesus, but who decides whether we repent and respond to the truth or harden the heart and reject it?

But is the only truth the Holy Spirit brings about our own sin condition, or is there another truth that is linked to it that is integral to our repentance, and in fact, without this other truth, just bring the truth about our sin condition might cause us to harden our heart in rebellion?

What is the central issue in the war between Christ and Satan? Is the central issue in the great controversy the sin condition of human hearts, or is the sin condition of human hearts the result of that central issue?

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

What caused Adam and Eve to sin in the first place? Lies told about God that broke their trust in Him and resulted in their condition changing from loyal love to fear and selfishness. This is the terminal sin condition with which we are all born (Psalms 51:5).

So, yes, we need to know the truth of our terminal sin condition, but that truth must be presented in conjunction with another truth or we don't come to repentance, we instead slide deeper into rebellion by denying God, or by various forms of self-soothing or self-medicating away the conviction of sin and guilt, or by creating false theologies that give us a false legal security but function to undermine trust in God by setting up various barriers to protect us and hide us from Him, and what is that other truth? The truth about God Himself—as Paul wrote in Romans 2:4:

> "Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4 NIV84)

Genuine repentance is more than conviction of sin, it is also being restored to trust in God. If we don't come to the truth about God, but instead are convicted of our sinful state while also believing in an untrustworthy, punishing, arbitrary, unfair god who is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death then we undermine trust in God and lead people to deny God exists, or worship a false god.

What wins us to repentance is the truth about God that Jesus has revealed.

The lesson makes another excellent point about God not forcing the will. While God has the power to do so, He won't do so, why? Is it merely because of what Satan will say about Him? Is God held hostage by Satan's allegations? Or is it because there is a reality involved that would destroy what God is trying to save if God were to do this?

If God were to use power to force people to obey, then He would destroy their individuality and erase their identity and they would become programmed robots and only be imitations or simulations of who they were. The true individual would be destroyed and so would their ability to love.

Love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom, therefore God will never use power to force people, either directly by entering their heart and mind and making choices for them or by coercion and force externally applied.

God, like a loving parent, disciplines those He loves for the purpose of teaching, but God does not coerce. Just like loving parents who discipline their children, if the children insistent on growing up into rebellion, the parents eventually let them go, and sadly, so does God, why?

Does the truth that God will not coerce people into obedience have any impact upon the theologies we teach? Are there any ideas taught in Christianity that could sound like God is coercing?

What about the 3 angels' messages, could they be presented in such a way that it could misrepresent God and cause people to wrongly conclude that God is the type of being who says, you better worship me and in the legally right way I have commanded or else I will torment you with fire and brimstone to punish you for refusing to obey me?

How can we present the 3 angels' messages in way that doesn't misrepresent God? We have a magazine *The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels* that does just that. You can get a copy here, read it online, and if you want some to share and have a US postal address we will ship it free. These are also available in Australia and South Africa.

Do we find God thundering and sounding threatening throughout Scripture, not just in Revelation 14?

How do you understand such language? Can we explain it in a way that doesn't misrepresent God? What is the key? Design law!

Is there another being who, if given the opportunity, will take liberty from people, will coerce consciences, will compel obedience?

Does the Bible predict this will happen on a global scale before Christ returns? Yes, it is the beastly system of Revelation which is ultimately led by Satan.

And have we seen a recent warning presented to the entire world that the beast is rising? Have we recently seen the worldly system of justifying the coercion of consciences as a good and righteous thing to do? And have we seen many churches and church officials join with the state in coercing consciences? Where and when have we seen this warning to the world?

Before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, Jesus foretold there would be a warning sign, which was the armies of Rome surrounded the city, but then they briefly backed away. The Christians recognized that sign and fled the city and were not caught up in its destruction.

This is an object lesson for us. Jerusalem represents the beautiful land, the people of God, the righteous, who are caught up in the war and Satan uses his forces to try and destroy the people of God.

God worked through the Jewish nation to bring saving truths to the world, the inspired writers, the retaining and spreading of the Scriptures, the sanctuary message, a health message, the Sabbath, the looking forward to the advent of the Messiah. And from that group, that organization, came those people who accepted Jesus and took the gospel to the world. Yet, that organization rebelled against Jesus, rejected Him, did not see the warning signs in AD 70 and when Jerusalem was attacked its leaders and loyal adherents to that system were destroyed. The people of God did not side with the leadership of Jerusalem or Rome but left both.

We stand in a similar position, the King of the South (liberalism, godlessness) is attacking and the King of the North (religious imperialism) is rising up, a warning to the people of God went forth when the enemies of God, the enemies of liberty of conscience, circled the globe and then pulled back. What was that warning?

COVID mandates which have coerced the consciences of millions if not billions and were justified under the lie that they were necessary to save lives. Billions have believed these lies and as a result families and communities have been divided, millions, if not billions, have been harmed, deaths increased and did not decrease because of these mandates. Not only were the mandates morally and ethically wrong, they violated the medical and scientific laws of health.

We can never avoid the truth we can only delay the day we deal with it. The truth always comes out in the end, for those who couldn't see the medical, physiological truth about COVID for a variety of reasons, because the data wasn't uncovered yet, or it was obscured by lies and propaganda, the methods employed by those enforcing mandates revealed they were not working for the kingdom of God. They used lies, distortion, coercion, censoring, deplatforming, threats, intimidation, and refused open and honest discussion and exploration of evidence.

And millions have accepted and engaged in practices that are satanic in origin, including many in church leadership, just like the Jews 2000 years ago. Choosing to practice such methods under the justification of saving lives is conditioning people to betray God's principles and preparing hearts and minds for participating in the next big worldwide coercion of consciences.

The people of God are to recognize this warning and flee, not physically like the Christians fled Jerusalem 2000 years ago, but we are to cut out of our hearts, affections, loyalties and devotion the ties to the organizations and systems that practice such ungodly methods and establish our hearts and minds into loyalty to God and God's kingdom of truth, love, and liberty.

If you haven't watched my lecture on COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind, I encourage you to do so. You will see how millions were duped by the employment of Satan's methods of lies and fear to incite selfishness and silence the truth which would have set minds free. Sadly, many Christian groups and organizations failed to discern the deadly methods employed and joined with the governments of the world to deceive their members and practice methods of coercions, all the while accusing those who practiced God's methods of truth, love, and liberty of not loving others. It has been quite evil.

MONDAY

The lesson points out that Paul in Colossians describes struggling to share the gospel despite being empowered with the power of God, that despite receiving God's power it was exhausting. The lesson notes that it isn't an easy thing to be successful in this world even with God's empowerment.

The lesson then goes on to say, "This is important to remember, because we live in a world in which we want more and more with less and less effort."

First question—is it a godly principle that we are to apply ourselves, that we are to work, including working for God and be workers in our own salvation?

> "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13 NIV84).

Do we do this work by ourselves? Does God work out our individual salvation by Himself? No, it is a cooperative effort, why? To retain our individuality. What God wants requires our active work, effort, engagement in a living trust or faith relationship with Him in which we choose and He leads and empowers.

Is this work, which God calls us to do, restricted to emotional mental work or does it include actual physical activity as well, not necessarily for a paycheck, but useful labor to achieve things in the real world?

What happens to people who do not apply themselves to achieve usefulness in this world? What happens to their abilities, talents, and character?

What method would Satan employ, if he could, that would claim to be helping people but would actually be violating God's design, laws, and purposes and result in destroying people?

What about replacing actions that relieve burdens from others purporting to be loving support but which function to relieve burdens and responsibilities from others that they, with diligent effort and real struggle, could accomplish?

What happens to a person if we give to people what they could accomplish for themselves? Will they develop, grow, mature, overcome or get weaker, more enfeebled, and less capable, ultimately becoming more dependent upon others? Is this what God wants for us?

Satan's lie is that love gives to people things without thought, just to give, but what is given interferes with their application of their own God-given abilities and results in their failure to develop themselves to the fullest. Can we think of any practices, policies, and philosophies that do this today?

Why would human beings go along with this? Some people do this purposely, strategically, why? They want to create a dependency class that relies on them and thereby create a predictable voting block for their own political power.

Let me give you an example of this manipulation of people to create an emotional issue that results in creating a reliable voting block to support a particular political faction. Yet, those garnering the support of the voters never actually resolve the issue because if it is resolved they lose the motivation to get people to vote for them.

Consider the recent Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade. We are not talking in here about the morality of abortion, what we are talking about is the legal and political landscape and why this issue has never been resolved in our country and how it is used to manipulate people.

In the USA all legal authority for all government institutions comes from the Constitution. The Constitution establishes the legal framework for the legislative, judicial, and administrative branches of the government.

One of the Supreme Court's jobs in this regard is to monitor and enforce what is inside the legal framework or bounds of what the Constitution authorizes. They act like referees in a football game, ruling whether the player is in bounds or out of bounds. The referee doesn't set the boundary lines, they only rule whether a player has stepped out of bounds or remained in bounds. Likewise, the Supreme Court doesn't set the boundaries, the Constitution does. The Supreme Court rules whether the other players in government, Congress, the President etc. are acting within the bounds of the Constitution or have stepped out of bounds. If they step out of bounds then the Supreme Court rules—unconstitutional, outside the bounds of what the Constitution authorizes and strikes down the action.

For instance, the Constitution authorizes as a right to all citizens the free exercise of one's religion. If Congress were to pass a law that mandated all US citizens must be baptized into a Christian church the Supreme Court would rightly rule that that law is outside the boundary of the Constitution and would strike it down.

But, Congress is free to pass almost any law within the framework of the bounds of the US Constitution. For instance, nowhere in the Constitution does that document give citizens a right to government provided healthcare. However, Congress can pass a law to provide it, which it has done and that is Medicare and Medicaid. And the Supreme Court has found this to be constitutional.

Now the question of abortion. Nowhere does the Constitution give or deny this right, but Congress has always had the authority to pass a federal law to make abortions legal or illegal in this country. Now think about it, why haven't they?

Because there are political parties that wants to have reliable emotional issues that will create large loyal voting blocks to keep them in power. So the political parties purposely and strategically decide NOT to use the Constitutional powers they have to pass a federal law to either provide this as a legal right or make it illegal. If Congress did act in this way, then the issue would be decided and the parties would lose a huge voting block of people. If you are a pro-choice person who supports the pro-choice party, you should ask, since the Roe v Wade decision back in the 1970s, has the pro-choice party ever been in simultaneous control of the House, the Senate and the Presidency and at times with super majorities? Yes, multiple times. Has the issue of abortion been under threat before? Yes, multiple times, and yet this party never used its Constitutional power to put this issue to legislative and legal rest, but instead kept it as a perpetual issue for every presidential election—be afraid, if the next president gets elected isn't of our party he may appoint an justice that will overturn Roe v. Wade….

And thus a perfect political tool to manipulate the masses to create a reliable and emotional voting block to keep themselves empowered.

I am not advocating for or against any political party, I am simply exposing manipulation of minds. I recognize all political parties as manipulative and exploitive and God's kingdom is not of this world. So please don't think because I exposed this political intrigue that I am taking political sides, I am not. I am advocating for leaving political parties behind and aligning with the kingdom of God.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "One of the greatest…" There are some really good points in this paragraph, in fact many good things in this week's lesson.

God created us to experience emotions, to be feeling beings, but our feelings are not to be in charge of us.

The mature person makes decisions based on truth, on understanding reality as God designed it, in harmony with God's laws, principles, purposes and will despite how it feels.

- Daniel and the lion's den
- Job staying faithful despite his grief
- Jesus in Gethsemane

James 1 tells us that we are tempted by our feelings.

Does that mean we should ignore our feelings? Absolutely not, our feelings are information to be processed through our higher faculties of reason and conscience and we choose what we understand is right despite what we are feeling in the moment.

The immature, the unhealthy, have habituated themselves to make decisions in the moment that feels best even when they know it is not the best. The mature, have grown up in their relationship with God to be able to stand firm for what is right even when it doesn't feel good.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points to Jesus words:

> "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." (Matthew 5:29 NIV84).

Then asks, "would you call them radical?"

Is Jesus being literal or using this as an object lesson about the value of the soul over the value of the body, of the value of eternal life over the value of temporal life?

One of Satan's tricks is to get us to value the body and what feels good physically over disciplining the body for the development of the character and the healing of the soul.

Another trick of Satan is to get people to value temporal life, the health of the body over eternal life:

- Daniel and the lion's den
- The three worthies on the plain of Dura
- Job and his physical suffering
- Jesus and His crucifixion
- All the martyrs
- COVID and the trap of valuing temporal life over eternal life, of willingness some to corrupt their characters by using coercive methods on others under the justification that it is to save lives, but at what cost? The cost of eternal life for those who harden their hearts in the methods of God's enemy.

THURSDAY

Why do we need to persevere? Who benefits from our perseverance?

Was Job persevering because He needed to work out some rebellion in his own heart?

What other option did Job have than to persevere?

If any of us are in union with God, like Job, and we are suffering some trial, like Job, what other option is there to perseverance?

If we give in we might get momentary temporal relief, but will we experience more peace, more joy, more happiness, or will we end up more miserable, discouraged, and hopeless? Why or why not?

Our choices in life are always between two options, what is healthy and what is unhealthy, what is true and what is false, what is harmony with God's design laws and what is a violation of God's design laws, what is based on trust in God and what is based on distrust in God. And health only is possible in harmony with the laws of health, which means in harmony with God!

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 7
Indestructible Hope

by Tim Jennings (announcement last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse: “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:5 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

What is hope?
- The feeling of positive expectation of something desired?
- Looking forward with desire and reasonable confidence?

What do you hope for?
In what or whom to you place your hope?

As Christians, what are we to hope for?

Where are we to place our hope?

What does the memory verse about God’s love and the Holy Spirit have to do with our hope?

Let’s read the memory verse about hope in its larger context starting back in Romans chapter four verse 18 and going through chapter five verse eleven from *The Remedy:*

> In the face of human opinion and conventional wisdom, Abraham placed his hope and trust in God and thus became the father of many ethnic groups, just as God told him: "Your descendants will be numerous." [19] Without doubting God for a moment, he accepted it in the reality that he was one hundred years old and his ability to procreate was severely limited, and Sarah had gone through menopause and was beyond child bearing years. [20] Even though in human understanding the promise seemed hopeless, Abraham did not waver in his confidence in God, but praised God as he [21] realized that God was able to miraculously fulfill the promise. [22] This unwavering trust in God, in the face of scientific evidence to the contrary, was recognized as righteousness because this trust replaced distrust and opened Abraham's mind to receive the endowment of a new heart, right motives, and Christlike principles established by God's re-creative power. [23] This record of his "trust being recognized as righteousness" is not written merely for Abraham, [24] but for everyone who trusts in God. Everyone who trusts in the God who raised Jesus from the dead is recognized as righteous because through trust they receive the endowment of a perfect heart and have new motives created within, and their distrust of God disappears. [25] Because our minds were infected by distrust of God, and our

condition was terminal, Jesus was given up to experience death in order to procure the Remedy. Having achieved God's purpose, he was raised to life, and now distributes this Remedy to completely restore us into perfect harmony with him.

5:1 Therefore, if our minds and hearts have been set right through trust, we are at peace with God through the Remedy achieved by our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 It is through Jesus that we know the truth about God and are won back to trust, and thus open our minds to experience God's gracious healing power. Our joy is found in the hope of full restoration into beings possessing Godlike character. 3 Because of this, we rejoice in our trials and afflictions, for we know that trials bring to light our shortcomings and defects of character. 4 If we persevere, choosing God's methods, the defects are removed and character is purified, and pure character increases our hope for God's kingdom. 5 And our hope will not be disappointed, because God pours out his love into our hearts and thereby matures, ennobles, and restores us into his image by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given to us.

6 You see, at the exact moment it was needed–when we were infected with distrust, rebelling against God, and our condition was terminal–Christ died to restore trust and cure the terminally ill. 7 Very rarely will someone die for a healthy person, though this might sometimes happen; 8 but God the Father demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were dying and in rebellion against him, Christ died to restore trust and cure sinfulness in order to heal us and bring us back to unity with God.

9 Now that we have been won back to trust, cleansed in mind and set right with God by all that Christ accomplished at the cross, it is ridiculous to think that God would let us go! 10 For since–while we distrusted God and fought against him in every way–his Son died to win us back to trust and friendship with himself and to cure our rebellious hearts, how much more, having won us back to trust and friendship, will God heal all the damage caused to us while we were in rebellion against him! 11 And even better still, having experienced this healing of mind and heart, we are overjoyed because God, through Jesus, has made us his friends.

Read second paragraph, “In one of his books…” The lion in the book is supposed to represent Jesus, what do you think of this idea that Jesus “is not safe, but he is good”?

C.S. Lewis has written so many wonderful things and advanced the gospel to millions if not billions. I have personally been blessed by his writings and have grown in my own journey with God from reading what he has written.

So I want to ask, is there any way you can think of that it is true that Jesus is not safe? I couldn’t think of one way this is true, to me this is a vestige idea from coming out of the Dark Ages understanding of God and God’s law, the idea that God’s law is imposed rules like humans make and need external enforcement. But perhaps I am not understanding what he means by this statement and so, can you think of some way in which Jesus is not safe?

If a person was dying of a terminal disease and there was the most compassionate a loving doctor who had a cure that worked 100% of the time for all who put themselves under the care of the doctor and followed the doctor’s instructions, would anyone say of the doctor “he is not safe, but he is good”?

If a person with a terminal condition refused the doctor's treatment, does the doctor become their enemy? If a patient doesn't like the taste of the medicine so they cheat and throw the medicine, given by the doctor, away and substitute their own which tastes good to them—will the doctor use power to harm them? What happens? Can God save cheats?

Does the doctor use any active means to injure, harm, or kill the dying patient who refuses treatment or cheats?

From where does death from sin come? Does it come from God? Does the Bible teach that sin does not harm or cause death, that sin is only legal rule breaking for which God is required to harm and kill? Is God the source of death and all sinners could live eternally in sin if God could just get over His need to kill?

No, the Bible is clear, sin, which breaks God's design laws for life and severs our connection with God, who is the source of life, is the cause of death.

- The wages of sin is death Romans 6:23
- Sin when full grown brings forth death James 1:15
- Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8

So where does this idea come that Jesus is not safe but He is good? It comes from believing God's law is like human law, made up rules that require external enforcement and thus Jesus isn't safe because He will enforce the rules and punish the rule breakers, but He is good because He only punishes those who deserve it and will forgive those who ask.

But this view of God is Satan's, it makes God out to be authoritarian and sin to be legal, and safety is found only in external rule enforcement and inflicted punishments, which coerce and undermine freedom and destroy love and individuality. God wants our love, trust, loyalty, friendship and devotion and this can only be achieved by the methods of God, truth, love and freedom. Thus the Bible teaches "not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord" Zech 4:6.

The Spirit works via truth and love in absolute freedom, gently, through persuasion, not coercion, because God wants to preserve and ennoble your individuality, not dominate and control you.

Read last paragraph, "Even though…" This is well said, except for the inference that God needs to be "safe." God is absolutely safe. God is the source of life, health, goodness, righteousness, holiness. In God there is no evil, no sin, no shadow of turning, no cruelty, no disease, no unkindness, no wickedness, no disloyalty, no untrustworthiness, no impatience, no foolishness, no ignorance, no immaturity. In God there is perfection of all things good, love, truth, liberty, kindness, patience, virtue, righteousness. **God is 100% and absolutely safe at all times**.

What is not safe is sin, rebellion, and disharmony with God and God's design laws for life. Sin is absolutely deadly; sin harms, sin hurts, sin injures, sin causes pain, suffering and death.

So erase completely anything in your heart, mind, and beliefs that suggests or infers in anyway that God is not safe. God is the only place of safety.

- If God is for us who can be against us (Romans 8:31)
- If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent (Psalms 91:9-10 NIV84).
- The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe (Proverbs 18:10 NIV84).
- Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me (Psalms 23:4 NIV84).

God is not the source of evil. God protects us from all evil. We only have safety with Jesus, with God. God is always safe.

But the idea that God is not safe and our desire to feel safe is one of the factors that leads to so much bad theology, teachings designed to hide us and protect us from God because we don't believe He is safe. Such things like needing someone between us and God to plead to God so God won't kill us, or to offer God a sacrifice of human blood to pay God off so God won't kill us, or to cover us with some blinder system, some robe or cosmic screen that causes the Father to see as righteousness when in reality we are unrighteous etc. etc. etc.

We must return to what Jesus taught that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, they are One! And no one had to stand between Jesus and Judas to protect Judas from Jesus. Jesus revealed by acts and deeds, even forgiving His crucifiers, that God is not a threat to us, God is not a danger to us, God is not the source of pain and death. What is a threat is sin and Satan and everything that separates us from God, including ideas that we teach in the church that keep us hiding from God rather than running to Him like king David and praying "search me and see the wicked way in me create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me."

But the rest of this paragraph is excellent. Our human perspective is narrow, limited, and our infinite God who sees through time, who sees all the variables and cascading consequences of actions will do things that from our perspective may seem unpredictable and even not make sense to us. But we can be certain God's actions are always for our good, always in harmony with love and trust and to reach the most people for salvation.

Can you think of some examples of where God has done something that was unpredictable?

- God calls Moses to go back to Egypt—did Moses see that coming?
- God responds to Adam's sin by promising Jesus as our Savior did the angels or anyone see that coming?
- God allowed Joseph to be sold as a slave in order to elevate Joseph to Prime Minister—did Joseph's brothers see that coming?

Any examples in your own life?

- This ministry—we didn't see how God was going to work to establish and grow this ministry
- Our call to go to Liberty University. We certainly didn't see that coming. But we can see God leading and are aware of amazing possibilities for reaching people with the truths of God's kingdom for the healing of hearts and minds.

Since we are talking about God pouring love into our hearts and this is our hope. Let's consider 1John 4:16-18 and the three angels' messages.

> "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **eternal gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. [7] He said in a loud voice, "**Fear God** and give him glory, because the hour of his **judgment** has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."
> [8] A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."
> [9] A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, [10] he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. [11] And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." [12] This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus" (Revelation 14:6–12 NIV84).

Now consider what we just read and harmonize it with what John, the same author of Revelation, inspired by the same Holy Spirit wrote in 1John 4:16-18:

> "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. [17] In this way, **love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him**. [18] **There is no fear in love**. **But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love**" (1 Jn 4:16–18 NIV84).

- What is the relationship between these two texts?
- How are we to fear God but then if we have God's love in our hearts we will have no fear?
- What is the relationship between fearing God and judgment and what is this confidence of love we are to have on the day of judgment?
- What is the relationship to this and giving God glory?
- What about fear having to do with punishment?
- If we have love and it drives out fear what is the relationship with punishment?
- When we think of punishment for sin, what comes to mind?
- Does punishment typically make one feel safe or incite fear?
- Does God punish and if so are we to be afraid of the punishment of God and if so how can we be perfected in love?

- But if we have fear as we face the judgment and fear the punishment for sin we are not made perfect in love, what is going on?
- Does the text say we are made legally perfect by a full and complete sacrifice to the heavenly magistrate so in the judgment we are declared righteous even though we are not? No, the text says we are made perfect in love, what does this mean?
- What day of judgment?
- Do we not have fear in the day of judgment because we have finally replaced imposed law with design law and we have finally judged God to be right, just as Paul in Romans 3:4 said needs to happen. And when we judge God to be righteous, holy, good, and understand His laws as design laws we trust Him, open the heart and experience His transforming power and are changed to be like Him, just as John is saying we don't fear because in this world we have become like Him!

Do you see the plan of God is to restore us to love and trust, to remove sinfulness from our inmost being, to set us right in heart and mind with God, to bring us into unity at-one-ment with God, to purify us, to cleanse His bride and bring us into eternal oneness with Him, i.e. Christ the Bridegroom weds His bride after He purifies her and makes her righteous.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the Big Picture and references Revelation 12:7-9 and Romans 8:22, let's look at those and ask, what is the big picture ideas of these two passages that can help us understand what is happening in the world?

> And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

What is the big picture idea here? How does it help us with difficulties in this world today? Does it give us hope or discouragement?

What kind of war is this?

Why was Satan cast out to the earth, why not some other planet?

Who gave Satan the ability to act on planet earth?

What about Romans 8:22?

> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Romans 8:22 NIV84).

What is the big picture idea here? How do we apply it to what we see in the world today?

Is there sickness and defects and pain in the world today because there is sin in the world? Are all such problems a result of individual sin or caused by acts of sin?

Why is there disease, aging, death, decay, poisonous plants, ferocious beasts in the world today? From where did all of this come?

Did God create plants with thorns and plants that are toxic to humans, poisonous plants?

Did God create animals that kill each other for food? From where did they come?

And before Christ returns and God eliminates all sin, sickness, disease and death, do things on earth get better or worse? Why?

Does this give us hope or undermine hope?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Oswald Chambers…" Just like C.S. Lewis, Oswald Chambers has written incredible things about God and dedicated his life to spreading the gospel, and millions if not billions have been blessed by his works. I also have found beautiful truths about God from reading some of Oswald Chambers writings.

But I question this particular idea. I wish he were here so I could ask him what he meant, for perhaps he means something I don't comprehend. But the way I am understanding these two sentences, it just doesn't quite add up for me.

Yes, God absolutely reveals Himself to us in all kinds of ways:

- In Scripture
- In the life of Jesus
- In nature and science
- In music
- In every act of kindness, mercy, compassion and love
- In the quiet moments when the Spirit moves upon our hearts
- In the providences of life

But does that mean that God will not reveal His plans to us? Hmmm…consider these Bible verses:

- "The Sovereign LORD never does anything without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets" (Amos 3:7 GNT).
- "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He" (John 13:19 NIV84).
- "I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe" (John 14:29 NIV84).

Has God revealed through multiple Bible promises what He was going to do before He did it—sending the promised Messiah, bringing the Babylonians and the 70 year captivity and then having Israel set free to return and so much more, the various prophecies of Daniel etc.?

Has He told us of the second coming and an earth made new? Is He going to do it?

So, I am not sure what Oswald Chambers meant here, perhaps he meant that God doesn't spell out all the little details of where and how He is going to act in our lives because God, like a loving parent, sometimes wants to surprise us and see the smile, joy, and excitement on our faces when He blesses us with something He didn't tell us beforehand.

The lesson focuses on Job's struggles and his questions and the questions of Job's friends, then the lesson points out that God asks Job 60 questions which distinguish God as the infinite Creator and Job as a creature. Such question as:

> "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand" (Job 38:4 NIV84).

And

> "Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion?" (Job 38:31 NIV84).

Why do you think God asked Job such a long list of questions that made it clear God was the infinite Creator and Job, as a created being, was limited in both his ability and understanding?

Consider what the lesson suggests in the fifth paragraph, "God never…" Do you agree with this conclusion, that because God is the infinite Creator "Job certainly does not need any answers"?

If God was going to win the war with might and power and not give answers, couldn't He have done that right in heaven and there would have been no need for this world to fall into sin? Couldn't He have just punished Lucifer from the beginning and exercised His might to force compliance, if that was what He was going to do?

But is that the way God wins? Why or why not?

And what about the idea that the need for explanation has been eclipsed by overwhelming might, power, and magnificence, is this what God wants? Is this how He wins the war?

Did Jesus use such methods when He was on earth? Could Jesus have wowed His audiences with great displays of power and might and wealth and pomp? Did He? Why not? What did Jesus want to be the only thing that attracted His followers to Him? The beauty of heavenly truth! Why?

Because it is a battle for hearts and minds and every person MUST be fully persuaded in their own mind, so settled into the truth about God, His methods, principles and laws that nothing can shake us from God.

Satan doesn't have truth and love, but Satan does have more power than we do. Satan can wow, mesmerize, intimidate, demonstrate great light shows, mysteries, pomp, and wealth. Satan showed Jesus all the wealth of the nations of the world and offered them to Him, but God doesn't win hearts this way.

God wins hearts by presenting truth in love and leaving us free. The war is not over might and power, but over God's character and trustworthiness in the use of His infinite might and power. God absolutely invites our questions, "Come let us reason together…"

So, what was the purpose of this long list of questions to Job? It was NOT to shut Job down, to stop Job's questions, but it WAS the answer to Job's questions. God was leading Job by these questions to realize that there are perspectives, issues, possibilities that Job had not considered, that there is more going on that just earth, that an entire universe is involved, including the angels in heaven. God was, through these questions, opening Job's mind to larger realities Job had never considered and thus Job is silenced by insight, by truths that were stunning, awe-inspiring, and incredible. These questions were not presented to intimidate Job but to ennoble and enlighten him. It is really sad that God's magnificent patience in talking with Job and asking these questions is presented by some to teach exactly the opposite of what God actually did for Job.

God's actions in asking these questions caused thinking, questioning, contemplating deeper truths and thus opened Job's mind which is unlike certain religious institutions that build grand cathedrals and demonstrate much pomp and mystical ceremonies that are designed to intimidate and shut down thinking and reasoning.

TUESDAY

The lesson points to one of the most tender, encouraging, comforting and beautiful passages in Scripture, one that at times in my life has brought comfort and encouragement to me. Isaiah 41:13:

> "For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you" (Isaiah 41:13 NIV84).

Have you ever needed God to take your hand and help you?

What does this perspective mean to you?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points us to Israel's captivity in Babylon and that despite their captivity God still had a plan for them.

The Bible records these events not only as historical facts, but as lessons, as teaching illustrations to teach us the larger reality of the sin problem and God's solution for it.

- Why was Israel taken captive in Babylon? Because they were unfaithful to God and worshipped false God's. What is the spiritual lesson? What does Babylon represent?
- What happens to our hearts and minds if we reject God and His law?
- Will our hearts and minds be taken captive?
- Why did God allow them to be taken captive by Babylon?
- Why does God allow our hearts and minds to be taken captive if we reject Him and choose sin?
- Did God forget them and abandon them in Babylon?
- Does God forget us and abandon us even if we end up enslaved by some sin?

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 137 where the Babylonians were asking the captives to sing songs about their homeland, but they couldn't do it and this psalm has one of the most difficult passages in Scripture.

Let's read this from the NIV and consider what it is saying, then we will read it from *The Remedy*:

> By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.
> 2 There on the poplars we hung our harps,
> 3 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
> 4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?
> 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.
> 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem
> 7 Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"
> 8 O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us—
> 9 he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks. (Ps 137:1–9 NIV84).

What does it mean? We have a Bible verse that tells us happy is the one who takes their enemy's babies and smashes them against the rocks. Should we start a religious campaign to put this into practice?

Does this sound right to you or does it sound in some way contradictory to what Jesus taught?

Here it is from *The Remedy:*

> 1 By the rivers of Babylon, as captives in this selfish world, we wept
> when we remembered Zion — God's fortress of spiritual health and wellness.
> 2 There on the willows we hung our harps
> 3 while our captors told us to sing: they demanded songs of happiness and joy; they said, "Sing us a song of health about Zion!"
> 4 How can our lives be songs revealing God's character of love
> while our hearts are held captive to this selfish world?
> 5 If I forget the truth about you, O Jerusalem — the center of God's healing plan — may I write no more music.
> 6 May I sing no more songs, if they are not about you;
> if they do not teach God's healing plan centered in you, O Jerusalem,
> as my highest joy.
> 7 Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did the day Jerusalem — your spiritual treatment center — fell? They shouted, "Tear it down, tear it down to the ground!"
> 8 O people of Babylon, who cling to selfishness, you are doomed to destruction! Happy are those who are finished with you, just as you deserve; who have weaned themselves from you.
> 9 Happy are they who take your children to fall upon the Rock and be broken.

THURSDAY

The lesson speaks of God's discipline and point out that in the Greek the word for discipline was the most basic word for "education."

Are discipline and punishment the same?

What is the difference?

Does the motive make a difference?

What is the goal of discipline?

What is the goal of punishment?

Should we fear discipline? What about punishment? Do we remember that in love there is no fear, because fear has to do with punishment?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dear Come and Reason family,

Since the founding of our ministry in 2010, we have been actively praying that God would not only lead us in advancing the truth, but also open new avenues for us to share this life-changing message with ever-increasing numbers of people.

Our ministry has steadily grown over the past twelve years, and we have just purchased and are completing renovations on our broadcast studio, classroom, and office facility. As we are being positioned to create more materials to share, God has now opened an entirely new avenue for advancing the healing principles of His kingdom. Dr. Jennings has been nominated for and accepted the position of Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Lynchburg, Virginia.

The vision for this new position is for Dr. Jennings to lead the medical university in creating a world-class psychiatric residency training program that fully integrates Bible-based Christian principles with modern neuroscience and behavioral medicine. This training program will be a state-of-the-art, comprehensive, and holistic treatment program founded on a Christian worldview. It will not only train new physicians, but it will also become a template program to be replicated across the country and globe in like-minded Christian facilities, practices, and programs.

As you can see, this is an incredible opportunity to advance the gospel—pairing it perfectly with not just the healing arts, but specifically with mental healing in a biblically sound lifestyle program that leads people to harmonize with God's design laws for life and health.

Being at Liberty University will also provide Dr. Jennings with the opportunity to network with other like-minded Christians, increasing the speed at which new platforms to share the gospel and advance the principles of God's kingdom can be built.

Dr. Jennings will be closing his private practice in Chattanooga, and he and his wife, Christie, will be moving to Lynchburg to begin his new duties starting in mid-September. Dr. Jennings will continue to serve as president of Come and Reason Ministries and contribute weekly blogs, new sharing materials, and new lecture series. He will also continue to be involved in the Saturday morning livestream Bible studies and Q&A.

If you want to interact directly with Dr. Jennings, come to our new facility once it is complete; his livestream will be interactive in the studio. If you live outside the area, you will still be able to get the live broadcast as usual. Additionally, we will have a monthly potluck in our new facility, and Dr. Jennings plans on attending in person on those dates.

We hope you share our vision to advance God's healing truth that this opportunity presents, because we absolutely need your continued prayers and support as Come and Reason

Ministries moves through this transition. We value you as a vital part of our team, so we ask that you continue to lift us up in prayer, join us each week for our live class, and share our resources with your family and friends.

Sincerely,

Come and Reason Ministries Board and Team

Building update: The HVAC has been installed and we are back on schedule, hopefully for early September move in date. Keep us in your prayers.

Dr. Jennings presentation at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind, is available at https://odysee.com/@ComeAndReason:4/CovidAndManipulationOfYourMind_UnitedForHealthcareSummit_TimJennings_20220715_1080p30:b

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 8
Seeing the Invisible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson asks, "How can we be sure about what we do not see?"

- Do you have any confidence or faith that radio waves exist? Why?
- Do you have any confidence or faith that radiation is real? Why?

Upon what have you based your faith in the existence of these things you cannot see?

What about our faith in God? Is there evidence for the existence of God? What evidence?

> since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20 NIV84).

What evidence is there from nature of God's eternal power and existence?

- The complexity of life itself
- The testable premises of life (complexity never happens randomly, it requires the input of an intelligence; life never comes from non-living matter, only from living organisms)
- The testable laws upon which life is built are fine tuned to sustain life and if any single one of them were to be changed in the slightest life as we know could not exist
- The testable moral laws, like the law of love, liberty, truth, exertion, restoration etc.
- The coded information in the DNA and RNA of all living organisms. There is no naturalistic explanation for information coding itself—and all thinking persons know this.

Thus, those who continue to promote godless theories of existence are the ones who operate outside objective reality, who deny evidence, and who advance belief systems that are superstitious, and require the suspension of reason.

But the delusion of godless evolution is so deeply imbedded into the accepted orthodoxy of modern education and science that it is almost never questioned.

The people who believe and teach this are blind guides leading more blind people to beliefs based on claims and proclamations that require the rejection of objective evidence. And it is this same type of denial of evidence, of rejection of design laws, of accepting authority of office, of position, of credentials, that governed the Dark Ages church in its abuses of people and which has been behind the entire COVID mandates and human rights abuses and exploitation. And you see the same hostile

response that Reformers received from the Dark Ages church leveled against the those calling for truth in regard to the COVID and godless evolution misinformation.

In addition to the evidence of God built into the created order, we also have Scripture with its revelation of God, including God's foreknowledge evidenced in prophecy; the character of God revealed most clearly in the life of Jesus; and the plan of salvation.

And, we also can add to this our personal life experiences with God, harmonizing all three science, Scripture, and experience leads to solid reality based understanding of truth and the truth leads us back to our infinite God of love who values nothing higher than the freedom of His intelligent creatures that our loyalty to Him may be freely given.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "If God really loved me…" Have you ever thought this? Have you known people who have?

What is the problem with this type of thinking? What does it reveal?

It reveals that the person who says this doesn't truly know the heart of God and how much God loves them. If they did, then in trying circumstances they would say something like, "I know God loves me, but I just don't know why this is happening, why He is allowing this. It doesn't make sense." That is exactly how Job thought when he suffered at Satan's hand.

That is a right and reasonable question anyone might ask in our finite existence, even for those who do know God and know that God loves them. We even hear and echo of such a question by Jesus on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" But Jesus never questioned God's love for Him.

But what does questioning God's love for us often lead to? Could it lead to other questions, like, "What sin did I commit that God is punishing me?"

Read third paragraph, "In Romans 8:32…" Do you like this rendering in *The Message?* It is very nicely done.

What is your answer to the lesson's question, "How could we possible think that God would send Jesus to die for us and then turn mean and stingy?"

Could it have anything to do with why we believe Jesus died for us?

Could the law lens we explain Jesus' death through impact how we see God?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The Roman church became infected with the Roman view of God's law, the idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require the rule-giver to use power to punish and enforce rule-breaking. In this false law model, God becomes the source of suffering and death inflicted as punishment for sin upon sinners and thus Jesus' death is presented as a means to persuade God, appease God, propitiate God, influence God, legally pay God or God's law so that the ruler won't use power to torture and kill us.

Here are some quotations from various religious traditions documenting that our understanding of God has become infected with the human law model—and these statements document very clearly why people think that God sent Jesus but is still mean and stingy:

- What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? … Scripture teaches only that Christ became a 'propitiation,' a 'sin offering,' or a 'sacrifice' for sins...Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, **could offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath** against the sins of mankind… Anger against sin shows the personal side of God, for sin is a personal offense against him… **God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased** in order to offer a personal forgiveness. In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, **the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ**. (Robert Sungenis, Founder and President of Catholic Apologetics International Publishing: Not By Faith Alone (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), pp. 107-108.)

- We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, **propitiating the Father by paying for our sins** and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel. (A Call to Evangelical Unity," Christianity Today, June 14, 1999.)

- Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side**.)Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74.)

- Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin**. Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111.

- Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by

beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightening, or a lethal injection? Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007. http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html

- One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice. (emphasis mine) Rodriguez, A., *Adventist World Review*, December 2007; p. 40.

Do you see the imposed law lie woven into all of these statements? The idea that God's law functions like human law puts God into the role of executioner, the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted because of rule-breaking.

But when we return to worshipping God as Creator, we recognize His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built and that sin is the source of pain, suffering, and death, not God. God is the source of goodness, life, health, and happiness and God's laws are the basis of such health and happiness. "The law of the Lord is perfect giving life to the soul" Psalm 19:7.

When we understand God's law is design law then we understand God is always good and God has been working through Jesus for the elimination of all deviations from His design, the elimination of sin and the restoration of His law in us, the restoration to righteousness or rightness which is the restoration to life. But if we refuse God, then God gives us up to our choice, which is separation from Him who is the source of life, and the result is ruin and death. This is the right Biblical understanding of God's wrath. This is what Paul says in Romans 1:18-32:

> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.
> 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.
> 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.
> 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.
> 28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife,

> deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (Ro 1:18–32 NIV84).

Are we seeing this today? This passage is not talking biological conditions that sin brings upon the world. Jesus answered that question when His disciples asked who sinned that the man was born blind, him or his parents and Jesus answered neither. This passage is not talking about people born with biological conditions such as intersex conditions Klinefelter's, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, hermaphrodites and many others. No, this passage is talking about people who *exchange* and *abandon* the natural for the unnatural, people who started out life with normal, godly, natural desires and through rejection of God, rejection of truth, preferring false worship, and the pleasures of this world debased themselves and changed the natural God-designed relationships for the unnatural and perverse.

And God's wrath is exactly what it has always been, after every effort to reach people with love, truth, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and redeeming power, if people insist on going their own rebellious way, God gives them up to reap what they have chosen. It is the only action love can take. But because those actions are in violation of the laws upon which God constructed life and health to operate they will only destroy themselves.

From the Bible commentary *Hard Sayings of the Bible* published by Intervarsity Press we read the following about this section of Romans and God's wrath:

> In some sense, God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause or own disintegration. P 542

> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). P 543

> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves. P 543

> In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. P 543 (Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996).

So, do we see how exchanging the truth about God's law for the lie that God's law functions like human law, that people can still think of God as mean and stingy despite sending Jesus as our Savior?

MONDAY

The lesson quotes John 14:14 "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

Do you believe this? Is it true?

If you pray, and end your prayer by saying, "In Jesus name" and ask that you win the next lottery, will Jesus do this for you? Will Jesus do anything we ask in His name?

Is it possible we don't understand the meaning of praying in Jesus' name?

The lesson goes on to note that this promise of Jesus is the reason we end our prayers "In Jesus' name" and asks "When we say this, what do we normally think it means?"

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?

In the Bible what do names represent? Character, so to pray in Jesus' name isn't about putting a verbal tag at the end of our prayers, it is about praying with the character of Christ.

Now, if we are praying with a heart that has been renewed to be like Jesus in character, what kinds of things will we pray for? For God's will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Can we be sure that God will do His will if we ask Him?

Read the third paragraph, "When our request…" Are you encouraged to think about the entire power of heaven, with all of its agencies going into action to answer our godly prayers? Can you think of any examples from Scripture?

I really like Daniel chapter 10 when Daniel prayed for the fulfilling of Jeremiah's prophecy of setting the captive free after 70 years. Daniel prays and fasts for 21 days and then Gabriel comes and tells him that as soon as Daniel started praying 21 days earlier he was dispatched from heaven to go to the king of Persia, but Gabriel was being opposed by the prince of Persia. Gabriel says he can't stay long to explain this because the prince of Greece was coming to help the prince of Persian in opposing Gabriel, and Gabriel doesn't have anyone to help him except Michael.

What does all of this mean?

- When we pray with Christlike motives heaven answers
- There are real intelligent beings, angels, on our side working to oppose Satan and his fallen angels
- Who are the princes of Persia and Greece? These are fallen angels working under the command of Satan, who the Bible calls the prince of the world.
- How many of the angels rebelled with Lucifer? 1/3, then why is it, if heaven as a 2 to 1 advantage in angels, there is no one left to help Gabriel except Michael?
- What kind of warfare is this? Were Gabriel and the princes of Persia and Greece engaged in physical warfare?
- 2 Cor 10:3-5 it is war for hearts and minds, it is a battle of truth versus lies, love versus selfishness, freedom versus coercion. Gabriel is the angel who became covering cherub occupying the place that Lucifer abandoned. In the created order Gabriel stands closest to God and there is not another angel with greater understanding of the truth and love of God than Gabriel. So there is no other angel that can bring more truth and love to bear than Gabriel—it isn't about numbers it is about truth and love. So only Michael, the prince, the one whose voice raises the dead, the one who holds the keys to death and the grave, the angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses in the bush in Exodus 3 and who the Bible says is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is Jesus in His pre-incarnate form. Only Jesus can bring more truth and love to bear than Gabriel.
- Let's be clear here, we are not suggesting Jesus is an angel or a created being. Absolutely not, Jesus is fully God, pre-existent, fully divine, with life original, unborrowed and underived from another source. We are suggesting that Jesus prior to incarnation manifested in the form of an angel and this is supported throughout Scripture. He did this because finite beings, including angels, cannot enter into infinity where God lives in unapproachable light, so one member of the Godhead left infinity to interact with His intelligent creatures on their level. That member was and is Jesus.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Resurrection addresses…" It is absolutely true that we as humans do not have the power over death, we are powerless to stop it. We are not the source of life. We cannot speak things into existence. We cannot cure the sin problem. We cannot destroy death and bring life and immortality to light.

Life originates in God and is sustained by God and God alone.

But what do you think of this idea that the death of Jesus made us legally right with God?

Is the sin problem a legal problem?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

When Adam and Eve sinned were they still faithful, holy, pure, righteous beings who merely had a legal problem with God, or were they changed in some way?

If the sin problem is a legal problem what happens if we don't get the proper legal solution?

What is a legalist? Someone who is preoccupied with their legal standing—this statement is legalism, and it is based upon the Roman view of God's law that God's law functions like human law.

The reality is that God is the Creator, His law are the protocols upon which life is built and sin transgresses God's law and changes the sinner from a state of holiness and life to unholiness and death.

As Scripture teaches that we are dead in trespass and sin. We have a terminal condition which we inherited from Adam and that without remedy results in death. But God did not leave us without Remedy. He sent Jesus, who while we were still sinners died for us in order to procure the solution, a cure, a remedy, that we could never provide for ourselves. And if we surrender in love and trust to Jesus, the Spirit takes that remedy and cure and instills it in us. There are many metaphors for this in Scripture note what they describe:

- Circumcision of the heart by the Spirit
- Removing the hard stony heart and putting in a tender heart
- Rebirth
- Renewal
- Dying to the old life and arising to a new life
- Having the mind of Christ
- Our old self no longer living but Christ living in us
- Writing the law in our hearts and minds

What do all of these descriptions functionally describe? Do they describe a legal process or a renewing, healing, transforming process?

You will not find the human law court system of theology in Scripture—some might immediately object and say, what about Zechariah and the high priest standing before God and being accused by Satan.

Great example, just read the story and ask what is happening. Is there any legal process going on at all, or is there a healing and renewal process with the rejection of the legal attacks made by Satan? The angel of the Lord is directed to take away the sin of the high priest and clothe him in righteousness, this is healing and the Lord rejects and rebukes the legal attacks of Satan.

We must stop presenting Satan's view of law and Satan's perversion of the plan of salvation that ultimately makes God out to be like Satan in character, the source of pain, suffering, and death.

Read the second paragraph, "However, the Resurrection…" What of this idea that the Resurrection placed Jesus at the right hand of the Father in a position of power and authority?

Was Jesus not in that position before His incarnation, sinless life, death and resurrection? Is this just a typographical error and they left out the phrase "in His human incarnated form" at the right hand of the Father?

I certainly agree that Jesus took His humanity back to heaven and Jesus is the second Adam and because of His victory over sin and Satan, Jesus, as a human, stands at the right hand of the Father. If that is what they meant then I agree completely. But I wouldn't want to say that Jesus the Son of God was not already at the right hand of the Father before His incarnation.

The lessons asks us to read Ephesians 1:18-23:

> "I also pray that your reasoning abilities and conscience may be healed so that you can discern and understand God's purpose for all humanity — the incredible, rich inheritance in store for his children —and God's incomparable power to heal and restore all who trust him. That life-giving power was seen as the outworking of his true strength, which he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heaven, above all power, rulers and authority, above all other kingdoms, empires or governments, and above every title that can be given–now and forever. And God placed everything under Christ's governance and appointed him the Supreme Head over all creation, including the church–his body, the showcase of his character–which he fills with every blessing and ability" (Ephesians 1:18-23 REM).

What is the message in this passage?

Read last paragraph, "But Paul doesn't…" Didn't Jesus have the **power** to rule before the resurrection? Didn't Jesus have the **right** to rule before His resurrection? What didn't Jesus have before His incarnation, sinless life, death on the cross and resurrection, that we need?

> "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV84).

Why did Jesus have to learn obedience? This is talking about His humanity, not His divinity. Jesus came to fix what Adam broke. Jesus took up humanity damaged by Adam and the generations of sin and overcame all that damage and carried humanity back into sinless perfection. In the person of Jesus, exercising only human abilities, not divine abilities, Jesus overcame every temptation, loved perfectly, chose with a human brain to trust His Father and give His life in love despite being tempted with human emotions and the drives of me-first survival of the fittest that urged Him to save self. And thereby, at the Gethsemane and the Cross Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light by destroying the law of sin and death, the carnal drives, fear and selfishness infecting the species, and restoring God's living law of love back into the species human. Thus He became the source of salvation for all who obey Him.

When we are won to trust and open the heart this victory of Jesus is given to us as gift, we get peace with God in our hearts, our fear goes away, we get new desires and new motives that we must choose to act upon and when we do we grow and mature in those desires and motives and develop godly character. But the motives, desires, and power to succeed are all from Jesus, the choice to trust, the choice to apply the truth, and the choice to act come from us, but the victory that enables all of this comes from Jesus and Jesus alone.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Someone once said…" Why do we wait often to go to the Lord until we are overwhelmed and feel helpless?

- Worry about future events and issues that is not ours to worry about—ours is to choose in governance of self what we know is right, healthy, and reasonable and trust God with how things turn out
- Not wanting to accept certain things or outcomes, especially when we see things going ways that cause us emotional distress
- Trying to avoid some pain, seeking an easier way. Deciding based on how it feels rather than on whether it is right and healthy.
- Concern about being negligent, in other words, not wanting to ask God for help because we don't want to be presumptuous, or to bother God with things that we think are insignificant. We are conscientious and want to do our part and sometimes we overreach and try to do things that we should first seek God's directions and counsel before pursuing. Like David building a temple.

Read the fourth paragraph, "Anxiety is caused by all sorts of things…" This is right. Anxiety is a symptom and should be considered a signal to the mind that something is wrong in a similar way that pain is a signal that something is wrong with the body.

If you get physical pain the first response should not be "I have a pain disorder and need pain medicine." The first response should be, what is causing the pain and the second is, what do I need to do to resolve the cause. Is the pain from a thorn, touching something hot, a cramp, etc.

Likewise, anxiety signals that something is wrong and the first question should be, what is the cause of the anxiety, and the second, how to I resolve it. Anxiety can come from:

- Physical causes—hormone problems/sleep problems/substances etc.
- Relationship problems
- Psychological problems
- Spiritual problems
- Real world threats
- Financial problems
- Being overwhelmed with too many legitimate responsibilities
- Trauma

It is a mistake to treat the symptom of anxiety with a single intervention, whether that intervention is medication or prayer.

Read the last paragraph, "Whatever the reasons…" What about the question "Does God still care enough to intervene when a divorce is looming?" And then the lesson states, "The Bible states that He cares enough to transform any situation."

Is it true that God cares enough to transform any situation? Yes, it is absolutely true that God cares, but could this statement lead to misunderstanding, such as: If God cares, and He doesn't transform the situation, then that means He either wanted the divorce, or the abuse, or the murder or rape or whatever other evil transpired, or He isn't powerful enough to transform it.

This is the problem many have, with leaving a statement like this in isolation.

But in order for God to transform a marriage, what type of intervention are we talking about?

Healthy relationships require healthy people. What happened to the relationship between Jesus and Judas? It ended in betrayal—did God not care enough to intervene? Of course He did, and He intervened directly by washing Judas dirty feet, by protecting Judas's reputation etc. But God's interventions don't take away our freewill and thus when it comes to relationships God cannot fix the relationship, what God can do is heal the hearts and minds of the individuals in the relationships IF they let God into their hearts and then the relationships improve as the people improve. But if people close their hearts to God, then God cannot fix the relationship.

THURSDAY

The lesson asks about how you would describe God to people who feel that God has disappeared and abandoned them?

FRIDAY

The lesson quotes E.G. White who wrote, "Faith grows strong by coming in conflict with doubts and opposing influences. The experience gained in these trials is of more value than the most costly jewels" 3T p. 555.

Do you see a design law involved? The law of exertion—if we want to grow stronger we must exercise the ability for if we don't use it we lose it. Thus, faith grows stronger as we face various conflicts, trials, doubts, and opposition, but stand firm in our faith, following the truth and trusting God.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q3 In The Crucible With Christ: Lesson 9
A Life of Praise

by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

memory text

> "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!" Phillipians 4:4

How much leeway is given here…there is an absolute in that sentence, what is it? How much time or what conditions are specified when we should NOT be rejoicing in the Lord? I mean, it is easy to shout with joy…praise…rejoice when we **feel** joy, when we are on top of the mountain, things are right in our worlds. But what about when we feel anything but joy, when we are down in the bottom of the pit at the bottom of the valley, and everything is going wrong? Is it easy to rejoice then…to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving? Could that be precisely the time when we need – perhaps more than ever – to praise God? Is it possible that praise can indeed transform even our darkest circumstances – not by changing the objective facts situation – but by changing our perspectives, our attitudes, and even changing those around us in a way that encourages and empowers and sustains us in the midst of our challenges?

What is praise? The dictionary definition specifies that "praise" can be either a noun or a verb, and is described as an expression of admiration or approval for someone or something…also to glorify or extol.

How can something so simple be such a powerful transformational weapon in the worst of circumstances?

I want to go through some inspiring examples of the transforming power of praise in some unimaginable situations.

Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (a.d. 138–161) continued Emperor Trajan's policy and practice of persecuting Christians. In a.d. 155, a crowd brought a group of Christians to the authorities of the city of Smyrna in Asia Minor to be convicted and punished. When the Christians refused to acknowledge the gods of the empire, they were punished by death. Afterward, the crowd demanded that Polycarp, the bishop of the church in Smyrna, be brought before the city. A disciple and friend of the apostle John, the old Polycarp also was a widely known and influential Christian leader in Asia and beyond. When Polycarp finally was brought into the amphitheater, the proconsul tried to persuade him to recant his faith and curse Christ.

The faithful disciple of Jesus replied: "For eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my king, who saved me?" When, eventually, the proconsul condemned him to

be burned on the pyre and the soldiers tied him to the stake, Polycarp prayed and praised God with a loud voice:

> **"Lord Sovereign God . . . I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. . . . For this . . . I bless and glorify you. Amen."**—Justo L. González, The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation, The Story of Christianity, vol. 1, revised and updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), p. 54.

Polycarp was only one of thousands of Christians who, following biblical characters such as David and Paul, praised God from amid persecution and the trials of life. Those early Christians praised God from the flames, from the stakes, from the amphitheaters full of wild animals, from crosses, from the prison cells, and from the chambers of torture. They did not think about the injustice done to them; they did not calculate the cost-benefit ratio of their act. They loved and trusted God and did not hesitate to make a radical and ultimate commitment to Him. They did not consider it a hardship to die for their Lord. Rather, they considered it a privilege to suffer and die for their beloved Savior. They unhesitatingly trusted God and His promise of resurrection and considered death but a moment in time on their way to meet their Lord in glory.

Writing about the experience of David as he faced the rebellion of his son Absalom, Ellen G. White notes David's habit in resorting to singing and praising God in times of trouble:

> "'A mighty valiant man,' a man of war, a king, whose word was law, betrayed by his son whom he had loved and indulged and unwisely trusted, wronged and deserted by subjects bound to him by the strongest ties of honor and fealty—in what words did David pour out the feelings of his soul? In the hour of his darkest trial, David's heart was stayed upon God, and he sang."—Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 741, 742.

What about Job? In the midst of unimaginable loss – property, livestock, wealth, all of his children…He said,

> "I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing. The Lord gave, and now He has taken away. May his name be praised!" – Job 1:21 GNT

In chapter 2 of The Great Controversy, entitled "Persecutions in the First Centuries," Ellen G. White describes how singing and praising God gave Christians the most genuine and deep joy and peace amid the fiercest affliction and persecution:

> "Like God's servants of old, many were 'tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.'…These called to mind the words of their Master, that when persecuted for Christ's sake, they were to be exceeding glad, for great would be their reward in heaven; for so the prophets had been persecuted before them. **They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth, and songs of triumph ascended from the midst of crackling flames.** Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the

> battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest and regarding their steadfastness with approval. A voice came down to them from the throne of God: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Revelation 2:10."—The Great Controversy, p. 41.

Fanny Crosby the song writer who wrote many famous hymns such as:

- "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"--1875,
- "Blessed Assurance"--1873,
- "He Hideth My Soul"--1890,
- "More Like Jesus"--1867,
- "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home"--1883,
- "Near the Cross"--1869,
- "Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!"--1882,
- "Rescue the Perishing"--1869,
- "Safe in the Arms of Jesus"--1868,
- "Take the World, But Give Me Jesus"--1879,
- "Tell Me the Story of Jesus"--1880,
- "To God Be the Glory"--1875

She was blind from infancy and later in life, wrote:

> **"It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Savior."** – https://www.eaec.org/faithhallfame/fanny_crosby.htm

Then there is the story of Horatio Spafford, who faced much tragedy and difficult circumstances in the late 1800's. First, his son died when he was only 2 years old…then despite being a successful attorney and real estate investor, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 ruined him financially as his investment properties were significantly damaged by the great fire. His business interests were further hit by the economic downturn of 1873, at which time he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS Ville du Havre. In a late change of plans, he sent his family ahead while he was delayed on business concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship collided with another sea vessel, the Loch Earn, and sank rapidly…all four of Spafford's daughters died. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone …". Shortly afterwards, as Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, just as his ship passed near where his daughters had died, he was inspired to write the words to a song…one he named after the stricken vessel, but a song we recognize by the famous chorus, "It is Well With My Soul."

How is this possible?

How do you pass the spot where all FOUR of your daughters went to their watery graves and write these words:

> "When peace like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say It is well, it is well, with my soul…For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live: If Jordan above me shall roll, No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life, Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul."

How does a person praise God for their blindness…thank Him for not distracting her with sight?!? How do martyrs sing songs of triumph and rejoice even while they are burning? This is not natural to me…surely this ability or instinct to praise at all times and in any circumstance is supernatural, and requires practice. What design law might be in play here…if we want to learn how to play an instrument, we must practice…if we want to be good at math, we must work math problems. So if praising – even in the midst of the storm – doesn't come naturally to us, when we practice praise so that it becomes a natural part of our lives, a habit, just our instinctive reaction in ANY circumstance, then praise has the power both to convert and to conquer.

> "And while I adore and magnify Him, I want you to magnify Him with me. **Praise the Lord even when you fall into darkness. Praise Him even in temptation**. [Wait…what???] 'Rejoice in the Lord alway,' says the apostle; 'and again I say, Rejoice.' Will that bring gloom and darkness into your families? No, indeed; **it will bring a sunbeam**. You will thus gather rays of eternal light from the throne of glory and scatter them around you. Let me exhort you to engage in this work, scatter this light and life around you, not only in your own path, but in the paths of those with whom you associate. Let it be your object to make those around you better, to elevate them, to point them to heaven and glory, and lead them to seek, above all earthly things, the eternal substance, the immortal inheritance, the riches which are imperishable."—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 593, 594.

SUNDAY

Framework for Praise

There are two basic types of prayer. First type of prayer—the prayer of need—brings our hearts and minds into the truth of our own helplessness, our own limitations, our own inability, and our own hopelessness without God in our lives. It is a prayer of humility that opens our hearts and minds to God, to connect with God, to seek God's presence in our inmost being. This is more than just the pursuit of knowledge, such prayer seeks the will of God in our lives and thus opens us to the healing and recreating presence of God. Our fears and insecurities are replaced with love and trust in God…we are transformed as we come into connection with our Creator.

The second type of prayer is that of thanksgiving, worship, and praise. This type of prayer solidifies our hearts in love, adoration, appreciation, affiliation, confidence, and faith in God…all of which is also working to eradicate our fear and selfishness in the bonds of love

and trust. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving focus our minds away from ourselves and onto Him by communicating our love, devotion, reverence, appreciation, and thankfulness to God. It is exalting God for who He is, communicating our longing for Him. Our praise welcomes His presence in our midst – God lives in our praise…He inhabits the praises of His people, so when we praise and worship God, His presence comes to dwell with us…and when He does, things change. Always. You can count on it – hearts change, situations change, minds change, attitudes change, lives change. Every time you praise God, something changes within you, or your circumstances, or in the people or situations around you. Even if we can't see all that is being affected, we can trust that it is…because it is impossible to touch the presence of God and there NOT be change.

When you come in contact with all that *God is*, it will affect all that *you are*. *Praise is the prayer that changes everything.* This framework for praise comes from really knowing God – the eternal life kind of knowing mentioned in John 17:3 – If we really understood who God is, our praise would be unending…It simply could not be contained.

Who is this practice of praise for? What is the point of rejoicing always (Phil 4:4), or blessing the Lord at all times (Psalm 34:1)? Is all this praising and worshiping for God or for us? Does God need to be reminded of who He is, or do we need to be reminded? Does God need to be reassured in the knowledge of His greatness, perfection, and love…or are we the ones who forget? When we are praising God, we are demonstrating and agreeing with and becoming like who He is. This instinctive response of praise must become a condition of the heart, a way of life, a pattern that is woven into the very fabric of our being – to the point where it is no longer a decision that has to be made because the decision has *already* been made, and we live a lifestyle of praise. (*The Prayer That Changes Everything*, Stormie Omartian, Harvest House Publishers, 2004.)

There is more design law stuff woven into this process of deciding…of actively choosing…the right action of the will. What is it? Our brains are amazing quantum computers. They are composed of 100 billion neurons and more than one trillion supporting cells. Each neuron can have up to 10,000 connections to other neurons. That's over 40 quadrillion interconnections!

These 40 quadrillion interconnections in our brains are comprised primarily of dendrites. Within each neuron, there are 10 million microtubules, and each microtubule is made up of billions of tubulin molecules, which in turn are composed of 445 amino acids, which are made of various atoms, many of which share electrons. Within these quadrillions of dendrites, with their millions of microtubules made of billions of tubulin molecules, the atoms form shared electron clouds.

These clouds exist in positions of uncertainty until you think about something and form a conclusion, a belief, or accept a truth — or a lie. **Your act of choosing to believe something will cause the electron clouds, in various places within the dendrites, to collapse. This causes conformation change within the microtubule structure, which solidifies the memory or belief into the brain.**

This is the process of choosing, when we choose to believe something it changes us, whether it is true or false, the choice to believe it changes the conformation of our dendritic electron clouds. This is why we can have a change of heart, or change of insight, or conviction of certainty very quickly when a belief changes—even while the brain hasn't had time to build a new neural pathway or connection…and those pathways and connections the brain builds then hardwires in learned information and behaviors that can become rote or habitual.

[OPTIONAL – but this is different than forming conclusions and beliefs and memories. Your beliefs and memories are stored within the brain tubulin structure until something happens that causes you to reexamine or reevaluate the belief or memory and come to a different conclusion. This is how beliefs are stored and mindsets are established. This is why the Bible tells us to rejoice in trials because they build character. Difficulties in life will cause us to re-examine our beliefs and the electron clouds reenter a position of uncertainty and we can change our beliefs and when we choose a new belief they collapse in new patterns corresponding to the new belief. This gives insight into the law of worship, which says that by beholding, we become changed. In psychiatry, this is known as "modeling." We neurobiologically and characterologically change to become like what we admire, worship, think about, choose, and act on.]

Our beliefs initially collapse the electron clouds storing those beliefs, and then as we act on those beliefs, think through and reaffirm those beliefs, recite them and live them the brain creates pathways wiring in the beliefs to habits of thinking, reacting and processing. Thus, we are changed and transformed by what we think, *praise*, value, worship, watch, believe and engage in.

MONDAY

Praying Down Walls

What was God trying to teach the Israelites in the story of Jericho? What actually caused the walls to fall? "By trust in God, the people marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls fell." When God is on the verge of doing something new in our lives, He may bring us to a Jericho, for He may need to teach us that the power to triumph does not come in our own strength and strategies. Everything we need comes from outside ourselves. So, no matter what is in front of us, no matter how insurmountable it may seem, our role is to praise God – the source of everything we need. This is faith in action.

TUESDAY

The Life of Praise

In the first paragraph, the quarterly reiterates what we just discussed – "Praise is something that we must practice until it changes from being an activity done at a particular time to an *atmosphere in which we live*. Praise shouldn't so much be a specific act but a specific way of life." This is well said and references what law?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

And did you know this practice or framework or atmosphere of praise is not just for us. The Bible says "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" – Psalm 150:6. Listen to this quote from the *Review and Herald*,

> "While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, **these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ** for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his mediatorial work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?" — RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4

> "Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, [law of worship, by beholding we are changed] **allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him**, [law of exertion, the more we exercise something it gets stronger] **we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life**. [!!!] Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. – COL 129.3

WEDNESDAY

A Witness Who Convicts

How can our praise transform the eternal destinies of those around us?

Did Stephen's reaction when being stoned affect Saul?

> "The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet of God upon his face; his words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who could not efface from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance." – AA 101.3

Were spectators in the arenas impacted by the martyrs singing and praising and praying even as the flames engulfed them?

THURSDAY

A Weapon That Conquers

How can praise be a powerful weapon when a "vast army" is coming against you?

> "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." 2 Chron 20:12

Even though God was going to fight for them, they still had to go out to face the enemy. But this was no ordinary march to war. Jesoshaphat appointed a choir to sing praises to the Lord as they marched out. "As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated." God intervened at the very moment they exercised their faith in His promise, as they began to "praise him for the splendor of his holiness."

Did you know this practice or framework or atmosphere of praise is not just for now, here on this earth? Do you think if we develop a habit of praising God in every circumstance, that we will just cease that behavior in heaven…or will we continue to develop it, refine it, and deepen those neuro pathways for all eternity. If we do not develop a heart of praise and thanksgiving while here on earth, could that impede our progress…or even make us unfit for heaven?

> "Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to Heaven, and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love; every countenance beaming with joy; enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb; and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, **mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise**? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb?—No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for Heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; **they have never learned the language of Heaven**, and now it is too late. – GC88 542.3

And what is the language of heaven?

> " Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. [12] In a loud voice they were saying: "**Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" [13]** Then I heard **every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them**, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb **be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever**!" – Revelation 5:11-13, NIV

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for Heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from Heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God. GC88 542.3

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 10
Meekness in the Crucible

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory verse: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5 NIV84).

What does this mean to you? We are called to be meek, but what is meekness?

Is meekness the same as weakness? What is the difference?

There is no greater example of the contrast between meekness and weakness than Jesus and Pontius Pilate. John 18:29–19:16.

Despite Jesus being falsely accused, lied about, cruelly mistreated, and abused, He retained self-control and a calm, fearless yet meek dignity founded on the strength of His righteous character and trust in His Father that could not be shaken by any worldly assault.

By contrast, Pilate, though empowered with earthly authority that was reinforced by Roman soldiers, demonstrated weakness of character: a fear of what others thought, a willingness to compromise his own judgment and choose the wrong, even when convicted of what was right, merely to avoid the accusation of being disloyal to Caesar and face the potential loss of position and power.

Jesus was meek and strong. Pilate was weak and wrong.

What is necessary to be meek? What is the source of strength that allows someone to be meek and strong?

What is the cause of weakness, even when one is empowered with all earthly power?

Meekness is a trait of character that stems from the outworking of God's love operating in the heart; weakness of character stems from fear dominating the heart.

As soon as Adam sinned, he ran and hid because he was afraid (Genesis 3:10). Fear that incites selfishness is part of the infection of sin. But "there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Love focuses our concern on others. Fear focuses on self. Love is willing to sacrifice self for others, whereas fear sacrifices integrity, principle, honor, truth, and others to protect self. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16 NIV84).

The meek love God and others and are not afraid to stand for God's truth; the weak are driven by fear and will compromise the truth to protect themselves.

And thus **meekness is founded on the combination of truth and love coming from a trust relationship with our trustworthy God of love**. We experience the transformational power of God's love as we come to the knowledge of God, the truth about God and are won back to trust.

Truth and love combined is the power that changes hearts and minds from **fearful weakness to cheerful meekness**.

The meek, having been reborn into God's kingdom of love, experience godly self-control (Galatians 5:23); the weak remain fearful and selfish and seek to make themselves feel safe by trying to control others.

These weak people "are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Romans 1:29–31 NIV84). And we see these weak people all too often in positions of power in the world, in businesses and also in the church. Why? Because the meek seek to help others, the weak seek to gain power for self, to make self feel safe and use their energies to advance self into the positions of power; and the world loves such people.

Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" (John 15:18–19 NIV84).

Satan is the father of the weak, the father of fear and selfishness; listen to what the Bible says about Satan and his method of governing:

> How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "**(1) I will ascend to heaven; (2) I will raise my throne above the stars of God; (3) I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, (4) on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. (5) I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; (6) I will make myself like the Most High**." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit (Isaiah 14:12-15 NIV84).

Satan seeks to rise above, to rule over—and every human government operates upon Satan's method, a few ruling elites rising over and exploiting the masses to empower the elites.

Notice Jesus' method of governing:

> Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, **(1) did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, (2) but made himself nothing, (3) taking the very nature of a servant, (4) being made in human likeness. (5) And being found in appearance as a man, (6) he humbled himself and (7) became obedient to death—even death on a cross**! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5–11 NIV84).

Jesus sacrifices self to uplift the masses. No human government represents the government of God. We will never achieve God's kingdom, God's purposes through Satan's methods and human governments.

Note further, Satan made six claims or six moves to advance self:

(1) I will ascend to heaven;
(2) I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
(3) I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
(4) on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.
(5) I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
(6) I will make myself like the Most High

But because his method of self-exaltation is a violation of God's design law of love, the law upon which life is built, Satan is brought down to the grave and dies from his rejection of God and God's methods.

But Jesus makes seven moves to counter Satan's self-exaltation, Jesus:

(1) did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
(2) but made himself nothing,
(3) taking the very nature of a servant,
(4) being made in human likeness.
(5) And being found in appearance as a man,
(6) he humbled himself and
(7) became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Jesus lived out God's law, the design protocols of love destroying the infection of selfishness and thus even though Jesus died on the cross, by doing so Jesus:

- Destroyed him who holds the power of death that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14)
- Destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light (2Timothy 1:10)
- Destroyed the devil's work by restoring the image of God in humankind (1John 3:8)

And therefore, having accomplished the eradication of the sin infection and restored God's law in humanity, Jesus rose from the grave and is exalted to the highest place and receives all glory and praise forevermore amen!

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The meek are those who have had God's law written into their hearts so that they live and love like Jesus. They seek to bless others, and they understand that love grows only in freedom; they advance the autonomy of others and use any positions of power they have to help others develop and grow.

But the weak are jealous of others, fear not having what others have, fear others gaining more skill, or ability, or fame, or fortune and taking their power from them so they seek to control others.

The meek present the truth in love and leave others free; the weak lie, manipulate, and coerce all in order to protect themselves.

The religious leaders in Christ's day were weak in character, consumed with fear—fear of loss of power, position, authority, and respect; rather than rejoicing in Jesus and admitting they were wrong, they instead worked to destroy Him.

Jesus taught His disciples to be meek, to respect the choices of those with whom they sought to share the gospel. If people didn't want to listen, the disciples were not to take personal offense, become angry, or seek to retaliate. Instead, they were to recognize that such people were injuring themselves and to simply move on to those who did want to hear the truth, without carrying any of the "dirt" of the rejection with them.

> "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town" (Matthew 10:14 NIV84).

The meek present the truth in love and leave people free.

But the weak in character, if not in positions that enable them to assert control over others, will instead either find someone powerful for them to believe in, follow, surrender themselves to, and become their adherent and pawn; or they become a behind-the-scenes conniver, plotter, and manipulator of others—like Judas, who sought to manipulate Jesus through behind-the-scenes betrayal.

The meek stand firm for truth in the face of opposition; they don't compromise truth or God's principles to garner favor. The weak present what they believe others want to hear in order to be accepted, seeking to manage people around them to keep themselves in good standing.

Yes, "blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth!" (Matthew 5:5 NIV84).

SUNDAY

The lesson calls our attention to Moses who was called the meekest man in the world and points out that "Moses was called to endure endless waves of gossip and criticism."

Is gossip a serious problem or a minor thing?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

How did Lucifer advance his war in heaven? What did Lucifer do in heaven that got 1/3 of sinless angels to rebel? Wasn't it gossip and criticism?

Have you ever been gossiped about or criticized?

What enables you to handle such mistreatment?

When you are gossiped about do you focus upon the gossip, the gossiper, the reaction of others, or something else?

What is our responsibility when people gossip about us?

How did God handle things with Lucifer? How did Jesus handle gossip and misinformation about Him when He was on Earth?

Our responsibility is in how we live and govern self, to do what we know is right, healthy, and reasonable and in accordance with God's will and then leave others free to think and do as they choose.

If a person is misinformed and is open to be corrected, then going to them to reconcile the misunderstanding is Biblical, even taking 1-2 others with you. However, if the person is closed to truth, closed to correction, then we are not to cast our pearls before swine lest they turn and attack us. In other words, conversations with people who are bent on hurting us only gives them information to twist and turn to hurt us.

Jesus didn't engage with the Sanhedrin during His trial, they were not interested in truth, in doing what was right. Anything He said would be twisted and used against Him, which is exactly what happened when He finally spoke.

So, we deal with gossips by living out the principles of God's kingdom in how we govern self and how we treat others. We keep our focus on Jesus and advancing His truth.

One of Satan's strategies is to divert us to the gossip and take our eyes off Jesus and instead of continuing to advance the truth we focus on getting certain people convinced, trying to prove to them that what they are saying isn't true, or worse, conforming to their concepts of right and wrong to get them to see you as okay.

Eventually the truth wins out, this is the Great Controversy—the truth is being revealed. The truth about God revealed in Jesus and at the cross the two antagonistic principles stood face to face. God's self-sacrificial love and refusal to use power to force others to comply with His law and Satan's method of power over others which does use force to make others to comply and to destroy those who won't.

I have consistently and repeatedly pointed out the contrast between these two systems of governing and frequently over the last few years done so by pointing to events happening in our society in which these two principles are at war and exposed them for all to see. Yet, I repeatedly get emails from people telling me to stop being political, to stop taking sides, to just stick with the Bible and the truth in the Bible.

For those who have had such concerns, do you not understand that these two antagonistic principles enter into every phase of human experience. In every act of live we are deciding on whose side of the Great Controversy we are going to be found by the methods and principles we choose to employ in how we treat others.

I love this historic quote from the book *Education:*

> The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. [One of the problems many have with the Bible is that they take a story here a verse there and don't understand it in the context of the entire history of the Bible and the war between Christ and Satan.] He should gain a **knowledge of its grand central theme**, [What is that grand central theme? The truth about God, the kingdom of God, the methods and design laws of God at war with the lies of Satan, the imposed law system of Satan, the corruption, disease, abuse, and destruction that comes from breaking God's design law and following Satan—and God's intervention to heal the damage done and restore us to harmony with Him and thus experience etern al life.] of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of **the two principles that are contending for supremacy**, [What are these two principles? Love versus fear and selfishness; truth versus lies; freedom versus coercion and control] and **should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation**. [We must see these two principles at war through human history, through Bible history, but we also must be able to see how they battle all the way to the very end so that we can choose to be aligned and part of God's kingdom.] He should **see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be** found. Ed 190.2 [We must not just study Scripture to understand how God's principles and methods warred against Satan's principles and methods in the past, we must then understand how those same two systems are warring for hearts and minds today and how this conflict enters into every phase of human experience and we are all deciding whose methods we prefer, whose law we are incorporating into our hearts and minds by how we treat others. Thus, when I point out these things that are happening in the world I am NOT being political. I am advancing the truth of God's kingdom and calling each of you to leave the methods of this world behind—to come out of Babylon that fallen imposed law system that coerces and controls.]

Satan doesn't care one wit about whether someone has a physical disease or gets cured from that physical disease. Satan doesn't care one wit whether someone takes a treatment or doesn't take a

treatment; what the evil one cares about is whether is getting people to choose his methods so that they become like him! Satan wants people, in the pursuit of saving temporal lives, to choose his methods and become like him in character.

Can Satan trick good people into becoming coercive and manipulative and violate the principles of love and liberty? What if it is all to save lives, save lives from a virus?

Who would have thought that the SDA church would have willingly sided with the various governments of the world to close their churches and stop their missions and to coerce the consciences of their employees, students, and the people coming to their institutions for help? Who would have thought the SDA church would actively collude with fraud, misinformation, and lies that have resulted on one of the greatest abuses to humanity in history?

Why did so many go along? Why are so many still colluding? Because they don't understand the principles, they are deceived by looking at the diversion, the misdirection, the misinformation.

Let me say this as clearly as I can—what has happened to the world during the COVID pandemic was NOT ABOUT A VIRUS it is spiritual warfare, it is about the kingdom of Satan assaulting the kingdom of God—and where is the kingdom of God found on Earth according to Jesus? Within you and me. It is about getting people to be afraid, and based on fear and misinformation, under the guise of supposedly helping others and saving lives, to get people to choose to use state power, political power, economic power (no one can buy or sell), to coerce people to make decisions that went against their own judgment and conscience.

There were two issues: 1) the objective facts about the virus and the various objective interventions to deal with it and 2) the methods we employ in how we treat others as we advance whatever solution we think is best.

Both issues are legitimate to discuss and explore and pursue the facts and truth about, but **the more important issue is the methods one uses** for that determines what law one internalizes into their heart, and whose kingdom one becomes a part of.

Now with this in mind, let us consider the quotation from *Upward Look* in **Thursday's** lesson. I will quote a little bit more than the lesson did:

> Now is our time of peril. Our only safety is in walking in the footsteps of Christ, and wearing His yoke. Troublous times are before us. In many instances, **friends will become alienated**. **Without cause, men will become our enemies**. [Have we seen this over the last couple of years, churches, families, friends dividing?] **The motives of the people of God will be misinterpreted, not only by the world, but by their own brethren.** [Have we seen this?] The Lord's servants will be put in hard places. A mountain will be made out of a molehill to justify men in pursuing a selfish, unrighteous course… By misrepresentation, these men will be clothed in the dark vestments of dishonesty, because circumstances beyond their control made their work perplexing. They will be pointed to as men that cannot be trusted. And **this will be**

> **done by the members of the church**. [Have you seen this? Have you experienced this?] **God's servants must arm themselves with the mind of Christ.** They must not expect to escape insult and misjudgment. They will be called enthusiasts and fanatics. But let them not become discouraged. God's hand is on the wheel of His providence, guiding His work to the glory of His name. UL 177

MONDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "After the people…" What do you think of this story?

The lesson says that God decided to destroy the people—did He? Did God decide to destroy the people and if it wasn't for Moses, who had more patience that God, more love than God, more understanding and compassion that God, and therefore interceded with God then God would have destroyed the people?

Is it true that God needs people like Moses and ultimately Jesus to intercede with Him to talk Him down, to calm His anger, to propitiate His wrath, to keep Him from killing us?

I have some patients with certain conditions that at times will flair up and cause them to lose control of themselves. These people know themselves well enough that they will ask their spouse, "if you see me having symptoms of unusual irritability, or impulsivity, please intercede with me and remind me to take an extra dose of my medicine so I won't escalate into a full relapse and need to be hospitalized again."

Is God like this? Does God have some mental health problem and needs His Son to plead with Him to help Him get a grip?

Of course not!!!

- God is for us! Romans 8:31
- For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son John 3:16
- God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself 2Cor 5:19

God did not decide to destroy the people when talking to Moses. Then what was going on?

The Bible tells us that angels long to look into these things (1Pet 1:12). That we are a spectacle a theater to angels and men (1Cor 4:9), and the angels in heaven just watched God deliver the people in a mighty and miraculous way yet within 40 days the people are having an orgy around a golden calf.

What do you think Satan was doing with that? We see glimpses in Job chapter one where Satan twists things, presenting things in a false light before the heavenly counsel trying to win more of the angels to his side. Do you think Satan was doing the same thing here?

Does God have foreknowledge? Absolutely, so God knew when He said what He said to Moses exactly how Moses would respond, and God knew that He was not going to destroy the people. God was never intent on destroying the people. Then why did God say this to Moses?

What God did want to demonstrate was that His methods of truth, love, and freedom work to heal hearts and minds.

Remember 40 years earlier Moses was a man who was willing to kill others; he murdered the overseer and then ran away. The angels knew this history.

So in the face of this apparent defeat, where the people having just been delivered miraculously by God prefer a false god and it appears they are waste of time, God looks to the angels in heaven says, "I know it looks bad, but my methods work. Remember Moses, 40 years ago he murdered someone, the infection of selfishness was strong in his heart. But after spending time with me he has been healed. He has a new heart and right spirit. He won't kill others to protect himself any longer, no, my law of love is restored in him and he will sacrifice himself to save others. Watch this…."

And Moses revealed that God's methods do work. Moses demonstrated new methods and motives and godly love for others and supreme concern about the reputation of God.

This is what was transpiring.

The lesson suggests this is a lesson on grace and in the last paragraph states "grace is needed when people least deserve it."

What are your thoughts on this?

What do you understand the grace of God to be? A classic answer is "unmerited favor," and what is usually meant by that? Is it something we don't deserve or haven't earned.

And it is certainly true that none of us have earned God's grace. His grace is not a paycheck, a medal, or a reward for some achievement on our part. But to talk about grace in this way focuses on the process of receiving grace—not on what grace is.

The typical meaning of merit is the reward one has a right to as a result of their own work or effort. If you get paid by your employer, you have earned or merited that pay. If you get stronger muscles by exercising regularly, you have earned or merited the growth in your muscles. If you become a better musician because you practice regularly, you have earned or merited that proficiency.

Unmerited favor is when you receive something you didn't earn or didn't merit; in other words, you don't have a right to claim something as being owed to you. In that sense, God's grace is not ours to claim by right. But understanding that God's grace is not something we earn still doesn't tell us what that grace is.

If someone gave you a glass of water as you were dying of thirst in a desert, you didn't buy it, earn it, or work for it—it was a gift. One could say the water was unmerited; it was given to you freely. But the water is water—the method of how you get it, whether free or at a cost to you, is separate from the substance of what it is.

The gift of God's grace to us is the manifestation of His character of love; it is gracious of God. But the fact that God gives His grace freely does not tell us what that grace is. Consider grace as a noun; the action of gifting it is a verb—we receive God's grace without earning it, but what is His grace?

Since it is true that God's grace is a gift to us—something we have not earned, something we are not owed, something we do not receive by right—does that also mean we do not deserve God's grace?

That depends on how one understands or defines "deserve." Does a child born with a terminal illness deserve to be treated with kindness, compassion, and offered a remedy if one exists to restore them to wellness—even though they have done nothing to earn such treatment? Why would they deserve it? Does a child, simply by being a human child, deserve the love of its parents—not because the child earned anything but because of who the child is to the parents? Do we have value and worth to God, not because of our achievements or any work we have done, but because of who God created us to be, because of what God has designed for us and invested in us?

When the Bible describes Jesus as growing in wisdom and stature and favor (which is the Greek word for grace) with God and men (Luke 2:52), did Jesus not deserve His Father's grace or favor?

Was the grace that Jesus received from His Father, as our human substitute, given freely by His Father or did Jesus have to earn it? The Father gave His grace to Jesus in the same way He gives His grace to us! Jesus didn't "earn" grace from His Father through some system of employment or quest fulfillment. Jesus, as a human, received the free grace of His Father and was empowered by the Father's grace in order to accomplish their joint purpose in saving humanity from sin.

So what is God's grace?

The Greek word translated as grace is χάρις [charis /khar·ece/], and the Strong lexicon says it is "good will, loving-kindness, favour … the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues" (Strong, J. 1995. In Enhanced Strong's Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship).

This is exactly what Paul wrote in Romans 2:4: "God's kindness leads you toward repentance" (NIV84).

And the kindness of God is freely given because of who God is. We see God's grace in His every action, all His activities, which are the outflow of His character of love and which always fights against evil, opposes corruption, stands against sin, and heals, renews, recreates, cleanses, and ultimately destroys death and brings life and immortality to light (2 Timothy 1:10). God's grace is the

dispersement of His energy, love, life, and power and is seen in His every act, but it is most fully seen in response to rebellion and sin. As Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20 NKJV).

God was just as gracious before sin and His grace was present and active before sin, but after sin His grace has been active and revealed in ways that were never before seen in the universe because it was never before needed—including the gracious condescension of Jesus to be our Savior. Prior to sin, God was just as gracious, but His grace never had to function to overcome sin until sin occurred.

We see God's grace in calling to Adam in the cool of the day before Adam sinned, but His grace is more powerfully revealed when God gently called, "Adam, where are you?" when Adam was hiding in the bushes after he sinned.

We see God's grace in His patient forbearance toward lost sinners prior to the Flood, waiting to act until there was no other option, when only one righteous man was left on the earth; thus, we see God's grace in bringing the Flood as a therapeutic intervention to keep open the avenue for the Messiah in order to save the species human from sin and eternal death.

But we see God's grace most fully revealed in sending Jesus to take up humanity, broken and damaged by Adam's sin, and overcome where we never could.

- "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14 NIV84).

- "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16, 17 NIV84).

- "But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7 NRSV).

- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:8–10 NIV84).

The grace of God is indeed a gift—like water to a person dying of thirst is a gift; the gifting is gracious, but the grace is more than the act; it is the substance of God's character—His love, truth, methods, power, glory, righteousness—fully manifested in Jesus. **When we receive God's grace, we are receiving the presence and power of God via His indwelling Spirit, we are receiving the gift of Jesus, and can say as Paul did, "It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me"** (Galatians 2:20). When we receive God's grace, we receive a new heart and right spirit; we have His law written upon our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10).

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Someone once said…" The lesson asks us to read Matthew 5:43-48:

> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:43-48 NIV84).

What does it mean? Why are we to pray for those who persecute us?

What is revealed by the examples Jesus gave as to how God treats the righteous and unrighteous the same? What kind of law is revealed in Jesus' example? This is the reality, God is Creator, His laws are design laws and they treat everyone the same, the only difference is in the individual, not the laws or in God.

What happens to us if instead of praying for our enemies we fantasize about their punishment, suffering, and death, and pray for their punishing, and perhaps even looking forward to the day when God tortures them in hell?

But what happens to us if we pray for our enemies, pray for their repentance, for the sin-sickness in them to be cured and for them to become trustworthy friends of God?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "It is terrible…" What do you understand justice to be? How can you tell what is just and unjust?

Does our view of law make a difference?

Do we recognize that the abuser, the sinner, the oppressor is actually destroying their own souls and doing more damage to themselves than they are to the victim of their crime?

When Jesus was being crucified by the mob, who was being destroyed in that process? Was Jesus being destroyed or were those crucifying Him destroying their own souls?

What about when Stephen was being stoned? Did the stoning of Stephen destroy Stephen or those who stoned him?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What did Jesus mean by:

> "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28 NET).

Who destroys the souls of sinners in the fires of hell?

> "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).

How do we understand this?

Is sin harmless and God is the one who harms the sinner for their sin, or does sin actually destroy?

What law lens do we use?

If God's law is like human law then sin doesn't actually cause harm any more than going 36 mph in a 35 mph zone does. In this false law model sin is a legal problem that requires the ruling authority to use power to inflict punishment for sin, thus, in this false model, God becomes the source of suffering and death and the one whom we need protection from—and many atonement models and theologies teach such ideas, something being done to God to protect us from Him.

But when we understand God as Creator and His law as design law then we understand that sin breaks the very protocols of life, separate us from God and results in ruin and death and requires God to heal and restore in us His law reconciling us to Him so that we receive life from Him.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

To clear up any confusion, Dr. Jennings will CONTINUE to teach our bible study class AFTER his move to Liberty Univ. The schedule will be similar to how it has been with various substitute teachers teaching from time to time, but he will always be present "on stage" WITH those teachers via remote Zoom call.

If you are in our new studio then you will be able to interact live with Dr. Jennings, if you are not in the studio you will get the non-interactive livestream as usual.

Podcasts: We have a weekly podcast about 13 minutes long that is available to be delivered to your device if you sign up for it.

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Building update: Still aiming to occupy our building in September. Keep us in your prayers.

Dr. Jennings presentation at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind, is available at https://odysee.com/@ComeAndReason:4/CovidAndManipulationOfYourMind_UnitedForHealthcareSummit_TimJennings_20220715_1080p30:b

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 11
Waiting in the Crucible

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text: "But the fruit of the Spirit is…longsuffering" (Galatians 5:22 NKJV).

Thoughts about this? Other versions say patience.

There is a song by a Christian group called Petra entitle *More Power to Ya* and the lyrics are:

You say you've been feeling weaker, weaker by the day
You say you can't make the joy of your salvation stay
But good things come to them that wait
Not to those who hesitate
So hurry up and wait upon the Lord

More power to ya
When you're standing on His word
When you're trusting with your whole heart in the message you have heard
More power to ya
When we're all in one accord
They that wait upon the Lord, they shall renew, they shall renew their strength

Jesus promised His disciples He'd give strength to them
Jesus told them all to tarry in Jerusalem
When they were all in one accord
The power of His Spirit poured
And they began to turn the world around

So be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might
Put on all His armor and fight the good fight
In all of our weakness, He becomes so strong
When He gives us the power and the strength to carry on

Read the first two paragraphs, "Scientists did…" The findings: some children waited and some children didn't. Those who waited turned out to be better adjusted and more confident later in life than those who didn't. This is what the scientists observed. But what does it mean?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The lesson concludes that patience was indicative of something greater and more important in human character.

Are there any other explanations for what was observed?

Could the differences be explained by:

- Difference in home life, a nurturing loving home versus chaotic and unstructured home? Would such a childhood impact how well-adjusted someone was later in life?
- Differences in nutrition and brain development?
- Underlying and untreated ADHD?

I am not discounting in any way the value and importance of patience and the necessity of developing the fruits of the Spirit, nor am I discounting that whenever in life a person develops the fruits of the Spirit their life, from that point onward, will be better adjusted and they will have more confidence. I think the link between Christian maturity and healthiness is well established, so don't misunderstand what I am saying.

I am pointing out that this particular study does not prove the link as there are other underlying causes that could undermine adjustment that are not originating in spiritual immaturity, but biological dysfunction, trauma, or nutrition etc.

In fact, failing to recognize the biological causes and misdiagnosing an impulsive child as having a spiritual problem rather than a neurobiological one if in fact it is neurological, could result in parents failing to provide the proper nutrition or getting the proper medical treatment and instead they bring more authoritarian rules to bear in an attempt to discipline the child to teach them self-control, which would only work to instill in the child a distorted self-image, discouragement, and/or a sense of rebellion and could result in a child dropping out, going into more destructive pathways that would not have occurred if the child had been diagnosed early, given proper treatment, which would have resulted in their better impulse control, better performance in school, which would have resulted in them gaining more confidence in themselves, forming a healthier self-image, and the parents having less anxiety and worries and thereby treating the child with more objective and merited praise rather than criticism and discipline and the child would grow up better adjusted etc.

Now, if you are a parent and you look back and recognize you had a child with a biological problem that when they were small you didn't appreciate and you treated them as if they were merely rebellious or unruly, i.e. you didn't get them medical treatment you disciplined and it got worse…what do you do today?

Do you beat yourself up? Do you feel guilty? Do you judge yourself with new information that you didn't have at the time? In other words, do you look back on your life and punish yourself for not acting upon information you didn't even know? Or do you treat yourself based on your motives and recognize your heart was for the welfare of your child and you did the best you could at the time? And you continue to move forward in the truth eager to grow and add greater wisdom and insight to how you live today?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 27:14:

> Wait for the LORD;
> be strong and take heart
> and wait for the LORD (Psalm 27:14 NIV84).

What does it mean to wait for the Lord?

The GNT renders the verse this way:

> Trust in the LORD.
> Have faith, do not despair.
> Trust in the LORD (Psalm 27:14 GNT).

Do you hear wait for the Lord the same as trust in the Lord?

This is how I paraphrased it in the *Remedy*:

> Trust in the Lord,
> be strong and confident.
> Trust in the Lord (Psalm 27:14 REM).

What is the relationship between trusting God and waiting for God? When we trust the Lord with the outcome, with the future, with aspects of reality that are not ours to carry out, then we are able to wait for Him to bring about the result in His time.

The lesson asks us to read Psalm 37:7:

> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
> do not fret when men succeed in their ways,
> when they carry out their wicked schemes (Psalm 37:7 NIV84).

Do we see wicked schemes being carried out by people in the world today? Does it cause you to fret, to worry? How can you not worry about what we see on the news every day?

Does turning our eyes upon Jesus help? Is it one of Satan's strategies to get us to focus upon the problem rather than the solution, to get us to focus on the disease rather than the cure?

THURSDAY

The lesson points us in detail to Psalm 37 so let's go through it from the *Remedy:*

> 1 Do not be distraught over the apparent gains of the selfish
> or envy those who persist in violating God's design of love; [Why not? It isn't fair is it? Why should those who do wrong prosper? Shouldn't they suffer? What law lens are you viewing the selfish and wicked through?]
>
> 2 for they will soon wither like grass,
> like flowers of the field they will fade away.
>
> 3 Trust in the Lord and live to love others;
> be active in your community as a shepherd of God's kingdom of love. [What happens in us if we do this?]
>
> 4 When you delight in the Lord,
> he will give you what your heart desires. [What does this mean? Does it mean God will give us the numbers to the next winning lottery ticket? No, it means our hearts are in harmony with God's and we will desire what He desires for us, that's why He will give us what we desire.]
>
> 5 Commit yourself to following God's plan — living in harmony with his designs;
> trust him with how life turns out and he will do what is best:
>
> 6 he will renew your character into righteous love that shines brighter every day;
> your decisions will radiate goodness like the noonday sun. [What is the focus of the righteous? On God's kingdom of truth, love, liberty, which operates where? Within us!]
>
> 7 Rest in the Lord and be patient for his plan to unfold;
> don't be distraught when the selfish seem to succeed —
> when they carry out their wicked schemes. [This is the verse the lesson focused our attention upon. Do we see why we don't need to be distraught when the selfish seem to succeed? Because every act of sin damages them; they are hardening their hearts, searing their consciences, warping their characters and destroying their souls. We don't need to be jealous of them for they have nothing of eternal value. We need to, like Jesus, pray, "Father forgive them they don't know what they are doing."]
>
> 8 Don't let anger or resentment take root in your heart;
> don't worry or ruminate — it only inflames selfishness. [Do you see how our modern media, politics, programming, messaging constantly seeks to divide society on issues that are designed to incite anger, instill resentment, cause fear and worry, and inflame selfishness. What is happening in the world is part of the roar of the lion, inflaming fear, driving selfishness and division. Don't listen to the messaging of the world, focus on Jesus, understand His character and methods of truth, love, freedom and then follow the truth on all subjects.]

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

9 And selfish people will sever themselves from life,
but those who trust in the Lord will inherit the earth. [Why will the selfish die? What happens? Who decides for the selfish that they die eternally? From where does the inheritance for the righteous come? Is this inheritance a legal pronouncement, a ruling, or is it something literal, experiential, objective that we receive? When a branch is grafted into a vine does it receive something that is not its own by right, does it begin to inherit something from the vine? When we are grafted into Jesus do we inherit something actual from Him that lives and operates within us and brings forth new life? But doesn't the Bible say the meek inherit the earth? Isn't the land, the world, our inheritance? Then why am I suggesting we receive our inheritance through being grafted to Jesus? Romans 6:23 the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life—is an inheritance a right or a gift? But what kind of a gift is an inheritance? It is a gift given to once descendants. Meaning it goes to members of the family, the children of the patriarch. And what makes us children of God? Being reborn into the family of God, dying to sin and selfishness and having our hearts renewed to be like Jesus. And what causes us to experience this renewal, this regeneration, this recreation to be like Jesus? It is being grafted into the Vine, Jesus, being won back to trust and opening the heart to Him and receiving His indwelling presence so that He writes His law upon our hearts and minds. And we receive His law, character, methods written upon our hearts and ultimately inherit the earth made new as our home. But we don't get the earth made new as our home unless we first inherit from Jesus the gift of a new heart and right spirit.]

10 It won't be long, and the selfish will be no more;
you will consider their place in the universe and realize they no longer exist. [Why won't the selfish be in the universe? How does that come about? Do we need to be jealous and envious of those who are destroying themselves by embracing and practicing the methods of God's enemy?]

11 But the humble who trust the Lord and love others will inherit the earth
and enjoy everlasting peace. [Have you experienced more peace when you love others, trust the Lord, and are humble, and more stress when you fight with others who are arrogant and selfish?]

12 The selfish plot against the unselfish
and viciously attack them; [Why? Why did the selfish plot against Jesus and attack Him? Was Jesus seeking to harm anyone? Do the true followers of Jesus seek to harm others? Do they seek to take from others? Or are the followers of Jesus seeking to uplift others, bless others, protect others, and advance the only principles and practices that bring health and life? Then why do the selfish attack the followers of Jesus?

Because the natural result of sin, of selfishness, is guilt, fear, and shame. These emotions are painful and no one wants to experience them. There are only two ways to avoid *feeling* these feelings. The godly way, which is through repentance and renewal in which we receive new hearts and right spirits and we live new lives with new motives and we stop living selfishly.

This is almost always a painful experience, walking through the valley of the shadow of death in which we feel like we are dying, but we are only dying to the old selfish nature because our Shepherd is leading us in the paths of righteousness for the restoration of our soul.

But because this is a painful renewal process, because it requires giving up old ways, old ideas, old habits, old addictions, old pleasures, old beliefs, old power, many people reject this path and instead choose the other way to avoid these feelings—denial and distortion. Denying anything is wrong, distorting their minds and their understanding of what is happening, projecting their dysfunction and defects out of themselves onto others and blaming others as a means of making themselves feel better. "it wasn't me, it was the woman you gave me" Adam cried.

Those who refuse repentance will use denial and distortion as a means of avoiding the inherit guilt, shame, fear, and sense of inadequacy that comes from being out of harmony with God and His designs for life. But when they come into the presence of the righteous, the rightness of the life of the godly condemns them even if the righteous say nothing. Their denial and distortions don't work and they feel the pressure of guilt, shame, fear, inadequacy and will do several things to avoid this.

- They will seek to tempt the righteous to join them in their sinful and dysfunctional living.
- If the righteous graciously refuse, then they will try and force the righteous person tell them how good they are.
- They will try and justify their sin, making excuses and defending themselves.
- They will make themselves out to be victims, it isn't their fault, and they will present their struggles into the face of the righteous and demand the righteous tell them that they are okay. If the righteous comply and agree that evil is good, that perversion is purity, that the wicked are righteous, then the denial of the guilty is maintained and their guilt, shame, fear suppressed and they move on.
- But if the righteous do not comply, but maintain a godly standard of living, then the wicked will become angry and accuse the righteous of being intolerant, judgmental, abusive, bigoted etc. and will use whatever means possible to try and punish and destroy the righteous. This is what the unrighteous did to Jesus and do you see this happening in the world today?]

13 but the Lord laughs at their foolishness,
for he sees their end approaching. [We don't need to fear the lies, attacks, plots of the wicked because they are only destroying themselves.]

14 The selfish draw their knives
and load their guns
to kill the humble and those who refuse to defend themselves —
to destroy those who live in harmony with God's designs.

15 But their knives cut through their own hearts,

and their guns will be broken. [What law lens do we see things through? Do we remember "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28 NIV84)?]

16 It is better to be unselfish and poor
than to be selfish and rich; [Why? Is this what the world teaches? Do we remember the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world.]

17 for the selfish are terminal and will lose all they have,
but the unselfish receive life from the Lord. ["For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26 NKJV).

18 The Lord cares for the unselfish,
and they inherit eternal life. [The Lord "cares" in this verse refers to actively providing for and intervening in the lives of the unselfish, the "cares" here is not referring to compassion or concern for people. God cannot provide for the welfare of the wicked when they refuse the truth, love, and grace that is the basis of their healing and restoration. Thus God cannot actively care for those who reject His care.]

19 In the time of trouble they will not be ashamed;
in the days of spiritual famine, they will be filled. [Daniel was not ashamed when he was accused of being a traitor to the king and condemned to the lion's den. Peter, Silas, and Paul were not ashamed when they were labeled as heretics by the church and arrested and imprisoned. We will not be ashamed to call Jesus Lord and to stand for the principles of God. And our hearts and minds will be filled with the Spirit of God and the love of God.]

20 But the selfish will perish:
those that oppose the Lord and his design will be like the fat of rams;
consumed in the fires of love, they will go up in smoke. [Why do the wicked perish? Does God want them to die? Who insists on the wicked being cut off from life, from God, from not being part of God's kingdom? The wicked do. It is their choice; they beg for the mountains to fall on them (Revelation 6:16). They do not want to live in a kingdom of infinite truth and love where their lies, denial, and distortion do not work, where they experience the pain and suffering unremedied sin causes. And why are they likened to the "fat of rams"? The fat of the sacrificial animals was burned on the altar and is symbolic of sin. And what happens to lies and selfishness when it is exposed to infinite truth and love? It is consumed. The lies the wicked tell themselves that allow warp their minds in order to avoid their own guilt and shame don't work in the flames of infinite truth and love and thus they suffer the pain that unremedied sin causes and they ultimately choose to let go their lives and voluntarily surrender their existence rather than live in the presence of God being bathed in infinite truth and love.]

21 The selfish take from others and do not return,

but the unselfish give generously. [The two antagonistic principles of the two antagonistic systems of governing. We all choose one or the other as the law we settle into in how we treat others.]

22 Those blessed by the Lord will inherit the earth,
but those who reject the blessing will be cut off. [Why? Is it an arbitrary reward or a natural result? Who does God want to inherit the earth? Or another way to say it, how many humans does God want to be saved and inherit the earth? So if God wants all humans to be saved (1Timothy 2:4) and inherit the earth, then who decides, determines, chooses for those who are not saved to not be saved?]

23 The Lord heals and restores those
who follow his prescription for life;

24 even if they sleep in the grave, they will not be eternally lost,
because the Lord holds on to them. [Do we remember this when a loved one dies from any cause, sickness, accidents, murder, injustice?]

25 Once I was young, but I've lived long and am now old,
yet I have never seen the unselfish abandoned by God
or their children seeking to feed only themselves.

26 They always give generously and lend freely,
and their children live to bless others.

27 Turn from selfishness and love other people;
then you will live forever.

28 For the Lord loves the unselfish — those who live right —
and will not abandon those who faithfully follow him;
he watches over them forever,
but the children of selfishness will be cut off.

29 The unselfish will inherit the earth
and live upon it forever.

30 Those who live in harmony with God's designs speak wisdom,
they tell how reality works — what is right and true.

31 God's design protocol (law) is in their heart
and they don't sidestep it.

32 The selfish spy on the unselfish,
seeking to destroy them;

33 but the Lord will not abandon them to the power of the selfish
or let their condemnation stand. [The wicked will condemn the righteous but they have no true power over them.]

34 Wait expectantly for the Lord
and live in harmony with his way.
He will regenerate you to inherit the earth;
you will see: the selfish will be no more. [We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on the eternal realities, not on the earthly problems. We must not fall into the trap of pursuing human justice, seeking to make justice by implementing artificial rules enforced upon others, such as equity agendas we see so much of. All such actions make things worse and cause harm. We are to live God's principles of equality of all people. Equality is treating everyone with the love, dignity, respect, and autonomy that we each have as beings created in the image of God. Equity is about forcing outcomes based on some identity measure and always causes inequity, injustice, and interferes with individual development and autonomy. Equity sows division in society, incites conflict by creating opposing groups fighting for limited outcome slots, but all under the lie of seeking to improve society. It is a fraud, a lie, a manipulation, a violation of God's methods, recognize it and refuse to support it.]

35 I once saw a selfish and cruel person
who appeared to grow in influence and power like a tree growing in good soil,

36 but when I looked again, they died and were no more:
though I looked for them, they were nowhere to be found. [This will be the result of all the wicked in the end, not an infliction, but the unavoidable result of cutting themselves off from the source of life.]

37 Take note of the person with mature godly character, observe those who live right,
for such living results in peace.

38 But all who rebel against God's design will cease to exist;
the future of the persistently selfish is destruction. [Why? Because they sever their connection with God, the source of life, their end is unavoidable.]

39 The remedy that heals the godly comes from the Lord;
he is their sanctuary in troubled times.

40 The Lord helps them and rescues them;
he delivers them from the wicked and cures them from their own selfishness
because they trust in him. [This is the key to health, happiness, victory, and eternal life—the saved trust God; they trust Him with their lives, fortunes, families, futures and are sealed to God. They are so settled into their loyalty, love, devotion, and trust that no lie, persecution,

trial, tribulation, or mistreatment can shake them from their trust. These are the perfected of God!]

MONDAY

Read Romans 5:6 and Galatians 4:4-5:

> "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6 NIV84).

> "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV84).

Then read first paragraph, "In these verses…" What do you think made it the right time for Jesus' incarnation? Why do you think God waited in human history until He did?

What ideas have you heard?

Was the plan of salvation only for human beings or was the work that Jesus was to accomplish to encompass more than just humans?

> "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven,** by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84).

So God was working to save humans from sin, but also to stop the rebellion in heavenly realms, to secure the unfallen sinless beings in their loyalty.

Remember, angelic perfection had already failed in heaven, while 2/3's of the angels stayed loyal to Jesus, the issues that Lucifer raised that led 1/3 to rebel had not been fully dealt with and resolved. God, through Jesus, not only had to provide what was necessary to save human beings from sin, but also had to do it in such a way that His actions would resolve the issues raised by Lucifer and secure the loyal angels into their loyalty.

We read about this in various places like Colossians one that we just read, but Jesus references it when He said:

> "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* to myself" (John 12:31-32 NIV84).

If your version has "men" in it, that word is supplied by the translators, it is not in the Greek. Jesus wasn't drawing only humans to Himself at the cross, but heavenly beings as well.

Jesus' crucifixion would pronounce judgment upon this world and the prince of this world—what kind of judgment is this? Was the crucifixion of Jesus a legal court setting? No! It is the judgment that Paul wrote about in Romans 3:4:

> "let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged'" (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

The war began in heaven when Lucifer lied about God and deceived 1/3 of the angels into judging God falsely and rebelling against Him. While 2/3's stayed loyal, they had questions that needed answering lest they also eventually lose trust in God and rebel.

Jesus is saying that at the cross He will be lifted up and reveal the truth about God, His character and methods of truth, love, and liberty and expose Satan as the liar and fraud that he is and Satan's methods as the source of all pain, suffering, and death. When this truth is fully revealed then Satan's power to deceive will be broken in the hearts and minds of all who see and embrace the truth, thus Satan will be drive out. He will be driven out of the shadows, out into the open for all to see him for who and what he really is and when that happens his power is broken and Jesus by being lifted up will draw all beings who value truth to Himself, including the angels in heaven.

The angels who witnessed this had their questions about God answered and Satan was revealed as the liar and murderer that he is and thus the angelic host in heaven pronounced judgment that God and Jesus are holy, holy, holy (we read about this in Revelation after Jesus' ascension), and Satan was cast out of the affections of all the angels in heaven. From that point forward Satan's work was restricted to earth not by physical force, but by the reality that no angel in heaven would listen to anything Satan had to say. Only on earth are intelligent beings still listening to Satan and believing his lies.

Okay, so with all that in mind, why wait until that time in human history for Jesus to come in order to provide salvation for humans but also reveal truth to angels?

What is the central issue in the war—God's trustworthiness—and what is Satan's angle to undermine trust in God? That God abuses power by imposing law that requires God to punish lawbreakers. In other words, Satan's lies are rooted in lies about God's law and methods, specifically that God's laws function like human laws, made up rules requiring God to use power to punish. This makes God out to be the source of death and the one whom we need to be protected from, and thus theologies develop about appeasing God, or propitiating His wrath, or paying Him legal penalties, or ransoms, or mediation to plead human blood to God to calm God down. In other words, the false law view that Satan originated undermines trust and incites rebellion against God.

How does this connect with when Jesus came in history?

Prior to this point in human history, where do we find a people who appear to be keeping the blueprint, the laws that God gave them? Nowhere! This is the first time in human history that a group of people appear to be keeping the law God gave through Moses.

- Sabbath keeping
- Sacrificed the right animals in the right way at the right times in the right place
- Ate the right foods
- Paid the right tithe
- Dressed the right way
- Obeyed the right commandments
- They no longer sacrificed to Baal, Molech, or any other pagan god

From the outside, they appeared to be keeping all the rules that God gave them. And when Jesus came and lived among them, what happened? They hated Him and killed Him.

Understand the significance, angels cannot read hearts and minds, and it is possible to behaviorally appear similar. The person who loves others more than self will not cheat, or murder, but the person who keeps the rules out of fear of punishment may never cheat or commit murder. It can appear quite similar from the outside. When Jesus came we finally have a group of people who are rule-keeping, who are following the script God gave through Moses. But rule-keeping of the RIGHT rules for the wrong reasons turns one into a rebel who will kill Jesus. In other words, the timing of Jesus' appearance, to a group of law-keeping followers of Yahweh, revealed that God's kingdom and government is not legal, is not imposed law, is not rule keeping, but is spiritual, is design law, is based upon truth, love, and freedom and operates in the deepest recesses of the intelligent being.

God cannot get what He wants through imposed rules and inflicted punishments. And angels finally saw, not just Satan exposed as a liar and fraud, not just God revealed in Jesus to be completely trustworthy to have all power, but that God's laws are not imposed, that rule-keeping, a legal religion that keeps the right rules, still turns people into rebels against God.

We need this lesson today as we approach the second coming of Christ. We need to return to worship the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water and whose laws are design laws and reject the imposed law dictator view of a legal god in which salvation is a legal process. For those who worship the legal imposed law punishing god will become like him and just like the Jews 2000 years ago will be among the worst enemies of God.

So why does God wait for certain times to act? What is God waiting for? Could it be that God is waiting for us?

Peter suggests in 2 Peter 3:12 that we can hasten the day of the Lord's appearing, what do you think of this idea?

When the Bible talks about delay, if there is a delay is it truly ever on God's part, or is it on our part, humanity's part, God waiting for us to respond to His saving grace?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on king David and the patience he revealed from the time he was anointed to be the next king by Samuel until he actually became king.

What enabled king David to exercise such patience?

Where did David place his trust?

David's attitude was that if God wanted him to be king then God would bring it about in God's timing and David didn't have to do anything to make it happen other than stay faithful to God.

What might have happened if David, after the anointing started campaigning to overthrow Saul?

What would have happened to David's character? What would have likely happened to the nation?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points to Elijah's running away after Carmel when he was threatened, let's read the account from 1Kings 19:

> Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."
>
> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.
>
> All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.
>
> The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.
>
> And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."
>
> The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."
>
> Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.
>
> Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
>
> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."
>
> The LORD said to him… "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1Kings 19:1-15 & 18 NIV84).

What lessons do we learn from this?

- Mighty people of faith, like Elijah, still struggle with human emotions
- People of faith do not know all things and can make false assumptions, and the assumptions can impact the choices we make—being alone when 7000 were still faithful
- God uses power, but God is not found in power, nor does God describe Himself as power, God describes Himself as love and truth
- What impact does might and power have upon the heart? Does love and truth advance most effectively during great displays of might and power, or do might and power incite fear and this can make it more difficult to grow in love and truth?
- Thus the still small voice, the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. God advances His kingdom by truth and love working gently upon hearts and minds without intimidation and threats why?
- Because what God wants cannot be achieved by threat, force, or external power. It is the internal power of truth and love that achieves what God wants.
- But didn't God just use might and power at Carmel? Why if He can't advance His kingdom by might and power? Might and power can cause people to stop and listen, but it cannot cause people to love and trust.

Did Elijah learn this lesson? Evidently yes, because later Elijah is transported to heaven without seeing death.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Have you ever considered this? Have you ever sung the song, swing low sweet chariot?

Have you ever wondered why aren't more people taken to heaven like Elijah was?

Would you want to go if it were offered to you?

Would you leave behind, right now today, your spouse, children, grandchildren to go to heaven where you would be able to watch the behind the scenes struggles of your family, the temptations, the secret sins, the exploitations, the sufferings and heartaches, and you wouldn't be here to support them, comfort them and encourage them?

Would you go? It would be a very difficult decision. Maybe this is why Elijah was taken because as far as we know he didn't have any immediate family, no wife, no children, thoughts?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 12
Dying Like a Seed

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Let's read the memory text, John 12:23-26:

> "Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me'" (John 12:23–26 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

> "Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'"

What is Jesus referring to when He says the time has come for Him to be glorified? Is He referring to might, power, pomp, signs, or wonders?

He is referring to His crucifixion; to being beaten, abused, treated unjustly, and dying on the cross. How is this glorifying Him?

What is God's glory? His character of love! And why does God's glory, His character, need to be revealed at such cost? Because Satan's primary war effort is lies about God and those lies caused confusion throughout the universe and the truth about God and God's character and methods of love needed to be revealed to settle all questions about God's trustworthiness.

So how was the crucifixion the means to glorify Jesus? Jesus had all power and at the crucifixion what does Jesus do with all power? He restrained the use of His power; He left His sinful creatures free to abuse and mistreat Him. He revealed that He values the freedom of His intelligent creatures more than He values protecting Himself, which means He revealed He is love and how love actually works. He submitted to injustice, to abuse, to death and in doing so He destroyed the lies about God that Satan told, and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness within the humanity that He assumed thereby perfecting humanity and thus, even though He was buried, He rose again demonstrating that God's laws are the laws of life.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Notice what Jesus says in this same conversation about His being glorified by His refusal to use power to protect Himself, but instead He accomplishes His goal by surrendering Himself in love to protect the liberty of His creatures, even protecting the liberty of His enemies to abuse and kill Him:

> "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. [Jesus knew this was His mission, to confront and overcome the lies, but also to purify the species human by destroying the infection of fear and selfishness, the carnal drives of sin that corrupt the human species. Thus He rose again as the new head of a new humanity that He perfected.] Father, glorify your name!"
> Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.
> Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. **Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself**." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die." (John 12:27-33 NIV84). [The word "men" is supplied, it is not in the Greek. Jesus didn't say He would draw all men to Himself, but He would draw all unto Himself. Jesus was including the unfallen angels in heaven. As Colossians 1:20 says "all things in **heaven** and earth are **reconciled** to Christ at the cross." The lies of Satan were refuted at the cross. God and Jesus were revealed to be trustworthy and all sympathy for Satan in the loyal beings in heaven was severed. Satan's work was restricted after the cross by the revelation of truth of God's character, methods, principles fully lived out by Jesus. God was glorified in His Son at the cross]

When we think of God's glory do we think of His character of love?

When we think of the 3 Angels' messages and the call to "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:7 NIV84), do we think about loving others and sacrificing self like Jesus did as the way to give God glory? Or do we present a god who makes up rules and then we tell people that if they don't obey His rules then they are in legal trouble because God is sitting in judgment and if they don't stop breaking His rules He is going to declare them guilty and then use His power to inflict pain and suffering upon them before He kills them? Is this the message we are to share to the world in order to bring God glory? Or is such a penal/legal punishing god the very picture of a human dictator, the very character of Satan, the very same type of power used against Jesus by His crucifiers and the opposite of the glorious character of God?

> "Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me'" (John 12:23–26 NIV84).

So what does it mean to glorify God? What are the lessons of the kernel falling into the ground and dying?

There are multiple:

First, is what Jesus said directly. The seed is an object lesson of Jesus, as our Savior, dying and being buried only to come forth in a new and perfected humanity, the second Adam, who provides the remedy to sin and thereby Jesus brings forth much fruit—the saved throughout history who have partaken if Jesus' victory and been saved from sin.

Second, this lesson applies to us individually. We are required to "die" to sin, to selfishness, to the old carnal nature and rise again with a new heart and right spirit, living a new life with new motives that come from Jesus. So, the object lesson also applies to us individually, we are to die to the survival drives, the fear driven, me-first, self-advancement motives of this world, and live to love God and others more than self, sacrificing self for the good of others.

Now let's explore this concept a little more. Was the death of Christ an event that brought an end to life, or an event that brought an end to death and the death causing principle and opened the way for eternal life to be experienced by us?

> "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, [this is self-sacrificial love, this is dying to selfishness by giving of self for the advancement of God's kingdom] by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. [Saved us? From what? From Himself, from an angry punishing god who would use power to torture and kill us? No! From sin, from the death causing principle that corrupts us.] This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, [think about that—how could this grace be given us in Christ Jesus before time was even created? Which means before we were created, which means before angels were created? Because this grace is not something new, it is the eternal gospel spoken of in the 3 angels' messages, the eternal good news that has always been true about God. God's character of love has never changed, it has always been the same. God's design laws of love have never changed, they have always been and always will be constants that life is built upon. The only thing that changed was Lucifer corrupted himself and spread lies about God causing the perspective of angels and humans to change, to question God, to distrust Him and to be afraid of Him, to view God as authoritarian and unforgiving, severe, and punishing. But this was never true. God has always been and will always be the same, God is love and God is always for us and never needs anything done to Him to save us. But we need something done to us to return us to trust in Him so that we will cooperate with Him so that He can heal and save us. And Jesus is true to Himself and committed Himself to be our Savior before time was even created.] but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, **who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light** through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:8-10 NIV84). [Jesus death wasn't the death that ends life, it was the death that ends the cause of death, that destroys sin, that destroys rebellion, that destroys Satan and Satan's power of death (Hebrews 2:14) and fully restores God's living law

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

of love into the species human, which means perfectly restores the species to unity with God, the source of life and thus brings life and immortality to light.]

When we think about the seed falling into the dirt and "dying" that seed still has the life-causing principle in it, but it dies to what it was so that it can live to what it can be in God's purpose. Jesus died as our Savior in order to destroy the infection of sin, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84). Jesus died to destroy sin, Satan, death, Satan's power, and Satan's work and restore God's law and character back into the living temple, the showcase where God created it to be—the human being and this is why He rose again, it was the predictable, inevitable, unavoidable result of His completing His mission. Unity with God, knowing God intimately, loving and trusting Him, having His living law of love written upon the heart through that intimate love connection with God is life. Jesus could predict His resurrection because He knew what He was going to accomplish, not because of prophetic vision of the future.

We just read 2 Timothy 1:10 about destroying death, here are the texts about what else Christ destroyed by His death:

- "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).
- "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8 NIV84).
    - And what has Satan worked to accomplish? To destroy the image of God in human beings and put Satan's image where God's should be. Satan has been jealous of Jesus as Creator and humans as pro-creators and Satan has labored to make beings in his image, specifically to turn humanity into, as Revelation calls it, "synagogues of Satan." But in Jesus all of Satan's corruption has been purged and God's perfection has been fully and completely restored into the species human and in Jesus we have a perfect, sinless human being. Jesus justified or put right the species human in the humanity He took upon Himself and carried through the cross. Now a human being stands at the right hand of the Father and wields the power of the Godhead because that human being is none other than God Himself, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And when we are united through faith in Jesus, His life, His love, His victory is reproduced in us through the indwelling Spirit and the infection of fear and selfishness is displaced as the motivating power of our actions. We are still tempted in this world, but our motivation is our love, trust, and devotion to God and we choose to align ourselves with God and choose His methods relying on His power to overcome and succeed.

There is another lesson from the seed falling to the ground and dying and that is the lesson of the resurrection from the first death to immortal life in an earth made new.

Paul wrote:

> "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power" (1 Corinthians 15:42-43 KJV).

Jesus said,

> "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 NIV84).

Do we believe this?

Then this dying isn't the cessation of life it is something else? It is a pause, a sleep, a state of suspended animation, a timeout, an interruption of active living, but it is not the cessation of existence. Thus, it is not the death that is the result of unremedied sin in the life.

The Bible refers to two deaths, the first death, which is described as this sleep—just like your computer running out of power goes to sleep. Jesus said this of His friend Lazarus and went to the grave to wake him up. That death was not the death the wicked die in the end. The first death, the sleep death is the death of grace, of mercy; it is an artificial state of pause permitted by God for the plan of salvation to be carried out.

But the Bible refers to a second death, a death that comes after the 1000 years, after the great white throne judgment, a death from which there is no resurrection, a death in which the individuality of wicked are eternally destroyed and they live no more. This is death from sin, the actual cessation of existence.

Now, the question, what causes the death that is the wages of sin? Does sin cause this eternal death or does God cause this death as a punishment for sin?

If God were to do nothing, to exercise no power, to take no action, but merely to allow events and circumstances to operate in their natural way, in harmony with Himself and His design laws for life, would the wicked live eternally in sin or would they die?

I recently had a conversation with a very intelligent and sincere Christian gentleman who takes the position that God, for justice sake, is the cause of death for the wicked. He suggests that God takes an action that causes the death of the wicked in the end. He argues that God, by revealing His glory, is killing them by this action and this is justice and the punishment for sin.

It is a subtle misinterpretation of reality that comes from the imposed law view, the idea that God's law functions like human law and that God as Sovereign must use power to inflict the pain and suffering and death upon the wicked for justice sake.

But the facts are being interpreted backwards—as soon as Adam sinned God, in mercy began taking an action, using power, intervening, interceding in ways that are artificial, that are not natural to His

universe, in order to stop sin and save His children. What action did God take that was artificial, but an act of grace to save sinners? God veiled Himself. He withdrew His infinite life-giving glory from planet earth, to prevent the destruction of humanity that would have occurred had He not. Adam and Eve suddenly found themselves naked and cold and they sought to cover themselves because God's light was no longer their covering. The natural state in God's universe is to be bathed and covered in light, like Elijah and Moses were on the mount of transfiguration; like the millions described in Daniel when the Ancient of days takes His throne and rivers of fire come out from Him.

After Adam sinned, God in mercy withdrew His full presence, His sustaining power didn't flow over the planet any longer in its fullest sense and nature began to decay, mutations entered, things began to wither and die, including human beings. Aging and the sleep death are not inflicted punishments by God for sin, they are a result of God's grace working, of God veiling His presence to allow the plan of salvation to be carried out.

Remember God said to Moses, "no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20 NIV84). Why?

What destroys the lawless in the end? The brightness of Jesus' coming (2Thes 2:8).

So what does the Bible teach is the cause of eternal death? Is God the source of death, does death come out from God? Or is God the source of life and death is the unavoidable result of breaking away from God and refusing reconciliation and healing that God freely offers? In other words, death results from unremedied sin which severs the connection with God, the source of life and occurs when God stops using power to protect the wicked and returns the universe to its normal state, filled with His glory. Any Bible verses on this?

- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 NIV84).
- "Sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:15 NIV84).
- "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).

So first death is a sleep, a timeout, a pause, a mercy of God's grace for the purpose of carrying out the plan of salvation, while the second death is the eternal destruction of the sinner the eternal cessation of life that comes from sin for all who refuse God's healing.

But, is the terminology of "dying" that doesn't actually result in death but results in life confusing?

I use this concept a lot in marriage counseling when dealing with a toxic marital situation in which certain practices are employed that are damaging to both parties, yet both parties want to save the marriage, but they don't want to go on like this.

What are they saying they want? They want the old way of relating to die and they want to have a new relationship with new motives, practices, principles that bring forth fruits of joy, love, kindness, health, and wellness. They don't want to return to the old ways, the old relationship, they want to kill it so they can have a new relationship in which new and healthy ways of living are employed.

And what would be required for them to have such a new and healthy marriage? Healthy relationships require healthy people, so the only way for them to kill the dysfunctional marriage and bring forth a new and vibrant one, is for each of them to die to fear, sin, and selfishness and be reborn with godly principles—God's living law active and functioning in their hearts and minds.

This is what the Bible is teaching—we must die to all the ways that are harmful, the fear-based self-centered motives that break the very protocols that life and health are built upon. When we do this, we do die to the old destructive habits and ways and are reborn into Jesus Christ and His life begins to flow into us renewing us as new creatures in Him.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Contemporary culture…" Is this correct? Are we to give up our rights? Do we have any inalienable rights that we are never to surrender? Did Jesus surrender His rights?

The lesson points us to Philippians 2:5-9 in which Jesus did not think equality with God was something to be grasped but humbled Himself into humanity and all the way to the cross.

There is no question that Jesus sacrificed Himself and surrendered His original position in heaven in order to take a lowly position on Earth, for the purpose we already explored, to complete His mission of stopping the rebellion of sin and saving humanity. But did Jesus give up His rights to do so?

It all depends on what law lens you are thinking through. If we use the human law lens then Jesus gave up His rights, but if we use God's design law, then we see something beautiful and incredible.

Did Jesus have the right to save humanity after Adam sinned? Did Jesus give up that right or did He exercise that right?

Who is the rightful ruler of planet Earth, Adam or Jesus? Did Adam rule Earth as Creator and owner of the Earth, or was Adam's rule subordinate to God and under the rightful authority of Jesus? When Adam sinned and Satan claimed Adam's position as ruler of Earth, did Jesus surrender His right to Earth and cede it to Satan or did Jesus retain His right and exercise His powers for the purpose of overthrowing Satan, destroying Satan's power (as we read in Hebrews 2:14) and redeeming Earth from Satan's clutches?

When Jesus was on Earth 2000 years ago, did He surrender His right to heal, to save, to forgive sins, to set captives free? Did Jesus surrender His right to teach and reveal the truth about the Father to the religious authorities and theology professors?

Did Jesus surrender His right to life? Or did Jesus say that He was laying down His life only to pick it up again?

> "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority [the right] to lay it down and authority [the right] to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (John 10:17-18 NIV84). [This command—this mission, the Father sent Jesus to accomplish their joint mission to overthrow Satan, destroy sin, destroy death, and save humanity. God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself.]

Did Jesus surrender His rights or retain them and exercise them?

Did Jesus surrender His freedom or retain His freedom?

When Peter cut off the High Priest's ear,

> "Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'"(John 18:11 NIV84)

> "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:53-54 NIV84).

Did Jesus surrender His right to joy or did Jesus retain His right:

> "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who **for the joy set before him endured the cross**, scorning its shame, and **sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**" (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84).

Did Jesus surrender or retain His right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?

Jesus retained and exercised His rights, but did so only in harmony with reality, with God's kingdom, through living out God's design laws of truth, love, and liberty.

The argument of the lesson about giving up our rights applies only when we view our rights through human law, **because human law is about imposing our will on others, forcing others to submit to our ways**, it is imperial, demanding that others acknowledge us and treat us the way we insist is our right.

But the kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17:21), and when we exercise the authority God has given us over ourselves to live out His methods and principles we never seek to force the hearts, minds, and consciences of others, but we also never surrender our right to live godly lives to the ungodly either. So we will not collude with beastly methods of coercion of consciences, even if we lose our government reimbursements, our jobs, or our freedom to travel etc.

Satan is a liar and he deceives by getting people to replace the laws of God for the methods and laws of humanity and then to seek to advance their rights through imperial methods of legislation, force,

coercion upon others, rather than advancing our rights through living out the truth, the love, and the methods of God in how we treat others.

MONDAY

Read Romans 12:1-2:

> "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2 NIV84).

The lesson states, "It is only the renewed mind that truly can understand God's will."

What does it mean to have a renewed mind?

Can you think of any ways in which a renewed mind thinks differently than an unrenewed mind?

What do you think about what the verse itself says, that "you will be able to test and approve what God's will is"?

What does this mean? Are we to test and then approve God's will? Aren't we merely to surrender and submit to God's will? If we are to test and approve God's will what would that mean for our thinking process? Are we to reason, comprehend and understand, or are we merely to submit and do what God instructs?

Does the renewed mind seek to understand God while the unrenewed mind seeks to simply obey?

Does the renewed mind seek an enlightened and intelligent faith while the unrenewed mind has "blind" faith?

Does the renewed mind seek to understand God's methods and principles and intelligently live in harmony with them, while the unrenewed mind seeks to determine the right rules and the authorized way to keep the rules?

Does the renewed mind, with a jealousy for God's reputation, humbly question what God has said while the unrenewed mind seeks to obey and never question what God has said? Consider Abraham questioning God about Sodom or Moses questioning God about destroying the people? Did they have renewed minds? Would it have been better had they taken the position "Who am I to question God. If the Sovereign has said it, I believe it, and that is all there is to it."

What about John 15:15 Jesus says:

> "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15 NIV84).

Does a friend of God have a renewed mind? What about a servant?

Is there a difference between the attitude and mindset of a friend and that of a servant?

What does God want from us and why?

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph, "When Eve…" What is being suggested? Is it being suggested that Eve was to believe that she did not have the ability to think, to comprehend, to reason, to understand? Was she to believe she was incapable of determining the right from the wrong and choosing the right? Was she not to exercise and use her own judgment and make a choice?

In fact, wasn't the Tree of Knowledge put in the garden for this express purpose, to give Adam and Eve the opportunity to be confronted in the most gentle way possible, with a choice—a choice to trust or distrust God? To believe God or believe the lies of Satan about God and then act upon what they chose to believe?

At the Tree of knowledge, would they choose to know the truth and trust God and thereby choose to know love, loyalty, and friendship with God and solidify themselves into beings with characters like God's, or would they choose to know fear, selfishness, disloyalty, shame, guilt, and death?

The tree was the place where they were to exercise the abilities God gave them and choose. It was not placed there for them to become mindless servants who refuse to think who simply turn off their reasoning abilities and say, "God said it who am I to question or seek to understand." They were to think through all that God had given them, all that He had revealed about Himself and that they knew personally about Him and compare that to the lies being told and conclude the serpent is lying and that God is trustworthy; they were to be fully settled into their understanding and loyalty to God because they thought the issues through and had been fully persuaded in their own minds. They were to mature and the mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong (Hebrews 5:14).

The lesson next focuses on King Saul's downfall and they suggest his downfall was a three step process in which Saul "saw" the scattering of his troops, then "said" to himself that the Philistines would win, so he "felt" compelled to offer sacrifice.

The situation was that an army of Philistines was gathering and Saul initially has about 3000 men. Samuel was to meet them, but for 10 days doesn't come and Saul is fearful, doesn't show faith or

confidence in the Lord, and his men start deserting, ultimately by the time Samuel arrives there are about 600 men left with Saul.

> Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. 8 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. 9 So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. 10 Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.
>
> 11 "What have you done?" asked Samuel.
>
> Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, 12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."
>
> 13 "You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. 14 But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command." (1 Samuel 13:7-14 NIV84).

Why did Saul lose the kingdom over this? Didn't he, in dire circumstances turn to the Lord? He didn't go to the witch of Endor here, what did he do wrong?

He misrepresented God and treated God like a pagan god, like Baal, a god that requires sacrifice to be offered to get the god to intervene and help. He didn't actually trust God, but thought he had to pay god, influence god, bribe god with a sacrifice to get a blessing.

TUESDAY

The lesson points our attention to the story of Samuel as a child and hearing the voice calling his name and eventually realizing it wasn't Eli, but God, and Samuel responds with "speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

The lesson points out that the Holy Spirit is the still small voice that speaks gently to those who are willing to listen. Why? Why does the Spirit work this way?

What does God want from us and for us? God wants our understanding friendship, love, loyalty, devotion, and agreement with Him. Can God get this by intimidating, frightening, or in any way threatening us? What happens if we are overwhelmed with might and power? Does it lead to love, trust, understanding friendship? Or does intense stress impair thinking, learning, and growth?

Yes, when we are frightened, when our fear circuits fire, it impairs the function of the prefrontal cortex and the ability to think, reason, comprehend, process new concepts and ideas are impaired, further the more fear the more self-concerned we become, we regress into survival modes of fight, flight, of freezing.

God doesn't want this for us, thus the God works, not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit, and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love, in an atmosphere of absolute freedom.

If that is so, then why did God thunder at Sinai, why did God send earthquakes, she bears, and fire at Mount Carmel?

While it is true that understanding friendship, love, trust, and loyalty can only be achieved through the gentle application of truth and love, gentle truths cannot be heard in the middle of a riot. So, God sometimes raises His voice to quiet the audience and get them to listen. And at Sinai when God thundered and all the people were terrified, there was Moses standing there in the middle of it all saying, "there is no need to be afraid." God was not their enemy, any more than if you would be if you came home to find your teenagers having a wild party with loud music, alcohol, drugs and several people were on the roof about to jump with umbrellas to see if they would work like parachutes and you yelled loud enough to stop the chaos. You are not the enemy of your children or their friends, but in that environment raising your voice was necessary to stop the chaos and hopefully over the next days and weeks get your children to listen.

But if they won't listen, then what happens as a result of mere power to quiet the chaos?

- What happened after the flood—the tower of Babel
- What happened after the plagues of Egypt—the golden calf
- What happened after the earth swallowed Korah and the other rebels—more grumbling and complaining
- What happened after the fire fell at Mount Carmel—more rebellion and eventual captivity in Babylon

Can God get understanding friends by the use of might and power? No! He can only get temporary cessation of chaos, but if people won't listen to the gentle voice of truth and love, what more can God do for them?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "As we saw yesterday…" What do you think about this? Can shopping make people happy? No, such activities can bring momentary pleasure, but not happiness. Happiness is always a by-product of healthiness, it is the natural result of growing closer to Jesus and living in harmony with His designs for life. Ultimate happiness will be experienced in the Earth made new.

But many people substitute pleasure-seeking for happiness, but pleasure-seeking often breaks the laws of health, the design laws of God and causes more unhappiness which will trigger more pleasure seeking to offset the unhappy feelings—it is a destructive cycle downward.

The only way out is the truth, the truth will set you free, but to begin the walk out of dysfunction to health is painful.

Once there is brokenness of injury of any kind there are no pain free options, the only options are to do what heals or not, but the healthy path is often painful. For those on the pleasure seeking path they almost always avoid the healthy path because it doesn't feel good, and thus then continue down the unhealthy path causing their condition to worsen.

The lesson points out that only supernatural help from God can relieve the pressure and give us victory. I agree with this, we cannot overcome in our own strength, the choice is ours, the power comes from God. But does the supernature help and power always come in obviously supernatural ways? Or is it often the gentle voice of the Spirit of truth and love working on a heart in the quiet moments of the night?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Jennings will still teach SS class and that broadcast will still go out live each Sabbath after he moves to Lynchburg. The schedule will be similar to how it has been with various substitute teachers teaching from time to time.

If you are in our new studio then you will be able to interact live with Dr. Jennings, if you are not in the studio you will get the livestream feed as usual.

NEW MAGAZINE: Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17: Discovering Untold Truths to Prepare for What Comes Next! is now available.

Dr. Jennings presentation at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind, is available at https://odysee.com/@ComeAndReason:4/CovidAndManipulationOfYourMind_UnitedForHealthcareSummit_TimJennings_20220715_1080p30:b

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at https://nationalaacc.com/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q3 In the Crucible with Christ - Lesson 13:
Christ in the Crucible

by Linda Ojala

NOTE: The actual Sabbath School lesson is in yellow, which is included for those who don't have this quarterly lesson.

SABBATH

Overview of the Week

Memory Text: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

This week's study is all about God suffering with us in the trenches….military band of brothers style…forever bonded by our shared experience of suffering under the consequences of sin.

Whenever we look at the issue of suffering, the question comes: How did sin and suffering first arise? Through divine revelation we have good answers: They arose because free beings abused the freedom God had given them. This leads to another question: Did God know beforehand that these beings would fall? Yes, but obviously He thought it was, as C. S. Lewis wrote, "worth the risk."

Worth the risk? For whom? For us, while God sits in heaven on His throne? Not exactly. The freedom of all His intelligent creatures was so sacred that, rather than deny us freedom, God chose to bear in Himself the brunt of the suffering caused by our abuse of that freedom. And we see this suffering in the life and death of Jesus, who, through suffering in our flesh, has created bonds between heaven and earth that will last throughout eternity.

Sometimes I think of us compared with ants. We so easily step on them, poison them, etc. But what type of exchange would it be for us to BECOME an ant, live like one, die like one in excruciating pain, then spend eternity as an ant?

And what do we imagine is the difference between God and us? SO much more!

SUNDAY

The Early Days

Scripture gives us little information about the early years of Jesus. A few verses, however, tell us something about those conditions and the kind of world the Savior entered.

Read Luke 2:7, 22-24 (see also Lev. 12:6-8) and Matthew 2:1-18. What do we see in these verses that gives us an indication of the kind of life Jesus faced from the start?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Poverty - Born in a stable, 2 doves or pigeons (the gift of the poor);

Herod's attempt to kill him, but instead killed all the other boys age 2 and under, since Jesus' parents raced to follow the angel's direction and left for Egypt by night..

Of course, Jesus was not the first person to live in poverty or to face those who wanted to kill Him, even from an early age. There is, however, another element that helps us understand the uniqueness of what Christ suffered from the earliest times.

Read John 1:46. What element does this add to help us understand what sufferings the young Jesus had faced?

Nazareth had a terrible reputation, causing people to think nothing good could come from there.

With the exception of Adam and Eve before the Fall, Jesus was the only sinless person who ever lived on the earth. In His purity, in His sinlessness, He was immersed in a world of sin. What a torture it must have been, even as a child, for His pure soul constantly to be in contact with sin. Even in our hardness because of sin, we ourselves often shrink away from exposure to sins and evil that we find repulsive. Imagine what it must have been like for Christ, whose soul was pure, who wasn't the least bit tainted by sin. Think of the sharp contrast between Himself and others around Him in that regard. It must have been exceedingly painful for Him.

Jesus was purity personified. Goodness is the exception in our world. According to today's media, 'if it bleeds, it leads."

MONDAY

Despised and Rejected of Men

How do we enjoy being around "perfect" people? With Jealousy, undermining, gossiping, undermining, lying about them? "She's SO Purrrfect!" You can probably hear the catty Purrring!

Would we really have treated Jesus any differently than the people of his day did?

We hear his frustration in Scripture:

> **Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.** You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! John 8:43-45
>
> You unbelieving and perverse generation, "Jesus replied," how long shall I stay with you? **How long shall I put up with you**? Matthew 17:17

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **you were not willing**." Matthew 23:37

Can we relate to that? What do we need?

Spiritual Binoculars: Each individual has to focus on what they want to see clearly.

> "Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can SEE the kingdom of God unless they are born again'…..Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but6 the Spirit gives birth to spirit.' John 3:3, 5

As a nurse, I find that much of my advice is not taken, though it would surely make the person I am advising feel better. Now I am to the point that, as one slogan says, "Yes, I'm a nurse….no, I don't want to look at it."

But God gave us spiritual freedom, and freedom means allowing people to have their own beliefs and decisions, even if we disagree with them, even if we know they are going to suffer and maybe even die because of those beliefs and decisions.

James Webb Space Telescope is finding galaxies 9.5 billion light years away, and that is only in one direction from Earth. It's impossible for me to imagine how far light can travel in 9.5 BILLION years!

https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap220713.html

Christ came to our tiny bit of the Milky Way Galaxy and offered himself to create the cure for our fatal spiritual illness.

Read the following verses, all the while keeping in mind the fact that Jesus was divine, the Creator of heaven and earth, and that He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (Matt. 12:22-24; Luke 4:21-30; John 8:58, 59). How do these verses help us understand the sufferings that Jesus faced here on earth?

> **Matt. 12:22-24** Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute
>
> **Luke 4:21-30** The crowd wanted to kill him by throwing him off of a hill, but he walked right through them and left
>
> **John 8:58, 59** Jesus hid himself and walked away from the temple grounds from people trying to stone him.

Whether by leaders, or even by the common people, Jesus' life, acts, and teachings were constantly misunderstood, leading to rejection and hatred by people He came to save. In a certain sense it must be like a parent who sees a wayward child in need of help, and though the parent is willing to give everything for that child, the child spurns the parent, heaping scorn and rejection upon perhaps the

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

only person who can spare that child from utter ruin. That's what Jesus faced while here on earth. How painful it must have been for Him.

Read Matthew 23:37. What does it tell us about how Christ felt about the rejection? As you read, ask yourself, too, "Was He feeling bad for Himself (as we often do when facing rejection), or was it for another reason?" If for another reason, what was it?

Jesus longed to gather, shelter and protect all of his Jewish children, but they weren't willing. In verse 38 Jesus told them that their house is left desolate.

We've all felt the sting of rejection, and maybe our pain was similar to Christ's in that it was unselfish: We were pained, not because we were rejected, but because of what the rejection would mean for the one who was rejecting us (perhaps someone we care about who refuses to accept salvation in Christ). Imagine, though, how it must have felt to Jesus, who was fully aware of what He was to face in order to save them, and at the same time fully aware of what the consequences of their rejection would be. "It was because of His innocence that He [Christ] felt so keenly the assaults of Satan." — Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 129.

TUESDAY

Jesus in Gethsemane

Did God's foreknowledge include "forefeeling"? With us, we start feeling the pain when something bad happens. To God, did He feel this pain forever, since He knew about this event forever?

"And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch" *(Mark 14:34)*.

Whatever Jesus suffered throughout His 33 years here on earth, nothing compared to what He started to face in the last hours before the cross. From the eternal ages *(Eph. 1:1-4; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; Titus 1:1, 2)* the sacrifice of Jesus as the offering for the world's sin was planned, and now it was all coming to pass.

What do the following verses tell us about Christ's suffering in Gethsemane? Matt. 26:39, Mark 14:33-36, Luke 22:41-44.

Matt. 26:39 Jesus asking not to have to go through this, but he would do the Father's will

Mark 14:33-36 Jesus began to be deeply distressed and troubled and he told his disciples he was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"

Luke 22:41-44 An angel had to come and strengthen him, as he was sweating drops of blood.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

"He went a little distance from them — not so far but that they could both see and hear Him — and fell prostrate upon the ground. He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression.

Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet, 'Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.' Zech. 13:7. As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself." — Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 686.

Is there a difference between God's anger and God's wrath in the Bible?

Examples from old and new testament:

1. **"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven** against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that **people are without excuse**. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. **Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts** to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, **God gave them over to shameful lusts**. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, **just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind**, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; **they have no understanding**, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them." Romans 1:18-32

2. "It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and **in the end he thrust them from his presence**." 2 Kings 24:20

3. "Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law. So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart." Isaiah 42: 24,25

4. **"The Lord has given full vent to his wrath; he has poured out his fierce anger.** He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the peoples of the world, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem. **But it happened because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed within her the blood of the righteous.** Now they grope through the streets as if they were blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments. "Go away! You are unclean!" people cry to them. "Away! Away! Don't touch us!" When they flee and wander about, people among the nations say, "They can stay here no longer." **The Lord himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them.** The priests are shown no honor, the elders no favor." Lamentations 4:11-16

5. **"**When God heard them, he was furious; **he rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among humans. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy.** He gave his people over to the sword; he was furious with his inheritance**."** Psalm 78:59-61

6. **"The Lord has opened his arsenal and brought out the weapons of his wrath**, for the Sovereign Lord Almighty has work to do in the land of the Babylonians…. Listen to the fugitives and refugees from Babylon declaring in Zion how **the Lord our God has taken vengeance, vengeance for his temple**. "Summon archers against Babylon, all those who draw the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her for her deeds; do to her as she has done. **For she has defied the Lord, the Holy One of Israel**…. "See, I am against you, you arrogant one," declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty, "for your day has come, **the time for you to be punished**…. This is what the Lord Almighty says: "The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. **All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet their Redeemer is strong; the Lord Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon."** Jeremiah 50:25, 28-29, 31, 33-34

7. "Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath.' In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth." Zephaniah 1:18

God's Anger and Wrath seem to be used somewhat interchangeably, but let's review the sample of texts listed above.

1) **Wrath** - Gave them over to their own destructive thoughts and actions
2) **Anger -** Thrust them from His presence
3) **Anger –** Handed over Judah and Israel handed over to be plundered, to war, but
    a. they still didn't learn
4) **Anger and Wrath** - enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem. The Lord himself scattered them; he no longer watches over them
5) **Furious -** he rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among humans. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy. He gave his people over to the sword; he was furious with his inheritance
6) **Wrath** - the weapons of his wrath, the time for you [Babylon] to be punished, <u>All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go.</u> Yet their Redeemer is strong; the Lord Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause
7) **Wrath** - In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth

WEDNESDAY

The Crucified God

Imagine an America with crucifixion – public, naked death – for anything the government deemed wrong, or "inappropriate! We are so used to hearing about the crucifixion, but perhaps don't realize all that occurred to Jesus. So, I looked up an article called

'**A Physician's View of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ' by <u>Dr. C. Truman Davis</u>** for a description of crucifixion:

> "…. the upright post, or stipes, was generally fixed permanently in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the patibulum [the cross piece], weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution.
>
> Many of the painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixion, also show the nails through the palms. Historical Roman accounts and experimental work have established that the nails were

driven between the small bones of the wrists (radial and ulna) and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when made to support the weight of the human body. The misconception may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas, "Observe my hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrist as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually placed on a staff, carried at the front of the procession from the prison, and later nailed to the cross so that it extended above the head. This sign with its staff nailed to the top of the cross would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

But, of course, the physical passion of the Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, the one of greatest physiological interest is the bloody sweat. It is interesting that St. Luke, the physician, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." Every ruse (trick) imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this description, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just doesn't happen. A great deal of effort could have been saved had the doubters consulted the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress of the kind our Lord suffered, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process might well have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was next brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiphus, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiphus. The palace guards then blind-folded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat upon Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, Jesus is taken across the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate.

It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Bar-Abbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion. There is much disagreement among authorities about the unusual scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who allegedly claimed to be the King of the Jews. Preparations for the scourging were carried

out when the Prisoner was stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful the Romans would have made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter, but the Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs.

At first the thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped. The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood.

The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. Flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used in bundles for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding, the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body.

After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. Already having adhered to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, its removal causes excruciating pain just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, and almost as though He were again being whipped the wounds once more begin to bleed. In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa.

In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock, until the 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed. Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy,

square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes and the titulus reading, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," is nailed in place.

The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.

It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The second, to the penitent thief, "[I add, for clarity, as there was no punctuation in the original scripture, '"Truly I tell you] Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief-stricken adolescent John — the beloved Apostle — he said, "Behold thy mother." Then, looking to His mother Mary, "Woman behold thy son."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"

Jesus experienced hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins -- a terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. One

remembers again the 22nd Psalm, the 14th verse: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasps His fifth cry, “I thirst.” One remembers another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death.” A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionaries, is lifted to His lips. He apparently doesn’t take any of the liquid.

The body of Jesus is now in extremes, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words, possibly little more than a tortured whisper, “It is finished.” His mission of atonement has completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, “Father! Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crurifracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; thus the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. The 34th verse of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John reports: “And immediately there came out blood and water.” That is, there was an escape of water fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, giving postmortem evidence that Our Lord died not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure (a broken heart) due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Death by crucifixion was one of the harshest punishments the Romans meted out to anyone. It was considered the worst way to die. Thus, how horrific for anyone to be killed that way, in particular the Son of God! Jesus, we must always remember, came in human flesh like ours. Between the beatings, the scourgings, the nails hammered into His hands and feet, the harrowing weight of His own body tearing at the wounds, the physical pain must have been unbearable. This was harsh, even for the worst of criminals; how unfair, then, that Jesus, innocent of everything, should face such a fate.

Yet, as we know, Christ's physical sufferings were mild in contrast to what was really happening. This was more than just the killing of an innocent man.

What events surrounding the death of Jesus showed that more was going on than most people there understood at the time? What significance can we find in each of these events that can help reveal what happened there?

> **Matt. 27:45** "From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land."
>
> **Matt. 27:51, 52** "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. Then bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people"
>
> **Mark 15:38** "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

Clearly, something much more was happening here than just the death, however unfair, of an innocent man. According to Scripture, God's wrath against sin, our sin, was poured out upon Jesus. **Jesus on the cross suffered a righteous God's righteous indignation against sin, the sins of the whole world.** As such, Jesus suffered something deeper, darker, and more painful than any human being could ever know or experience.

I'd like us to consider the above underlined statement. The real punishment for sin is the consequence it brings...."**The wages of sin is death."** ***Romans 6:23.*** God was withdrawing. Was God doing this to Jesus? No…As the source of life, God had to withdraw from Jesus to enable him to die, and Jesus had to be separated from his Father for the first time in all eternity. Jesus was receiving the worst Satan could dish out, and the effects of total separation from God with the weight of sin that causes total heartbreak and loss. The Bible even prophecies that we would say God did this to Jesus.

> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, **YET** WE CONSIDERED HIM STRICKEN BY GOD, SMITTEN BY HIM, AND AFFLICTED. **BUT** he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and **by his wounds we are healed**. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and **the Lord has laid on him the iniquity** [the sin condition] **of us all**. Isaiah 53 4-6

THURSDAY

The Suffering God

We are so used to it that it's hard to imagine life any other way. Jesus knew the other way of life. What He left behind to rescue us is beyond our comprehension. What does a minnow know about our life, for a limited example?

Imagine life in heaven, without sin. Consider this partial list:

- A life without any fear or anxiety. Forever safe!
- A pain-free, upgraded body; the ability to see long distances, see microscopically, fly, travel the universe.
- Meet and talk with Jesus and beings from antiquity, listen their stories and what they have learned throughout the ages
- Sing and play music with angels and with Jesus.
- Spend eternity with those we lost here on earth
- The freshness, the views of creative art and the unspoiled beauty of a vast universe

We might as well get used to it: as long as we are here, in this world, we are going to suffer. As fallen creatures, it is our fate. Nothing in the Bible promises us anything different. On the contrary …

What do the following verses have to tell us about the topic at hand?

> **Acts 14:22** "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"
>
> **Phil. 1:29** "It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.
>
> **2 Tim. 3:12** "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Yet, in the midst of our suffering, two things we should keep in mind.

First, Christ, our Lord, has suffered worse than any of us ever could. At the cross, He "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"*(Isa. 53:4, NKJV)*; what we know only as individuals, He suffered corporately, for us all. He who was sinless became "sin for us" *(2 Cor. 5:21)*, suffering in a way that we, as sinful creatures, couldn't begin to imagine.

But second, as we suffer, we should remember the results of Christ's suffering, that is, what we have been promised through what Christ has done for us.

Read …. What are we promised?

> **John 10:28** "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."
>
> **Romans 6:23** "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Titus 1:2 "A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God who does not life, promised before the beginning of time.."

1 John 2:25 "And this is what he promised us – eternal life."

Whatever our sufferings here, thanks to Jesus, thanks to His bearing in Himself the punishment of our sin, thanks to the great provision of the gospel — that through faith we can stand perfect in Jesus right now — we have the promise of eternal life. We have the promise that because of what Christ has done, because of the fullness and completeness of His perfect life and perfect sacrifice, our existence here, full of pain, disappointment, and loss, is no more than an instant, a flash, here and gone, in contrast to the eternity that awaits us, an eternity in a new heaven and a new earth, one without sin, suffering, and death. And all this is promised to us and made certain for us only because of Christ and the crucible He went into so that one day, coming soon, He would see "the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" *(Isa. 53:11)*.

FRIDAY

Further Thought

Read Ellen G. White, "Gethsemane," pp. 685-697, and "Calvary," pp. 741-757, in *The Desire of Ages*.

"Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and **His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself**. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And **He will not turn from His mission**. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin. His prayer now breathes only submission: 'If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." — Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 690, 693.

Will we turn from our mission? What does Satan use to turn us from our mission?

Too involved/busy with sports, politics, work, entertainment, travel, etc.

The good can become the enemy of the best!

How does it help us in our own sufferings, this knowledge that God Himself, in the person of Christ, suffered more than any of us ever could? What should the sufferings of Christ in our behalf mean to us? What comfort can we draw from this amazing truth? As you think about your answer, keep in mind the following statement from Ellen G. White: "All the suffering which is the result of sin was poured into the bosom of the sinless Son of God." — *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 129.

Remember 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (NKJV).

Satan sought to devour God and take His place, by killing Jesus, now he is after each of US, but with 2,000 more years of practice and experience. If he can't go, he certainly doesn't want you to!

When I have been in very low places in my life, the stories of Job and Joseph, Moses and Jesus are such an encouragement. What do you do when you are at a low point?

Don't waste Christ's sacrifice to create your cure.

- It's not enough to believe God is good.
- It's not enough to believe Christ created the cure.
- If Satan can just separate you from God and keep you from taking the cure…he wins and you lose eternal life in a vast, sinless universe.

Remain watchful by praying and reading the Bible every day, but read it to:

- find the puzzle pieces that God put in there for you
- get to know your maker and savior. Can you imagine that the smartest, most powerful and most loving being in the universe wants to be your person friend and for you to communicate with each other?
- find your mission and purpose
- be disciplined and corrected.

> "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." You will have a conflict to be right. I Don't command you to read the Bible—I never shall. I want you to read the Bible because you love it, not because you are driven to it, for then it will be an unpleasant task. But if you neglect the reading of the Bible, you will lose your love for it. Those who love the word of God are those who read it most. By reading and searching out scripture references, you will see the chain of truth, and will see new beauties in the word of God. While you make the Scriptures more your study, and become more familiar with them, you will be better fortified against the temptations of Satan. When inclined to speak, or act, wrong, some scripture will come to arrest you, and turn you right. It is not natural for the heart to love the Bible; but when it is renewed by grace, then the mind will feast upon the rich truths and promises contained in the word of God.
>
> An Appeal to the Youth, pg 79.2

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q4 Future Hope: Lesson 1
Rebellion In A Perfect Universe

by Russell Atkins

LESSON INTRODUCTION

"God created human beings to enjoy eternity in a loving relationship with Him and His creation. But this relationship was distorted by the mysterious appearance of sin within the heavenly courts (Isa. 14:12–15, Ezek. 28:12–19, Rev. 12:7–12) and the subsequent fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1–19, Rom. 5:12)."

"As mortal human beings, we need assurance in the present and hope for the future. As well stated by the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner, "What oxygen is for the lungs, such is hope for the meaning of human life. Take oxygen away and death occurs through suffocation, take hope away and humanity is constricted through lack of breath; despair supervenes, spelling the paralysis of intellectual and spiritual powers by a feeling of the senselessness and purposelessness of existence. As the fate of the human organism is dependent on the supply of oxygen, so the fate of humanity is dependent on its supply of hope."—Eternal Hope (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), p. 7. Indeed, the biblical hope sustains us during the existential crises we face in our journey toward eternity."

This is well said. The lesson takes great pains to trace "death" back to its origins [Satan's rebellion in Heaven]. This "great controversy" perspective has been unique to Adventism and thankfully other Protestant denominations are clueing in to its value.

SABBATH

How you have fallen from heaven, you star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who defeated the nations! (Isa. 14:12, NASB).

From the lesson: "Many thinkers have tried to explain the origin of evil. Some suggest that evil always has existed because, in their view, good can be appreciated only in contrast to evil. Others believe that the world was created perfect but, somehow, evil emerged. For example, in Greek mythology, evil started when the curious Pandora opened a sealed box out of which flew all the evils of the world (this myth, however, does not explain the origin of the evils supposedly hidden in that box).

By contrast, the Bible teaches that our loving God is all-powerful (1 Chron. 29:10, 11) and perfect (Matt. 5:48). All that He does must likewise be perfect (Deut. 32:4), which includes how He created our world. How, then, could evil and sin appear in a perfect world? According to Genesis 3, the fall of Adam and Eve brought sin, evil, and death here.

But that answer raises another issue. Even before the Fall, evil already had existed, manifested by the "serpent," who deceived Eve (Gen. 3:1–5). Hence, we need to go back, even before the Fall, in order to find the source and origins of the evil that so dominates our present existence and that at times can make it pretty miserable."

Again, well said.

What is "Death"? How does Scripture define it? How many types of "death" are spoken of in the Bible? Why didn't Lucifer die as soon as he rebelled? Or when he was cast out of Heaven?

What Law lens do you view these questions with?

SUNDAY

Creation, and Expression of Love.

We can easily see two antagonist principles / governments at war here on Earth — in humanity, indeed, all of nature. Scripture provides us some clarity

> "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" And the owner replied, " "An enemy has done this" (Matt. 13:27, 28, NKJV).
>
> See also: https://biblehub.com/romans/8-22.htm

Before Mankind fell, God warned the First Couple about consuming the forbidden fruit. ". . . you shall surely die" Genesis 2:17 This gets literally translated from Hebrew as ". . . dying you shall die."

This is quoted from Ministry Magazine:

Consider a classic example in the final phrase in Genesis 2:17: " 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' " (emphasis added).[1] The Hebrew text uses an idiomatic construction literally translated "dying you shall die." Members and students figure out such literal translations, and come running to the pastor with questions. Some have asked me if this phrase indicates that Adam and Eve began dying that very day, even though they did not finish dying the same day. Others wonder if this might be a descriptive warning akin to a parent telling a child, "If you touch the fire, you will get burned." **Still others suspect it should be understood as a divine announcement disclosing an enforceable penalty.** Emphasis mine.

I encourage you to read the entire article and consider which Law lens is viewed by the author.

https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2011/12/dying-you-shall-die

Clearly Eve and Adam didn't die the instant they tasted the fruit. WHY? What prevented their instant death? Did God intervene in some fashion to prevent their instant consumption?

- He intervened to veil His own glory, so our first parents would continue living on Earth with the hope of restoration.
- He intervened in now corrupted human nature [putting enmity between humans and Satan — Gen. 3: 15]
- He intervened in Nature itself by putting a "fear" of man into the creatures of the Earth after the flood. — Gen. 9: 2
- He intervened by restraining the powers of darkness [4 winds of destruction in Revelation].
- He intervened by gifting humanity the first death of sleep. How is this a gift??

Question from the lesson: "What can the certainty that 'God is Love' tell us about the nature of His creative activities?"

What indeed?

The lesson goes on to list three implications of Love / Creation

1. Love cannot exist in / of itself — it must be expressed.
2. All that God does is an expression of His infinite love [Creation, redemption and "punitive judgements"].

   The lesson quoted DA p. 762 for support.

   "God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love." **Time to check your Law lens.**

3. Since God is Love, He cannot be the source of sin/evil.

Is Love the **only** reason God created? Specifically our creation?? Was there something else at play?

MONDAY

Free Will, the Basis of Love.

I think the Law of Liberty is the most misunderstood of the Design Laws. Why does God give pedophiles freedom to molest children?? Why does He give a high schooler the freedom to shoot his classmates? Why did He, knowing the end from the beginning, create Lucifer in the first place?

Why is "free will" important? ^^^ Love cannot exist without it.^^^

I loathe the terms "hate speech" and "hate crime". There's only FREE SPEECH. Free speech you like and free speech you don't. And there's only crime. Period.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Given our current cultural mess, I have some good friends that have said "We just need the 'right kind' of dictator to . . ." Would a dictator actually help? Or has our culture already become dictatorial? Do we need more freedom / free will or less?

Which Law lens are we using??

From the lesson:

> The origin and nature of sin are mysteries that no one can fully explain. Even so, God did not ordain sin to exist; He only allowed its existence, and then, at the cross, He took upon Himself the ultimate punishment for that sin, thus enabling Him, ultimately, to eradicate it. In all our painful musings about evil, we must never forget that God Himself paid the highest price for the existence of sin and of evil (see Matt. 5:43–48 and Rom. 5:6– 11), and that He has suffered from them more than any of us ever will.

How would you explain the above paragraph??

TUESDAY

Mysterious Ingratitude.

The lesson references Ezekiel 28:12–19 for this lesson. Pay special attention to verse 18 and think about the final Judgement.

From the lesson:

> "In reality, Lucifer was created perfect—which included his ability to choose freely. However, abusing that perfection by the misuse of his free will, he became corrupted by considering himself more important than he actually was."

Was Lucifer created perfect? The above passage seems to indicate he was.

Or was he created sinless, like Adam and Eve, who had to develop perfection?

> "Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. . . . Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men. He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. . . . Thus he drew men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world.
>
> Sin appeared in a perfect universe. . . . The reason of its inception or development was never explained and never can be, even at the last great day when the judgment shall sit and the

> books be opened. . . . At that day it will be evident to all that there is not, and never was, any cause for sin. At the final condemnation of Satan and his angels and of all men who have finally identified themselves with him as transgressors of God's law, every mouth will be stopped. When the hosts of rebellion, from the first great rebel to the last transgressor, are asked why they have broken the law of God, they will be speechless. There will be no answer to give."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 15.

WEDNESDAY

The Price of Pride.

Tuesday's lesson suggested that ingratitude played a role in Lucifer's fall. It may have a point, however, I think Pride, today's subject, was the primary force. In my experience, pride leads to ingratitude.

From the lesson:

> "In the Bible, the city of Babylon stands for a power in direct opposition to God and His kingdom; and the king of Babylon (with special allusion to Nebuchadnezzar) becomes a symbol of pride and arrogance. God had revealed to King Nebuchadnezzar that Babylon was only the gold head of the great image of successive empires (Dan. 2:37, 38). Challenging God's revelation, the king made an image entirely of gold—a symbol that his kingdom would last forever—and even required everyone to worship it (Daniel 3). As in the case of the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:12–19), the king of Babylon also became a symbol of Lucifer.
>
> Isaiah 14:3–11 describes the fall of the haughty and oppressive king of Babylon. Then, Isaiah 14:12–15 moves from the historical realm to the heavenly courts and highlights that a similar proud and arrogant spirit generated the original fall of Lucifer. The text explains that Lucifer planned to exalt his throne above all heavenly hosts and make himself " ' "like the Most High" ' " (Isa. 14:14). This was the beginning of a new and hostile situation in which God's altruistic love and cooperation would be challenged by Lucifer's selfishness and competition. The enemy was not afraid of accusing God of what he himself was and of spreading his lies to other angels. Here are the mysterious origins of evil in the universe."

Is Babylon the ONLY power standing in direct opposition to God and His kingdom?? [see Ex. 5: 2, and Daniel 11 with https://comeandreason.com/daniel-11-end-time-events/]

Consider the following:

> [The] work of opposition to the law of God had its beginning in the courts of heaven, with Lucifer, the covering cherub. Satan determined to be first in the councils of heaven, and equal with God. *Selected Messages,* book 1, p. 222.
>
> The evil that led to Peter's fall and that shut out the Pharisee from communion with God is roving

the ruin of thousands today. ***There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable.***

Peter's fall was not instantaneous, but gradual. Self-confidence led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 154, 155. Emphasis mine.

THURSDAY

Lesson — The Spread of Unbelief.

Was Lucifer's issue "unbelief" or did he sincerely believe he was equal with Michael? The quote from yesterday tells us he opposed God's Law and presented it as imposed to the angelic host.

Adam and Eve's issue was believing sincerely a lie, and not trusting God.

From the lesson:

> "Reflecting on the beginning of this controversy, Ellen G. White explains that "God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 495, 496.

We do not know how long that war lasted in the heavenly realms. Regardless of its intensity and time span, the most important aspect of the whole struggle was that Satan and his angels "were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven" (Rev. 12:8, NRSV; see also Luke 10:18). The problem, of course, was that they came here, to the earth."

> After Satan and those who fell with him were shut out of heaven, and he realized that he had forever lost all its purity and glory, he repented, and wished to be reinstated in heaven. He was willing to take his proper place, or any position that might be assigned him. But no; heaven must not be placed in jeopardy. All heaven might be marred should he be taken back; for sin originated with him, and the seeds of rebellion were within him. Both he and his followers wept, and implored to be taken back into the favor of God. But their sin—their hatred, their envy and jealousy—had been so great that God could not blot it out. It must remain to receive its final punishment. [Ed. Why??]
>
> When Satan became fully conscious that there was no possibility of his being brought again into favor with God, his malice and hatred began to be manifest. He consulted with his angels, and a plan was laid to still work against God's government. When Adam and Eve were placed in the beautiful garden, Satan was laying plans to destroy them. . . . It was decided that [he] should assume another form and manifest an interest for man. He must insinuate against God's

truthfulness and create doubt whether God did mean just what He said; next, he must excite their curiosity, and lead them to pry into the unsearchable plans of God—the very sin of which Satan had been guilty.—*Early Writings*, p. 146.

Friday

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, **"Why Was Sin Permitted?"** pp. 33–43, in Patriarchs and Prophets; **"The Origin of Evil,"** pp. 492–504, in The Great Controversy. [Emphasis mine.]

There was no possible hope for the redemption of those [Satan and his angels] who had witnessed and enjoyed the inexpressible glory of heaven, and had seen the terrible majesty of God, and, in presence of all this glory, had rebelled against Him. There were no new and wonderful exhibitions of God's exalted power that could impress them so deeply as those they had already experienced. If they could rebel in the very presence of glory inexpressible, they could not be placed in a more favorable condition to be proved. There was no reserve force of power, nor were there any greater heights and depths of infinite glory to overpower their jealous doubts and rebellious murmuring. Their guilt and their punishment must be in proportion to their exalted privileges in the heavenly courts.—Ellen G. White, Confrontation, p. 21.

From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, 'that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16.—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 22.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 2
Death In A Sinful World

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12 NKJV).

From where does death come? What is the source of death?

There are two options—the imposed law view or the design law view.

The imposed law view is that death comes from God and is inflicted by God as punishment for sin.

The design law view is that death comes from Satan and sin, from breaking God's law and severing oneself from the source of life.

What does the Bible teach?

- The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life Romans 6:23
- Sin when full grown brings forth death James 1:15
- Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8
- "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).
- "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9-10 NIV84).

Understand, the design law view is that God's laws are the laws upon which the Creator built reality and life to operate. Sin breaks God's law, breaks the design for life, and without intervention from our Creator, the only result is ruin and death.

This was acted out in the sacrificial system when the sinner confessed sins on the head of the animal and then the sinner, not the priest, cut the circulation—the life is in the blood (Lev 17:11) and the blood circulates, but sin cuts the circle, severing God's design and the result is death. God does not inflict death, sin does.

But the imposed law view posits that sin is a legal problem that gets one into legal trouble with the ruling authority. Death would not occur for the wicked unless the cosmic rule-maker used his power to

inflict death upon the wicked and kill them for their rebelliousness. This, in their penal-legal system, is called "justice." But this teaching is a violation of the law of liberty, to believe this undermines trust in God, destroys love, and spreads rebellion.

Further, this view teaches that life and death have the same eternal source, which is in the heart of their god. This is the root of eastern philosophies that teach for the universe to exist there must be balance between light and dark, good and evil, life and death and that both will exist forever. This is Satan's dream for both good and evil to exist eternally. And this is what the penal legal theologies teach. But it is a lie. Death does not originate in God nor does it come out from God. God is the source of life, death is what happens when one sins, rebels against God and refuses God's healing to their terminal condition.

Read the second paragraph, "Having been cast out of heaven…" I like how the lesson wrote that Satan "imagined" a legal solution to the sin problem, that some legal pardon could be devised. Yes, that is correct, the legal theory, built upon the idea that God's law functions like human law and that the sin problem can be solved by a legal solution is all from Satan's imagination—it is not reality, it is fantasy.

Some might argue, what about the Ten Commandments, those are not from Satan, those are from God. Correct, they were given by God—but when and to whom, and what do they establish and reveal?

When a parent gives a rule to a child not to play in the street, or they must brush their teeth, is the parent setting up a legal system of justice that requires the parent to kill the child if the child disobeys? Or is the parent, demonstrating grace to protect the child, by adding a layer of rules for the child who cannot understand the actual laws of physics and thermodynamics, how reality works, and how failure to live in harmony with the laws of physics will result in injury and death?

Thus, the Bible teaches in Galatians that the written law was added because of sin so that we could more easily see it. The written law acts as a mirror to expose sin in us, as a protective hedge to protect us in our immaturity, and as a aid to lead us to Jesus for healing and restoration.

So, in our modern language the written law of Ten Commandments is like an MRI but for the soul. The MRI was not made for healthy people but for the sick, to diagnose and expose disease hidden from normal view. But the MRI doesn't heal, the law doesn't heal, the MRI is to bring conviction or certainty of one's sick state and need for healing and lead a person to the doctor who heals. Likewise,

> We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me" (1 Timothy 1:8-11 NIV84).

What do you think about the idea that Adam and Eve were not even to expose themselves to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?

This is classic imposed law think—a law-keeping approach to salvation. Consider this commentary from the book *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing:*

> The effort to earn salvation by one's own works inevitably **leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin**. For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, **they will devise rules and regulations of their own to force themselves to obey**. [Have you ever seen this with say, Sabbath observance?] **All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart,** [That is what imposed law does, it violates liberty through coercion and destroys love] and with it perishes love for his fellow men. **A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard**. [The imposed law view of things—human standard] The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies. MB 123.1

This is exactly what the penal legal view of salvation does. And the lesson suggests a new rule that God did not give and in fact is the opposite of what God wanted—the lesson suggests they were not to expose themselves to temptation at the Tree? They reference Genesis 2:16,17 to support this idea:

> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17 NIV84).

Does this text support the idea that God did not want them to expose themselves to temptation? Who put the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden? And where did God put it?

> "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9).

So God put the Tree of Knowledge in the middle of the garden near the Tree of Life—does this sound like God did not want them exposed, or that God did want them exposed but He wanted them exposed in a way that they were capable of rejecting the temptation and choosing loyalty to Him? Why?

What is it that God wants from all His intelligent beings whether human or angels?

God wants our loyalty, love, trust, devotion, understanding friendship and agreement with Him. And how can God get this? Can God get our love, trust, friendship by programming us like robots? Can God get our love, trust, and friendship by using power and might to threaten to kill us if we don't love Him? Can God get our love, trust, and friendship through withholding the issues from us so that we are never faced with the questions or the lies and therefore never choose Him?

So, what is necessary—for God to be truly righteous and trustworthy and worthy of our love and loyalty—which He is; and for us to have evaluated the allegations of Satan in light of the truth and choose for ourselves to reject the lies and trust God.

Adam and Eve in Eden, before they sinned, had the ability to do this in their own sinless human strength. We do not. But they could have chosen loyalty and they could have developed a sinless human character. But the only way for them to do this was to be exposed to the issues in the controversy and choose to reject the lies and embrace and settle themselves into the truth.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is not the tree of cognitive information—God and the angels had already told Adam and Eve about the rebellion, they already had didactic instruction and warnings about sin. The Tree was the place where Adam and Eve would decide what they would *know* in reality, in experience: would they choose to reject the lies and know love, loyalty, trust, righteousness, and eternal life and have God's living law solidified into their character, or would they embrace the lies and choose to know fear, selfishness, distrust, shame, guilt, rebellion and death?

So, understanding design law, we understand how reality works, what God wants, the true purpose of the tree, and when we reject Satan's imposed law lie we realize God wanted Adam and Eve to reject the lies and know the truth in action and deed and become mature children of God. Thus God designed for the most mild exposure to the cosmic issues possible in a protected and sinless world, all for their success.

I came across this quote in the commentary *Conflict and Courage*, which was written by E.G. White, one of the founders of the SDA church, let's compare this view with what we just read from the quarterly.

> Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. . . . [Why? Because they were free beings, not robots, capable of love, because God is love and His law of love requires liberty.] They were to enjoy communion with God and with holy angels; but before they could be rendered eternally secure, **their loyalty must be tested**. [What kind of test? Is it a rule-keeping test or a test of who they will choose to love, who they will choose trust, who they will choose be loyal to, thus a test of whose character, methods, and law they will choose to internalize into their characters.] At the very beginning of man's existence a check was placed upon the desire for self-indulgence, the fatal passion that lay at the foundation of Satan's fall. [A check, meaning an opportunity to be tempted with self-indulgence, but an opportunity to say no to that temptation. Why? What is the way we mature, gain strength in God's design? Through exercise, the law of exertion, they could not gain strength, could not mature, if they never faced the question, were never tempted and chose to say no.] The **tree of knowledge, which stood near the tree of life in the midst of the garden**, was to be a test of the obedience, faith, and love of our first parents. While permitted to eat freely of every other tree, they were forbidden to taste of this, on pain of death. **They were also to be exposed to the temptations of Satan**; but if they endured the trial, they would finally be placed beyond his power, to enjoy perpetual favor with God. . . . {CC 13.2} [They were not to avoid being exposed as the lesson suggests, but were to be exposed, why? So they would

overcome, solidify the truth about God into their hearts and then Satan's lies would no longer have any impact upon them.]

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, **but a mere automation**. [Yes, God could have built robots, but robots cannot love and God did not do this.] **Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule**. {CC 13.3}

God did not want Adam and Eve to sin. He wanted them to face the temptation and, based on all the other evidences of His goodness, His reliability, His trustworthiness, reject the lies of Satan and choose to know good, to know life, to know Him and internalize Him and His law of love into their inmost being. Unfortunately, they chose to know evil instead.

SUNDAY

Read Genesis 3:1-4:

> Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
>
> The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "
>
> "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. (Genesis 3:1–4 NIV84).

Read the third and fourth paragraphs, "From the perspective of human logic…" Does this sound right to you or is there something not right here?

What is the idea, message, or thought you think the lesson is advancing with these two paragraphs?

Do you get the sense that the lesson is suggesting you cannot trust your ability to reason and think? Is the lesson undermining reasoning, weighing of evidence, and suggesting that perhaps we are to believe because God gave a commandment or a rule or an instruction and we are not to reason it out for ourselves?

Let's demonstrate the problems with these two paragraphs.

The lesson argues there was no evidence in the natural world of the existence of death. Does that mean there was no evidence in the natural world for them to make a right decision upon?

- Did they have evidence of the existence of God?
- Did they have evidence of the goodness of God?
- Did they have evidence of the love of God?
- Did they have evidence in nature of how life was built to operate and the design laws that govern its existence?
- Did they have evidence of liberty and freedom granted to them by God?
- Did they have evidence of other intelligent beings (angels) being loyal and loving and trusting God?
- Did they have evidence that God gives freely, having given them dominion over the animals on the planet?
- Did they have evidence that God gives liberty of conscience and freedom to choose?

So when the serpent ate the fruit and spoke to Eve, with all the evidence provided and the warning of God and the testimony of angels, what would be the most logical and reasonable action for Eve to take? To go get her husband, talk to him and together go and ask God before acting. Human logic didn't fail here, human logic and reason wasn't actually applied here.

So, if they were to make an evidence-based decision with the evidence available at the time, the evidence would conclude that the serpent lied.

The lesson states the "human reason is not always the safest way to evaluate spiritual matters" thoughts about this?

How can the authors know this? Would they have had to reason out the reasons why this so? And if they did reason this out, how can they rely on their reason to come to this conclusion? How can they know whether the Scripture should be obeyed, should they reason out whether it is trustworthy or not? And should they reason through which Scripture to obey, should they apply a non-reasoning acceptance to all Scripture, say the apocrypha, the Book of Mormon, the Quran?

How can these authors know to obey the 66 books without reason but not the other various scriptures in the world? Is it that they surrendered their reason to some other humans to tell them what is acceptable to believe without reason and what is not? And in that case are they actually listening to God or to fallible humans who reasoned it out for them?

What does Scripture say?

> "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).
>
> "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5 NIV84).

What is the Biblical principle? That we must think, reason, weigh the evidences for ourselves and be fully persuaded in our own mind—why? Because this is how truth changes a person.

A person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still. It is not transformative to believe because someone else told you, it is transformative to believe when you understand the truth and why it is true and love and choose the truth.

This is why Jesus said to His disciples:

> "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15 NIV84).

Jesus does not want the obedience of a well-trained dog, or a slave. He wants understanding friendship, which requires we reason and think through the evidence God has provided.

Let's consider this historic quote, again documenting a principle that the SDA church was founded upon, and ask, is the quarterly advancing this principle or undermining it?

> **All whom God has endowed with reasoning powers may become intellectual Christians**. God has given abundant evidence of the truth of his word, and he requires that those who would be counted as the followers of Christ should study the Scriptures, that they may be able to give to every man **a reason** of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. **He has not required any one to believe without evidence**. Let the inquirer after truth put to the **stretch his mental powers** in diligent study of the word of God. **To neglect this duty is to place the soul in peril of eternal death. Each one is required to understand** the conditions upon which eternal life depends. We must know what saith the Lord, that we may be able to live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." **We cannot afford to have another settle questions of such momentous import as those concerning our soul's salvation**. We must open the Scriptures for ourselves, searching the word of God prayerfully, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus. **We cannot afford to trust to the ministers, to follow idle traditions, to subject our souls to human authority, but we must know for ourselves what God has said**. We are to be laborers together with God, and we must know, we must be determined to know, what are the conditions upon which we may become heirs of salvation. If we neglect this important duty, we shall die in our sins. – The Medical Missionary, May 1, 1892

Now, we are not the source of truth, thus God must reveal truth to us, so the revelation of truth is not something we can accomplish with our human ability, human reason cannot discover divine truths unrevealed by God, but once God has revealed them to us, which He has in His Word, and in nature (Romans 1:20) and in His providences (life experiences), God calls us to examine the truth and compare the truth that He has revealed against with the lies and make a decision on whom we will trust, who we will believe, what we will embrace and choose to practice in our own lives.

What about the idea that the Word of God can appear to be illogical and senseless to us?

If it does, then we are misunderstanding it in some way. The Word of God is always trustworthy, when rightly understood. But the Word of God misunderstood and misapplied causes harm.

When the religious leaders in Christ's day wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery were they applying their own made-up rules or where they applying the Word of God? But did they understand it correctly? Why or why not?

MONDAY

Read the last three paragraphs, "Eve's curiosity…" What do you think of the idea she was forced to decide?

Once the lies were presented, it is true that she would have to decide what she believed, who she trusted. But, was she forced to decide at that moment? Did she have the liberty, the freedom to walk away, to think about it, to get her husband, to go to God that evening and gather more information and input before deciding?

Does it sound like they are denigrating the empirical method of observation?

Hmmm…consider this historical quote describing what is legitimate experience to make decisions upon:

> As I have before stated, you, my sister, rely upon experience. Your experience decides you to pursue a certain course. **But that which many term experience is not experience at all**; it is simply habit, or mere indulgence, blindly and frequently ignorantly followed, with a firm, set determination, and **without intelligent thought or inquiry relative to the laws at work in the accomplishment of the result**. 3T 68.3 [Now while Eve had no bad habits, did she make a choice without intelligent thought and without full inquiry as to the laws at work?]
>
> **Real experience is a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits.** [What is real experience? It is careful experiments, problems solved in a variety of ways, with a mind free from prejudice, bias, opinion, habits, preconceived ideas in order to observe what is actually happening—how reality works. It is the outworking of God's design laws in reality in contrast to Satan's imposed laws] **The results are marked with careful solicitude and an anxious desire to learn, to improve, and to reform on every habit that is not in harmony with physical and moral laws**. The idea of others' gainsaying what you have learned by experience seems to you to be folly and even cruelty itself. **But there are more errors received and firmly retained from false ideas of experience than from any other cause, for the reason that what is generally termed experience is not experience at all**; **because there has never**

> **been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principle involved in the action**. 3T 69.1

What trial by experiment could Eve have conducted that would have enabled her to know that the serpent was lying?

How about waiting and giving time to see what happens to the serpent after eating of the fruit?

How about calling God over to the tree and having God and the serpent confront each other and observing the interaction?

Imagine, she calls God over and God casts Satan out of the serpent and she sees the fallen angel in his true form—what might that have done to Eve's understanding and perspective of things? Would it have been evidence of someone trying to deceive her?

But there is a principle the lesson is trying to help us embrace, which is a righteous principle and that is trusting God and remaining loyal to Him when we don't currently have all of our questions answered or enough evidence to comprehend the issues involved. Job, for instance, didn't understand why things were happening. He did not have the behind-the-scenes information about the drama playing out in heaven. But Job had enough evidence and personal experience with God to trust God and remain loyal to God giving God opportunity to explain things to Him.

This is correct, we are not to make decisions merely and only on our own ability to understand *events,* but we are to make decisions based on our ability to understand God, His methods and principles and to trust HIM!

TUESDAY

The lesson explores the question of Satan's lie that if Eve should eat the fruit she would not surely die.

The question of whether sinners die or not can be explored from a variety of perspectives:

- What did God mean when He said they would die if they ate the fruit?
- Did it mean physical death?
- Did it mean as some suggest, spiritual death?
- Did it mean God would inflict death?
- Did it mean that eating the fruit would cause death?
- Is the death the first death, the sleep death from which there is resurrection, or the second eternal death from which there is no resurrection?

Satan's lie is that sin does not result in death, that both the righteous and the wicked live eternally, it is just the place where they live, the condition in which they live, and how God treats them is different.

We can approach this question by comparing the various Bible texts about sin resulting in death while eternal life is only for the righteous etc.

A Bible text examination approach presents a compelling case Biblical that sin does result in death and the eternal life is a gift from God for those who are restored to righteousness, but there is another, more impactful line to explore on this question, and that is what it says about God.

The underlying premise that many people hold that causes them to believe that unsaved sinners live eternally in a place of suffering is that in Eden, when God created Adam and Eve, that at that time, before they sinned, He created some part of them, whether soul or spirit, that is immortal and can never die.

The Bible doesn't actually teach this, but this is the assumed premise. You can approach this premises with Bible texts that say the soul who sins will die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). But the more impactful approach is to ask, if this premise is true, what does it say about God?

- Did God foreknow that Adam and Eve would sin before He created them?
- Did He foreknow they would have children born in sin and conceived in iniquity?
- Did He foreknow that billions of their descendants would live very short earthly lives of sin and die without salvation?
- And if God foreknew all of this and created them with some aspect of their being that could never die and therefore created conditions He foreknew would result in billions of people suffering for all eternity in the torments of hell for being born into sin that they never chose, what would that say about God?
- What kind of a god would God be if this were true?

- On the other hand, of the Open Theists are correct (which they are not but let's argue their view), that God doesn't know the future and God didn't realize Adam and Eve would fall, what would that say about God?
- Did God get caught by surprise? Did God not even have enough wisdom to anticipate the possibility this could happen?

Either way, the argument that humans are inherently immortal, created by God in Eden with immortality, says horrible things about God and ultimately undermines trust in God.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Genesis 3…" From where does fear, guilt, and shame come? Does God inflict this or is it the natural result of what sin does?

And what impact does fear, guilt, and shame have upon people? What does it result in within the sinner and how does it impact relationships?

Fear is inherent to the sin condition—we are born afraid, shame immerges around 18-36 months and guilt begins about age 4.

Babies will startle and be afraid this is an inheritance from Adam's fall. As we grow up, we find focuses for our fear—fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of environmental things (germs, heights, water, darkness, black cats), fear of God.

Fear turns the mind to self and self-protection and results in the drives to survive, the kill or be killed principles, the justifications to harm another in order to advantage self. Fear and love are opposites, when we love others we will sacrifice self for their advantage, to benefit them, a mother sacrificing self to save her child is a perfect example.

Shame requires social connotation, and just like guilt there is appropriate and inappropriate shame.

But shame is used by evil to destroy, to isolate, and to obstruct God's healing solution.

Shame causes one to feel, and then believe, that no one could love them and accept them if people knew about their sin, their shamefulness. Thus shame leads to secrecy, isolation, social mask-wearing, and false theologies that teach we will never be truly known for who we are, but will remain hidden behind the shield of Christ's righteousness who covers our shameful histories.

The reality is that we will not have shame when we are in Christ because the old has died and we have new identities in Christ.

One of the roles of a healthy, godly, church is to help people experience the grace and love of God that overcomes the shame. It is to experience being known and being loved despite our shame.

The woman caught in adultery experienced this. She had real shame and once Jesus dispatched the crowd, He did not condemn her. He saw her. He saw the real her, deep down into her soul and He still loved her, but more than this, He saw who she could be if she were freed from fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame and thus He treated her in that moment with love, with grace, with acceptance as a person while He didn't accept the destructive behaviors and fearful and shameful thoughts and feelings. This knowing her and loving her and accepting her while rejecting the sickness of sin that was infecting her, is called imputed righteousness.

Jesus imputed to her, in the way He treated her, what He knew she could be if she trusted Him. He imputed His love to her, He longing for her recovery, healing, wellness; He imputed in how He treated her the perfection of who she could be if she trust Him. And because of the imputed righteousness that she experienced from Him, she was won to trust in Jesus and opened her heart and He imparted His

righteousness to her which transformed her to a new creature who became righteous, just as it says in 2Cor 5:21.

Read the fourth paragraph, "Adam and Eve…" What law lens do you understand God's words through?

If we accept Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, then the text is read as God pronouncing a death sentence against them which He will one day enforce.

But if we return to design law, then we recognize God is merely diagnosing their condition for what it is—a terminal state of being that without remedy will result in death.

Consider, if someone were exposed to a fatal dose of radiation, do they die in that moment? No, we have heard news reports of people being assassinated with polonium. They do not die the day they ingest the polonium, but they are degrading and returning to dust—do we say they are sentenced to death? No, they receive a change in their actual condition that results in deterioration and death—unless and remedy and cure can be applied.

This is what Adam and Eve did, they changed their state of being and God veiled His life-giving glory, they no longer had access to the Tree of Life, and their biological systems began to decay in harmony with the 2nd law of thermodynamics and they eventually died the first death experience turning back to dust.

This was not a legal death sentence; it was a diagnosis of their terminal condition.

THURSDAY

Read Genesis 3:15:

> "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15 NIV84).

This is the key to understanding the entire Old Testament. Once Adam sinned no human could be saved without Jesus, our Messiah, coming and overcoming where we could not. The entire OT narrative is the battle between God's forces working to bring the Messiah to save humanity and bring an end to Satan and sin and secure the universe unfallen, and Satan warring to prevent the coming of the Messiah.

This gives us insight into why the Bible focuses our attention on the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then Judah, because it is through them that the Messiah comes.

It gives insight into why God intervened with the Flood, Sodom, and many other places, it was all about keeping open the avenue for the Messiah, because without Jesus no human being could be saved.

The text gives us insight also into God's intercessions or interventions. Once Adam sinned God intercedes in three places or ways, this text reveals one of them. God intercedes in human hearts with the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, to instill a desire for Him, for right, for life. Without this intercession in our hearts there would be a perfect union between fallen human beings and fallen angels. We can still see that in individuals who reject the workings of the Holy Spirit and sear their consciences and harden their hearts, they become fully united to Satan and under his demonic influence. But the entire human race would be in that state if it wasn't for God interceding in our hearts in this way.

God also intercedes in holding back the principalities and powers of darkness, putting up a hedge of protection around the righteous.

And God, interceded in the natural result of sin within the human species by Jesus becoming incarnate and destroying the carnal infection and restoring God's living law back into the human species, thereby become the second Adam and opening a new a living way back into the presence of God for us.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

OCTOBER 8: Grand Opening of Our New Facility is Scheduled for October 8 at 10 a.m. Please join us for our first Bible Study class in our new facility and then plan on staying afterward for potluck. So please bring enough food for your family and a few others.

NEW MAGAZINE: Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17: Discovering Untold Truths to Prepare for What Comes Next! is now available.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q4 Future Hope: Lesson 3
Understanding Human Nature

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

Memory text: **"**And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

When the serpent told Eve she "certainly will not die", he was repeating a theme he had already started with Eve [and in Heaven as well]. The theme was God was withholding something desirable from her — **"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"** Genesis 3:1.

Implied in this question is God is stingy/selfish.

What kind of God would not let His created beings eat the fruit of the trees?
How can a God like this claim to love you?
God doesn't really have the best interest in His heart for his creation.

My suspicion is Lucifer had been observing Adam and Eve since their creation and he had noticed some subtle body language cues and facial expressions between them. I suspect he noted some differences in knowledge and understanding between the two and thought if he appealed to Eve's desire for increased knowledge, he would have his best chance.
What do you think he would have tempted Adam with if it had been Adam alone at the tree?? Or does it even matter?

Ever since the Fall, he has been tempting women with the idea that someone or something [i.e. The nebulous Patriarchy] is trying to withhold freedom or knowledge from them. And he has been tempting men with women.

This is fallen human nature.

It's difficult to imagine anything other than our fallen nature isn't it?

> If men had been willing to receive the truth so plainly stated in the Scriptures concerning the nature of man and the state of the dead, they would see in the claims and manifestations of spiritualism the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders. But rather than yield the liberty so agreeable to the carnal heart, and renounce the sins which they love, multitudes close their eyes to the light and walk straight on, regardless of warnings, while Satan weaves his snares about them, and they become his prey. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," therefore "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11. [**ED**: What Law is described here?].

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Those who oppose the teachings of spiritualism are assailing, not men alone, but Satan and his angels. They have entered upon a contest against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan will not yield one inch of ground except as he is driven back by the power of heavenly messengers. The people of God should be able to meet him, as did our Saviour, with the words: "It is written." Satan can quote Scripture now as in the days of Christ, and he will pervert its teachings to sustain his delusions. Those who would stand in this time of peril must understand for themselves the testimony of the Scriptures.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 559.

SUNDAY

A Living Being.

From the lesson: "Although both animals and man alike were made from "the ground," (Gen. 2:19, NIV) the formation of the man was distinct from that of animals in two main ways. First, God shaped the man physically, and then "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7, NIV). He was a physical entity before he became a living one. Second, God created humanity as both male and female in the very image and likeness of the Godhead (Gen. 1:26, 27)."

Scripture doesn't explicitly say that the animals were spoken in to existence or whether or not God formed them with his hands, but it is explicit in saying that Adam was formed by the hands of God [Christ] and the breath of life was breathed in to him.

Note that Adam was formed from Earth and Eve was formed from Adam. There's some great symbology here.

Consider what Man relates to the best. The world [Earth] that he functions in. He observes it, tests it, explores it. He describes and codifies all of the natural laws he can and shares this with his fellow men.

Consider what Woman relates to the best. Man [i.e. human relations]. She observes, and tests, and explores them. She then, gossips with all of her friends about them.

"Men test ideas. Women test men." Jordan Peterson.

> Physical life is something which each individual received. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself," He said. In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. This is the open fountain of life for the world.— Ellen G.

White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1130.

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a per sonal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 415.

MONDAY

The Soul Who Sins Shall Die

Read Ezekiel 18:4, 20 and Matthew 10:28. How can these verses help us understand the nature of the human soul?

The lesson states "Nothing infected by sin can be eternal by nature." I would go farther and say that nothing **created** can be eternal by nature. Created beings can be future eternal, but not past eternal. Only God is Eternal [past / present / future].

It also states "Death is the natural consequence of sin, which affects all life here." Well said. Death is not an imposed punishment from God for sin. It's a predictable, unavoidable outcome of sin [aka Lawlessness].

How does Ezekiel 18:4, 20: " 'The soul who sins shall die' " (NKJV) help us in our understanding??

What about the 2nd Commandment:

> "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Is this a contradiction??

From the bottom section in Monday's lesson:

> Why is the surety of the Second Coming, which is made certain by Christ's first coming (and

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> after all, what good was Christ's first coming without the second?), so crucial to all that we believe? What hope would we have without the promise of His return?

Is Christ's 2nd coming necessary?? What about the 3rd coming?? Could God and His Law be vindicated with just Christ's death/resurrection?

> When the voice of God awakes the dead, he will come from the grave with the same appetites and passions, the same likes and dislikes, that he cherished when living. God works no miracle to re-create a man who would not be re-created when he was granted every opportunity and provided with every facility. During his lifetime he took no delight in God, nor found pleasure in His service. His character is not in harmony with God, and he could not be happy in the heavenly family.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 270.

> Satan told his angels to make a special effort to spread the lie first repeated to Eve in Eden, "Ye shall not surely die." And as the error was received by the people, and they were led to believe that man was immortal, Satan led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Then the way was prepared for Satan to work through his representatives and hold up God before the people as a revengeful tyrant— one who plunges all those into hell who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath; and while they suffer unutterable anguish, and writhe in the eternal flames, He is represented as looking down upon them with satisfaction. Satan knew that if this error should be received, God would be hated by many, instead of being loved and adored; and that many would be led to believe that the threatenings of God's Word would not be literally fulfilled, for it would be against His character of benevolence and love to plunge into eternal torments the beings whom He had created.—*Early Writings*, p. 218.

TUESDAY

The Spirit Returns to God.

It's time for a review.

Humans are tri-partate. We have a body [Gr. Soma]. We have a unique identity [Gr. Psyche]. And we have an energy source [Gr. Pneuma — aka "Breath of Life"]

This is analogous to a computer having hardware, software, and an energy source [AC / DC / Battery].

The lesson uses terms "soul" and "spirit". Where do these fit in to our computer analogy? Is't the "Soul" the same as the Psyche / Unique identity, and the "Spirit" the same as the Pneuma / Energy source??

> "If death be the last enemy to be destroyed at the resurrection, we may learn how earnestly believers should long and pray for the second coming of Christ, when this full and final

> conquest shall be made. . . . This is the day that all believers should long, and hope, and wait for, as being the accomplishment of all the work of their redemption, and all the desires and endeavors of their souls." "Hasten, O Lord, this blessed day!". . . Such was the hope of the apostolic church, of the "church in the wilderness," and of the Reformers.—*Maranatha*, p. 14.

WEDNESDAY

The Dead Know Nothing.

The lesson recommends reading **Job 3:11–13; Psalm 115:17; Psalm 146:4; and Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10** for insights on the state of the dead.

Are there any other, perhaps better texts available to us??

See Daniel 12: 2. Multitudes who **sleep** in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

- John 11:, 12,13. His disciples replied, "Lord, if he **sleep**s, he will get better. Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural **sleep**."

- 1 Cor. 15: 50-52. I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all **sleep**, but we will all be changed— **5** in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

- Eph. 5: 14. This is why it is said: "Wake up, **sleep**er, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

- 1 Thess. 4:13-15. Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who **sleep** in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that ***God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*** According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. [ED: Emphasis mine].

The following is an interesting perspective from EGW:

> "But, mother," said I, "do you really believe that the soul sleeps in the grave until the resurrection? Do you think that the Christian, when he dies, does not go immediately to heaven, nor the sinner to hell?"

She answered: "The Bible gives us no proof that there is an eternally burning hell. If there is such a place, it should be mentioned in the Sacred Book." . . .

It was some months after this conversation before I heard anything further concerning this doctrine; but during this time my mind had been much exercised upon the subject. When I heard it preached, I believed it to be the truth. From the time that light in regard to the sleep of the dead dawned upon my mind, the mystery that had enshrouded the resurrection vanished, and the great event itself assumed a new and sublime importance. . . . If at death the soul entered upon eternal happiness or misery, where was the need of a resurrection of the poor moldering body?

But this new and beautiful faith taught me the reason why inspired writers had dwelt so much upon the resurrection of the body; it was because the entire being was slumbering in the grave. I could now clearly perceive the fallacy of our former position on this question.—*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White,* pp. 49, 50.

THURSDAY

Resting With the Forefathers.

From the lesson:

"We can identify at least three meaningful aspects of resting with the forebearers. One is the idea that sooner or later the time will come when we need to rest from our own tiring labors and sufferings. Another idea is that we are not the first and only ones to follow that undesirable trail, because our forebearers already have gone ahead of us. A third idea is that, by being buried close to them, we are not alone but remain together even during the unconsciousness of death. This might not make much sense to some modern individualist cultures, but it was very meaningful in ancient times."

Can anyone think of any advantages / disadvantages of being buried next to our kin??

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q4 On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 4
The Old Testament Hope

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Thank You! Thank you to all of our supporters and friends who have been praying for us and supporting us. It is all of **you** who have made it possible to purchase and renovate this space.

I also want to thank Come and Reason Board, and I want to thank our building committee who has worked very hard, volunteering untold number of hours in planning, researching materials, going and examining products, installing equipment and no one has done more than Dean Scott.

I want to thank the rest of our building committee Karin Covi, Lori Atkins, Michael Land, and Francesca Brewster.

Our purpose in purchasing and renovating this building is to continue to share the final message of mercy with the world. It is this purpose, this vision, to hasten the coming of the Lord that we have committed ourselves and our resources. And therefore, we are going to pray a prayer of dedication, dedicating this space to the glory of God.

We know that God does not dwell in buildings made by human hands, but in the hearts and minds of His people. So we are not dedicating this building as a dwelling place for God, but as a workspace for us, His children to work for Him and to carry forward His purpose for us at this time.

> Father—this space is not ours; it is yours and we are your stewards. We have dedicated ourselves to you Lord, and now we dedicate this space to you—to glorify your character and methods of love. We ask you to dispatch angels to watch over this place and will hold back all evil influences and forces that would attempt to infiltrate this place and undermine your will. We ask for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit here today and upon these people and all those who come to this place to work for you and to worship you and also upon all the people who support us online and who dedicate themselves to work for you in sharing this message throughout the world. We love you and seek only to honor you and to say about you what is right. To that end, we ask for your presence, your inspiration, your cleansing from all sin, and your power to succeed in taking your truth to the world. Thank you Father, thank you Jesus, thank you Holy Spirit, and we close with the words of your friend Peter,
>
> "Whoever speaks, let it be with God's words. Whoever serves, do so with the strength that God supplies, so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11 NET).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SABBATH

The Old Testament Hope—what was it? And is it different from the New Testament hope?

Read first paragraph, "The Old Testament hope…" What is the hope suggested here? Is it resurrection from the dead?

Hmmm…. Isn't it true that both wicked and righteous are resurrected from the dead—to either the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation? So, is merely being resurrected from the dead *the* hope or is resurrection part of the hope, a manifestation of the hope, a result of experiencing what we truly hope for, a consequence of the hope?

Isn't the true hope for both Old and New Testament the hope of deliverance from sin, of taking away the sin of the world, of removing sinfulness from us and from the planet and the universe, of restoring human beings back into God's original ideal for our existence, of bringing us back into unity and oneness with our Creator? And isn't that hope found in the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15?

Thus the Old Testament hope is the same as the New Testament hope the promised Messiah, Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and cleanses us from all unrighteousness and restores us to at-one-ment or unity with God, who destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil, who destroys the devil's work, who destroys death and brings life and immortality to light—and who restores us and the universe to sinless perfection.

So, the hope is not simply in the resurrection, the hope is in Jesus and the eradication of sinfulness from us, and there are some people who participate in the "hope" that will never be resurrected bodily from the dead, but will be like Enoch and Elijah and never die, because resurrection is a part of the hope—the real hope is in Jesus, who cleanses us from sin and we become the righteousness of God.

This is why Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 NIV84).

The people who have been reconciled to God through Jesus never die even if their bodies die, do you believe this? How do you explain this to a non-believer?

So, what happens to people when they die? Do they return to dust? Do they go to God? Do they go to heaven? Or do they do all three?

According to the Bible, human beings are tripartite:

> "Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Thes 5:23 NET, emphasis supplied).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Is it possible that at death, one part of a human returns to dust, one part goes to God, and one part goes to heaven?

Interestingly, computers are also tripartite and serve as a very poignant object lesson. In order to have an **operational computer**, one needs **hardware**, **software**, and an **energy source**. Having only two of these three, results in a computer that will not operate. All three are required for actual functioning. In a similar way, to have an **operational** (functioning) **human being**, it requires all three components—**body**, **soul**, and **spirit**:

- The Greek word for **body** is σῶμα [soma] and is analogous to a computer's hardware—the physical machine, including our brain.
- The Greek word for **soul** is ψυχή [psuche], from which we get *psyche*, as in *psych*iatry and *psych*ology, and means our unique individuality, personhood, identity.[1] It is analogous to a computer's software.
- And the Greek word for **spirit** is πνεῦμα [pneuma], from which we get *pneumonia* or *pneumatic* and means wind, air or breath, as in the breath-of-life. This is our energy source—the life-energy originating from God.

If a computer runs out of power, what state does it go into? It sleeps. This is exactly how the Bible describes those who die the first death: they sleep, awaiting the resurrection (see Ps 7:5, 13:3; Mt 9:24; Jn 11:12-13; 1Thes 4:13). So, with this in mind, we can now answer what actually happens to the various components of a human being at death.

At the first death,

- the body returns to dust (see Gen 3:19, Ps 44:25, Ecc 3:20);
- the spirit—life energy—returns to God who gave the breath of life (see Ecc 12:7);
- but what about the soul—the psyche, the individuality, the software? Where does that go?

If someone stole your laptop and was threatening to destroy it, but you had a perfect copy of the data backed up on a cloud-server, you might say, "I'm not afraid of the one who can destroy my laptop [body] but cannot destroy the software [soul/psyche]." This is what Jesus described in Matthew 10:28 when He spoke about those who might kill us for our faith in Him.

Why is it, that killing of the body cannot destroy the soul? Because the soul is our psyche, our individuality, our unique personhood and is distinct from the body. The question is, *Where does the soul go when it is absent from the body?* The apostle Paul said,

[1] The use of the term *soul* can be confusing, because sometimes the term soul refers to the entire living being. When someone sends out an SOS (save our souls), they are calling for their entire living selves to be saved. In this article, however, the soul as referenced in 1Thes 5:23 is not the entire living person, but one (the psyche/individuality) of the three components that make up the entire human being.

> Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be **absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord**. (2Cor 5:6-8 KJV, emphasis supplied)

But where would our identities (souls) be stored in heaven? Would it not be in the heavenly records—the Lamb's book of life? Which the Bible says contains the names of the righteous, which are the Bible way of saying their character, their identity, their individuality.

If someone destroyed your laptop but your data was safe on a cloud-server, the data would not be active and operational but dormant—awaiting download to new hardware. And when our bodies die and decay to dust; the breath of life returns to God; and our souls (individualities) are safely secured on the heavenly "servers" in the presence of the Lord, in what state are they? They are asleep / dormant / in stasis, awaiting download into new bodies (hardware) at the resurrection. The apostle Paul brilliantly describes this very process:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him**. The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1Thes 4:13-18 NIV84, emphasis supplied)

Did you notice that the very same righteous dead who arise out of the ground are also coming down out of heaven with Christ, and that they are described as coming from heaven in a state of sleep? How can this be? Because their souls (psyches/software), which are stored/recorded on the heavenly "servers," are coming down with Christ to be downloaded into their new immortal bodies during the resurrection at the Second Coming! Jesus, the Builder of our tripartite beings, understood this and proclaimed,

> I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. (Jn 11;25,26 NIV84)

The righteous may *sleep*, but they never *die*. Their individualities are safe with Christ in heaven!

So is our hope in the resurrection or in cleansing from sin and reconciliation with God from the work of Jesus in us?

Read second paragraph, "But how could…" after our explanation of the tripart nature of humanity does it make clear sense how destroying the body, the hardware, does not destroy the soul, the software—individuality? And that our individuality is safe and secure with Christ in heaven waiting to be downloaded onto new upgraded hardware?

The lesson says in the third paragraph that "we know that in the beginning God brought life into existence from nonlife through the power of His word…"

I just want to clarify this statement, God was not dependent on external material whether living or nonliving material for Him to create life. The lesson is correct in that God spoke into existence both the living (plants, animals) and the nonliving materials. Thus, God did not use evolution to form life from lower forms over millions or billions of years, but created it directly. However, life comes from life and while God was not dependent on external living matter to create life, God is a living being and all life originates in, and comes from, God who shares His life, His life-giving energy with all living beings—what the Bible calls the "breath of life."

This is one of those testable points that differentiates a creationist worldview from a godless worldview. The godless teach that living organisms arose from nonliving materials on their own. Science disproves this, as no living organism has ever been demonstrated to arise from nonliving material. However, the creationist view has a living being, God, creating other living organisms and all of nature shows that one living being can share its life to give rise to other living organisms.

SUNDAY

Read Job 19:25-27:

> I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25–27 NIV84).

What does this passage mean? Some suggest this is not describing the nature of humans in death or the resurrection, but only describing Job's mindset, Job's understanding and hope. What would you say to this perspective?

Do we have any Biblical examples of people who have died being resurrected? So, if we believe the Bible to be true, then the historical resurrection of people from the dead would support this text as describing reality not merely Job's wishful thinking?

Do other Bible writers teach the same truth, about bodily resurrection from the dead? And did Jesus teach resurrection from the dead?

And if Jesus Himself, was not bodily raised from then Scripture says we are t be people most pitied.

So given the weight of evidence from the rest of Scripture and history, Job was not merely expressing his own imaginings, but his awareness of the reality of the future in God's universe. Though we may fall asleep in the first death that "death" is not the destruction of our individuality, our souls/software, and God will resurrect us from the dead into a new heaven and new earth.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read from Psalm 49, let's read it in its entirety from The Remedy:

1 Hear this, everyone;
listen carefully, every person who lives on the earth,
2 both young and old,
rich and poor alike:
3 I will tell you real wisdom,
because I understand how reality works. [You want to know how Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego were 10 times wiser than the other fellows? It wasn't simply because they ate a vegetarian diet. It was because they worshipped the Creator God and understood God built reality and His laws are the laws upon which reality works, design laws, and they sought to harmonize their lives with how God's reality works.]
4 I will use my insight to discern profound proverbs
and bring forth the hidden meaning like music from a harp.
5 Why should I fear in the days when evil abounds,
when the depravity and villainy of my enemies surround me—
6 those who believe they are spiritually superior because of their wealth
and boast of their great riches? [Do we see this in the world today, evil abounding, villainy, and people who believe their godless worldview is superior and boast of their earthly wealth and power? Do we need to fear?]
7 No one can ever cure their own terminal condition,
no human can buy the remedy from God—
8 the cost to procure it is beyond our means. [What is the cost? Is it a monetary cost? It is a legal cost? What is it? It is what reality required, perfect harmony with the laws upon which life is built—a sinless life that confronted and destroyed Satan's power of death—the lies about God by perfectly revealing the truth about God, eradicated sinfulness from humanity, destroyed death and replaced the death causing principle in humanity with the life causing principle in humanity thereby becoming the second Adam, the second head of the species human. It cost the life of the Son of God to achieve this outcome and none of us had the sinless life or constitution necessary to engage this battle, not being God ourselves we couldn't reveal the truth about God, and we didn't have a sinless life to confront and overcome the evil and replace the carnal infection with sinless perfection. Only Jesus could do this for us.]
Nothing we could provide would ever cure our mortal state
9 so that we would live forever
and never experience death. [But the godless of this world are trying to use their wealth and power to do just this, to provide their own cure, to create means for them to live forever. They are doing this through genetic and cybernetic research. Looking for ways to extend human life or to transfer human consciousness onto a cybernetic platform.]
10 For all can see that everyone dies—
the wise, the foolish and the thoughtless brutes—
everyone perishes and leaves their wealth to others. [This text appeals to reality—look around, all can see that everyone dies. But we live in a time when reality is denied, what is actually real

and objective is rejected and replaced with feelings, wishes, fantasies, imaginations, and desires. If a person doesn't feel one way, it doesn't matter what objective biology and reality says, they can proclaim they are not what they are and demand everyone else agree with them. It is claimed that their feeling, their subjective experience is their "truth" and all of us are required to accept their feeling as reality. Understand this clearly, what is happening in our society today is not primarily about gender, it is a demonic assault on truth, on reality, on minds. The goal is to infect minds with the idea that there is no objective reality. If there is no objective reality then there is no standard upon which anything can be right or wrong and thus no justification for judging anything as good or evil. In this demonic view all perspectives are equally valid. And when this lie, that there is no objective truth, is accepted, it destroys the ability of intelligent beings to think, to discern, to examine situations and actions of others and decide if those actions are good or evil. Thus, the only thing left for decision-making is power. You must submit to and accept as right the ruling authorities. If the authorities say that it is right, you are not allowed to question because there is no other standard than their position and power to judge them by. To question someone in authority is to be rebellious, insubordinate, a threat and you must be eliminated. This is the true goal of the demonic forces working in this world. It is a set up for beastly powers. And we see this very clearly in modern medicine—no longer are physicians encouraged to think, to question, to search for testable evidence, but are threatened by those in positions of authority to submit to the powers that be. This is the same method as the Dark Ages church, rejecting the Reformers' appeal to the evidence of Scripture, or Galileo's appeal to the evidence of science, and instead demanding submission to authority.]

[11] Their inner thoughts (characters) are fixed
as their permanent state of being.
Though they claimed the earth as their own,
[12] their prized selfish—sin-infected—world will not last:
they will die just like brute beasts. [Though they claim "we must save the planet," the earth, as it is, will be destroyed and replaced with a new earth. Worse, because of their godless worldview they have no hope of a sinless future in a earth made new, and therefore they advance policies that harm the people in order to save the planet because they value this planet more than the people. But we know the truth and we understand reality and we value the people more than the planet. We always act as good stewards and will not exploit the planet, but we won't get tricked into advancing policies that are harmful to the people in order to seek to save the planet.]

[13] This is the inevitable end for those who trust in themselves,
and of all who follow them and embrace their selfish ways.
[14] Like mindless sheep they are destined for the grave,
and death will consume them.
When the earth is made new,
the righteous—those restored to God's perfect design—will walk over their graves;
their bodies will turn to dust in the grave,
and they will never live in heavenly mansions.
[15] But God will heal my terminal condition and resurrect me from the grave;
he will most certainly take me to live with him. [This is reality. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. We must always see things through the lens of God's kingdom, which is not of this sinful world.]

16 Don't be distraught when the selfish become rich,
when their estates become increasingly opulent and grand,
17 for they will take nothing with them when they die—
their wealth will not follow them into the grave.
18 Though they proclaim themselves fulfilled and triumphant—
and they are praised for their success—
19 they will die like all the other selfish people before them;
they will never see the light of life again.
20 A person who is wealthy without understanding the reality of God's design
is like the mindless beast doomed to perish.

What lessons from this psalm apply to us today? Is it only wealth? What about power and position and fame?

Does Satan use the glamor of this world to get us to focus on earthly things and forget heavenly things? Do we sometimes get jealous when we see evil appearing to succeed? Would we trade a clear conscience and a pure heart for more wealth, more power, more earthly success?

Do you remember the Sports Illustrated poll of aspiring Olympic athletes back in 1997?

- 198 sprinters, swimmers, power-lifters and others answered two questions:

  Q) You are offered a banned performance-enhancing substance with 2 guarantees: you will not be caught and you will win your competition. Would you take it?
  A) 195 – yes, 3 – no

  Q) You are offered a banned performance-enhancing substance with 3 guarantees: you will not be caught, you will win every competition you enter for the next five years and, you will die from the side effects. Would you take it?
  A) More than half – yes

  source: Sports Illustrated, April 14, 1997

Do you think in the past 25 years this has improved in society? Or has this attitude of selfishness worsened?

- Do we live in a society where character is valued or where the ends justify the means?
- Do we live in a society where we respect the property of others or where those who shoplift from stores are defended and protected as merely seeking to right some institutional wrong?
  - But do we ever hear a public discussion about what is happening to the hearts, minds, characters of the people doing the stealing?
- Do we live in a society where individual God-give rights of self-determination and liberty of conscience are respected, or where the ends justify the means and it is considered just to coerce consciences for the so-called greater good?

- Do we ever hear about what happens to the hearts, minds, and characters of those who would use such methods on others?

Two wrongs do not make a right and we cannot win God's cause using Satan's methods. One of Satan's strategies is to inspire or tempt someone to do real wrong and then incite anger, outrage, and hate into the hearts of others and get them to seek to make the wrong right by using more of Satan's methods, whether eye for an eye retaliation, or vigilante acts, or using the laws of the state to inflict various forms of so called retaliatory justice on those viewed as being in the wrong.

True Christian justice is doing what is right because it is right, and what is right or just is defined by God's law of love, the protocols upon which reality is built. Thus, true justice always seeks to eliminate the infection of sin, to eradicate fear and selfishness with love, to eviscerate lies with truth, and to win our enemies into being our friends.

But worldly justice is about payback, about inflicting pain and suffering upon those who have done us wrong, about forcing our ways upon others and worldly justice always results in perpetual cycles of violence and abuse in which everyone is injured.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The book of Isaiah…"

Let's read Isaiah 56:1-7:

> This is what the LORD says:
>
> "Maintain justice
> and do what is right,
> for my salvation is close at hand
> and my righteousness will soon be revealed.
> 2 Blessed is the man who does this,
> the man who holds it fast,
> who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it,
> and keeps his hand from doing any evil."
>
> 3 Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say,
> "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people."
> And let not any eunuch complain,
> "I am only a dry tree."
>
> 4 For this is what the LORD says:
>
> "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,

who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant—
5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that will not be cut off.
6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD
to serve him,
to love the name of the LORD,
and to worship him,
all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it
and who hold fast to my covenant—
7 these I will bring to my holy mountain
and give them joy in my house of prayer. (Isaiah 56:1–7 NIV84).

What does this mean? What do you believe is the central message of this passage? Isn't the central message that God's salvation is for all people, it is not restricted by genetics?

There is something about the Sabbath that seems important here, would you agree? What is it? Is it knowing the right day? Is it avoiding work on the right day?

Did the Jews who crucified Christ go to Temple on the wrong day? Did they run their business on that day? Did they pick heads of grain on that day?

What is the point of asking these questions? Can one identify and make behavior changes to not work in any way on the Sabbath and to also attend church every Sabbath and still not be "keeping" the Sabbath?

- If you have the right Sabbath but trust the wrong god, are you saved or lost?
- If you have the right Sabbath but practice the wrong principles, are you saved or lost?
- If you have the right Sabbath but develop the wrong character, are you saved or lost?

- If you have the wrong Sabbath but trust the right God, are you are saved or lost?
- If you have the wrong Sabbath but practice the right principles, are you or saved or lost?
- If you have the wrong Sabbath but develop the right character, are you or saved or lost?

Is the Sabbath a gift from God? For what?

- **Is it to assist us in knowing God and experiencing His healing from sin, or is the Sabbath a rule we must keep to prove to God we are on His side and are good people?**

Was the Sabbath made? And, according to Jesus, for whom was it made?

And what is the purpose of the Sabbath according to Scripture?

> I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. Also I gave them my **Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy**. (Ezekiel 20:11-12 NIV84).

Are we saved by law-keeping? Does the law have power to save and heal from sin? Is the Sabbath able to save and heal from sin?

What is the Sabbath a sign of? A sign that God makes us holy, what does this mean?

Is the Sabbath a sign to us that God is the one who makes us holy OR is our Sabbath-keeping a sign to God that we are holy?

The Sabbath was created by God at the end of creation week in the context of Satan's rebellion against Him and the Sabbath stands as a memorial of God's kingdom and methods of love. As such the Sabbath is a sign, like a flag, it is an evidence of God's methods, principles, and design laws built right into time so that it cannot be removed from our experience. We all pass through it every week. We may not recognize it, we may have forgotten it, but it is still there and cannot be destroyed by Satan.

This is amazing! God built this sign into time itself so that it would remain for all of us to witness and see and this sign is like a flag, it inspires, it signals, it communicates truths about God and His kingdom of truth, love, and liberty.

It was in six days that God created the earth and its solar system, and rather than using His power to force Satan into line, God rested on the seventh day. God stopped using power and rested and God blessed the Sabbath day by investing it with His methods of governing—the truth (His creatorship revealed), love (a planet whose ecosystem operates upon the design law of love, with sapient beings designed to govern in love and capable of pro-creating beings in their image), and freedom (God rested and left His children free rather than compel them with power to obey).

In creating the Sabbath, God memorialized religious liberty, truth, presented in love, while leaving His intelligent creatures free to decide for themselves. Thus the Sabbath is a sign that God makes us holy by restoring us to live in harmony with His methods of truth, love, and liberty in how we treat others.

All week long we are to remember the Sabbath, remember what it stands for, remember the kingdom and methods of God and live those methods all week long. This is how we keep the Sabbath holy. And then we trust God with our fortunes, our futures, our success in this world by refusing to act in self-interest on the Sabbath, we rest in our trust relationship with Him demonstrating that we live out His principles in all that we do.

Think about it, if we do evil on the Sabbath have we made it less holy? If we worship God on Sabbath have we made it more holy? So we are not keeping Sabbath holy, we are living as holy beings when

we honor the God of the Sabbath by having His law written upon our hearts and living out the principles that the Sabbath is a sign of.

But if we, like the Jews 2000 years ago, have the right day of the week, but the wrong god, the wrong understand of law, and the wrong character, then we will crucify the Lord of the Sabbath and want Him off the cross in order to be sure and keep the Sabbath day holy.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Psalm 71, David who has had many struggles finds comfort and reassurance in recounting God's care for Him in the past. Let's read the psalm from The Remedy:

1 O Lord, I trust you completely;
take away all my shame. [From where does shame come and why does it need to be taken away by Jesus? What does shame do to a person? What impact does it have? And what helps us overcome the shame of sin?]
2 Recreate me and restore me to your perfect and righteous design;
hear me and save me from fear and selfishness.
3 Be my remedy and my recovery room
to which I can always go;
give the command to heal me,
for you are my remedy and my refuge.
4 Set me free, O God, from fear and selfishness,
from the clutches of evil and cruelty.
5 For you, O Creator God, are my only hope,
the source of my confidence since my youth.
6 I have relied on you since birth;
you have provided for me since the day I was born.
I live in continual praise to you.
7 To many, my life is evidence of your saving power,
because upon you I have relied for healing and restoration.
8 Praise for you constantly pours from my mouth;
I proclaim the beauty of your character of love all day long.
9 Do not force me to retire when I am old;
do not release me from your service when my strength is gone. [Is there a principle of God's kingdom expressed here? Is this in contrast to what the world teaches? Does the world teach that we should retire, quit working? But one of God's principles is the benefit of useful labor. We grow stronger as we exercise, as we employ ourselves into God's cause and work in our communities, not for pay but for the glory of God, we are benefited. Those who volunteer live longer, have less illnesses, less depression, less dementia and stay out of nursing homes longer than those who do not volunteer. One of the actions that can accelerate one's decline is to retire and quit working. So I tell people, while you might retire from a paying job, don't stop working for God's cause, stay active and engaged in the Lord's work and you will be blessed.]

10 My enemies misrepresent me;
they conspire together, watching for an opportunity to destroy me.
11 They say, “God has abandoned him;
take him down now,
for no one will rescue him.”
12 O God, don’t stay away a moment longer than necessary;
come quickly to help me, O my God.
13 My accusers will be consumed with shame;
those who want to destroy me
will drown in their humiliation and disgrace.
14 But I will continually trust you
and praise you with ever greater affection and regard.
15 I will tell of your right and holy character and methods of love;
all day long I will speak of your remedy to fear and selfishness,
even though the magnitude of your achievement is beyond my comprehension.
16 I will go empowered by you, O Creator God;
I will promote your character and methods of love, and only yours! [What is described? Do you see contrasting methods? Do you see the wicked slandering, accusing, attacking, but the Psalmist is not retaliating against them. He is focused upon God, upon living to glorify God which means He lives out God’s methods and designs. He does not pursue justice with worldly methods, but via God’s methods.]
17 O Creator God, you have taught me of your kingdom of love since my childhood,
and to this day I proclaim how wonderful you are!
18 And even when I am old and gray,
do not release me from your service, O God;
empower me to proclaim your kingdom of love to the next generation—
the power of your healing remedy to those who come after me. [Yes, let’s share what we have learned from God with the next generation, with our children and grandchildren.]
19 Your right and perfect character of love, O God, is the praise of heaven;
you have done great things
and there is none like you!
20 You have shown me the selfishness within me—the source of my pain and sorrow;
you bring to me your life-giving remedy,
and from the grave
you will raise me to everlasting life.
21 You make me greater, healthier, holier and happier than ever before
and surround me with your comforting presence.
22 I will praise you with song
for your never-changing love and goodness, O my God;
my life will be a song of praise to you,
O Holy One, in whom Israel trusted.
23 I will shout for joy
and sing your praises,
for you have healed me!

[24]I will tell of your perfect character of love
for all eternity,
for those who sought to destroy me
reap only shame and humiliation.

Can we have the same hope and attitude as David?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW MAGAZINE:

Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17: Discovering Untold Truths to Prepare for What Comes Next! is now available.

Podcasts:

We have a weekly podcast about 13 minutes long that is available to be delivered to your device if you sign up for it.

Remedy app:

The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Building update:

It Is Finished! We've grandly opened and are now OCCUPYING!

Materials in Australia:

Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia, email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

Materials in South Africa:

Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine:

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 5
Resurrections Before the Cross

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What resurrections can you recall that occurred before Jesus died and rose again?

The lesson lists the following:

- Moses
- The son of the Phoenician woman, the widow of Zarephath who housed Elijah
- The son of the Shunamite woman Elisha helped
- The son of the widow of Nain
- Jarius's daughter
- Lazarus

Any others? I recalled this one:

> Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet (2 Kings 13:21 NIV84).

The lesson also points out that the Bible is consistent in its teaching that the dead know nothing, that death is like a sleep, a period of unconsciousness. And, it is a fact that the Scripture contains no record of any of the people who were resurrected giving reports of any experiences that occurred while they were dead. This lack of a report is not the same as a report that they didn't know anything, but it is consistent with the description that death is a sleep and is what we would expect if the Scripture teaching that death is an unconscious sleep is true. Conversely, if death is a time where souls are conscious and are in paradise celebrating and experience joys and bliss beyond human imagination, then one would expect some report about this.

It is interesting, that the only place we find reports about consciousness after death is outside the Bible. It is very similar to Eastern Mediation practices.

I was at a medical seminar many years ago where a famous Harvard physician was teaching the audience of the medical benefits of Eastern Meditation. He had representatives of every major world religion and multiple minor ones, and these representatives all described how Eastern Meditation was used in their religion.

When it came to Q&A time I went to the microphone and asked the Catholic priest, Protestant pastor, and Jewish rabbi, the three religions based on Scripture, if this form of meditation is found anywhere in the Bible, and all three said no.

Isn't it interesting, that Eastern Meditation is found in every religion of the world, but the one place it is not found is in God's inspired word?

I find this lack of testimony from resurrected people in Scripture of consciousness in death quite profound, when we consider all the resurrections, and how so-called near death experiences and voices from the beyond occur outside Scripture.

SUNDAY

Read Jude 9:

> But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9 NIV84)

What lessons, truths, insights, principles, does this passage reveal?

Who is Michael? There are three main positions put forth:

- The Jehovah Witnesses take the position that Michael is Jesus in His preincarnate form, before He was born in Bethlehem—and they take the position that Jesus was a created being, not fully God.

- The SDA church takes the position that Michael was Jesus in His preincarnate form but Jesus is fully God, pre-existent with life original, unborrowed and underived from another. That Jesus was never an angel in substance, but prior to His incarnation manifested Himself in heaven in the form of an angel.

- Most of the rest of the Christian world takes the position that Michael is not Jesus at all, just an archangel like Gabriel.

In my view, the Jehovah Witnesses' view can be rejected from the outset because they take the position that Jesus was not fully God and if Jesus is not God, then the plan of salvation, as I understand it, could not have been accomplished by Jesus, the truth about God could not be revealed by a being who is not God. In fact, if Jesus was not fully God, then we don't learn that God is love, a being willing to sacrifice Himself for us, but instead learn that God is selfish and willing to sacrifice others to protect Himself. And of course, the weight of Scripture on the various attributes of divinity are all part of the description of Jesus—creative power etc.

So the only two reasonable options to consider are whether Michael is Jesus the divine Son of God in His preincarnate form or whether He is just another archangel like Gabriel.

First point to consider is that Michael's name means "who is like God?" or "One who is like God." This is a clue, but certainly not conclusive.

So let's examine the Scripture and see if we can make a sound case for whether Michael is fully God-the Son, Jesus, in His preincarnate form, or whether Michael is just a created angel like Gabriel.

Exodus 3:2-6:

> There the **angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush**. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up."
>
> When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called to him from within the bush**, "Moses! Moses!"
>
> And Moses said, "Here I am."
>
> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God**. (Exodus 3:2-6)

We have the account of the angel of the lord being God—this account in Exodus is repeated by Stephen and affirmed in Acts 7:30-38.

In Judges chapter two we find:

> **The angel of the LORD** went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "**I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you**, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' **Yet you have disobeyed me**. Why have you done this? Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you." (Judges 2:1-3).

With whom was the covenant that Israel made? Was the covenant between the people and a created angel or with God? And who promised to drive out the occupants of the land, was the promise from an angel or was the promise from God?

> Then Manoah inquired of **the angel of the LORD**, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?"

> He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding. "Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, **the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame**. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the **angel of the LORD**.
>
> "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "**We have seen God**!" (Judges 13:17-22)

This account also affirms that the angel of the Lord is God.

This next text, Zechariah 3:1-7, will describe the same dynamics we see in the conflict over the body of Moses recorded in Jude. Notice the players involved and who is doing what:

> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before **the angel of the LORD**, and **Satan standing at his right side to accuse him**. [Notice Satan is the accuser. Accusation is one of Satan's methods, God doesn't use this method.] **The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan!** [Who are the players? Joshua is there and being accused by Satan and the angel of the Lord is there, but then the text says "the Lord said to Satan 'The Lord rebuke you…" Is this a fourth party or is this the angel of the lord, who is God? Doesn't this sound just like the conversation over the body of Moses? And who said "the Lord rebuke you" there?] The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"
>
> Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes."
>
> Then he said to Joshua, "See, **I have taken away your sin**, and I will put rich garments on you." [Who takes away our sin? Is it an angel? Is it the Father? Or is Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away our sin?]
>
> Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.
>
> **The angel of the LORD** gave this charge to Joshua: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: `If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here. (Zechariah 3:1-7).

Do we recognize the angel of the Lord here as Jesus in His preincarnate form?

> "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that

> time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. (Daniel 12:1)

Interesting passage, we don't know who Michael is from this passage, but he protects the people—from what? What is the focus of Scripture? Is it primarily about local conflicts with regional rulers, or is the focus of Scripture, as we read in Zechariah, a conflict between cosmic powers, Satan and his agents are the enemy from whom we are being protected? And if so, the great prince of the universe, who protects us is the one who becomes King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus. This text certainly allows for such an interpretation, but itself doesn't establish it.

> And there was war in heaven. **Michael and his angels** fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. (Revelation 12:7)

This affirms our view of a cosmic war against principalities and powers of darkness with Michael leading the heavenly host against Satan, the dragon, who was cast out of heaven. But it still doesn't establish Michael as Jesus in His preincarnate form.

> But even the **archangel Michael**, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Jude 9

Now this text establishes that Michael is in the form of an archangel, and that Michael is the one who raised Moses from the dead, which is a big clue to the true identity of Michael, because who has the power of death and the grave?

Here is another clue as to who raised Moses, wouldn't it be the one who buried His friend Moses?

> "Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in Moab, just as the LORD had said. The LORD buried the body of Moses in Moab" (Deuteronomy 34:5-6).

But there is more:

> "For the **Lord himself** will come down from heaven, with **a loud command**, with **the voice of the archangel** and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Whose voice raises the dead? In this passage it is the voice of the archangel, which in this passage could be a different being than the Lord or it could be the Lord Himself. This passage doesn't conclusively tell us if the Lord of this passage is the voice of the archangel, and whether this is Michael. But Jesus Himself, had previously told us:

> "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live**."

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when **all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out**--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5"25 & 28-29).

Jesus speaking to John in Revelation says:

> "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave" (Revelation 1:17-18 NLT).

Who holds the keys to death and the grave and whose voice raises the dead? The voice of Jesus, which is the voice of the archangel, who is Michael who raised Moses and is the angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses from the bush. So, I think we can make a strong case that Michael is Jesus in His preincarnate form.

With this understanding we can make greater insights into the conflict between good and evil.

Peter wrote:

> "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the **morning star** rises in your hearts" (2 Pe 1:19 NIV84).

The Greek for "morning star" is *phosphorus* and means bright light, so some translations say day star, and it refers to Jesus. But this Greek word when translated into the Latin is translated as Lucifer, because Lucifer means light bearer, one who gives light. And how is Jesus described in John chapter one?

Jesus is described as "The true light that gives light to every man" (John 1:9).

Now what is the implication of this? First, is there any reason why Jesus, who is fully God, pre-existent, with life original, unborrowed, underived, would appear throughout His created order as an angel?

What does God, who is love, want to have with His intelligent creatures?

Do parents want a close and loving relationship with their children? Will parents get down on their knees, down on the level of their children and interact with their children on a level of the child in order to share experiences, connect, bond, and love them? Will parents play pretend-school or pretend-house or make silly faces and noises to connect with their children and see them smile?

Or do parents insist on teaching calculus to their small children, or speaking about theoretical physics, or the various atonement models?

What is the bigger gap in ability, a human parent and their child, or our infinite God and His created beings?

Would God step down from infinite power, might, knowledge, and experience onto the level of His finite children to connect with and join them in loving relationship?

1 Timothy 6:16 tells us God lives in "unapproachable light"—unapproachable by whom? By all finite beings. God is an infinite being, with infinite power, infinite, knowledge, infinite light—and a finite mind, even that of an unfallen angel, cannot assimilate and process infinite truth, knowledge, power.

So if finite beings cannot enter into infinity and since God wants close intimate connection with His creatures, what must God do? A member of the Godhead must leave infinity and interact with His creatures on their level of existence. This is Jesus. Jesus has always been the bridge-builder, the go-between, the connecting link, the mediator between our infinite God and the created order. And in this role, prior to His incarnation as our Savior, Jesus manifested Himself in the form of an angel to connect and interact with angels.

So I find it not only possible, but highly compelling and reasonable to conclude the Michael is God the Son, Jesus, in His preincarnate form.

MONDAY

The lesson points us to the resurrections two OT resurrections, let's read one of these stories, 2 Kings 4:8-37:

> One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. 9 She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. 10 Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us."
>
> 11 One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. 12 He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. 13 Elisha said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?' "
> She replied, "I have a home among my own people."
>
> 14 "What can be done for her?" Elisha asked.
>
> Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son and her husband is old."
>
> 15 Then Elisha said, "Call her." So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. 16 "About this time next year," Elisha said, "you will hold a son in your arms."

"No, my lord," she objected. "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God!"

17 But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.

18 The child grew, and one day he went out to his father, who was with the reapers. 19 "My head! My head!" he said to his father.

His father told a servant, "Carry him to his mother." 20 After the servant had lifted him up and carried him to his mother, the boy sat on her lap until noon, and then he died. 21 She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and went out.

22 She called her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and a donkey so I can go to the man of God quickly and return."

23 "Why go to him today?" he asked. "It's not the New Moon or the Sabbath."

"It's all right," she said.

24 She saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Lead on; don't slow down for me unless I tell you." 25 So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When he saw her in the distance, the man of God said to his servant Gehazi, "Look! There's the Shunammite! 26 Run to meet her and ask her, 'Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?' "

"Everything is all right," she said.

27 When she reached the man of God at the mountain, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi came over to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone! She is in bitter distress, but the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me why."

28 "Did I ask you for a son, my lord?" she said. "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes'?"
29 Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tuck your cloak into your belt, take my staff in your hand and run. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not answer. Lay my staff on the boy's face."

30 But the child's mother said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So he got up and followed her.

31 Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound or response. So Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy has not awakened."

> 32 When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. 33 He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the LORD. 34 Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, **mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands**. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew warm. 35 Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.
>
> 36 Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite." And he did. When she came, he said, "Take your son." 37 She came in, fell at his feet and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out. (2 Kings 4:8–37 NIV84).

What do we learn from this story?

I believe this is story is real, that this woman really lived, she had a child, the child died and a real prophet of named Elisha was used by God to act as He did and the power of God raised this boy from the dead.

But, is there more to it than just the evidence that resurrection is real?

As we have described many times, the Bible is not only the record of real historical people who did real things, but these real events often teach larger realities of the plan of salvation through object lessons.

The first object lesson of this story is the boy—he is one of seven miracle births in the Bible and they all tell us something about Jesus. Jesus was a miracle birth to a virgin, these seven were miracle births to women who were infertile and God miraculously healed their infertility and they became pregnant in the normal way from their husbands. But, each one teaches us something about Jesus our Savior:

1. Sarah- Isaac – The promised one who will be sacrificed
2. Rebekah – Jacob – wrestles with God to overcome his own weakness and became Israel, the father of the nation built upon twelve sons, Jesus wrestled with temptation and overcame to be the cornerstone of the church built upon twelve apostles
3. Rachel – Joseph – who was sold into slavery but through faithfulness to God became ruler to save his people from famine; Jesus humbled himself to be a servant but through His faithfulness to His Father overcomes and is exalted to be ruler and saves us from sin
4. Monoah's wife – Samson – blessed with strength to deliver Israel from bondage of oppressors and to rule over them, Jesus has the strength to deliver us from sin and rule the universe
5. Hannah- Samuel – who became High Priest, Jesus is our High Priest
6. Shunammite woman – child died and resurrected, and Jesus died and rose again
7. Elizabeth – John the Baptist – who greatest of prophets, and Jesus was the greatest of all prophets

So the first object lesson from this story is the example of the child, a miracle birth and later the child dies and rises again. But is there more to this story, deeper object lessons to learn?

Elisha is a type of Christ, a spokesman, representative, and object lesson for Jesus. Some of the miracles of Elisha that demonstrate this:

- Elisha directs a widow woman to fill jars with oil and sell the oil to pay the debt of their deceased father and prevent her sons from being taken into slavery. (2 Kings 4:1-7)
    - The oil represents the Holy Spirit which Jesus pours out and it is via the Holy Spirit that the victory of Christ becomes ours and prevents us frees us from the slavery of sin and the debt of our father Adam
- Miracle of providing a son for the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:15-17)
    - Represents Jesus miracle birth
- The raising of the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:18-37)
    - Represents Jesus rising from the dead
- Miraculously makes poisonous food edible and feeds the faithful prophets (2 Kings 4:38-41)
    - Represents Jesus the bread of life, becoming sin though He knew no sin in order to destroy death and bringing life and immortality to light. He feeds us His righteousness and delivers us from death.
- Feeds 100 men with 20 loaves, multiplying the food (2 Kings 4:42-44)
    - Jesus feeds the masses multiplying the bread and fish, but also represents Jesus Himself being the bread of life which feeds us the word of truth
- Heals Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14)
    - Jesus healed many lepers and leprosy is a metaphor for sin and Jesus heals us from sin
- Makes an axe head float (2 Kings 6:1-7)
    - Jesus has power over the forces of nature, calmed the storm and walked on water
- Warns Israel of the enemies plans (2 Kings 6:8-10)
    - Jesus reveals to us the plans of the enemy
- Angel armies protect him from the enemy forces, and he blinds the enemies leading them into the hands of the king and instructs for the enemies to be fed and given water and then sets them free and these former enemies stopped attacking Israel. (2 kings 6:11-23)
    - Jesus has His angel armies around us protecting us and He desires to take the blind enemies in this world and open their eyes so they experience the bread and water of life so that they are turned from enemies into friends of God and stop attacking the people of God

Do you see how Elisha was a type of Christ?

But the boy was a type of Christ—is this confusing to have different people in the same story representing Jesus?

Consider the OT Sanctuary service:

- Moses represented Jesus in His preincarnate state, as Moses talked with God face to face and then left and went out and built the sanctuary, Jesus in heaven prior to His incarnation talked to God face to face about the plan of salvation and then left heaven and built His temple:
  - "Here is the man whose name is the **Branch**, and he will branch out from his place and **build the temple of the LORD**. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.'" (Zechariah 6:12–13 NIV84).
- The lamb represented Jesus during His 33 years on Earth when He was sacrificed as our Savior
- Aaron represented Jesus after His resurrection functioning in the role of our High Priest

So, back to the question of the object lessons from this story, Elisha and the boy both represent Jesus, what do we learn from this?

Jesus said,

> The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do." (John 10:17-18 GNT).

Do we see this acted out in the story of Elisha raising the boy when both represent Jesus?

What about the laying on him mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands? Does that seem strange to you? It is an object lesson, of what?

> "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 NIV84).

Jesus, as our substitute, as our second Adam, had to purify humanity from sin in spirit, soul, and body.

- Spirit=breath, which is represented by mouth. Jesus breathed on His disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. The Greek for breath and spirit is the same word *pneuma*.
- Soul=eyes, the Greek for soul is *psyche*, our individuality, our mind, our thinking. Eyes symbolize wisdom, discernment, enlightenment, thinking, and thus symbolize the soul. We often say that the eyes are windows into the soul
- Body=hands, the hands symbolize our actions, our works, which we do with our bodies.

So, the object lesson is that Jesus who died as our substitute raises His humanity back life after winning the battle over Satan and sin, and Jesus purifies humanity in spirit, soul, and body, mouth, eyes, and hands.

And the boy sneezes seven times—seven the number of perfection or completion; sneezing is blowing out of impurities, Jesus purged the infection of sin and perfectly purified humanity. And this is symbolized for our cleansing from sin when in the sanctuary service the High Priest (Jesus), sprinkles the blood of the lamb (which represents Jesus' sinless life) seven times over the ark on the Day of Atonement. Jesus cleanses us completely from sin.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

> The Bible says that Jesus "'went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him'" *(Acts 10:38, NASB).* Indeed, all the Gospels are full of accounts of Jesus ministering to many needy and hurting souls, which is why later many Jews came to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah."

Is there a reason beyond the benefit of physical healing that Jesus spent so much time healing and not preaching?

It is the most accurate, efficient, and reality-based way to reveal the plan of salvation.

The plan of salvation is the plan of healing, it is not the plan of legal adjustment.

- We do not heal people from any sickness or disease by adjusting what is recorded in the medical record.
- We do not heal people from disease by legal declaration that they are well when they are still sick.
- We do not heal someone from disease by judicial ruling.
- We do not heal someone from disease by finding someone else who never had the disease and recording their healthy status in the record of the sick one.
- We do not heal someone from disease by have the doctor's son plead with the doctor to diagnose them as sickness free even though they are terminal.

No, we heal someone from disease by removing any toxins, pathogens, or brokenness and restoring the person to harmony with God and God's laws of health. God's plan of salvation is to restore His law of life into humanity—the new covenant is writing God's law into the hearts and minds of people.

Every wound, injury, sickness and health problem is caused by some break from the design laws upon which God created life and health to operate. Health and wellness are experienced when the principles,

presence, and powers of our Creator God are brought to bear upon the suffering one. This is why healing physical illness teaches the plan of salvation because the plan of salvation is restoring God's law into our hearts and minds.
Thoughts?

The lesson points out that when Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain He did so without her asking for help, whereas the Phoenician widow and the Shunammite woman both asked for help from Elijah and Elisha.

What do you make of this difference?

> "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8 NIV84).

God absolutely helps us when we ask, but God stepped in to help us before we asked!

Do parents only help their children when they ask? Or, are loving parents most pro-active in seeking to help their children when the children don't even realize they need help?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points us to the resurrection of Jairus's daughter. I love this story because it gives powerful details that help us understand some of the issues of first death and how God sees it.

This little girl was dead and her death was understood by the community as many mourners had already arrived and began to mourn.

But Jesus tells them that the girl is not dead but asleep, and they laugh at Him.

What does this tell you?

That the girl was not in a physiological sleep, but was, what we call, dead.

But why didn't Jesus say, "It's okay that the girl is dead. Don't worry" Why did Jesus say she was asleep? Was Jesus trying to trick them or deceive them? Or was Jesus doing what He always does, trying to enlighten them because He is the light which lightens all people?

But did they receive the light? No, they laughed at Him.

Do we have insight today as to how a person can die what we call death, but God calls it a sleep? Yes, the analogy of computers that run out of power go into sleep mode. And if the data is backed up on a

cloud, then the machine can be destroyed, but the computer can be resurrected by downloading the data to new hardware.

Thus, God wants us to understand the death that we call death is not what God calls death and is not the death of sin, not the death God warned Adam and Eve about in Eden. Jesus said that those who die the sleep death and believe in Him will never die.

Only the unrepented, the unsaved, die the death that is the wages of sin. And that death happens at the end of the 1000 years, and it is the death that God and the Bible call death and it is the death from which there is no resurrection. It is the death where not only the body is destroyed, but the soul, the individuality, the software.

THURSDAY

Lazarus—another great story to help us understand the difference between first and second death. Jesus again describes Lazarus as sleeping rather than dead, but His disciples didn't understand and thought He meant a physiological sleep, so Jesus had to tell them he was dead.

But Jesus was going to wake him up from the dead, but Jesus waited for four days, because there was a superstitious belief that the spirit hung around the body for three days. Thus waiting for four days met the people where they were in their ignorance and false understandings, to ensure they all believed and knew that Lazarus was dead, and not merely physiologically sleeping.

Another great detail recorded in Scripture is that when Jesus told them to roll away the stone, Martha objects that the body will be stinking because decay and rot had set in. This give greater credence to the fact that Lazarus was dead, and to the power of Jesus over death.

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions.

Read third question, "If you think that the soul is immortal and that the dead, especially the righteous dead, live on in heaven after they die, what need is there for a resurrection at the end of time?"

And what would heaven be like right now for any person if they die and are conscious and aware in heaven? Would a mother who dies and leave behind small children be happy to see them placed in foster care and mistreated? Would a father who dies be happy to see his children molested by a step-father who enters their life after his passing?

Could heaven really be a place of joy and bliss for people while their loved ones continue to struggle with evil and sin here on earth?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Our New Schedule: Second Sabbath of every month Dr. Jennings will teach in person followed by potluck. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend our monthly potluck and fellowship. Dr. Jennings will teach remotely the other Sabbaths and those in our studio can interact live with him.

NEW MAGAZINE: Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17: Discovering Untold Truths to Prepare for What Comes Next! is now available.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 6
He Died for Us

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read John 19:1-30, which describes Jesus' before Pilate and the Jewish leaders calling for Jesus' death and how they said they have no king but Caesar and then Jesus' crucifixion. Let's read verses 28-30:

> Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19;28-30 NIV84)

What was finished? What did Jesus complete and accomplish at the cross?

Before we explore this question let me say at the outset some foundational truths and what we believe about the mission, purpose, and accomplishments of Jesus:

- After Adam sinned, no human being could be saved without the sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior
- The death of Jesus was a requirement for the salvation of human beings from sin
- Jesus died as our substitute—we believe in substitutionary atonement, in other words, Jesus took the place of sinful human beings in order to address and overcome the sin problem for us so that human beings can be saved from sin.
- There is nothing any human being can do to add to or improve upon what Christ has done for us
- We as individuals experience individual salvation by God's grace as manifest in the accomplishments of Jesus Christ when we partake of those accomplishments through faith, also known as trust.
- We experience the victory of Christ in our lives individually when, through faith, we open our hearts to God and the Holy Spirit takes the victory of Christ and changes our hearts and minds—the new covenant (Hebrews 8:10); this is known as being reborn—what Jesus said to Nicodemus.

So, having made these statements clear, don't get confused when we reject certain explanations of why Christ had to die. Any explanation we give will not contradict the statements above.

What was finished? Do we have Jesus using this same language about finishing His work elsewhere?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> After Jesus finished saying this, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you. For you gave him authority over all humanity, so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him. And eternal life means knowing you, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I have shown your glory on earth; **I have finished the work you gave me to do.** Father! Give me glory in your presence now, the same glory I had with you before the world was made. **I have made you known to those you gave me out of the world**" (John 17:1-6 GNT)

Was what Jesus finished at the cross when He said "it is finished" and what Jesus said here in John 17 about finishing the work the Father sent Him to do addressing the same or different accomplishment?

Was Jesus' finishing the work the Father gave Him to do, specifically to resolve the sin problem?

Could we say that Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death is the solution to the sin problem?

Then would our understanding and explanation of what we think the sin problem is influence why we think Jesus had to die?

So, what is the problem that sin caused that Jesus' death fixes?

When Adam sinned in Eden did God get changed? Did God's law get changed? Did the condition of Adam and Eve get changed when they sinned?

So, is there a problem with God or God's law that needs fixing? Is there a problem in humanity that needs fixing?

So, where will the effect, the impact, the saving change have to occur to save humans from sin, will Jesus' death have to do something to God or God's law, or will it have to do something to humankind in order to save or redeem human beings from sin?

So, how did Satan cause the sin problem in humans? By lying about God.

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness result in acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, relationships—a terminal condition

So, if sin began with believing lies about God, what does the healing solution start with? The truth about God—Jesus said, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:32).

- Truth destroys lies and wins back to trust
- In trust we open the heart and the Spirit pours in love—we are reborn with new motives
- Love and trust results in acts of righteousness, service, beneficence

- Acts of righteousness result in growing in godliness/maturing, and advancing the kingdom of love and truth—we who were dead in trespass and sin come to live and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness

But the entire healing progression begins with the truth about God that wins us back to trust.

So, Jesus finished the work the Father gave Him to do—He made the truth about God known. But is revealing the truth the complete and total and only aspect of what Christ came to do? Did sinners need more?

Is God's law involved in some way in our sin problem and God's solution for it?

Through what law lens do we understand the sin problem and God's solution for it?

If we view God's law functioning like human law, imposed rules that require a judicial ruling of guilt or innocence with the infliction of "just" penalties upon the guilty to punish sin and uphold the integrity of the law, then we explain the purpose of the cross in legal terms, and we see God as the source of inflicted pain and death as punishment for breaking His rules.

The legal view leads good-hearted people to draw a host of wrong conclusions because their underlying premise about God's law is wrong.

- They will say that Jesus came to be tempted like us and overcome the temptations so that He could be a sinless substitute upon whom God inflicts our punishment in order to meet the demands of His holy law.
- It is then claimed that if we sinners accept this legal payment that God will be able to declare us to be righteous even though we are unrighteous and
- That God will not be legally required to kill us.
- Further it is taught that if we claim the blood payment of Jesus then God will apply that blood to our heavenly records and it erases the historical records of our sins so that no record of our sinful deeds will remain for any saved or sinless being to ever know about when we get to heaven.
- But this legal application of inflicted punishment and payment of a blood debt to the ruling god is only able to be applied if the innocent party suffers for every single violation of the law. Therefore, it is taught, that every single individual act of sin, committed by every single sinner in history was placed on Jesus and God punished Jesus for those sins, thus His punishment was much more severe than any other person in history.

Do you find this explanation reasonable? Are you won to trust a god who would artificially inflict punishment upon an innocent in order for the guilty to go free?

Would you like to live in a country where innocent people are purposely and knowingly punished for the crimes of the guilty so that the guilty can go free? If we were to set up a system that punished the voluntary innocent, say a mother willing to be punished for the crimes of her adult child, would doing so make us more like Jesus?

Where does this unjust explanation come from? It comes from accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law and the sin problem is a legal problem and therefore the purpose of Christ's death was to provide a legal solution.

This is why Satan has infected Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law, because it results in concepts being taught about God that make God appear to be like Satan in character, unforgiving, severe, arbitrary, the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death for sin, a being who is willing to torture and kill the innocent in place of the guilty. Such teachings undermine genuine trust in God while they increase faith in religious ritual, blood payments, legal adjustments and all other types of means of various superstitious teachings and rituals that serve to hide us and protect us from this punishing god and simultaneously give power to human religious leaders and organizations:

- pay your tithes and offerings or your sins will remain on the books
- make sure you remain in good standing as a member of your religious organization or else you can't have eternal life (fear ex-communication from the organization)
- make sure you participate in the right rituals in the right way or you cannot be saved—and who decides whether the ritual is done properly, who is empowered by investing ritual with the belief that it has saving power?

This is all contrary to Scripture, exactly the opposite of the truth, and is the result of accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law.

When we return to design law, that God is Creator and His laws are the laws that He built life to operate upon, we understand that sin breaks God's design for life and results in death unless God fixes the damage and restores His living law into us. Just as the Scripture teaches:

- The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)
- Sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15)
- The one who sows to the carnal nature from that nature reaps destruction (Galatians 6:8)

God is the source of life and death does not come from God, it comes from sin, from breaking God's design for life and separating ourselves from the source of life.

We are "dead in trespass and sin" we have a terminal sin condition that we inherited from Adam and we cannot cure it. David wrote that we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). And this condition, without remedy, results in symptoms—acts of sin—and eventual death.

Without Jesus every single human being would die from this condition, but

> "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,** but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does **not believe stands condemned already** because he has not believed in the name

> of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: **Light has come into the world**, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:16-19 NIV84)

From where does the condemnation for sin come? It doesn't come from God, Jesus didn't come to condemn, but to save, we stand condemned already-why? Because we are terminal, dead in trespass and sin, only those who embrace the light, take in the truth as Jesus revealed and are won to trust and in trust open their hearts receive the indwelling Spirit who takes what Christ accomplished for us and renews us, we are reborn into new beings with a heart like Christ because Christ dwells with in. This is all reality based, based upon God's design law, the actual condition of the hearts, minds, and characters of people. There is nothing penal legal going on.

If a patient receives a terminal cancer diagnosis from their doctor, do they go home and tell their family, "Well, the doctor has condemned me to death?" And does the family respond by saying, "If we could only get the doctor to not be so judgmental, maybe we could pay the doctor a fee and with the proper payment maybe we could get the doctor to declare you to be cancer free even though you am not."

And if there were doctors and patients who operated this way, diagnosing terminal disease, but taking payments to declare people to be healthy when they are still terminal, what would the outcomes be? People would still be suffering, getting worse, and dying of their terminal condition. And this is sadly what we see in much of Christianity:

- Child abuse rates are no different in Christian and non-Christian homes
- Spouse abuse rates are no different
- Pornography use no different
- Addictions no different

Paul warned that at this time in history people would have a form of godliness but with no power—and that is what the penal legal system does—it sets up a system that gives a form of godliness but it cheats people of the life transforming power because it tells them salvation is a legal process that happens OUTSIDE of them, when in reality salvation is a supernatural process that happens inside of them, as Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is within you."

This plan to save sinners through Jesus was the joint plan of the Godhead—God so loved the world HE sent His Son—God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself.

Jesus took the terminal sin-condition upon Himself and rather than succumbing to it—He "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light" 2Timothy 1:10.

In the humanity of Jesus Christ, He experienced the full weight of what sin causes, the temptations, the fear, the anxiety, the heart-breaking agony and was tempted to use power to save self. He was tempted in every way just like us but without sin (Hebrews 4:15). And we are tempted when we are dragged away and enticed by our own evil desires (James 1:14). Did Jesus experience human emotions that tempted Him to act in self-interest? Yes, in Gethsemane He suffered terrible emotional anguish and was

tempted to act in ways to save self, but with every temptation He chose to trust His Father and act in love.

Thus in Jesus, in the humanity of Jesus, by exercising His human abilities He destroyed the death causing principle that He inherited through Mary and solidified the life causing principle that He inherited through the Holy Spirit into His human character that He developed by His choices as a human being.

Thus, "once he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Wasn't He always perfect? Jesus was always sinless, but Bible perfection is about maturity of character and character cannot be created, it is developed by the choices of the intelligent being. Once Adam sinned no human being could develop a sinless human character, thus Jesus came as the second Adam to overcome and destroy the death causing principle and restore God's life causing principle, God's law, into the human being.

Every act of sin committed by every single human being throughout history was **not** placed upon Jesus and punished by God. Jesus partook of the sin-condition with which every human suffers and every human is tempted by and Jesus destroyed that condition and established a new sinless humanity becoming the new head of humanity, the second Adam.

Was the problem that sin caused restricted to human beings? Was there a problem with sin that existed in God's universe before Adam and Eve sinned?

And when Lucifer and 1/3 of the angels sinned did their rebellion change God or God's law? Did God need to do something to address the sin problem in the rest of the universe? Was Christ's death not only designed to provide what sinful human beings needed in order to save us from sin, but also what loyal angels needed in order to secure them in their loyalty and prevent further angelic defection?

> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, **whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:18–20 NIV84).

What was needed for the loyal angels in heaven—they were not sinners, but somehow they needed the cross why? What did the cross do to help the loyal angels?

Jesus tells us about this when He said:

> "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* to myself" (John 12:31-32 NIV84).

If your version has "men" in it, that word is supplied by the translators, it is not in the Greek. Jesus wasn't drawing only humans to Himself at the cross, but heavenly beings as well.

Jesus' crucifixion would pronounce judgment upon this world and the prince of this world—what kind of judgment is this? Who is the prince of this world? It is Satan—so at the cross Satan is being judged and driven out. But was the crucifixion of Jesus a legal court setting? No! It is the judgment that Paul wrote about in Romans 3:4:

> "let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged'" (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

The war began in heaven when Lucifer lied about God and deceived 1/3 of the angels into judging God falsely and rebelling against Him. While 2/3's stayed loyal, they had questions that needed answering lest they also eventually lose trust in God and rebel.

In order to resolve the sin problem that Satan's lies caused, God not only needed to provide a solution that fixes the damage sin caused to humans and open a path for sinful humans to be restored to righteousness and eternal life, but God also had to provide the answers to the allegations of Satan to solidify the loyal angels in their loyalty. In other words, God had to reveal Himself to be righteous—which is what Paul says was the purpose of the cross:

Romans 3:21-26:

> But now the **righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed**, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even **the righteousness of God**, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified [the Greek for righteousness and justice is the exact same, so this could read as "being made righteous" or "being set right" instead of being justified, which is I believe is the correct rendering as the plan of salvation is not designed to make a legal adjustment in books while we remain wicked, but to make us righteous. As it says in 2Cor 5:21 "he who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God."] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, [The Greek for propitiation is *hilasterion*, which is the word used for the lid to the ark of the covenant. It simply means that Christ was sent by God as the way and means of resolving the sin problem and restoring us to righteousness and reconciling us to God] through faith, **to demonstrate His righteousness**, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, **to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness**, [What was the reason God did this? To demonstrate His righteousness, to demonstration He is righteous, why did this have to be demonstrated? Because Satan lied about God's character and alleged God is unrighteous, how? By alleging God makes up laws and inflicts arbitrary punishments. That God would inflict punishment upon an innocent is one of the greatest ways Satan advances the lie that God is not righteous] that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. [Again, just and justifier are the same Greek as righteous and righteousness]. (Romans 3:21–26 NKJV).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Here is how I rendered it in *The Remedy*:

> But now God has revealed a healthy state of being — a character that is right and perfect in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

Jesus is saying that at the cross He will be lifted up and reveal the truth about God, His character and methods of truth, love, and liberty and expose Satan as the liar and fraud that he is and Satan's methods as the source of all pain, suffering, and death. When this truth is fully revealed then Satan's power to deceive will be broken in the hearts and minds of all who see and embrace the truth, thus Satan will be drive out. He will be driven out of the shadows, out into the open for all to see him for who and what he really is and when that happens his power is broken and Jesus by being lifted up will draw all beings who value truth to Himself, including the angels in heaven.

The angels who witnessed this had their questions about God answered and Satan was revealed as the liar and murderer that he is and thus the angelic host in heaven pronounced judgment that God and Jesus are holy, holy, holy (we read about this in Revelation after Jesus' ascension), and Satan was cast out of the affections of all the angels in heaven. From that point forward Satan's work was restricted to earth not by physical force, but by the reality that no angel in heaven would listen to anything Satan had to say. Only on earth are intelligent beings still listening to Satan and believing his lies.

This is why, before Christ returns, a message goes forward to give God glory, just as Christ prayed in John 17 that He would be glorified in order to finish the work of making God known so that God would be judged correctly and the lies about Him would be overthrown, so too at this time in history, we His people are to be the light of the world to glorify Him because the hour has come for people to make a right judgment about God, to stop judging Him to be an imperial dictator and to return to worshiping Him as Creator, Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water.

WEDNESDAY

The second paragraph states, "But animal sacrifices could not take away sin by themselves (Heb. 10:4). They provided only conditional forgiveness dependent on the effectiveness of Christ's future sacrifice on the cross."

What do you think about this? Is any of this true? What about the first sentence, "But animal sacrifices could not take away sin by themselves (Heb. 10:4)." Does that mean animal sacrifices could take away sin when they are joined with something else, say animal sacrifices plus faith in a future sacrifice?

Could animal sacrifices ever take away sin? No! Period, full stop. Animal sacrifices were never able to remove sin, save from sin, provide any impact that could resolve or remedy sin. They were only and ever designed to teach, to educate, to impact the mind of the sinner in ways that would lead the sinner to Jesus for salvation. This is true through all human history since the fall of Adam.

People did not have to participate in the OT sacrificial system to experience salvation, but they did have to experience what the OT sacrificial system was teaching, that is, reconciliation with God through the efficacy of Jesus.

Can you think of any people who did not participate in the OT animal sacrifices that the Bible indicates experienced salvation? Naaman and Nebuchadnezzar. We also have no record of Daniel and his friends presenting animal sacrifices during the 70-year captivity.

So the first sentence, at best, is very poorly constructed, but it likely reveals more. It likely reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the sin problem and God's solution for it, which the second sentence further confirms. "They provided only conditional forgiveness dependent on the effectiveness of Christ's future sacrifice on the cross."

What? An animal sacrifice provided conditional forgiveness? Is the sin problem one of getting God to forgive? It is forgiveness from God that is the obstacle? Or is God's forgiveness freely given without any price being paid because that is who God is, but His forgiveness doesn't resolve the sin problem because His attitude was never the obstacle to our salvation?

Is Jesus fully God? Did Jesus have the authority to forgive sins? Did Jesus on the cross forgive those who crucified Him? And did that save them? Were they, by Jesus' forgiveness, turned from enemies to friends? It is true that no sinner could be saved without God's forgiveness, but the obstacle was never God's forgiveness. The obstacle to salvation is our distrust of God what the Bible calls a lack of faith and our fallen or carnal nature. In other words it is sinfulness in us that is the obstacle to salvation, not some deficiency in God that is remedied by Jesus. Our distrust of God and our fallen sinful nature needed to be removed by God in order to restore us to one-ness with Him, i.e., save us—and both were accomplished by Jesus as our substitute.

It all goes back to the law lens one views things through. Through the human law lens, we are in legal trouble and what we need is forgiveness or pardon. Through design law, God is love and freely

forgives, but His personal forgiveness doesn't address the lies of Satan and restore us to trust in Him, and doesn't remove sinfulness from humanity and restore God's living law into humanity. These are the obstacles, the lies of Satan and sin in us, which had to be directly addressed and resolved. Jesus came and did both, presented the truth about God in order to remove the lies of Satan and restore trust and He developed a perfect righteous human character that He offers to impart to us when we are won back to trust.

The second to the last paragraph states, "Martin Luther referred to the cross as 'the altar on which He [Christ], consumed by the fire of the boundless love which burned in the His heart, presented the living and holy sacrifice of His body and blood to the Father with fervent intercession, loud cries, and hot, anxious tears (Heb. 5:7)."

What does this quote say to you? What is the message? Is it suggesting a type of intercession to God, that Jesus is offering His sacrifice to God for us and pleading to God for us in some way?

What is interesting is that they reference Hebrews 5:7 to support Christ praying like this to the Father for us, but let's read this text and go through verse 10:

> During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7–10 NIV84).

Does this sound like what we read from Martin Luther? It does not! Martin Luther suggested Jesus is in heaven pleading with tears and such to the Father; but Hebrews describes Jesus on Earth, struggling in His humanity as our substitute with the temptations of the death causing principle asking His Father for the strength to succeed in His personal struggle as our substitute and He was heard and He succeeded and as the text says He then became the source of our salvation. Jesus is not pleading with God to get God to be merciful, He is pleading to God for the strength to complete their joint mission to overthrow Satan, sin, and save humanity. Jesus doesn't need to plead to His Father, just as He previously told His disciples in John 16:26:

> In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. (John 16:26-27 NIV84).

THURSDAY

In the second paragraph the lesson states, "Christ did not die just the natural death that every human being has to face. He died the second death, so that all those who accept Him will never have to experience it for themselves."

I agree with them completely on the first part, that Christ did not die the natural death that every human being faces, but I would like it if the lesson authors were here, I would ask them, "could you please define for us, from the inspired record, what is the second death." And then with that definition, I would ask does Christ's death meet those indicators. We will explore those indicators in a moment, but I would also ask them if they could provide any inspired reference that states Christ died the second death?

So far no one has been able to do so, why? Because the idea of Christ dying the second death comes from the penal/legal lie—and it would serve Satan's purposes if Christ did die the second death. For the second death is the death from which there is no resurrection and Satan would love for Christ to still be dead.

The reason some teach that Christ died the second death is because they have the penal view; they understand that the wicked die the second death as the penalty for sin, and therefore, in their model for them not to have to die the second death then someone else has to so that the second death penalty is paid. And, if we suggest that Christ did not die the second death, then in their model, their legal sin-penalty hasn't been paid and they would be required to die for their sin. This causes them to experience terrible fear and anxiety and they not only desperately cling to this false view, they get really upset as those of us to point out the truth. It is so upsetting to them that most close their ears to the truth and make the false allegation against us that we don't believe in substitutionary atonement.

But the root to their difficult is the same root to their entire penal legal model of salvation, namely they have the wrong concept of law. They believe God's law functions like human law and that the penalty for sin is an inflicted legal penalty by God. They all teach Satan's lie that opened the controversy in heaven, that every sin must meet its punishment (DA761).

When we return to design law, we realize that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15), that the sinner needs to be delivered from sin, that the sin condition needs to be eradicated, that sinners need curing, healing, transforming, not punishing.

We could say that Jesus destroyed or killed the carnal nature at the cross, but Christ Himself did not die eternally, He conquered death and rose again in a perfected and sinless humanity.

Christ did not die the first death and **Christ did not die the second death**. Christ's humanity was unique, His life was unique, and His death was unique. Jesus' death was the means of eradicating sin from the species human, destroying the death causing infection of fear and selfishness, and establishing a new sinless humanity. There is nothing penal legal going on.

But further evidence that refutes the idea that Jesus died the second death:

The Bible uses the term "second death" only in the book of Revelation in 2:11, 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8. The first two times the term is used the Bible tells us that the second death has no power over the righteous—was Jesus righteous? The second death has no power over Him! And those victorious in Christ, those who arise in the first resurrection, the second death has no power over them.

The last two texts the Bible gives us some description of what the second death actually is:

- Rev 20:14 “The lake of fire is the second death”
- Rev 21:8 “their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

According to Revelation the second death occurs in the lake of fire or that dying in the lake of fire is the second death. Did Christ die in the lake of fire? When Jesus died is there any inspired evidence that Jesus died with fire reigning down upon Him? Or does the inspired record reveal just the opposite that darkness covered Him and He pled, “my God, my God why have you forsaken me” (Matt 27:45, 46)?

And what do we understand the lake of fire is? It is the fire of God’s life-giving glory that the righteous live in and which consumes sin. It is the fires of infinite truth and love emanating from God. Rivers of fire flow out from God and billions of righteous stand in this fire (Daniel 7:9-10; Isaiah 33:14-15).

So what would have happened to Jesus if He were exposed to God’s life giving glory? He would not have died because there was no sin in Jesus. The only way for Jesus to complete His mission and

1. die to overcome the carnal drives of fear and selfishness,
2. to restore God’s law of love, the law of life into humanity
3. to reveal the truth about God’s character love that God is safe with all power and would rather let His creatures kill Him than use His power to stop it
4. to expose Satan and his sympathizers and murderers and the source of death, and
5. reveal what God actually does to the sinner,

was for the Father, the source of life, to let go, to abandon Him.

Thus the Father letting Jesus go was not an act of punishment upon Jesus, it was the cooperative choice of the Father and Son to complete the mission of destroying the sin infection and saving humanity.

God acts the same toward Jesus and the wicked in the end—He let’s both go to reap what they have chosen. Christ chose freely to go through the cross for the purposes of overcoming sinfulness and restoring righteousness into humanity. And God set Jesus free to experience fully what that choice resulted in.

And God sets the wicked free to experience fully what their refusal to be reconciled to God results in. And the wicked die, when they are exposed to God’s life-giving glory because they are solidified in sin, in fear and selfishness.

While God treats both Christ and the wicked the same, letting both go to reap what they have chosen. Because they have chosen differently, they experience different outcomes.

Jesus death was the means of actually destroying death! 2 Timothy1:10 states, Christ "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life."

Death results where selfishness rules and death is destroyed where love reigns supreme! Christ died when love overcame selfishness, when He gave His life freely, when He chose to lay down His life voluntarily. In Christ the law of love, the law of life, was fully lived out when Christ refused to use His power to save self, but rather gave His life freely in love. In Christ, giving destroyed taking, love destroyed selfishness, life destroyed death! And thus Christ's resurrection was the inevitable, predictable, reality-based outcome of restoring the law of life perfectly into the humanity that He possessed.

The differences between Christ's death and that of those who die the second death are stark:

- Christ died trusting the Father – Luke 23:46
  The wicked die distrusting the Father – Revelation 6:16

- Christ died longing to see the Father – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die hiding from the Father – Revelation 6:16

- Christ died when the Father's presence was hidden – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die when the Father is fully revealed – 2 Thes 2:8

- Christ died less than 72 hours – Luke 24:1-8
  The wicked die eternally – Malachi 4:1-3, Romans 6:23, James 1:15, 2Pet 3:10-12

- Christ died when love overcame selfishness – John 3:16, 10:17,18, 1John 3:16
  The wicked die overcome by selfishness – Revelation 21:8

Do you see the amazing difference it makes to return to design law? Do you see how accepting Satan's lie about God's law, that it is imposed and justice requires inflicted punishment, takes away so much of what Christ actually accomplished at the cross, and worse, it makes God out to be the source of pain, suffering and death.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Our New Schedule: Second Sabbath of every month Dr. Jennings will teach in person followed by potluck. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend our monthly potluck and fellowship. Dr. Jennings will teach remotely the other Sabbaths and those in our studio can interact live with Dr. Jennings.

Also, we will start having an afternoon Bible study discussion on potluck weekends. We will NOT be recording or broadcasting the afternoon Bible study and discussion, there are a variety of reasons for this. So plan to attend class, enjoy potluck and join us for a monthly Bible study discussion.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 7
Christ's Victory Over Death

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs,

> Central to the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus. Paul made this point very powerfully when he wrote: "For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor. 15:16-18, NKJV). We will look at this in more detail next week.
>
> Thus, no matter all the emphasis Paul put on Christ's death, and how important it was — "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2, NKJV) — **it really does us no good apart from His resurrection.** That's how crucial the resurrection of Jesus is to the entire Christian faith and the plan of salvation.

Why is this true?

If our current life were the only life and there was no future life, which would be the better way to live, the life that Jesus showed us—a life of love, truth, liberty, of integrity, honesty, loyalty, kindness, mercy, grace; or a life of fear, selfishness, exploitation, villainy and cruelty? Which is the healthier and happier life to live regardless of the future life?

Then why does the crucifixion of Christ do us no good if He was not resurrected? Why doesn't Paul say that even if Christ were not to have risen from the dead that living like Christ is the best way to live?

He wrote:

> "For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And **if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins**! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor. 15:16-18, NKJV).

What is this saying? If Christ hasn't risen from the dead then we are still in our sins—and if we are still in our sins it is not possible for us to live a righteous life. While it is true that, even if there were no resurrection, living like Jesus leads to the healthiest and happiest life experience in this sinful world, the only way we are capable of living that healthy and righteous life is through the victory of Jesus. And that victory is the victory that destroys death, so if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we would not be delivered from the sin condition and would be hopelessly lost in corruption and misery.

What Paul is saying goes beyond the future resurrection, it is about the power of Jesus' victory that we can experience here and now to live the victorious life, the fruitful life. Jesus said:

> The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10 NKJV).

Jesus wants us to experience the abundant life, the life full of His love, goodness, mercy, truth and presence. But if Jesus did not win the victory over Satan, sin, and death, then He does not have the remedy to our sin condition so that we can live the abundant life. But praise be to God that Jesus did win the victory and God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might **become the righteousness of God in Him**." (2Corinthians 5:21 NKJV).

SUNDAY

Read Matthew 27:62-66:

> The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."
>
> "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. (Matthew 27:62-66).

What do you learn from this passage?

- The enemies of Jesus knew He predicted His death and resurrection
- They didn't believe Him, why? They had the OT stories of resurrections of the two children and the dead man who touched Elisha's bones, so why didn't they believe?
- The high priest, Caiaphas, was a Sadducee and the Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection. Thus they didn't believe it was possible. Their preconceived ideas blinded them to the truth.
    - But it was also about politics and power, about ego and pride. The Pharisees, like Paul, believed in the resurrection. And these two theological schools had heated debate over this issue. There were power struggles, who would be high priest etc. If the Sadducees acknowledged the resurrection it would mean a loss of their position, power, and authority.
    - What have you seen people do in the world today and in the church today in order to maintain their earthly power, position, authority?
    - Do people purposely lie, obstruct the truth, censor, seek to silence those who would expose their lies, refuse to allow discussion of topics that would expose their choices has harmful?

    - The Sadducees were invested in denying the truth because self was valued more than God.
- They didn't have mindsets that prioritized the truth, they had mindsets of all religious cults, the need to defend their doctrines, which gave them power, which required them to deny evidence and truth that contradicted their system of beliefs
    - Those who are lost in the end the Bible describes as being lost because "they did not love the truth and thus be saved." We are not saved by the amount of factual truth we know. When Jesus returns there will not be one person among the saved who knows every detail and passage of Scripture correctly and fully, but all the saved will be lovers of truth. They will have hearts that are humble to be corrected by the truth, rather than hearts that resist and deny truth. The lost hate the truth and don't want to be corrected by it. This was the mindset of those who crucified Christ.
- Do we see this same mindset today? All cults do this, communism does this, in fact every evil satanic system does this because they are all built on lies and the truth will overthrow such systems. Thus, evil systems will value authority of office, power, position, proclamations, claims, and will seek to obfuscate the truth and destroy those who are advancing the truth. We saw this with COVID, how the system is bent on destroying those who only want to discover what is actually true, but those in power, who have advanced a false narrative, cannot tolerate the truth, it threatens their position, power, and authority, and thus they use methods of silencing, censoring, deplatforming, restricting liberty, termination from employment, and in some countries people who advanced evidence contradictory to the government have been disappeared.
- But what did the scheming of the Jewish religious leaders result it? They desperately wanted to use might and power to stop the resurrection, so they sealed the tomb and placed soldiers to guard it and this resulted in what? A more certain historical record of the resurrection. It is a certainty that the Jewish peasant disciples could not have seduced a detachment of Roman soldiers into neglecting their duty, which if discovered would result in their execution.

So after the resurrection, the Roman soldiers had a story to tell, their firsthand testimony of what they experienced, which was an angel coming down from heaven, overwhelming them, they passed out, and when they woke the tomb was open and Jesus was gone.

When they report this to the Jewish leaders, how do the leaders respond? Turn to **MONDAY's** lesson, and let's read Matthew 28:11-15:

- While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day. Matthew 28:11-15 NIV84).

What do we learn from this?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

From this account does it sound like the priests believed or didn't believe the Roman soldiers?

If the chief priests did not believe the account of the Roman soldiers; if they believed that the soldiers had neglected their duty and that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, what would the chief priests have done? They would have gone to Pilate, reported them, and demanded they be publicly tried and punished.

But if they would have done that, and Pilate had a trial, what would have occurred? The Roman soldiers would have all given testimony to the fact Jesus rose from the dead—and what else would have likely happened? The witnesses who saw Jesus after His resurrection could have been called to give testimony that they had seen Jesus alive.

And if this would have happened, what would have happened to the Jewish leadership?

Go back and read Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin as recorded in Acts chapter seven. I will read his summation, but recognize that if the Roman soldiers would have been tried and had given public testimony, along with other witnesses, the entire countryside, the populace at large would have been saying what Stephen said here to the chief priests:

> "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." (Acts 7:51-53 NIV84).

And if the people took up this position, what would have happened to those religious leaders? Do you see why, despite believing the testimony of the Roman soldiers, they chose to cover up the truth and advance their lies?

This is exactly what the unrepentant always do; they are motivated by fear and selfishness and choose to do whatever is expedient to protect themselves. It is the classic ends justify the means mentality. It is exactly what we see happening around the world from those who are in power and desperate not to lose it.

The first paragraph in Monday's lesson points out that Christ's divinity did not die at the cross, it was His humanity that died, and then it was His divinity that resurrected His humanity.

Thoughts about this? Questions about this?

From where does all life come or originate? In God, God is the source of all life. And Jesus, God the Son, has life original, unborrowed, underived from another source. And after Adam sinned, Jesus chose to join His immortal life with our mortal life, in order to destroy the death causing principle and restore humanity back to harmony with God and give us the gift of eternal life.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Through His sufferings Jesus confronted the infection of fear and selfishness, the carnal drives, and destroyed them and by His choices as our substitute He developed a perfect, mature, and sinless human character. At the cross love and selfishness battled it out in the heart and mind of Jesus Christ, and love destroyed fear and selfishness. Thus Jesus rose again as the predictable and inevitable result of completing His mission—which was to destroy the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle into humanity.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 27:51-53:

> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27:51-53 NIV84).

What does the tearing of the veil at the time of Christ's crucifixion reveal? What is the object lesson? What is being taught by that action?

What does the veil represent?

It is commonly taught that the veil represents Jesus' body, this idea comes from Heb 10:19,20 which says:

> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body…(Hebrews 10:19-20 NIV84).

Does this text say that the veil is Jesus' body? The sentence structure allows for "body" to refer to either the curtain or the new and living way through the curtain, either is possible, both in the English and Greek. So we must study a little deeper to know which it is.

Let us consider the meaning and implications of both options.

In the theater of the OT sanctuary, the veil obstructed the light of God's glory from being seen, the glory shone over the top of the veil as the veil didn't reach the ceiling. What could this mean?

- Christ did veil His full fiery glory in humanity so that He could dwell among us sinners and not destroy us
- But at the same time Christ is the light which lightens all men, and Christ glorified God in His life. In fact, Jesus, praying to His Father, said in John 17: "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Further, the Bible describes the second temple,

which was smaller than Solomon's temple, as being more glorious than Solomon's, why? Because Jesus revealed the glorious character of God in person at that temple. So, while the physical glory of God was veiled, the greatest revelation of the true glory of God, which is His character, was revealed by Christ.

- In the Great Controversy between God and Satan, who is the light that reveals the glory of God and who is the one that constantly seeks to obstruct the glory of God from reaching the people?
- So if we focus only on the physical aspects we would conclude on this point that the veil represents the body of Jesus, but if we focus on the Great Controversy and the elements of truth, righteousness, love, and God's character we would conclude that the veil represents the lies of Satan that obstruct that light.

The veil has angels sown on it, and the Bible further reveals that there is a battle between godly angels and satanic angels, we read about this throughout Scripture, including places like Daniel chapter ten. So the veil with angels could represent the angelic host of God sent to the church to help us battle with the lies and powers of Satan that obstruct our way back into God's presence. But angels, though ministering spirits sent to help us, are not able to pierce the veil and open the way back into God's presence for us. Only Jesus could do that.

Here is a very clarifying point. The only element of the OT sanctuary that God used His power to destroy is the veil. This destruction of the veil happened at the very moment of Christ's death. And what does Scripture tell us Christ destroyed?

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil (Heb 2:14 NIV84).
>
> Our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84).
>
> The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8 NIV84).

So, what was destroyed by Christ's death? Satan's power of death, death itself, and Satan's work which has been to destroy the image of God in humanity and place Satan's image where God should be.

And at the moment of Christ's death the veil was rent opening the way back into the presence of God. We can make a very strong case that the veil represents the lies of Satan about God that keep us from knowing and trusting God, and our fallen nature both of which Jesus destroyed at the cross, thereby opening a new a living way back into the presence of God for us.

We can look at it on the other side. If we say that the veil represents Jesus' body, which the penal legal view likes to take, then we must conclude that God is the one who killed Jesus on the cross. This is also what the penal legal view teaches, that God was required by law and justice to put our sins on Jesus and then use His divine power to punish our sins by executing Jesus in our place.

However, this contradicts everything about Scripture and mispresents God as being like Satan in character.

- It is based on the lie that God's law functions like human law
- It makes God out to be the source of death
- It contradicts the plain testimony of Scripture and Jesus Himself when Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46 NIV84). God did not lay a hand on Jesus, but separated Himself from Jesus, setting Jesus free from His life-sustaining presence in order for Jesus to accomplish their joint mission of destroying Satan, Satan's lies and power, and death itself, and restoring in humanity God's living law of love. If God did not separate from His Son, it would not have been possible for Jesus to die since God is the source of life. Thus God's abandoning of Jesus on the cross was by mutual consent among the Godhead, not one member punishing another member.
- So, we must reject the idea that the veil represents the body of Jesus, and instead conclude it represents the obstacles to our reconciliation to God that were destroyed by Jesus.
- Thus, because of Jesus we have a new and living way opened for us back into the presence of the Father.

I believe Paul alluded to this very understanding of the veil being Satan's lies when he wrote:

> And even if our gospel is **veiled, it is veiled** to those who are perishing. The **god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers**, so that they cannot see the **light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**, who is the image of God. (2Corinthians 4:3,4)

So, which interpretation do you think fits more fully with the full testimony of Scripture, that the veil is Jesus' body and God punished Jesus by destroying Jesus on the cross, or that the veil is what obstructs our reconciliation with God and Jesus destroyed those obstacles and opened a new a living way for us back into unity or at-one-ment with God?

The lesson also points out that many people were resurrected with Jesus, and these individuals were resurrected to immortal life and went to heaven with Jesus.

> "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (Ephesians 4:8 NIV 84).

I think we read about some of these resurrected victors in places like Revelation 4:4:

> Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. (Revelation 4:4 NIV84)

Who are the ones dressed in white with gold crowns and with whom Christ shares His throne? These are not angels, nor are they sinless beings from other worlds, these 24 elders are human sinners saved

by Jesus. I believe that at least some of them are the resurrected saints taken back to heaven with Jesus when He ascended.

Have you ever speculated on who some of these might be? We might be okay to consider that three are, Enoch, Elijah, and Moses since we know those three by name are in heaven. But have you considered any other possibilities?

- I personally don't think Adam or Eve are part of this group. I think they sleep in the grave until the second coming, but that is just my view.
- But what about Abel, whose blood cried out to God from the ground?
- What about Noah?
- What about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph?
- What about David, a man after God's own heart?
- John the Baptist?

I don't know who they are, but don't you think every single one of those resurrected with Jesus were friends of God and would say of God what is right?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson gives a long list of people that Scripture records saw Jesus after His resurrection. These include:

- Mary Magdalene
- The Apostles on more than one occasion, including Thomas who wasn't there on the first occasion
- The men on the road to Emmaus
- And we have this account in 1Corinthians 15:
    - For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1Corinthians 15:3-8 NIV84).

This is quite a profound historical record of witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

What do you think of Thomas's experience? It is helpful in so many ways. What was the basis upon which Thomas was persuaded? Thomas was persuaded by his own experience with Jesus, whereas the men on the road to Emmaus were persuaded by the weight of Scripture. These stories reveals two of the threads of evidence through which God works, Scripture and real life experiences. Jesus did not

quote Bible verses to Thomas, but instructed Thomas touch Him and then said to Him, stop doubting and believe, based on what? On his experiencing, which confirmed for Thomas what he already knew from Scripture and from what Jesus had previously taught him.
What do you think of this text, and remember what I am about to read to you is the record of Jesus' activity in His immortal resurrected body:

> While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."
>
> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."
>
> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. (Luke 24:36-43 NIV84).

What do you think of this? Why did Jesus do it? Wasn't Jesus concerned about maintaining a vegetarian diet in His new and immortal body?

It shows the incredible steps that Jesus is willing to take to condescend in order to reach us and disabuse us of falsehood. He did this because they had the idea in their mind that He might be a ghost rather than a real physical being.

One other small point I want to clarify about the witnesses that saw Jesus. Who was the first to see Him after His resurrection? Mary Magdalene, and the encounter, as translated into many versions, has resulted in a myth being told about Jesus. The encounter is translated like this in many versions:

> Jesus replied, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." (John 20:17 NET)

This has led to the myth that Jesus could not be touched and if Mary had touched Him prior to ascending to His Father that she would have contaminated Him or despoiled Him of His purity or virtue. But this is not what Jesus was saying, the Greek is active present, it means "do not go on touching me" meaning "you must stop clinging to me and let me go because I need to go see my Father."

So the NIV renders it:

> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. (Jn 20:17 NIV84).

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that Jesus, in His immortal body continues to carry the scars from His crucifixion, why?

A very interesting passage in Zechariah gives one possible reason:

> If someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your body?' he will answer, 'The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.' (Zechariah 13:6).

Throughout all eternity Jesus will carry the reminders of what He sacrificed in order to overthrow sin, save sinners, and secure His universe. We will never plumb the infinite depths of HIs sacrifice. But He will always bear the marks which will continually draw from all intelligences love, appreciation, and further inquiry.

And the text implies that there will be those in heaven who don't know the story of Jesus and His wounds will be a great starting point for them to ask Him about the marks and listen to the story. Certainly, all those who died before the Cross might have questions about the marks, but what about those since the cross is there any evidence that there might be people in heaven who haven't heard the story of the cross?

First, let's be very clear—no human being can be saved without Jesus. In other words, every human being who is saved from sin is saved only because of the life, death, resurrection of Jesus. It is through Jesus and by Jesus and what He accomplished that salvation is provided to humanity and there is no other name, power, or avenue through which salvation can occur.

However, the Bible indicates that some people partake of Jesus and His salvation without fully realizing the story and historical account of what He did. Paul makes this case in Romans where in verse 1:19-20 he says:

> what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20 NIV84).

Notice Paul doesn't say that what may be known about God is plain to them because the gospel story has been told to them by missionaries, no, it is through what God has made. And if people learn about God through what He wrote into the book of nature, who is the member of the Godhead through which they are coming back to this knowledge of God? Jesus:

> In the beginning there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him (John 1:1-3 NCV).

Then a few verses later in Romans Paul writes the following:

> All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's

> sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, **who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) (Romans 2:12-15 NIV84).

Paul is making the case that those who learn the truth of God's character and methods of love from what God has made and trust Him as Creator and open their hearts to Him, that the Holy Spirit will take the victory of Jesus and reproduce the character of Christ in them, even though they haven't learned the story yet. The law is written upon their hearts, which is exactly what the Bible says is the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:10). But, these people, even if they haven't heard the story, are still only saved by Christ and through Christ, not through some other way.

From Last week's lesson: **THURSDAY**

In the second paragraph the lesson states, "Christ did not die just the natural death that every human being has to face. He died the second death, so that all those who accept Him will never have to experience it for themselves."

I agree with them completely on the first part, that Christ did not die the natural death that every human being faces, but I would like it if the lesson authors were here, I would ask them, "could you please define for us, from the inspired record, what is the second death." And then with that definition, I would ask does Christ's death meet those indicators. We will explore those indicators in a moment, but I would also ask them if they could provide any inspired reference that states Christ died the second death?

So far no one has been able to do so, why? Because the idea of Christ dying the second death comes from the penal/legal lie—and it would serve Satan's purposes if Christ did die the second death. For the second death is the death from which there is no resurrection and Satan would love for Christ to still be dead.

The reason some teach that Christ died the second death is because they have the penal view; they understand that the wicked die the second death as the penalty for sin, and therefore, in their model for them not to have to die the second death then someone else has to so that the second death penalty is paid. And, if we suggest that Christ did not die the second death, then in their model, their legal sin-penalty hasn't been paid and they would be required to die for their sin. This causes them to experience terrible fear and anxiety and they not only desperately cling to this false view, they get really upset as those of us to point out the truth. It is so upsetting to them that most close their ears to the truth and make the false allegation against us that we don't believe in substitutionary atonement.

But the root to their difficult is the same root to their entire penal legal model of salvation, namely they have the wrong concept of law. They believe God's law functions like human law and that the penalty for sin is an inflicted legal penalty by God. They all teach Satan's lie that opened the controversy in heaven, that every sin must meet its punishment (DA761).

When we return to design law, we realize that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15), that the sinner needs to be delivered from sin, that the sin condition needs to be eradicated, that sinners need curing, healing, transforming, not punishing.

We could say that Jesus destroyed or killed the carnal nature at the cross, but Christ Himself did not die eternally, He conquered death and rose again in a perfected and sinless humanity.

Christ did not die the first death and **Christ did not die the second death**. Christ's humanity was unique, His life was unique, and His death was unique. Jesus' death was the means of eradicating sin from the species human, destroying the death causing infection of fear and selfishness, and establishing a new sinless humanity. There is nothing penal legal going on.

But further evidence that refutes the idea that Jesus died the second death:

The Bible uses the term "second death" only in the book of Revelation in 2:11, 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8. The first two times the term is used the Bible tells us that the second death has no power over the righteous—was Jesus righteous? The second death has no power over Him! And those victorious in Christ, those who arise in the first resurrection, the second death has no power over them.

The last two texts the Bible gives us some description of what the second death actually is:

> Rev 20:14 "The lake of fire is the second death"
>
> Rev 21:8 "their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

According to Revelation the second death occurs in the lake of fire or that dying in the lake of fire is the second death. Did Christ die in the lake of fire? When Jesus died is there any inspired evidence that Jesus died with fire reigning down upon Him? Or does the inspired record reveal just the opposite that darkness covered Him and He pled, "my God, my God why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:45, 46)?

And what do we understand the lake of fire is? It is the fire of God's life-giving glory that the righteous live in and which consumes sin. It is the fires of infinite truth and love emanating from God. Rivers of fire flow out from God and billions of righteous stand in this fire (Daniel 7:9-10; Isaiah 33:14-15).

So what would have happened to Jesus if He were exposed to God's life giving glory? He would not have died because there was no sin in Jesus. The only way for Jesus to complete His mission and

1. die to overcome the carnal drives of fear and selfishness,
2. to restore God's law of love, the law of life into humanity
3. to reveal the truth about God's character love that God is safe with all power and would rather let His creatures kill Him than use His power to stop it

4. to expose Satan and his sympathizers and murderers and the source of death, and
5. reveal what God actually does to the sinner,

was for the Father, the source of life, to let go, to abandon Him.

Thus the Father letting Jesus go was not an act of punishment upon Jesus, it was the cooperative choice of the Father and Son to complete the mission of destroying the sin infection and saving humanity.

God acts the same toward Jesus and the wicked in the end—He let's both go to reap what they have chosen. Christ chose freely to go through the cross for the purposes of overcoming sinfulness and restoring righteousness into humanity. And God set Jesus free to experience fully what that choice resulted in.

And God sets the wicked free to experience fully what their refusal to be reconciled to God results in. And the wicked die, when they are exposed to God's life-giving glory because they are solidified in sin, in fear and selfishness.

While God treats both Christ and the wicked the same, letting both go to reap what they have chosen. Because they have chosen differently, they experience different outcomes.

Jesus death was the means of actually destroying death! 2 Timothy1:10 states, Christ "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life."

Death results where selfishness rules and death is destroyed where love reigns supreme! Christ died when love overcame selfishness, when He gave His life freely, when He chose to lay down His life voluntarily. In Christ the law of love, the law of life, was fully lived out when Christ refused to use His power to save self, but rather gave His life freely in love. In Christ, giving destroyed taking, love destroyed selfishness, life destroyed death! And thus Christ's resurrection was the inevitable, predictable, reality-based outcome of restoring the law of life perfectly into the humanity that He possessed.

The differences between Christ's death and that of those who die the second death are stark:

- Christ died trusting the Father – Luke 23:46
  The wicked die distrusting the Father – Revelation 6:16

- Christ died longing to see the Father – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die hiding from the Father – Revelation 6:16

- Christ died when the Father's presence was hidden – Mark 15:34
  The wicked die when the Father is fully revealed – 2 Thes 2:8

- Christ died less than 72 hours – Luke 24:1-8
  The wicked die eternally – Malachi 4:1-3, Romans 6:23, James 1:15, 2Pet 3:10-12

- Christ died when love overcame selfishness – John 3:16, 10:17,18, 1John 3:16
  The wicked die overcome by selfishness – Revelation 21:8

Do you see the amazing difference it makes to return to design law? Do you see how accepting Satan's lie about God's law, that it is imposed and justice requires inflicted punishment, takes away so much of what Christ actually accomplished at the cross, and worse, it makes God out to be the source of pain, suffering and death.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Our New Schedule: Second Sabbath of every month Dr. Jennings will teach in person followed by potluck. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend our monthly potluck and fellowship. Dr. Jennings will teach remotely the other Sabbaths and those in our studio can interact live with Dr. Jennings.

Also, we will start having an afternoon Bible study discussion on potluck weekends. We will NOT be recording or broadcasting the afternoon Bible study and discussion, there are a variety of reasons for this. So plan to attend class, enjoy potluck and join us for a monthly Bible study discussion.

NEW MAGAZINE: Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17: Discovering Untold Truths to Prepare for What Comes Next! is now available.

Podcasts: We have a weekly podcast about 13 minutes long that is available to be delivered to your device if you sign up for it.

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 8
The New Testament Hope

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11,12 NIV84).

What does this text mean? Does it trigger any questions in your mind?

- Why would God need to "give" us eternal life if we already have it?
- Does this text make any sense if the common belief that humans are immortal or have immortal souls was true?
    - And we have asked this before, but what would it say about God if He created humans in Eden with immortality knowing ahead of time they would sin and some humans would live for eternity is torment? Or if He failed to realize the possibility and was caught off guard?
    - There nothing about the common doctrine of natural immortality of the soul that says anything good about God.
- Does our memory verse about having eternal life only in Jesus apply to all humans or only to those who have lived since the time of Jesus?
    - Did Enoch, Elijah, and Moses receive eternal life? And did they receive it through Jesus or through some other path or means?
- Do the Jews have a pathway to heaven that bypasses Jesus?

God created one human race in Adam; Eve was taken from Adam and all other humans were born of their line.

And there is one sin condition which entered through Adam and Eve and all human beings are born infected with it (Ps 51:5). **And there is only one solution for it, and that solution is Jesus Christ!**

Now, why is it that if we have Jesus we have life and why is it that those who don't have Jesus don't have life?

- Is it because those who have Jesus have the proper legal documents to present to immigration control authority at the gates of the New Jerusalem?

- Is it because they have something of enough value to the Father, specifically the shed blood of His Son, that when they present this blood to the Father the Father will be influenced in some way to let us into heaven; whether that is by making a legal payment to satisfy His sense of justice, or to appease His wrath or something else?
- Is it a bargain with God we offer God the blood of His Son and in exchange He gives us eternal life?

Why does having the Son mean we have eternal life?

What does it mean to have the Son?

Can you think of any other place in the Bible where Jesus speaks of what eternal life is?

> Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"
>
> "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. **If you want to enter life, obey the commandments**." (Matthew 19:16–17 NIV84).

Is law-keeping the way to achieve eternal life? If we work really hard and keep the right rules does that mean we can obtain eternal life? If we keep the right commandments does that mean we have Jesus in our life?

I have heard many Adventists use texts like this one in relation to the Sabbath and elevate Sabbath keeping to a litmus test of having Jesus and being among those who have eternal life. Is Sabbath keeping a sign we have eternal life?

Did the Jews who crucified Christ go to synagogue on the wrong day of the week? Did they have the wrong Sabbath?

Why can we not achieve eternal life by law-keeping? Because law-keeping cannot cure the death-causing sin problem. This is a core issue between Satan's counterfeit religions and true Christianity. True Christianity is based upon God's design law for life. We understand God's laws are the laws upon which life and health are built by God to operate and sin breaks that design and results in ruin and death unless remedied by Jesus. However, if one substitutes human law, imposed rules that require imposed penalties, for God's law then one misunderstands God's use of law and teaches a pagan method of salvation, specifically legal payments and appeasement sacrifices to the punishing god to assuage wrath and pay for sin. Further, people focus on law keeping as a means of salvation and fail to realize the Ten Commandments were given by God not as a means of salvation, but as a diagnostic instrument to expose the sin-sickness in our hearts and lead us to Christ for healing of the sin condition.

Paul makes this very clear in several places. He describes what a great law keeper he was until he realized the tenth commandment that said thou shall not covet and realized that there is no behavior or

deed he could do to keep that command. He realized the law was actually about the heart and then he realized all ten commandments are about what is happening in the heart, not a list of rules to be kept. He describes the real purpose of the written law in several places (like 1 Timothy 1:8-11), to be a diagnostic instrument to expose or sin condition and bring us to Christ for healing and the law was not given for the righteous but the wicked. Like an MRI is not designed for healthy people but for sick people to diagnose what is wrong. But the MRI doesn't heal and neither does the written law.

Paul also describes this in Romans 7, I am going to read this from the Remedy verses 4-13:

> Therefore, your selfish, fear-ridden heart died when you accepted the truth revealed by Christ's death, and you received a new heart from him who was raised from the dead, in order that you might grow in character–to be like Jesus–and live to honor God. For when we were controlled by the infection of fear and selfishness — which resulted from distrust — the destructive passions revealed by the law were ravaging our bodies, we were terminally ill and spreading death wherever we went. But now, as we die to the distrust, fear and selfishness that once bound us, the law no longer diagnoses us as infected and terminal. In fact, the law now confirms that we have a new heart–not by observing rules, but created within by the Spirit. We are now healthy and loving like Jesus.
>
> What shall we say then? Is the law evil and selfish because it increases the amount of evil and selfishness we see? Absolutely not! I would not have known what evil and selfishness looked like if it wasn't for the diagnostic efficacy of the law. I would not have realized that coveting was evil and selfish if the law didn't say, "Don't covet." But selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the law is only a diagnostic instrument–and not a Remedy–magnified every covetous desire within me. For apart from the diagnostic ability of the law, sin is unrecognizable. Once I thought I was healthy and free from the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness, but then the commandment examined me, exposed how utterly infected I was, and diagnosed me as terminal. I discovered that the very commandment given only to diagnose my condition I had unwittingly attempted to use as a cure, and thus my condition only worsened. For selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the commandment could only diagnose and not cure, deceived me into thinking that I could be cured by working to keep the commandments; but instead, my terminal state only worsened. So understand this: The law diagnoses perfectly, and the commandment is the standard of what is right and good, set apart by God to reveal what is evil and destructive.
>
> Did the law, which did good by diagnosing what was wrong with me, become the source of my terminal condition? Of course not! It only exposed what was already in me, so that I could recognize how totally decayed, putrid and near death I was, and so that through the lens of the commandment I might become utterly disgusted with evil and selfishness, and long for a cure. (Romans 7:4-13 REM)

But Jesus still connected eternal life with obeying the commandments, why? What is the basis of the Ten Commandments? Notice this exchange between Jesus and a Jewish lawyer:

> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**"
>
> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"
>
> He answered: " '**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself**.'"
>
> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." (Luke 10;25-28 NIV84).

Is there a connection between loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbors as ourselves and keeping the commandments?

If you love someone—and we are talking operationally not emotionally, the love of God is not restricted to sentimental or warm feelings, God's love functions in a positive way toward the best interest of others. So when the Bible talks about loving God and others it isn't restricted to having feelings of affections, but is primarily focused on the actions and function of your life. If you love someone you won't murder them, you won't cheat on them, you won't bear false witness about them, you won't steal from them, you won't even covet anything of theirs. If you love them all their successes you celebrate and you actively seek to protect them and build them up as you are able. You speak well of them, or you remain silent if you cannot speak well of them—just like Jesus did.

So, can we love God and our neighbors by following a list of rules? What enables us to love others? The ability to genuinely live godly lives of love is to first experience God's love in our own lives. We must be renewed in heart and mind by faith/trust in God through Jesus Christ! We must individually and deeply know God for ourselves.

Thus Jesus said:

> Now **this is eternal life: that they may know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3 NIV84).

Knowing in the Bible is intimate knowledge of and experience with, not knowing about.

How is knowing God and Jesus related to having the Son, which means having eternal life?

Can we have the Son, which means having eternal life, if we do not know God and Jesus?

Jesus prays just a few verses later in John 17:

> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. **May they also be in us** so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **I have given them the**

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **glory that you gave me**, that they may be one as we are one: **I in them and you in me**. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23 NIV84).

What does it mean to be in Jesus and in the Father? Is this speaking of physical cellular occupation? No! It is speaking of in union, in unity of heart, mind, motive, values, desires, principles, practices, having the law of God written upon our hearts:

> This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. **I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, '**Know the Lord,' because they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest (Hebrews 8:10-11 NIV84).

Is knowing the Lord connected with His law being written upon the heart? And is this connected with eternal life? Why?

This is beautifully described in the book *Christ's Object Lessons:*

> When we submit ourselves to Christ, **the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness**. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, **which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah**. COL 311.4

This author connects our faith relationship with Jesus, with the transformation of our inner being, in which our hearts, will, mind, and thoughts are brought into unity and harmony with Jesus receiving the perfection of Christ's character and we live a life like Jesus through the indwelling Spirit. This is law keeping, loving God and others through Christ. It is not legal, it is transformational, healing, recreational, actual, real, as Paul wrote in 2Corinthians 5:21 "we become the righteousness of God."

What is another name for being united as one with God? For the work of Jesus bringing us into unity with the Father and the Son? It is called at-one-ment. And is there another Biblical relationship in which two are to become one? Marriage—and in a marriage, as God designed, do the people lose their individuality? No! But do they come into unity, oneness? And the church is described as the bride of Christ, we are to be united with God, to know Him, because we have the Son and the Son is the exact revelation of the Father to us.

And to know Him is to be one with Him in heart, mind, attitude, desires, motives, principles, methods, practices why? Because of a list of rules? No, because we love His ways, it is the only way we want to live, we experience our greatest joy, happiness, and fulfillment in living out God's living law in how we treat others.

Death is caused by just the opposite, by not knowing the Lord:

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).

Satan has the power of death and what is that power? His lies about God that we believe that keep us from knowing God (John 8:44).

Remember, lies believed break the circle of love and trust.

Believing lies about God does NOT necessarily mean people stop believing in God.

Consider this for a moment: If we had a time machine and could travel back to crucifixion Friday and stand beside those who were mocking Jesus as He hung on the cross, and if we asked them the following questions, what do you think their answers would be?

- Do you believe in God? –absolutely we are so committed to God that we seek to root out heresy and this man is a heretic
- Do you believe in the Bible? –of course, this man refused to follow what the Bible teaches, He wouldn't stone a woman caught in adultery
- Do you believe in the Sabbath? -absolutely and this man wouldn't correct his disciples from harvesting grain on Sabbath
- Do you believe in the sanctuary and its role in God's plan to save sinners? -of course, and this man threatened to destroy the temple and we cannot allow for anyone to threaten us in that way

Go down the list, what was the problem in the belief system of the Jews who insisted that Christ must die?

It was not any specific doctrinal point—it was that they did not know God. Every single doctrine they held was processed through the lens of imposed law with a god who is an imperial dictator and who is the source of inflicted punishment upon rule-breakers, a god who must be appeased with sacrifice, or works, or offerings, and thus, via the design law of worship, they became like that abusive and unjust god. They held a fraudulent trial, bribed witnesses, intimidated the Roman governor and killed the Son of God and then demanded He be taken off the cross before sunset to keep the Sabbath of the God they just killed. They did this so they could keep the right rules and thereby feel good about themselves, proving to themselves by their law-keeping that they are righteous and good and in good standing with God. After all, they were fastidiously keeping the Sabbath.

Understand, Satan's lies are not restricted to those who do not believe in God or are outside people called by God. Satan's lies have deeply infect Christianity because Christianity holds the truth and where God is revealing is truth is where Satan works most aggressively to oppose it.

We have the exact same problem the Jews had 2000 years ago, Satan has infected Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law, and therefore God is the source of pain, suffering, defects, deformity, and death and that God needs something done to Him in order for God to forgive, to be merciful, and to save. This is paganism, this is Satan's lie, and it is how Satan sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Read second paragraph:

> Thus, for Christ and the apostles, the Christian hope was not a new hope but, rather, the unfolding of the ancient hope already nurtured by the patriarchs and prophets. For example, Christ mentioned that Abraham foresaw and rejoiced to see His day (John 8:56). Jude stated that Enoch prophesied about the Second Coming (Jude 14, 15). And the book of Hebrews speaks of the heroes of faith as having expected a heavenly reward that they would not receive until we receive ours (Heb. 11:39, 40). This statement would be meaningless if their souls were already with the Lord in heaven.

Yes, the same hope for salvation that we have in Jesus, is the hope that all humans have had throughout human history.

But what do you think of the about the argument that "the book of Hebrews speaks of the heroes of faith as having expected a heavenly reward that they would not receive until we receive ours (Heb. 11:39, 40)." If they stopped there I would agree completely with this statement. But then then added this "This statement would be meaningless if their souls were already with the Lord in heaven"?

Hebrews 11:39 states: "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised" (Hebrews 11:39 NIV84).

Of these faithful folk, the Bible says "none of them" received what had been promised—and who was included in the list? Enoch—who is in heaven—has not received what has been promised, but didn't Enoch receive eternal life? Yes, so the fact Enoch, who is in heaven, is on the list of heroes in Hebrews undermines the last point in the lesson, that the statement would be meaningless if their souls were already in heaven. So the promise not yet received must be talking about something more than eternal life, what?

> **They did not receive the things promised**; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are **looking for a country of their own**. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for **a better country—a heavenly one**. (Hebrews 11:13–16 NIV84).

What is the promise of God? That the meek shall live forever in heaven? No, that the meek will inherit the Earth (Matthew 5:5). Jesus prayed for God's will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). God has promised to not only deliver us from sin, but to cleanse and renew the Earth from sin and make Earth our home by bringing God's government and kingdom to Earth. Then we can live on a

sin-free Earth, a home without sickness, pain, suffering, exploitation, crime—a place where everyone loves each other truly and freely, a better land than what we have now. This is what the heroes were longing for and what has not yet been received.

The more we become like Jesus on this Earth, the more this Earth torments the soul, the less true peace we have in this wicked and evil place. Yes, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, but we do **not** have peace in this world. Remember what the Bible says about Lot:

> Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— (2 Peter 2:7-9 NIV 84).

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the promise of Jesus that He will come again.

Do you believe this? What would give you cause to believe that Jesus is coming soon, even within our lifetime?

Can you list any signs of Jesus soon return?

- Fulfillment of various Bible prophecies—such as the 1260 years ending in 1798 which places us in the "last days." But that has been over 200 years ago, why would we think Christ's return could be soon rather than 200 years into the future?
- Wars and rumors of wars have been going on for 2000 years
- Pestilences—certainly we have seen those, but they also have been going on for 2000 years
- What about "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12)? Do we see ever increasing selfishness and a lack of human decency and love for each other?
- The persecution of the righteous? But throughout all human history the wicked have always persecuted the righteous, what is different about now?
    - In every previous era, when the righteous have been persecuted there was always someplace on Earth the righteous could flee and establish a new society of liberty. The USA was established just for that reason. But when the USA betrays its founding and Constitutional principles of civil and religious liberty, then there will be no place left on earth for the righteous to flee and a worldwide system of abuse will soon follow, and Jesus will come shortly thereafter.
    - Did we see evidence during COVID that such a system of abuse and coercion of conscience could be set up and implemented in very short order?

But this is all in place, the systems of human governments are capable of doing this now, so why the delay? **Because God is not waiting for the wicked to become more wicked, God is waiting for all those who can be saved to become righteous!**

As Peter wrote:

> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance**. (2 Peter 3:8–9 NIV84).

What is Jesus waiting for? For us to be ready, which means He is in heaven, working with all the agencies at His disposal, to cleanse His temple, His people, to prepare us to be able to stand in His presence.

The lesson asks us to read John 14:1-3 do you see a connection between this passage, the work of Jesus and the delay:

> "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:1–3 NKJV).

What does it mean?

Modern Bible translations don't use the word "mansions" because the Greek word translated mansions in the King James simply means "dwelling place" and in the 17th century when the King James was written the word "mansion" didn't mean a pretentious posh ornate home, but a simple dwelling place. So most modern translations say "rooms" or "dwelling places."

> From the SDA Bible Commentary: *monai* (singular *monē*) literally, "abiding places"… Our English word "mansion" is from the Latin *mansio*, in meaning almost equivalent to the Gr. *monē*. *Mansio*, as does *monē*, means "a remaining place," "a place of abode." The idea of a building of some size or pretentiousness does not attach to the Latin, nor, of course, to the Greek. That idea was a later development of the English word and the meaning should not be introduced into the present verse. Either "mansion" should be understood in its archaic sense of "a dwelling place," or "abode," or one of these meanings should be substituted in a translation of the verse. The fact that there are "many" dwelling places makes certain of sufficient room in the Father's house for all who heed the Father's invitation. (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol. 5, p. 1034).

So when Jesus said "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you…" He wasn't saying that He went to heaven and started a massive construction project to build houses for us, but that in His Father house is room for everyone.

How long would it take the Creator God who speaks galaxies into existence to build some buildings?

Does the Bible use the language of "God's house," or what Jesus said, "My Father's house" anywhere else?

> "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6 NIV84).

Jesus, who spoke the words in John 14 promising to come again, also spoke the words in Revelation to the seven churches which says the following:

> **"I am coming soon**. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes **I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.** I will write on him **the name of my God** and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him **my new name**" (Revelation 3:11–12 NIV84).

What does this mean? Twice Jesus has connected His soon return with preparing the house of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, and in Revelation we are being prepared as pillars to be part of that house and we will never leave it. Why will we never leave the heavenly temple? It is not because the heavenly temple is an inanimate building made of gold and silver bricks and we are not chained to a pillar like Samson in that pagan temple; we will not be locked away in some physical geographic location and imprisoned in some building for all eternity. No, the reason we will never leave the heavenly temple is because the temple of God is built out of living beings and we will never leave it because we will never choose to sin and thereby remove ourselves from our love and loyalty to God. We will be pillars in God's house!

But what must God do to prepare for this day when we live in God's house? **Must God do something in heaven to get heaven ready for us or must God do something in us to get us ready for heaven?**

Peter wrote:

> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—**you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4–5 NIV84).

So what would Jesus need to do before coming again? Would He not need to apply to the hearts, minds, characters of all who trust Him His perfection, cleansing the Spirit Temples from sin and preparing His bride to meet Him face to face? Wouldn't He need to polish us, hone us, remove from us all defects of character, all fear of Him, all distrust of Him? And couldn't this be described as cleansing the sanctuary, or going to heaven to prepare a place for them?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses upon Jesus identifying Himself as the bread which came down from heaven.

What does this mean to you? How is Jesus the bread that came down from heaven?

When Jesus said,

> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"
> Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (John 6:51–56 NIV84).

What did He mean?

When we think of Bible metaphors and symbols, do we interpret them to their true meaning?

- Is there power in the blood of Jesus?
- What power is in the blood of Jesus?
- If we had some red corpuscles shed by Jesus when He was crucified 2000 years ago, somehow saved in a sealed jar, would those red blood cells have some power? Would they cleanse from sin? Would they pay our debt? Would the Father in heaven be happy to see the blood?
- Or is the power in the one who shed His blood, and the power to impact us in the power of the truth of what was accomplished by Jesus when He shed His blood. The truth destroys lies and sets us free and in trust we open the heart and receive the life of Christ, which is in the blood.

Thus the flesh and blood symbols got replaced by Jesus with the bread and wine symbols. Jesus said the bread represented His body, His flesh, and the wine represented His blood. When we partake of this at a communion service are we taking in literal human flesh and blood? Is it being transformed as we swallow into human flesh? Or are these symbols of something else? What?

When we eat food it is broken down into molecules that become building blocks to our literal body. Jesus is the Word made flesh, to partake the flesh of Jesus means to partake of the Word, to partake of the truth. And the truth becomes building blocks of our beliefs, concepts, schemas, and displaces the lies and our minds are won from fear and distrust of God to trust in God, and then in trust we open the heart to Jesus and He pours in His Spirit of love and we partake of the life of Christ, the life is in the blood. We get a new heart and right spirit, it is no longer we that live but Christ lives in us. Thus,

partaking of Christ is to partake of the truth about God He revealed and the character of Christ that He developed for us.

The lesson points out that without Jesus we do not have eternal life, but does that mean if one claims salvation by Jesus and identifies themselves publicly as a Christian, and does good works in the name of Jesus they are saved? If so, what did Jesus mean by:

> "Watch out for false prophets. [A prophet is not merely a person who gives prophecies of the future, the vast majority didn't. The prophets were God's spokespeople, whose who came to the people with a message from God. Jesus is saying, watch out for those claiming to be my messenger, claiming to be telling you heavenly truths, but in fact are not, they are false spokespersons.] They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. [What fruits? Fruits of character—the methods people employ in how they treat others? Are they legalistic, rules oriented, do they present God in a light different that Jesus? Do they practice the methods of God in how they treat others, or would they use the power of their position to coerce consciences under the guise of needing to save lives?] Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. [You cannot receive Christlike character by worshiping a god that is like Satan in character, even if you call that false god Jesus.] A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [Claiming allegiance to Jesus in some legalistic, payment way is not sufficient for salvation, but living out the will of God like Jesus did, being transformed to be like Jesus in character is a requirement—why? Because it is the basis of life, the living law of God written into the heart by the Spirit of God.] Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:15-23 NIV84). [In whose name were they doing this? Not Buddha or Muhammed but in the name of Jesus. These people would identify themselves as Christians, but Jesus tells them they are evildoers and He never knew them. What is life eternal? Knowing God, why are these people who are doing good works in the name of Jesus described as being evil? If they don't know Jesus, what are they doing in His name? Misrepresenting Him, doing good works, with the wrong methods and teaching falsehoods, which corrupts their characters and produces bad fruit.

WEDNESDAY

Read the second and third paragraph:

> There is a historical tendency to read into the expression, "bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:14, NKJV) more than the text is saying. Many who accept the theory of the natural immortality of the soul suggest that Christ, at His second coming, will bring with Him

from heaven the souls of the righteous dead who are already in heaven with God. Those souls thus can be reunited with their respective resurrected bodies. But such an interpretation is not in harmony with the overall teachings of Paul on the subject.

Read the words of this non-Adventist theologian on the real meaning of this verse: "The reason why the Thessalonian Christians can have hope as they grieve for the dead members of their church is that God 'will bring' them, that is, he will resurrect these deceased believers and cause them to be present at Christ's return, such that they will be 'with him.' The implication is that these deceased believers will not be at some kind of disadvantage at the parousia of Christ but will be 'with him' in such a way that they share equally with living believers in the glory associated with his return." — Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 1-2 Thessalonians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), p. 319.

- The place of the soul and its condition:
    - The common view is the soul is in heaven in consciousness awaiting the reunion with a new body
    - The SDA view is the soul is either in the grave or nowhere waiting for the resurrection (real problems with the SDA view if they think literally, where is the soul of those who died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that were vaporized, or people who were eaten by sharks at sea etc. etc.)
    - The truth is what we have described with the computer metaphor and which the Bible beautifully describes in this passage. A living functioning human being requires three parts, body, soul, spirit, like a computer requires hardware, software, energy. And when the body dies, the software/soul goes into a state of sleep, just like a computer that runs out of power. And just like a computer can have its data backed up on a cloud, so too, our individualities, souls are stored on the heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life waiting for download into new bodies at the second coming, but they are in a state of sleep. Just as the Bible describes.

If you read Friday's lesson they quote EGW from *Acts of the Apostles:*

> "'Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him' [1 Thess. 4:14], Paul wrote. Many interpret this passage to mean that the sleeping ones will be brought with Christ from heaven; but Paul meant that as Christ was raised from the dead, so God will call the sleeping saints from their graves and take them with Him to heaven. Precious consolation! glorious hope! not only to the church of Thessalonica, but to all Christians wherever they may be." — Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 259.

How do you understand her statement? Is it in conflict with our position?

Does the Bible take a position on human beings being tripartite, having bodies, souls, and spirits? When the body is destroyed where is the soul, the individuality, the psyche? If we say that the individuality, the memories, mindset, beliefs, attitudes, experiences that make a person a unique

individual are retained in the memory of our infinite God, then where are they being kept? Where is God? The Bible actually describes the storage place as separate from God's own memory and uses the language of Lamb's book of life where the "names" are written, and in the Bible names represent character. EGW herself wrote in other places:

> Remember, **your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven**, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character to the Pattern, Jesus Christ?. . . {TSB 62.1}
>
> Remember that **this world is God's daguerreotype office**. **The pictures of all who live here**, old or young, **are being made in the books of heaven**. What shall the likeness be?—Letter 78, 1901. 3MR 352.3

So is our explanation about souls being asleep and safe upon the heavenly servers and brought with Jesus upon His return wrong? I don't think so. EGW was writing with the understanding she and her audience had regarding these things at the time, emphasizing the salient and critical point of human beings are mortal and in first death they are not aware but in a state of sleep.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the second coming, will it be a secret rapture or will it be the full second coming with every eye seeing Him?

I have my belief about this, but I don't really get concerned about it because it doesn't really matter much as it will become self-evident when Jesus comes. What does matter however, is whether we are restored to genuine friends of Jesus who lie and practice the methods of God in how we treat others.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Our New Schedule: Second Sabbath of every month Dr. Jennings will teach in person followed by potluck. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend our monthly potluck and fellowship. Dr. Jennings will teach remotely the other Sabbaths and those in our studio can interact live with him.

Also, we will start having an afternoon Bible study discussion on potluck weekends. We will NOT be recording or broadcasting the afternoon Bible study and discussion, there are a variety of reasons for this. So plan to attend class, enjoy potluck and join us for a monthly Bible study discussion.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 Q4 On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 9
Contrary Passages?

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read the first paragraph:

> Peter warns us: "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15, NKJV). Paul adds, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2, 3, NKJV). This being the case, we should look not only at those passages that easily can be explained to fit our beliefs, but we should also deal with passages that are commonly used to teach something different from what we believe. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 72)

- If two people understand the Bible differently on various doctrines, does that mean one of them is not right with God?
- How is it that good hearted people can read the same passage of Scripture yet come to completely different understandings of what it means?
- When Jesus returns will any of the saved correctly know every single detail of Scripture?
- What is the primary purpose of the doctrines we hold—the most important reason we have doctrines?

The primary purpose of each doctrine is to reveal the truth about God. Every doctrine is to be directly connected to our understanding about God, what does this doctrine reveal to us about God, His kingdom, His methods, His design laws for life. They should be like spokes on a wheel, every single one of them connected to God and leading to greater intimacy with God.

But sadly, all too often, our doctrines become stand-alone litmus tests of orthodoxy that we prove with a series of Bible texts and then apply our interpretation to behavior and use this to test the faithfulness of others all of which turns the focus away from God onto self; and worse, such an approach mispresents God as punishing and vengeful. This is exactly how the Jews in Christ's day approached Bible study, not as a book designed to reveal the truth about God, but as a code book that listed certain laws or truths that were to be obeyed in order to have salvation.

Read our memory text:

> You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39–40 NIV84).

Notice, the Jews were searching Scripture for the keys to eternal life, approaching it as a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned, but they failed to realize that Scripture is designed to lead us back to a knowledge of God.

Remember life eternal is knowing God. That if we have the Son we have life, life is not found in having the right list of doctrinal beliefs.

If we have the **correct** doctrine, teaching about some subject, say method of baptism, or Sabbath day, but that doctrine is not connected to the truth about God then that doctrine can be used to mislead and obstruct the plan of salvation.

Jesus said:

> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are (Matthew 23:15 NIV84).

Did these Jewish lawyers and theologians that Jesus was speaking to have the wrong Sabbath day, eat the wrong foods, have the wrong religious festivals, the wrong tithe percentage, the wrong sanctuary? What did they have wrong? They failed to connect the doctrines to the truth about God and instead set the doctrines into the setting of human governments and human laws, imposed rules requiring legal accounting and management, and behavioral monitoring.

So as we look at these contrary passages, we need to keep in mind that our Christian friends in other traditions may very well interpret some of these passages differently than us, and we may be quite correct in disagreeing with their interpretation, but that doesn't mean they don't know God or that we do. Our love and knowledge of God is unfolding, and they, like us, may hold beliefs that have never been fully examined and traced through the entire record of Scripture and linked back to God—asking what does the belief say about God? And this is the most important question on all of these passages: **What do the various interpretations say about God?**

SUNDAY

Read Luke 16:19-31:

> "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.
>
> "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

" 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' " (Luke 16:19-31 NIV84).

Is this a literal story or is this a parable?

Why would people believe this is a literal story rather than a parable?

- Preconceived ideas—if one already believes that souls go to heaven in some conscious way, then this story seems to describe that process, so it doesn't trigger cognitive dissonance, it doesn't make one pause and question, it is read literally because it seems to fit an underlying belief.
- But what are the reasons that indicate this is not a literal description of reality and supports the idea that this is a metaphor or parable?
    - This is describing disembodied souls or spirits, yet the rich man asks that Lazarus dip his "finger" in water to cool his "tongue" both of these are *body* parts. Spirits don't have fingers and tongues.
    - If this describes reality in which the dead are conscious, then those in heaven and hell can see and communicate with each other. And if that is how heaven functions, what would the experience be like for the various saved who have loved ones crying out to them from the torments of hell for all eternity? Would King David be filled with joy and peace and without any grief or tears if for all eternity he sees and hears his son Absalom crying out to him from the torments of hell?
    - What would it say about the saved if we could be in heaven and watch any living being, animal, human, or angel, being tormented and crying out in pain and look upon that and feel satisfied, feel good, feel "yes, that is right, glad to see it"?
    - And if this is literally the way things are in God's universe, that some are tormented in the fires of hell for all eternity and the righteous, for all eternity, watch and hear their screams of pain what kind of place is that for the righteous? Would you be happy there?

Wouldn't such an experience destroy tenderness of heart, cause either demoralization or hardness and callousness of heart?

- And what kind of God would God be if He created a universe in which people are born into a world they did not choose, born into sinfulness that they did not choose, and experience child abuse they did not choose, and are murdered before they ever accept Jesus as their Savior and God sends them to hell to be tormented for all eternity—a short life in sin with no opportunity for salvation followed by eternal torment. What kind of being would God be if this were true?
- So, does taking this story literally say anything good about God?

What did Jesus tell this story? What truths was He trying to get across? I think there were several truths Jesus wanted to convey to the people of that day and, as I list them, consider if these were falsehoods that the Jews struggled with that this story exposed and truths we need to remember today:

- Health and wealth are not good indicators of salvation, righteousness, or standing with God
- Poverty and sickness are not good indicators of who is out of favor with God or cursed of God
- There is a chasm that separates the righteous from the unrighteous and when it becomes fixed it cannot be crossed—and that chasm is the chasm between love and selfishness. Once a person has become fixed in heart and mind into either camp they cannot cross over to the other side.
- There will be a day of recognizing, a day when all parties will realize the difference between the two camps, and the lost will be terribly dissatisfied.
- God reveals Himself to us via Scripture, nature, revelation and if we will not believe the evidence God provides through His divine agencies during this lifetime, we will not be changed even if we have the testimony of someone returning from the dead, which the Jews proved true when Jesus raised a man named Lazarus from the dead and they still would not believe.

So this is how I paraphrased it, see what you think?

> "You know the circulating story of a wealthy man dressed in fine clothes and who lived in luxury every day. At the entrance to his estate was a beggar named Lazarus, who was sick and covered in sores. He would have been happy with the scraps from the rich man's table. He was so badly off, the dogs licked his sores.
>
> "As the story goes, when the beggar died, angels transported him to heaven and sat him next to Abraham, but when the rich man died, he was buried in the ground. The rich man looked up while being tormented in hell, spotted Abraham millions of light years away, and noted Lazarus beside him. So he cries out, his voice carrying over the expanse of the universe, 'Oh Father Abraham! Take pity on me and send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire.'
>
> "But, as the story goes, Abraham replied, 'Son, don't you remember all the wealth and health you had during your lifetime while Lazarus suffered in poverty and sickness, but now he is rejoicing here and you are in agony. Besides, the kingdom of love and the kingdom of

selfishness are separated by such a chasm that those fixed in one cannot cross over to the other.'

"He answered, 'Then please, Father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers who need to know. Have him warn them so they won't end up fixed in selfishness and suffer in torment.'

"Abraham replied, 'They have the Scriptures — it contains all they need to know.'

" 'No, Father Abraham,' he pleaded, 'they need more than the Scriptures. If someone from the dead goes to them, they would turn away from selfishness, partake of the Remedy, and be renewed in love.'

"Abraham said to him, 'If they don't value the Scriptures and won't listen to the instructions God has provided therein, they will not be convinced even if someone returns from the dead.' " (Luke 16:19-31 REM).

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

> One of the Bible passages most widely used to try to prove the immortality of the soul is Luke 23:43 — "He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise'" (NRSV). Almost all Bible versions (with few exceptions) translate this text in a similar way, giving the impression that on the very day Christ died, Christ and the thief would be together in Paradise. This should not surprise us because those translations were made by biblical scholars who believe in the dogma of the natural immortality of the soul. But is this the best translation of the text? (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 74)

The lesson makes a great admission, that Bible translators bring in their biases, preconceived ideas, and beliefs into the translation and will introduce those biases as they translate. This is one place that demonstrates this process—where the translators choose to place the comma. But the bigger distortion to Bible translation is the bias that translators bring about God's law, the idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require God to inflict punishment and thus God is represented as the source of death. When the translators hold this assumption then they translate this legal distortion into the text. This legal distortion is introduced honestly, with great integrity, without malice or deceit because in many places it is linguistically permissible. Such as translating the Greek *δικαιόω [dikaioo /dik·ah·yo·o/* in various places like Romans 3:24 as *justice, justify, justification, justified, rather than righteous, righteousness, or set right and put right.*

This one Greek word can legitimately be translated either way and the translators decide based on their own understanding, their own biases. If they view God's law like human law, they will often translate in ways that introduce the legal sounding language. But if they understand that salvation is about

relationship to God, knowing and loving God, then they interpret more often as righteous and righteousness.

The Remedy paraphrase is purposely written to interpret through the lens of design law not imposed law.

Back to our verse for today: Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43 NIV84).

This is a straightforward verse to figure out. The question in this translation is where to place the comma, before or after the word "today"?

- Punctuation is not in the original Greek but is supplied by the translators, meaning the comma is not inspired by God.
- Moving the comma, one word over, changes the meaning from going to heaven on that day, to being promised on that day that he would go to heaven. "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise."

Both options are permissible grammatically, so which is it? We need other evidence from Scripture and the Scripture provides it:

John 20:17, Jesus speaking to Mary:

> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. (John 20:17 NIV84).

If Jesus hadn't returned to the Father by Sunday morning, that means He and the thief were not in paradise on Friday, so the comma should be placed to emphasize the promise given that day.

TUESDAY

Read Philippians 1:21-24:

> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. (Philippians 1:21-24 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do you explain it?

Do our biases and preconceived ideas impact how we read it?

If Paul meant that some part of him would go to heaven in conscious form and be with Jesus, would that idea contradict anything Paul wrote elsewhere? Paul describes very clearly when we will be alive and conscious in the Lord's presence:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus **those who have fallen asleep in him**. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that **we who are still alive**, who are left till the coming of the Lord, **will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep**. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, **we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18NIV84).

Paul is saying here that we meet the Lord together, that those who are alive will not precede those who have fallen asleep. Those with the Lord are in a state of sleep and not conscious, but are being brought back with Jesus to become alive again.

How do we reconcile this text with the Philippians text?

A living functioning human being requires three parts, body, soul, and spirit, like a computer requires hardware, software, and energy. And when the body dies, it returns to dust/dirt, the spirit—life energy—returns to God from whom all life originates, and the software/soul goes into a state of sleep, just like a computer that runs out of power. And just like a computer can have its data backed up on a cloud, so too, our individualities, souls are stored on the heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life, waiting for download into new bodies at the second coming, but they are in a state of sleep. Just as the Bible describes.

But what about 2 Corinthians 5, which seems to suggest when we die we do go to the Lord:

> Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
>
> Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the

> judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10 NIV84).

How do you explain this?

What would it say about God if we interpret this to mean disembodied spirits in a state of consciousness going to be in the Lord's presence at death? Is the emphasis about disembodied spirits, or is Paul actually talking about new bodies, heavenly bodies that we will live in?

From *The Remedy:*

> Now, we know that this earthly body is like a tent or hospital gown that wears out easily and leaves us exposed. And if this earthly body–which our individuality currently occupies–is destroyed, we have an eternal body that will never wear out; a heavenly dwelling place for our individuality, but not built by human hands. Meanwhile, the older we get, the more we groan, longing to be free of this deteriorating body and to be clothed in our perfect heavenly body, because when we have exchanged this mortal body for our heavenly one, we will not be found sick, dying, and exposed. For while we are in this collapsing tent, we groan with the burden of aging and slow decay. We don't want to die to be rid of this worn-out body, but we want to be translated directly into our heavenly body so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by eternal life. God's intention for us has never changed: He created us to live eternally and — as the first phase of our restoration — has given us the Spirit to heal our minds, guaranteeing our future complete re-creation.
>
> We certainly know that as long as this frail body is our home, we remain away from the Lord; but we live by trusting God with how things will turn out — not by waiting to see the future restoration. Therefore we are confident while in the mortal body, even though we prefer to be translated into our heavenly body and be at home with the Lord. Our goal is to be pleasing to him by living in harmony with his design for life — whether we are in this mortal body or our heavenly one — for we will all appear in Christ's examining room so that each one may be accurately diagnosed and receive what their condition warrants, whether from compliance or non-compliance with God's treatment plan.

WEDNESDAY

Read 1 Peter 3:13-20:

> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than

> for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water… (1 Peter 3:13-20 NIV84).

How do you explain this?

Why do we not take this to mean Jesus went to some place in an alternate reality where living souls are being tormented and preached to them for three days?

- It contradicts the Bible teaching on the mortality of the soul
- It contradicts the Bible teaching that sin causes death and replaces it with the idea that God causes eternal torment
- It contradicts the idea of the first death is a sleep
- It contradicts the idea that salvation must occur during this life and suggests that some souls could be saved after this life is over—this opens up the possibility for false doctrines like purgatory
- And if taken literally, what about all the other souls who died without the knowledge Christ after the Flood, didn't Christ care enough about them to preach to them also?
- And what would this say about God if a place of conscious torment really existed?

Then what does the text mean? Who are spirits in prison that are being referred to and how did Christ preach to them?

The Bible says "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14 NIV84).

Do angels have bodies or are they disembodied spirits? So the term spirit can mean many things, including the intelligent being, as in this case.

Did Jesus come to set captives free? Free from what? Does the Bible describe that those without Christ are slaves to sin? So this is describing the reality that all sinners are captives of sin and death and only in Christ are we set free from sin and death. And every human since Adam was born enslaved by sin with a terminal sin-condition; then how did Christ preach to those before the Flood?

Notice the text says that Christ preached to those people who died in the Flood through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative and agency on Earth through whom Christ brings truth to bear upon every human heart and mind throughout all human history. And the Holy Spirit was active prior to the Flood when Noah was preaching bringing the truth to bear upon their minds, just like He has been active through all human history. Remember David prayed in Psalm 51, "take not your Holy Spirit from me" and in Genesis one the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep. God's Holy Spirit has always been active.

So from *The Remedy:*

> Don't you see that if you are genuinely committed to God and eagerly practice his methods of love, you cannot be stopped? Even if you are attacked or persecuted for doing what is right, by forgiving and loving others you reveal God's true character and simultaneously are advancing to be more like him. So "do not fear for this mortal life as the world fears; and don't be frightened for a minute," but make Christ the center of your heart, mind and character. Always be prepared to talk about God's character of love, as revealed in Jesus, to anyone who asks why you are hopeful in the face of persecution, trial, and difficulty. But be sure to do it with gentleness, kindness and respect, with a pure heart and clear conscience, so that those who lie, gossip, and spread rumors about your ministry for Christ may be ashamed of their malicious ways. It is better, if God permits, to be persecuted for doing good than to suffer the results of doing evil, for that is exactly what Christ did. He suffered terribly and died once in order to cure sinfulness–to provide a Remedy for all humanity and restore us to unity with God. In Christ, love vanquished selfishness, and righteousness overcame unrighteousness. He allowed the sin-sick to kill him, and in giving himself freely, he triumphed over the infection of selfishness and fear, and was renewed to life by the Spirit of love and truth. It was through this same Spirit of love and truth that he preached to all humans, who were held in the bondage of sin. Yes, it was Christ, working through the Spirit, who preached to those bound by sin in Noah's day. He was so patient with them, working constantly to reach them as Noah built the ark, yet only eight people responded and had a new life on the other side of that great flood. (1 Peter 3:13-20 REM).

THURSDAY

Read Revelation 6:9-11:

> When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. (Revelation 6:9-11 NIV84).

How do you address this text?

First—this is symbolic not literal! It is important to remember when reading Revelation almost everything is presented in symbolic language. When we read about a rider on a white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth—we are not to take that literal. When we read about lamb slain, we are not to take it literal, the lamb represents Jesus.

We must move away from the symbolism to what the symbols represent.

How would you explain this?

First option is to decide what altar is being referred to, is it the golden altar in the Holy Place, or the brazen altar in the courtyard?

Read the first paragraph,

> The opening of the fifth Apocalyptic seal reveals an unusual scene. The souls of the martyrs were seen metaphorically "under the altar" crying to God for vengeance (Rev. 6:9-11). Some commentators are inclined to identify this "altar" as the altar of incense mentioned under the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1-6). But the reference to "blood" (instead of "incense") in Revelation 6:9-11 leads us to see here an allusion to the altar of burnt offering, where the blood of the sacrifices was poured (Lev. 4:18, 30, 34). As the blood of those sacrifices used to be sprinkled around the altar, so the blood of the martyrs was symbolically poured at God's altar when, by remaining faithful to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 6:9, see also Rev. 12:17, Rev. 14:12), they lost their lives. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 77)

The lesson takes the position that the altar is the brazen altar, not the golden, what do you think?

I think this is wrong for several reasons:

- Their reason is that the blood of the sacrifices was poured out around the brazen altar not the golden and therefore this must indicate the brazen altar. However, the blood was also applied to the horns of the altar. If a non-priest brought the sin offering then the blood was applied to the horns of the brazen altar and the blood poured out at the based of the brazen altar. But if a priest brought the sin offering then the blood was applied to the horns of the golden altar with the remaining poured out at the base of the brazen altar.
- In the OT sanctuary theater, who do the priests in their white robes represent? They represent the priesthood of believers. And to which group do the martyrs, those who died for their faith in Jesus, belong—to the non-believing group or the believers in Christ? So, the sacrifices of the non-priests would not represent the martyrs, it would be the sacrifices of the priests which would represent the martyrs and that blood was applied to the golden altar. And these martyrs were given white robes, just like the daily priests wore, which symbolically represents the righteousness of Christ. And this symbolizes the cleansing of their individualities, hearts, minds, characters from all sin and defect perfecting them for eternity.
- And what does the blood symbolize? It symbolizes the life. And in this context, the sinner confessing their sin, not their deeds, but their sinfulness, their sinful life upon the lamb, symbolically says I surrender my life to you Jesus and Jesus takes our place and overcomes our sinful condition where we could not. The blood is applied to the golden altar symbolically registering our name—character, individuality, our life in the Lamb's book of life—as a life cleansed by Jesus, a life in which the carnal has died and the righteousness or life of Christ has been infused.

- The Bible uses the symbolism of the blood for the life, the life of the righteous call out to God for Him to finish His work and restore them and the world to sinlessness. The Bible uses this symbolism all the way back in Genesis when Abel's blood called out to God from the ground.

The lesson makes a very good point in the second paragraph,

> The "souls" under the altar are also symbolic. By taking them literally, one would have to conclude that the martyrs are not fully happy in heaven, for they are still crying out for vengeance. This hardly sounds as if they are enjoying the reward of salvation. The desire for vengeance can make your life miserable. But your death, as well? (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 77)

If we take this literally, would these righteous people be in a place of happiness and bliss or where sin has not yet been fully eradicated?

And will the righteous actually have a desire for vengeance in their heart? If the righteous really wanted God to punish the wicked wouldn't they be disobeying Jesus when He said we are to forgive those who wrong us, love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us?

- But the text says their lives call out for vengeance, so how do we understand it?
- What is the Bible definition of this vengeance?
    - "Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities (Isaiah 1:24-25 NIV84).
    - These saints are calling upon God to finish His work of destroy sin, wickedness, and all sin from them and all other humans who open their hearts in trust to God! They are calling for the completion of the plan of salvation and the complete eradication of sin from God's universe, not for God to use power to hurt others.
    - But this is all symbolic, not to be taken literal.

Read the third paragraph,

> Also, it's important to remember that John was not given a view of heaven as it actually is. "There are no white, red, black, or pale horses there with warlike riders. Jesus does not appear there in the form of a lamb with a bleeding knife wound. The four beasts do not represent actual winged creatures of the animal characteristics noted. … Likewise, there are no 'souls' lying at the base of an altar in heaven. The whole scene was a pictorial and symbolic representation." — The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 778. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 77)

This is well reasoned and I agree with it, but find it quite interesting that when it comes to the heavenly sanctuary many SDA's take the opposite position, that John or EGW were shown a view of

heaven as it actually is. No, this is correct, Bible prophets are given visions that are not literal windows into heaven, but symbolic representations of heavenly realities.

Read bottom pink section:

> Who (especially of those who have been victims of injustice) hasn't cried out for justice, which has not yet come? Why must we, by faith, trust that ultimately the justice so lacking in this world will nevertheless come? What comfort can you draw from this wonderful promise?

Thoughts? What does this mean? What is justice? What determines what is just or right? Does the law have any role in defining and determining justice?

And if we believe God's law is made up rules like humans make, then how is justice described? It is God using power to inflict punishment upon the unrepentant. God becomes the cosmic enforcer the source of pain, suffering, and death.

But, if we understand God's law as design law, we recognize justice is doing what is right, and the right thing is to heal and save from sin, but for those who destroy the faculties that respond to the Spirit of love and truth, then the only right or just action for God to take in regard to them, is to set them free to reap what they have chosen—separation from Him who is the source of life. God let's them go and they die of their unhealed terminal sin condition just as the Bible teaches, sin when full grown brings forth death, and those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction.

God is just, sustaining and supporting and maintain the constant operation of His design laws, including the law of liberty and giving people freedom to die if that is what they insist upon, rather than force them to stay in His presence which would be a place of torment to those who have solidified themselves in wickedness and selfishness.

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, which is a quote from *Christ's Object Lessons:*

> "In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ shows that in this life men decide their eternal destiny. During probationary time the grace of God is offered to every soul. But if men waste their opportunities in self-pleasing, they cut themselves off from everlasting life. No after probation will be granted them. By their own choice they have fixed an impassable gulf between them and their God." — Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 260.

What makes the gulf impassable? Why can't God use His infinite power to bridge the gap?

Read question two:

> Reflect on the contrast between the unnegotiable religion of the Christian martyrs and the flexible religion of our postmodern generation. In other words, what are things worth dying for? However, if one has a view that all truths are merely relative, or cultural, then why die for any of them? At the same time, what can we learn from those who were willing to die for causes that we believe are false?

Does the fact someone is willing to die for their faith mean what they believe is correct? Consider the Branch Davidians, those who died in Jonestown, those who fly planes into building for their cause?

Can people be so settled into lies they will die for those falsehoods and false causes?

What is the difference between the righteous who will not compromise, who do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death, and the wicked who will die for their cause?

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth and love, it is the combination of these two elements that is evidence of God's kingdom. Satan's kingdom is built on lies and selfishness and Satan will mix his principles with God's.

Satan will mix lies with love and selfishness with truth to create corruptions that can appear appealing and seduce people into practicing them.

Can you think of any examples of this mixture?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Christian Psychiatrist Wanted: If you are a Christian psychiatrist, or know one, who is interested in coming to Liberty University to be part of our team in building a world-class scientifically sound but biblically consistent treatment program and residency program, then contact me at trjennings@liberty.edu.

THIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS FOR LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RELATED MATTERS ONLY. Please do not send personal emails to this address. If you have Come and Reason Ministry related questions or comments please use our requests@comeandreason.com email address.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 10
The Fires of Hell

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson describes a traditional view of hell with never ending torment and in Catholic theology a place of punishment to purge sin called purgatory. Then goes on to say, "In short, a false understanding of human nature has led to terrible theological errors."

I would suggest, it is a false understanding of human nature coupled with:

- A false understanding of God's law
- A false understanding of the sin problem
- A false understanding of the solution for the sin problem
- And ultimately, a false understanding of God

The idea of an immortal soul is coupled with the idea that God's law functions like human law and God must, for justice sake, punish sin. The idea that justice requires punishment is so deeply imbedded as an assumed truth that most people cannot even step back long enough to examine the question, to consider the implications and study the evidence for themselves. Many people almost immediately close off their minds at the suggestion that God doesn't use power to inflict punishment for sin. And to support the false conclusion that He does use His power to inflict punishment for sin they will contrast that idea with other falsehoods of various kinds like—

- "well if God doesn't punish sin, then there is no punishment for sin and you must be teaching universalism."
- Or "if God doesn't punish sin, then Jesus didn't have to die for our sins and you don't believe in substitutionary atonement."

So, before discussing such topics, it is helpful to first define our understanding of God's law. If we take the position that God's law functions no differently than human law, imposed rules requiring infliction of punishment, then the mind is trapped in the lie that God must punish sin.

But if we worship God as Creator and recognize that as Creator God builds reality, space, time, energy, matter, and life, and that reality is built on the laws of reality, law of gravity, physics, health etc. Then we realize that life and health are only possible in harmony with God and His design laws for life.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Satan and humans cannot build reality, we are created beings. We can only make up rules and use force to punish rule breaking. This idea of governing is Satan's method and he infects hearts and minds with the idea that God's law works this way. And then, when it comes to understanding passages of Scripture about punishment for sin, hell etc. people project in the false belief that justice requires inflicted punishment, and since God is just God must inflict punishment. And it is falsely taught that if we don't get our just punishment put off onto someone else, then God must punish us, and then the only question is whether the *punishment* is eternal or the *punishing* is eternal—and that is determined by how we understand human nature as the lesson says.

The lesson takes the position that the eternal burning torment of the traditional view, based on the idea that man has natural immortality and sin must be punished is worse than the common SDA view **(but we realize, not the true SDA view)** in which it is taught that man is mortal and sin must be punished.

Which is worse?

In the eternal punishing view, God created human beings in Eden with natural immortality, it is true, that in that view God didn't really consider the implications, didn't anticipate the potential downside, didn't have foreknowledge to know what was going to happen, and when Adam and Eve sinned, God was heartbroken, sent His Son to die to pay the penalty, but sadly, there is nothing more He can do for the wicked. They have immortality and cannot die so their rejection of salvation results in eternal torment and it really saddens God. He never wanted this for them, He just doesn't have any other option.

In the common SDA view, which is not the true SDA view, it is correctly taught that man was made mortal, and immortality is a gift of God to the righteous. But it is falsely taught that sin requires externally inflicted punishment and because there are different levels of sin, Hitler sinned much more than a teenager who never accepted Jesus and died during a burglary, for instance, then in justice, God and the saints sit in committee and determine how much suffering must be inflicted upon each person to satisfy justice. And then God reigns down fire upon the wicked and God uses His power to perform a miracle to keep the wicked alive in the fires to ensure they suffer the proper time they deserve before God kills them.

Which view is better?

Do either of these views actually say anything good about God? In the eternal torment view, God is inept, blind, foolish, hapless, doesn't have foreknowledge or if He does and created humans with immortality knowing they would sin then God is cruel and a tyrant. And in the limited torture view, God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, torture, and death—the one from whom we need protection. God is saying love me or else I will torture and kill you. A violation of the laws of liberty, love, and truth.

Both views undermine our ability to know and trust God.

So, what is the truth? This section on the consuming fire and eternal burning is from our Three Angel's magazine, so if you want to share this with others, you can find it there.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah describes this fire:

> "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: 'Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?'" (Isaiah 33:14 NIV84)

What is being described? Hell, the torment of the third angel. But who can live in this fire? Who will spend eternity in the flames? Isaiah gives a shocking answer:

> "He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil!" (33:15 NIV84)

- When God spoke to Moses from within the bush, the bush burned, but did not get consumed. (Exodus 3:2-4, Acts 7:30-36)
- When God came to Mt. Sinai, His presence was described as a "consuming fire," but the elements did not melt. (Exodus 24:17)
- When Solomon's Temple was dedicated, the priests couldn't enter because the brightness of God's fiery glory was too great, but the Temple did not burn down. (2 Chronicles 5:14, 7:1-3)
- Lucifer, before his fall, walked among the "fiery stones" of God's presence. (Ezekiel 28:14, 16)
- God takes His throne "rivers of fire" come out from Him and billions stand in this fire without any harm. (Daniel 7:9, 10)
- Jesus, prior to His crucifixion, in a body still subject to death, was bathed in heavenly fire, yet no harm came to Him. His clothes didn't even get scorched. (Matthew 17:2)
- Hebrews tells us that "our God is a consuming fire," (12:29) and the Song of Solomon states: "love is as strong as death its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away." (8:6, 7 NIV84)

The lie that Satan has foisted upon us is this: the place you don't want to go, the place you don't want to be, is the place of eternal burning and consuming fire. But, as amazing as it may seem, that place is God's very presence!

The "burning sulfur" described by the third angel is from the Greek *thion* and is a form of the word *thios*. *Thios* means God, those who study *thios* study theology. Thus, *thion* is divine fire or the fire of God's glory. The righteous will spend eternity bathed in the flames of God's fiery presence. But the wicked are consumed in that eternal fire.

When Christ returns He doesn't come veiling His glory, but in the full splendor of His holy, loving, righteous self; brighter than the sun! Rivers of blazing love surging out from Him, the earth will be

bathed in His glory! (Isaiah 6:3) The righteous will be transformed by the life-giving fires of love, just like Moses was transformed after being in God's presence. He came down off the mountain with his face radiating heavenly fire, but Moses wasn't in pain. He didn't have third degree burns. His whiskers weren't even singed. But the children of Israel, unrepentant, still filled with sin and selfishness, when they saw Moses' face, they shrank back and begged him to wear a veil. They couldn't stand the heavenly light. (Exodus 34:33-35)

The fire of infinite love is painful only when the mind is not healed. The guilty conscience, the unregenerate heart that prefers lies and selfishness cannot tolerate the light of love and truth.

This is why the Bible describes that the wicked are destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

But how can this be? How can a fire that doesn't burn up bushes, buildings, or faces consume the wicked in the end? What kind of fire is this?

This is the fire of love and truth that glorifies God's people while it cleanses the earth of sin.

A fire that consumes sin? What is that?

It is not the fire of combustion, which burns material substances, things made out of molecules like our homes, furniture, and books, because sin is not made out of physical matter. Sin is made out of ideas, thoughts, concepts, attitudes, and beliefs. At its core, sin is composed of two elements: lies (Satan is the "father of lies"), (John 8:44) and selfishness. Fires of combustion don't destroy ideas. Fires that burn material substances don't consume lies and selfishness.

So, what does consume a lie? The truth! And what consumes selfishness? Love! The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both truth and love. Amazingly, when the Spirit fell at Pentecost, they all witnessed two streams of fire over each person, (Acts 2:3) yet no one got burned. The building didn't burn down. Their clothes didn't ignite. It was their hearts and minds that were cleansed by that fire – the fire of love and truth.

What happens in the mind of those who reject truth and cling to falsehood, when the truth of God comes shining through? They suffer torment of mind, anguish of heart, and suffering of psyche. And what happens to those whose hearts are filled with selfishness, when the pure, undiluted, love of God comes blazing through? The terrible suffering that unremoved sin causes.

What will it be like, on that day, for that abusive mother, for that sexually deviant father, to look into the mirror of undiluted truth and see their own selves as they really are, no self-distortion, no lies, just the plain truth? What will it be like for such a person to have full awareness of what their actions did to their child? What will it be like to have this truth sear through their mind in front of the entire universe?

There will be terrible suffering in the flames of God's love, but not inflicted as an external penalty. That suffering to come will be the unavoidable torture of soul that unremedied sin inflicts.

This is why some do suffer longer, not because God uses power to inflict punishment, but because some have more lies and selfishness in their hearts that resist and fight against the fires of truth and love.

The Bible confirms that the fire of God's presence consumes sin, not material substances. God demonstrated that the "consuming fire," which destroys the wicked, is not a fire that burns elements. In Leviticus, we read about Aaron's sons who, as priests, brought unauthorized fire before the Lord:

> Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD… Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." So they came and carried them, **still in their tunics**, outside the camp, as Moses ordered (Leviticus 10:1-5 NIV84 emphasis mine).

The "fire of the Lord" "consumed" them, yet their bodies weren't charred and their tunics were still intact.

The third angel warns, that the wicked are tormented in "the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb" (Revelation 14:10 NIV84). It is God's very presence where the consuming fires of love and truth originate and in His presence the wicked can no longer hide from their own corrupt histories, the reality of their own wickedness.

And eventually, after all the wicked, like Nadab and Abihu, have been consumed yet their physical bodies not destroyed, when only dead bodies of the unrepentant remain, then the fires of combustion, spoken of by Peter in which the elements melt in the terrible heat consumes all that remains and the earth is recreated free of all sin a new earth, the home of the righteous (2Peter 3:12-13). But the third angel tells us will never forget:

> And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.

Smoke is what is left *after* something is burned. The smoke symbolizes the memory, the lessons learned of what unremedied sin does to sinners—it torments and destroys. This lesson will never be forgotten. The righteous will remember for all eternity that the wicked suffered and died, not at God's hand, but because of their condition and because they refused to allow God to heal them. The righteous will remember for all eternity that every person who is eternally lost is lost only because they prefer non-existence to living in a universe of love and truth.

I have just walked us through the Scripture evidence for our position, I have said the common SDA view is not the true SDA view, so to back that up, let me give you a quote from one of the founders of

the SDA church from the book *The Great Controversy* and we will unpack it and discover our view is the one consistent with the founders of the SDA church.

> God has given to men a **declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin**. [what do you think that declaration is?] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." [What do you hear? What is His method? Why will God not clear the guilty? What law lens do you see it through, imposed or design?] Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. The **power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion**; **yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being**. {GC 541.2} [What does this mean? Do you hear retributive justice and think using power to inflict harm, pain, punishment? This would be imposed law thinking. Or do you hear the power and authority of the divine government will be employed—used—to put down rebellion through design law? What is God's means, methods, power? It is the power of love, truth and freedom. Notice what is described in the following paragraphs]
>
> **God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love.** [If this is true, then can God be the source of inflicted torture, punishment, and death? Is it possible to get free decisions, uncoerced choices, friendship, trust, loyalty, and love by threatening to kill those who don't choose what you want them to choose?] **He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence**. [What reason would God have us obey? Not fear of punishment, but appreciation of His character of love, which cannot exist if God is the source of inflicted punishment. It is Satan's view that God must punish sin because it makes God out to be the source of death and undermines love.] And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}
>
> **The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God.** [What are the principles of God's character? Do these principles coerce, compel, or torture?] Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [Does love seek to inflict pain and suffering to torture and punish? But notice what is describe next as love for our enemies] **God executes justice upon the wicked**, for the good of the universe, and **even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** [What does this mean? What law lens do you hear this through? What is justice? And what are God's judgments? Do you hear this legally and punitively or diagnostically and therapeutically? What is justice? Doing what is right, and what determines what is right and wrong? The law, so what law? In God's government it is God's law, which is design law, which is the law of love, which means God wants to minimize pain, minimize suffering, and heal all who will let him, but ultimately God's

law seeks to stop the torment of those who won't allow Him to heal them. Thus, God's justice is like the parent whose child with a terminal illness who refuses every intervention that would heal them, the parent does NOT seek to prolong and protract the suffering, but to allow the suffering to end. Notice what is described next.] **He would make them happy *if He could* do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character.** [Why can't God make them happy? Because they refuse to participate in His methods, they refuse to allow Him to heal them. And happiness is the by-product of healthiness and healthiness is only possible in harmony with God's design laws for life. Thus God's method for making us happy is writing His law in our hearts and minds and freeing us from sin, which is transgression or living out of harmony with His laws.] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. [How do they make void His law? By replacing it with a false law—imposed law. Think how sad it will be for those legal Sabbath-keepers who wouldn't enter Pilates house but sought to kill Jesus. Imposed law-keepers, worshipping the imposed law-giver and become like the god whose government is based on made up rules and inflicted punishments—the god of this fallen world. How many today are in the same situation?] While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided**. [What determines their destiny? Is it a judicial finding in a heavenly court, or the choice of the sinner to permanently harden their heart, searing their conscience, so that the work of the Holy Spirit has no impact upon them?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** [These are rhetorical questions, meaning that God will not do this, which means He cannot be the source of inflicted punishment and death. He does not use His power to perform miracles to keep them alive, chained to His side in the fires of His presence.] {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why? What does this mean?] **Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters**. [How did it become fixed? Who fixed it there? If God "judges" their characters fixed, does He make it fixed or is God's judgment the accurate diagnosis of what they have chosen to do to themselves?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of

praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no;** [Why not? Does God uses divine power to prevent them from being there, to inflict torture upon them, or is their condition incompatible with God's design for life? And notice the language of the author, "Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb?" Will the righteous "endure" God's presence, or thrive in God's presence? Will God's glory be oppressive to the righteous? Why do the wicked experience God's presence as torment? Does God treat the wicked differently or is it the nature and character of the wicked that respond differently to the infinite fires of love and truth that emanate from the presence of God? Notice, what this author gives as the reason.] **years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven**; but ***they*** have never trained the mind to love purity; ***they*** have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.** [Why are they unfit? Is it that they don't have the right legal payment in record books, or is it something actually within them? Notice why they are not fit] **Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.** [This is huge, what do they experience as torture? Purity, holiness and peace! Is this God using His power to cause pain, to inflict suffering, is there something coming out from God other than goodness, mercy, love and truth? It is their condition which experiences goodness as pain, purity as torment, holiness and suffering. The torture happens because of sin in them, not as an infliction from God!] **They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction**, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What do the wicked actually want? Separation from God! Why do they want it? To be at peace, to stop their suffering; So, in this situation what is the just action for God to take, what is the merciful action for God to take? Is there a difference between justice and mercy? Notice the next sentences] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is *voluntary with themselves*, and *just and merciful on the part of God*.** {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [This is design law, this is justice and mercy, and justice and mercy rightly understood are always an expression of God's character of love.] {GC 543.1}

SUNDAY

Read Mark 9:47-48:

> And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' (Mark 9:47-48 NIV84).

What does this text mean? Is it literal or metaphor?

From the SDA Bible commentary:

> ***Worm.*** Greek *skōlēx*, "a maggot," or "a worm." As Major, Manson, and Wright (*The Mission and Message of Jesus, pg* 123) comment, "The undying worm is not the symbol of a soul which cannot die, but is the symbol of corruption which cannot be purged." In verse 43 "life" is set forth in contrast with "the fire that never shall be quenched." In Rom. 6:23 and many other scriptures "life" stands in contrast with "death." In John 3:16 the contrast is between "everlasting life" and "perishing." It is obvious that Jesus here intends the same contrast. "The fire is not quenched" stands in apposition to "their worm dieth not," and is an equivalent expression, yet it seems incongruous that maggots should pursue their work in the presence of fire. There is nothing in the word *skōlēx*, "worm," that even remotely justifies the popular explanation equating "worm" with "soul" (see on Isa. 66:24), a fact recognized by almost all commentators, whatever they may think personally about the state of man in death. Nichol, F. D., ed. (1980). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 5, p. 636). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

So, what is the meaning of the expression?

It is better to die to self here and rid from our lives anything that fuels selfishness, then to retain the links to selfishness and die eternally. For those who solidify themselves in selfishness will not have the worm or corruption of selfishness removed but will be consumed in the fires of love and truth.

Here is how I paraphrased this in The Remedy, along with a footnote:

> And if you have the habit of using your eye to look at material that warps your character and sears your conscience, then cut it out. It is better to have a healed mind and enter into eternal life with one eye than have both eyes and a warped character and be cast into torment, where 'their worm of selfishness does not die, and the fire of truth and love will burn eternally.' (Mark 9:47-48 REM)

- Footnote: Their worm of selfishness does not die" is intended to say, "where they do not die to self," or "where selfishness is not removed from their character." Thus, they do not survive when all sin and selfishness is consumed by the life-giving glory of God's fiery presence.

MONDAY

The lesson states, "When qualifying fire (Matt. 18:8, Matt. 25:41, "everlasting"), it implies that the fire will not go out until it fully consumes what is being burned."

Thoughts? This is a common error made by those who believe the fire is artificially inflicted by God as punishment. When we return to design law and the evidence of Scripture we recognize, as we have already documented in the lesson today, that the eternal fire is the fire of God's life-giving glory. It is Satan's fondest desire to have this fire go out, for it would mean the end of God.

But we are thankful that the fire never goes out. But we are also thankful that the fire is not harmful, it is life-giving, what is harmful is sin. And the sad fact is that most people are more afraid of the fire of God's life-giving glory that heals and restores than the sin in their life that torments and kills.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about purgatory. Because imperial/imposed-law requires punishment for wrongdoing, the church of the Dark Ages taught that sin must be punished. This led to the doctrine of purgatory, where after death, conscious souls have their sins purged through punishment. In Roman Catholic theology, entrance into heaven requires the "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven," for which indulgences may be given which remove "either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin," such as an "unhealthy attachment" to sin. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The celebration of the Christian Mystery." The Holy See. The Catholic Church. Retrieved 14 March 2017.)

Catholic doctrine teaches that those who die in grace, but who have not yet fulfilled the temporal punishment, due to their sin, can do so in purgatory.

One of the major doctrines that the great reformer Martin Luther rejected was the teaching that conscious souls are punished in purgatory. He disagreed with this doctrine in two ways:

- First, he did not believe in a conscious soul that could experience punishment, and instead taught that the saints sleep peacefully:
    - "It is enough for us to know that souls do not leave their bodies to be threatened by the torments and punishments of hell, but enter a prepared bedchamber in which they sleep in peace." (Weimarer Ausgabe, 43, 360, 21–23 (to Genesis 25:7–10); also Exegetica opera latina, Vol 5–6 1833 p. 120 and the English translation: Luther's Works, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: CPH), 4:313.)
- Second, Luther put forth a new theory designed to free people from both the fear of purgatory and the exploitation of indulgences to buy loved ones their freedom from further punishment in purgatory. He expanded Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement by adding inflicted punishment. Luther taught the idea that all sins by all humans from all time were placed on Christ at the cross and punished by God at the cross. Thus, for the saints, there were no unpunished sins remaining to be punished, thus there was no need for purgatory. (Paul Althaus, Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 7th ed. (1994), 179, 191-195.)

Unfortunately, the same root lie underpins both purgatory and Luther's solution—that God's law functions like human law and that breaking the law (an act of sin) requires inflicted punishment, and therefore Luther's solution and penal substitution theology continue to misrepresent the sin problem to be the legal and inflicted punishment for sin coming from an authoritarian god.

The completion of the Reformation requires the rejection of this imposed law lie, in order to take the eternal gospel to the world to prepare the world for Christ's return.

How is the SDA investigative judgment message similar to purgatory taught by the Roman church?

- Both teach that at death sinners are not prepared to enter heaven
- Both teach that actions can be done to or for the dead complete the salvation process
- The Roman church teaches the sinner is conscious and suffering to pay their unpaid legal sin-debt to complete the necessary temporal punishment for their sin
- The SDA church teaches that the legal payment for their sin was paid by Jesus at the Cross and Jesus as Mediator is in heaven applying that legal payment to legal documents to purge from the record of the saints any remaining unpaid legal debt that would be required for them to pay after the resurrection. But for those who have not surrendered to Jesus, their sins remain on the books to be punished after the thousand years.
- The Catholic view as remaining sins being punished in purgatory to purify the sinner and take them to heaven.
- The SDA view has the remaining sins of those who have not placed their trust in Jesus being punished in their body through a miracle and torture at the end of the thousand years.
- Our view is that no legal process is going on at all, only healing and restoration through the achievements of Christ. In heaven, Jesus applies His perfection to the hearts, minds, and characters of all who trust Him, so that "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." At death humans sleep as Scripture teaches and Luther agrees. All who die trusting in Jesus, despite not yet achieving the full healing of their hearts and minds, while asleep in Him, have His perfection applied to their individuality so that when they arise from the dead at the resurrection they arise perfected. The thief on the cross does not arise with desires to steal. Martin Luther does not arise addicted to alcohol or hating the Jews and longing to kill them. And for the living, this settling into the truth about God and His methods and being transformed to love God and others more than self, occurs in them so that they become faithful and trustworthy friends of God, who like Job, will not betray that trust even in the face of persecution and death.

The real problem with the Roman view or the penal legal Investigative Judgment view, is not the underlying idea that a further work is being accomplished by Jesus in the lives of the saved, but how that work is perverted into something penal/legal rather than healing and restorative.

Non-SDA Protestants don't have any further work at all going on. For them, everything was accomplished at the cross, all we do is accept it and then we are saved, there is certainly the doctrine of maturing, sanctifying that occurs during this life, but nothing more for God to do in the lives of the saints to actually remove sin until glorification.

We view it this way. The species human was saved in Jesus, who, as the second Adam, redeemed the species from the corruption Adam placed upon it. But, individual members of this species still must partake of Christ's victory by faith. That victory is not a legal adjustment in books, but a transformation of the person, the soul, we:

- partake of the divine nature
- have new hearts and right spirits
- receive the mind of Christ
- have the heart circumcised by the Holy Spirit
- are reborn
- have the heart of stone removed and a tender heart created within
- have the law written upon the heart and mind
- receive a new name which is a new character
- partake the flesh and blood or bread and wine which symbolize the life of Christ taken into the soul itself
- And some people experience the full healing transformation on this earth and are ready to go straight into heaven, like Enoch and Elijah. But others do not experience this full healing in their life, but die trusting Jesus with elements in heart not yet harmonized with God. For those individualities, Jesus purifies them so that when they arise in the resurrection they arise perfected in character and no longer struggling with any residual sin problem. This is the work of the cleansing of the sanctuary, His High Priestly ministry.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks "Why is there a resurrection and a judgment?"

This is a very valuable question, reasoned through it brings to light multiple truths.

- If people receive their reward at death, either paradise or hell, what is the purpose of the resurrection and judgment?
- If the SDA view of mortality of the soul is correct, why raise the wicked who are "asleep" to experience more pain and suffering that will not result in their repentance, only to kill them again?

What is the purpose of the resurrection after the 1000 years?

There are four judgments described in Scripture, if you would like to read about the other three, go to our blog on The Four Judgments

The Great White Throne Judgment is the fourth and final judgment.

> I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

What is being described? Is this a legal process? What law lens do we read Scripture through?

What is recorded in the books of life? Or should we say the book of your life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books of heaven record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

> Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned** (Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84).

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what the reality actually is. God is the God of reality, the builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols upon which life operates. There has never been a heavenly judicial law court like humans make; the idea that God is an arbitrary judge who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin is a lie from Satan.
The fourth and final judgment is not judicial; it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

> He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).

So what is the purpose of resurrecting people at the end of the thousand years? To demonstrate that God's diagnosis, what is recorded in the books about the quality of character of each lost person is accurate. God does not expect us to believe simply because He says so, but because it is so. And when God raises the wicked their own actions demonstrate the accurate diagnosis of their terminal sin-state.

When the wicked are raised the final time the New Jerusalem the saints, Jesus, and His angels are on the Earth and in the city, and the gates of the New Jerusalem are open.

And what do the wicked do when they see the city? Do they come to Jesus in repentance and ask for cleansing from sin? Do they try to peacefully enter the city?

Who keeps them out of the city? They do. They do not want to come in, and what does this reveal? That even with the New Jerusalem upon the Earth those settled into sin, lies, rebellion, selfishness will not be convinced, will not repent, and there is nothing more God can do for them. Every single lost soul choose to be lost. They would rather die than live in God's universe the way God created life to operate.

And when the fires of infinite truth and love are released and flow out of the city onto the Earth, and Jesus is weeping, He has had to handle it in such a way that every single saved person can go up to Him and put an arm around Him and say, "It is okay, we know there is nothing more you could have done."

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Christian Psychiatrist Wanted: If you are a Christian psychiatrist, or know one, who is interested in coming to Liberty University to be part of our team in building a world-class scientifically sound but biblically consistent treatment program and residency program, then contact me at trjennings@liberty.edu.

THIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS FOR LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RELATED MATTERS ONLY. Please do not send personal emails to this address. If you have Come and Reason Ministry related questions or comments please use our requests@comeandreason.com email address.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 11
End Time Deceptions

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What comes to mind when you consider the title End-Time Deceptions?

What is the focus or purpose of the end-time deceptions? In other words, what is the goal of the end-time deceptions? Is there any particular truth that the end-time deceptions are intended to prevent people from embracing?

Of course all of Satan's deceptions are designed to prevent people from coming to salvation in Jesus Christ, but is there anything different about the end-time deceptions?

Would end-time deceptions be particularly designed to counter the end-time message from God?

God has been revealing truth to win people to salvation from the moment Adam sinned, but truth is unfolding and we are told God has a special end-time message to prepare people for the coming of Christ. Would Satan's end-time deceptions be specifically designed to counter God's final message of mercy to the world?

And what is God's end-time message? How would you describe it?

We have a magazine entitled The Final Message Of Mercy To The World: The Three Angels.

What is the purpose of this final end-time message?

- To advance the eternal gospel which is the eternal good news about God We do this by…
- Revering God for who He is the builder of reality, whose laws are design laws
- We glorifying Him in our character by living out His principles in how we treat others
- We return to worshiping the Creator whose laws are design laws, truth, love, liberty and reject the imperial dictator views of God that came through Rome and thus we judge God to be like Jesus revealed
- We call people to leave Babylon, the system of pagan god constructs who run their kingdoms on imposed law, with gods who inflict punishment on rule breakers and who require appeasement and payments to forgive, particularly payments of blood.
- And by leaving the false religions of this world, the systems that pursue justice through legal means and return to worshiping Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water, we live out God's living law of love in how we treat others.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

One of the founders of the SDA church described the final message of mercy, which is the truth about God that allows us to make a right judgment about God and leave the false system of this world in this way:

> "**It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world**. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. **At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed**, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love**." Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

The final message mercy is the eternal gospel, the good news about God that has always been true and will always be true that wins us back to trust, and it is returning to worship God as Creator, which means recognizing His laws as design laws and rejecting the imperial Roman dictator view of God, which means rejecting the penal legal infection to Christianity.

Will Satan's end-time deceptions be designed to counter this end-time message of mercy?

The end-time deception is designed to keep people loyal to Babylon, to prevent people from breaking out of the beastly system.

How many deceptions are there? Untold numbers, this is why Jesus said,

> "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14 NIV84).

There are never-ending number of lies and false paths, but only one truth and one true path to salvation.

This is why we fix our eyes on Christ, and do not fix our eyes on the multitude of falsehoods or false messiahs. Knowing the truth makes identifying the false easy.

But if we do not know the truth then identifying the false is difficult.

And the truth we must know goes beyond specific doctrines, the truth that protects us from deception is the truth about God which connects all true doctrines together into a cohesive whole. All true doctrines lead us back to God and enlighten us about His character, methods, design laws, principles, practices, and standards.

One of Satan's greatest deceptions is to get people:

- to focus on doctrinal truth while embracing functional lies

- to focus on being right about facts while embracing the wrong methods
- to focus on right beliefs while applying the wrong principles
- to focus on the right religion while harboring selfish attitudes
- to focus on the right fundamental beliefs and creed while developing a satanic character
- to focus on advancing the so-called right doctrinal beliefs and religious observations through the methods of this world, imposed law with imposed penalties and coercive pressure as a means of pursuing justice

Satan experienced great success with the Jewish nation 2000 years ago when he was able to deceive them into rejecting the Messiah that they had been waiting for their entire existence to receive. How?

Satan didn't achieve this rejection of Christ by getting them to reject the Bible, or God as Creator, or the Sabbath day, or the sanctuary message, or tithing, or the dietary message. It wasn't the list of fundamental beliefs that they got wrong, it was the truth of God's character, His methods, His principles, His design law that they exchanged for the imposed laws and coercive methods of this world.

They had set all of God's directions into the human law setting and came to view God as authoritarian, dictatorial, punishing, unforgiving, severe, a being who required appeasement. They viewed the use of law and punishment as the way to achieve justice and so they used external power and force to coerce people, even killing the innocent to advance their cause.

> Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." (John 11:49-50 NIV84).

It is better to kill an innocent to save the nation. We have a people to protect, we can't let this man go if we want to save lives.

We have seen the same ungodly and evil methods in operation over the last two years, people being seduced into using coercion to advance a cause they view as just, we must save lives, it is therefore righteous and good to use imposed laws to intimidate, fine, restrict liberties, arrest, destroy reputations and careers.

It is better to hurt our employees and patients than to lose our government funding, we have a health message to advance, we have institutions to protect. It is better for a few to be inconvenienced and their liberties violated that for our organization to lose its institutions we have a special message to take to the world.

How many millions of faithful have been infected with these satanic methods of treating others because they have trusted church leadership to tell them what is right and wrong? How many have trusted governments to tell them and have gone along and have who have used these beastly methods on their own families?

I have heard multiple stories of families torn apart during the past two years because of fear, which inflames selfishness and results in the justification of the practice of the satanic self-centered methods on others.

Do we see what has happened over the last two years as part of Satan's end-time deception to lure people into embracing evil methods and incorporating those practices into their characters?

Over the last two years, as the world applied the methods of force, coercion, restriction of liberty, as families allowed fear to dominate, what has been the result? Have we reaped more love? Have people become more like Jesus in character? Has the fellowship of family and friends grown closer during this crisis as we pressed together supporting each other, recognizing the individuality of others and leaving them free to decide for themselves what is best in their life?

Or have millions, billions, been duped into believing this is "life and death" and those who won't do what the government says are enemies, are fools, are evil, are trying to kill the good people and they should be punished with limited freedoms, loss of jobs, and even the limited freedom to see their own families.

Do we recognize this as part of Satan's end-time deception, his way of implanting his methods into hearts and minds, of getting people to believe it is actually right to treat others like this, as long as it is to save lives or perhaps protect the planet, or some other greater good?

Some might counter, but we aren't doctors, we don't know the science, how are we to know not to do this when our doctors tell us and our government healthcare leaders tell us?

Because it wasn't about the science, it was about the methods being employed in how we treat others. Even if people didn't have access to the specific scientific evidence, every single reasoning person was capable of seeing and discerning the methods being employed by the two groups:

- Restrictions on liberties—liberty of travel, assembly, worship, speech
- Coercion—closure of business, terminating from jobs, arrests, fines, loss of licenses
- Accusation and vilification

These methods are not from God. They are from God's enemy and any reasoning person can see this and know it.

Why did so many collude?

- Because they were afraid
- Because they believed what they were told
- Because they worship a god who imposed uses law and external punishments
- Because they think God's justice is through imposed law and punishment
- Because they didn't trust God with the results of choosing to live out His methods and believed they needed to protect themselves and thus billions concluded with human governments and

> chose the path that made them feel empowered and safe and which kept their organization funded and in good standing with the government.

And what was the result? Very predictable—whenever we violate God's laws we injure and harm others. And the result of applying the methods of God's enemy over the last two years has been untold amounts of injury, harm, and deaths that are still piling up. Let me say this very clearly—more lives have been lost by the mandates than were saved by the mandates, and the death toll continues cascade down from those mandates through multiple generations.

I am not saying any of this to change any government, or any governmental policy in the world. I am saying this to change the hearts and minds of those who have not been hardened into the methods of the beastly system, the methods of coercion and control, to fulfill our end-time mission of calling people out of Babylon.

Leaving Babylon is about leaving systems and methods of the beast behind, not mere doctrines, but practices in how we treat others. The people of God are the people of truth, which they present in love, while leaving other free. The people of God's enemy may have some truth that they embrace and advance, but they will advance it with Satan's methods, with propaganda, with selfishness, with coercion, force, and restrictions of liberty.

We cannot win God's cause using Satan's methods.

So, as we approach the end-time, we must look beyond specific doctrinal beliefs, and to the methods, character, and principles of God and make decisions in harmony with God's principles in how we live and treat others and trust Him with how things turn out.

Let me say this very clearly. The saved will not be a group of people who know all things; the saved will not be a group of people who believe every text of Scripture the same way; the saved will not be a group of people free from every misunderstanding or false idea; no, the saved will be those who:

- Know God and Jesus Christ whom God sent (John 17:3)
- Have God's law of love, truth, and liberty written upon their hearts as the primary motive to action
- Who love the truth and are willing to grow in the truth as soon as they can comprehend it
- Who love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength
- Who love others more than self and would give their lives for others
- Who refuse to use the methods of coercion upon another person's conscience
- Who practice the methods of God in governance of self
- Who trust God with how things turn out

Thus when it came to specific medical treatments over the last two years, there were/are people of God on both sides of the treatment question—because it wasn't about a specific medical treatment, it was about how one advances what they believe to be the truth. The people of God who truly believed a certain medical treatment was the right thing to do, presented the evidence and their plea to get it to

others, but then left others free to decide for themselves. But those who were/are beastly use coercive tactics upon others to force others to do what they want them to do.

Jesus said, when it comes to separating the saved from the lost, the differentiating factor is not doctrinal beliefs, day of worship, faithful tithe, method of baptism, but how we treated others. Why?

Because the methods we choose to apply to ourselves in how we treat others determines what law gets written upon our hearts and minds! Are we practicing God's methods of truth, love, and liberty in how we treat others, or are we practicing Satan's methods of fear, self-preservation, self-deception and justification of using coercion and force as necessary for the greater good?

This application of coercive methods under the guise of doing good, to protect, to save lives, is a much greater and serious end-time deception than merely believing something wrong about the state of the dead.

With that in mind read the Memory Text:

> And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:14-15 NRSV).

Their ends match their deeds—yes practice the methods of Satan in how you treat others, regardless of how sincerely you believe it is right to do so, and you will reap the satanic mold upon your character and end up hating God, the things of God, and the people of God.

This brings up another question that many often ask. What about sincerity, won't those who sincerely believe the wrong thing, but believe with an honest heart, still be saved?

And this is a great question because it affords the opportunity to differentiate what ultimately matters from what doesn't, facts from methods.

- If one sincerely believes something wrong about a fact, a doctrine, an idea such as the method of baptism, or whether the vax helped or harmed, either way, it won't matter in the end IF they practiced the methods of God in how they advanced their belief. The methods of truth, love and freedom.
- But, if one believes the truth on a doctrine, but sincerely believes that Satan's methods of the ends justifying the means and therefore they use propaganda, force, coercion of conscience, restrictions of liberties, to protect and save lives, then even if their doctrinal belief is right, their character is wrong and they will sincerely end up like Satan in character and be lost.

What I have unpacked for you here today is a revelation of why the end-time deception will be so powerful that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived. Because it will not primarily be a deception about a specific doctrine or idea, but a deception to embrace and practice the methods of

Satan as we advance a good cause, a just cause, a righteous cause, such as saving lives or saving our nation, saving our institutions, or saving the planet.

And sadly, far too many Christians are never taught the principles of God's design law methods and instead are taught doctrines through the lens of imposed law, with God using imposed punishments upon rule-breakers, so if the cause is right, and there is no specific Bible text against it, then they will conclude it is right to use these methods on others.

SUNDAY

Mysticism—the primary aspect of mysticism is an internal experience, which is believed to be supernatural in some way. The person experiences something within that they believe is from their god, their dead ancestors, some super-human force in the cosmos. This is most commonly pursued through some form of Eastern meditation or mindfulness practices.

These practices have real effects upon the brain and the person's experience, but those experiences are not balanced with Scripture and science.

Mysticism is the pursuit of some internal feeling to guide in one's decisions. This is why much of Mormonism is actually mysticism, the praying for the burning bosom. The idea that the Holy Spirit leads through internal impressions that are experienced through silencing the mind and waiting for the internal impression irrespective of truth, evidence, and revelation of God through Scripture and nature.

Read the last paragraph,

> Those who think that it matters not what they believe in doctrine, so long as they believe in Jesus Christ, are on dangerous ground. The Roman Inquisitors who condemned to death untold numbers of Protestants believed in Jesus Christ. Those who had "cast out demons" in Christ's name (Matt. 7:22, NKJV). had believed in Him. "The position that it is of no consequence what men believe is one of Satan's most successful deceptions. He knows that the truth, received in the love of it, sanctifies the soul of the receiver; therefore he is constantly seeking to substitute false theories, fables, another gospel." — Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 520.

What is the point of this paragraph, what is the idea the authors want us to learn from this paragraph?

Does it seem the authors, with the support of a quote from EGW, are emphasizing the importance of ensuring we have the right doctrines?

Is there a subtle error introduced with this line of thinking?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What is the primary purpose of all doctrines? To lead us to the knowledge of God, to advance the eternal gospel. As the EGW quote referenced above says, Satan introduces error to introduce another gospel, a false gospel, which means a false conception of God.

And the primary doctrine introduced into Christianity that undermines the gospel is the idea that God's law functions like human law; then you take the 28 fundamental beliefs, set them into a human law construct, and you have introduced another gospel, a false gospel, because you have introduced a false god who is an imperial dictator, the source of imposed pain, suffering and death upon rule-breakers.

Remember what we already discussed about the doctrines of the Jews 2000 years ago—they had right individual doctrines, but the wrong understanding of God and His law and thus they rejected and crucified Christ.

EGW wrote that our own church leadership did the same thing at the 1888 conference:

> On many occasions the Holy Spirit did work, but those who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis were waiting for a chance to travel over the same ground again, because their spirit was the same. Afterward, when they had evidence heaped upon evidence, some were convicted, but those who were not softened and subdued by the Holy Spirit's working, put their own interpretation upon every manifestation of the grace of God, and they have lost much. They pronounced in their heart and soul and words that this manifestation of the Holy Spirit was fanaticism and delusion. They stood like a rock, the waves of mercy flowing upon and around them, but beaten back by their hard and wicked hearts, which resisted the Holy Spirit's working. Had this been received, it would have made them wise unto salvation; holier men, prepared to do the work of God with sanctified ability. **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ**. {1888 1478.2}

In 1888 what doctrines did these leaders of the SDA church have wrong? Did they have the wrong Sabbath, the wrong state of the dead, the wrong sanctuary, the wrong health message, the wrong tithing practices, the wrong Bible, the wrong belief about Creation? They embraced and clung to the wrong law, the imposed law, that was the issue. Waggoner's book was entitled *The Gospel in Galatians* whereas the GC President GI Butler wrote a book advancing the view of those who rejected the 1888 message and his book was entitled, *The Law in Galatians.*

Sadly, we are still stuck in the wilderness of imposed law, the desert devoid of the water of life, devoid of the latter rain, devoid of the design laws of God, the living law of love that emanates from God and flows out in rejuvenating streams into the hearts and minds of all who trust God.

MONDAY

Near death experiences—any questions about these?

These experiences are presented by some as evidence of consciousness after death.

And for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, i.e. discernment, these experiences expose themselves as being completely contradictory to what they claim. How?

What do they claim? They claim to be able to give some insight into what happens at death, but they are called, "near death experiences." If something is near death, is that the same thing as death?

And that is the key to understanding these experiences. No one, not one single person, has ever died and come back to tell us their experience.

Death is not the transient pausing of the functioning of one of the body's organs, such as the heart stopping for a short period and then restarting. Death is necrosis, cellular decay and rot. Until cellular decay and rot happens, death of the body has not occurred.

A person can donate organs, such as their heart, and that heart stops beating, is put on ice, is shipped across country, is implanted into another person and it starts beating again. That heart is not dead—likewise when a person has an arrythmia and their heart stops beating and they receive CPR and cardioversion and their heart starts beating again, the heart never died and the person never died.

So, these so-called near-death experiences cannot tell us anything about what happens at death, they can tell us the experience of a person when various bodily systems fail to operate properly, but that isn't death.

Interestingly, a person does not have to be near death to experience a NDE. A 1990 study at the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center in Charlottesville of 58 people who had experienced NDEs found that half would have survived without medical care. Something as innocuous as fainting can produce an NDE.

Other experiments documented people can induce these experiences by a series of hyperventilation and breath holding and rapid changes in position, which changes blood flow to the brain.

TUESDAY

Reincarnation is the belief that a person's individuality recycles through many lives on its way to purification and eternity.

This belief is advanced through the idea of the first law of thermodynamics that energy is neither created or destroyed but retained. Meaning that energy changes forms, but isn't increased or decreased.

A Hindu doctor once used this argument on me, that energy isn't created or destroyed but continues on. So the energy in his body will continue on in a new form, in a new body after he dies and thus he will be reincarnated.

He is right about the energy continuing on, but is wrong about the nature of humankind and our individuality.

This is where Jesus and the Biblical view is more scientific that the Easter view. The Eastern view merges energy with individuality and suggests that when energy recycles so does the person.

The Biblical view describes humans has having three parts, body, soul, spirit. We use the analogy of a computer to understand this, hardware, software, and energy.

The Bible teaches that at death the body/hardware turns back to dust, the energy goes back to God is conserved in harmony with the first law of thermodynamics, but the software, the individuality, the soul, sleeps, is safely stored in the Lamb's book of life waiting for the resurrection. We could say stored on the heavenly servers. So the Biblical view is much more scientific and accurate than the Eastern view.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph:

> The word "necromancy" derives from the Greek terms nekros (dead) and manteia (divination). Practiced since ancient times, necromancy is a form of summoning the alleged active spirits of the dead in order to get knowledge, often about future events. Ancestor worship, meanwhile, is the custom of venerating deceased ancestors because they are still considered family and whose spirits can, it is believed, influence the affairs of the living. These pagan practices can be very attractive to those who believe in an immortal soul and who also miss their deceased loved ones.

This is a form of spiritualism, let's review a definition of spiritualism. If you know this definition you can identify spiritualism in all its form, whether necromancy, voodoo, tarot cards, tea leaves, palm reading, astrology or any other form.

Spiritualism is the pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason.

All spiritualism practices what to know something, the future, what happens after death, what decision to make, what their dead loved one thought of something etc. It is the pursuit of knowledge without investigating the evidence God has given and using our God-given reasoning powers to comprehend and understand the truth.

Satan has no truth on his side so he must sideline the pursuit of God's truth, the evidence God has given and our reasoning powers. Thus Satan introduces practices and methods that set aside the truth and reasonableness for mystical and supernatural experiences.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses upon fallen angels, Satan's demonic allies, presenting themselves in a supernatural way pretending to be a messenger from God, whether in a séance, a voice, automatic writing, or in physical manifestation and in person.

Satan appeared as an angel from heaven to Jesus during Christ's temptations in the wilderness.

And Satan will one day impersonate Christ claiming to be our Messiah.

How can we tell the difference between Jesus and Satan's impersonation of Him?

Will we be able to tell by:

- Miracles?
- Signs and wonders?
- The melodiousness of his voice?
- The testimony of church leaders?
- Whether he quotes Bible texts or not?
- What foods he eats?
- Whether his feet touch the ground?

Satan will not have truth on his side, but more importantly, Satan will use satanic methods, the methods of imposed law and coercive force. Satan will present himself as a being of love, here to save, and who only wants to protect, as long as we worship him and recognize him as our leader. We will do this by embracing and practicing his methods in pursuing a course is stated to save the planet, protect lives, and bring in a new era of peace. But those who refuse, must be punished, first with restrictions, limited buying and selling, loss of property, imprisonment, but if they won't repent, then justice requires that rebellion and sin be punished. He will cry, and plead, and remind you of how he has already given his life for you, but if you won't follow, justice requires that you be put to death and pay the death penalty yourself because you have rejected the penalty he paid in your behalf.

How many Christians will accept this being?

How many SDA will accept him if he also endorses and enforces the 7th day Sabbath?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Christian Psychiatrist Wanted: If you are a Christian psychiatrist, or know one, who is interested in coming to Liberty University to be part of our team in building a world-class scientifically sound but biblically consistent treatment program and residency program, then contact me at trjennings@liberty.edu.

THIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS FOR LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RELATED MATTERS ONLY. Please do not send personal emails to this address. If you have Come and Reason Ministry related questions or comments please use our requests@comeandreason.com email address.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 12
The Biblical Worldview

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What is a Biblical worldview?

Is a Biblical worldview better than other worldviews?

Does it depend on what law model those who hold a Biblical worldview have?

Does it depend on what God concept those who hold a Biblical worldview have?

Did those who crucified Christ consider themselves to have a Biblical worldview?

Did the Puritans who burned people they believed were witches to death believe they had a Biblical worldview?

Do you think David Koresh and the Branch Davidians believed they had a Biblical worldview?

Is it enough to believe in the Bible? Is it possible to believe in the Bible and be one of God's worst enemies?

Would you like to have someone like David Koresh or Caiaphas, who both would claim to have a Biblical worldview, in charge of your church or perhaps in charge of your government?

Is knowing the Bible enough or something more than knowing Scripture needed?

Is life eternal knowing the Bible or is it knowing God and Jesus Christ—and of course the Bible is God's revelation to us. Thus, we need to prioritize the Scripture in our pursuit of truth, but I am making a point.

The primary purpose of Scripture is to reveal God to us in the context of the cosmic conflict, the sin problem, and God's solution for it.

Scripture reveals God's dealing with the sin problem and thereby reveals God to us, this is its primary purpose.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So a Biblical worldview means understanding the truth about God, God's character, God's design laws and methods and not falling into the trap of viewing God and the Bible through human law and imperialism.

In fact, I would suggest that those who hold the wrong picture of God and believe God's law functions like human law, who have presented God running the universe like Caesar ran Rome, with imposed rules and imposed punishments, are actually promoting a non-biblical worldview while claiming to be promoting a biblical worldview.

Read first paragraph:

> The book of Revelation speaks of two major "globalizations" prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Revelation 13 describes the globalization of error, when "all the world" will marvel and follow the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:3, 7, 8, 12, 16, NKJV). Revelation 14 highlights the globalization of truth, when the "everlasting gospel" will be preached "to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV). During those "distressing times" (2 Tim. 3:1, NRSV), "every wind of doctrine" will be blowing (Eph. 4:14, NKJV) and people will "turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths" (2 Tim. 4:4, NRSV). "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome." — Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 588. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 96)

How would you describe the globalization of error?

The lesson seems to be leading us to believe the final globalization of error will be over the state of the dead and day of worship, that if we have the right understanding of the state of the dead and worship on the Bible Sabbath then we will not be drawn into the beastly system and wont use its power?

Is this true? Will knowing the truth about these doctrines and worshiping on the right day mean people receive the seal of God and are protected from receiving the mark of the beast?

Or, is it that the two errors referenced above open people up for the final deception and they choose the beastly methods and practices? The author they quoted says: "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions."

So is the final deception believing wrong about these two ideas, or about other deceptions that Satan brings people under?

Have you ever heard the idea that Sunday is the mark of the beast? But the same author we quoted above repeatedly says that Sunday *enforcement* is the mark of the beast, not Sunday itself. That same author says there is nothing in the Sabbath commandment that forbids worshiping God on Sunday or doing missionary work on Sunday or requires antagonizing our neighbors by working on Sunday.

The issue is about what Sunday and Sabbath represent. They stand as emblems, marks, signs, flags, pennants of two systems or governing.

Sabbath became a day of worship by Creation, God created it as a day of rest when God rested from using power after giving evidence of His methods, of His creatorship, of creating an entire planet that functions upon His design laws. And He did this in the context of a war against His right to rule. God, presented truth, in love and wove the design law of love into this entire planet, and then rather than using power to force angels to bow, He created a day where He stopped using power, a day of liberty, of freedom to think without pressure or coercion. Thus the Sabbath stands as a symbol or sign of the methods and principles of God's government.

Sunday became a day of worship through legislation and stands as evidence or a symbol of imperialism, of imposed law with external enforcement and inflicted punishment. It is a sign of the methods and practices of Satan and this fallen world. Why? Because created beings cannot create reality, we cannot make laws of physics, or gravity, or health, so created beings who want to counterfeit the government of God make up rules that are called laws and enforce them with inflicted punishment. Thus the artificial legislation of Sunday sacredness, not going to church on Sunday, but legislation, imposed passed laws about its sacredness, is evidence of the beastly system and methods. And when those laws are enforced with coercion then the coercive force used to coerce conscience is understood to be the mark of the beast. Those who believe in their minds that it is right to coerce another person's conscience mark themselves in their foreheads, symbolic of their minds. And those who go along with the coercion to keep their job, their government funding, their travel privileges or any other benefit, mark themselves in their hands, symbolic of their works.

But, the two days, Sabbath and Sunday, are not the governments, any more than the US flag is our government. They two days are signs or marks of the governments and the two types of laws.

And people can wave the US flag while they work for enemies of the US government. Likewise, people can revere and extol the Bible Sabbath and crucify the Lord of the Sabbath and want Him off the cross by sunset to keep the Sabbath. Such people are marked as beastly.

Whereas, those who revere the principles of God, truth, love, liberty and refuse to coerce others consciences while they worship on Sunday are sealed of God and considered Sabbath keepers because they have the design law of God written upon their heart of which the Bible Sabbath is a sign.

The same author the lesson quoted wrote the following:

> The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands**. **To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** {*Review and Herald*, July 13, 1897 par. 5}

What are the methods and practices of the beast?

- Lies
- Imposed laws
- Coercive enforcement

The same author wrote in in the book *The Great Controversy:*

> **If the reader would understand** the agencies to be employed in the soon-coming contest, he has but to trace the record of **the means** which Rome employed for the same object in ages past. [This means look at the methods employed, not the specific doctrine the methods were employed to advance.] **If he would know how papists and Protestants united will deal with those who reject their dogmas, let him see the spirit which Rome manifested toward the Sabbath and its defenders**. {*Great Controversy* 573} [Again, the author is telling us to look at the METHODS employed.]
>
> **Royal edicts, general councils, and church ordinances sustained by secular power were the steps** by which the pagan festival attained its position of honor in the Christian world... [What methods? Proclamations, imposed rules, legislation, authority of office, backed up by governmental coercive enforcement. This is what we are to be watching for. Romanism, overruling conscience on any subject by edict, authority of office—perhaps an executive order, law, and inflicted punishment. Have we seen these methods used the last two years? And did many Christians collude with them?] {*Great Controversy* 574}
>
> **The royal mandate** [or executive orders] **not proving a sufficient substitute for divine authorit**y, Eusebius, a bishop who sought the favor of princes, and who was the special friend and flatterer of Constantine, **advanced the claim** that Christ had transferred the Sabbath to Sunday. **Not a single testimony of the Scriptures was produced in proof of the new doctrine**... {*Great Controversy* 574}. [What is the method of Satan here? Imposed laws and mandates coupled with claims, declarations, and proclamations without evidence. Have we seen mandates recently that coerced consciences, mandates that lacked evidence to support them, and that were advanced through some claim? In other words, Eusebius, a doctoral church historian and theologian, gave his ***expert opinion*** that something was true. He claimed it, declared it, used the authority of position and office. Have we seen this happening in society recently? And have we recognized this as beastly? Or are we locked into the day of worship only and cannot recognize the beastly methods at work that destroy hearts through other forced behaviors or false ideas?]
>
> **Later it was decreed** that rich men should **be punished** with the loss of half of their estates; and finally, that if still obstinate they should be made slaves. The lower classes were to suffer perpetual banishment…{*Great Controversy* 574} [What methods are employed here? Have we recently seen the use of financial punishment, loss of employment, restrictions of liberty upon those who didn't comply with government mandates regarding their own body and health?]

> Later the pope gave directions that the parish priest should admonish the violators of Sunday and wish them to go to church and say their prayers, **lest they bring some great calamity on themselves and neighbors**... {*Great Controversy* 575} [Have we seen the science priests and government officials making the argument that it is right to coerce others because if we don't some great calamity will happen to them and their neighbors?]

With this in mind, how would you describe the globalization of deception that brings the world, all but the righteous, into the camp of the beast?

By the advancement of some just cause through the application of Satan's methods, and those methods are:

- Imposed laws and made up mandates that coerce conscience
- Claims, proclamations, declarations—not evidence and truth; in other words, propaganda, misinformation, and deceit
- Silencing, vilifying, and censoring those pursuing and presenting evidence and truth
- Accusations against those who resist the mandates that they are the cause of calamity and suffering on society
- Use of coercive pressure, fines, loss of property, loss of jobs, loss of position, licenses, ability to travel, assemble, worship, visit family, imprisonment and the Bible says eventually death penalty

Are we seeing the globalization of such methods and principles, the willingness of a freedom-loving people to abuse their neighbors and restrict the liberties of others under the guise of advancing some good cause?

And what of the church's response?

Consider this warning, from the same author, written over 100 years ago:

> In the movements now in progress in the United States **to secure for the institutions and usages of the church the support of the state, Protestants are following in the steps of papists.** {*Great Controversy* 573} [Have we seen churches join the state in the coercion of its employees in order for them to secure the support of the state, the continued financial reimbursements, the avoidance of any fines, or orders to shut down?]

Do we see the call of the three angels, which the lesson references, is a global message of truth, of the eternal gospel, the good news about God that has always been true, that God is the Creator, whose laws are design laws and God is not an imperial dictator whose laws are imposed and enforced with external punishments?

- Do we recognize and respond to the call to return to worship God as Creator, the One who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water, and we do this by rejecting imposed law and embracing design law?

- Do we respond to the call to leave Babylon, the fallen system of imposed law and imposed punishments and stop aligning and supporting systems that coerce others' consciences, even for good causes?
- And are we presenting the truth about God in love while leaving others free? The hour has come in human history for people to make a right judgment about God, to stop judging Him to be like a Roman dictator and judge Him to be exactly as Jesus revealed.

Those who make this right judgment about God open their heart in trust to Him and the Holy Spirit is poured out transforming their characters, healing their hearts and minds, so that they bring glory to God by living out God's methods in how they treat others.

This is the final message of mercy, that separates the people of God from the world. And the people of God are those who are like Jesus in character and have His law written into their hearts and minds so that they love God and others and live out that love in how they treat others. Whereas, the enemies of God may very well be religious but they have embraced the lie that God is like Caesar and worship a dictator-god, and by so doing they embrace the imposed law of Satan and become like God's enemy, people who seek what they believe is right by using force, coercion, and punishment upon others to coerce consciences—all under the guise of seeking the greater good, protecting lives, saving the planet, or equity for all.

SUNDAY

Read Luke 2:52: "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52NIV84).

The lesson states,

> Jesus was the perfect Human Being, and His growth comprised all basic dimensions of human existence. According to Luke 2:52, "Jesus grew in wisdom [mentally] and stature [physically], and in favor with God [spiritually] and man [socially]" (NIV)."His mind was active and penetrating, with a thoughtfulness and wisdom beyond His years. Yet His character was beautiful in its symmetry. The powers of mind and body developed gradually, in keeping with the laws of childhood. As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy." — Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 68, 69. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 97)

How did Jesus grow as a human? Did Jesus grow in a different way than the rest of us? Let's consider the different aspects of growth and what is necessary to grow in healthy ways and how Jesus did it and whether those same resources are available to us:

- Physical growth—what is necessary to grow physically?
    - Nutrition—food, did Jesus have to eat? Is healthy food important to our growth and health?
        - What happens with poor nutrition? Does poor nutrition affect only the body and physical growth, or does it have impact on the mind, the ability to regulate mood, to concentrate and focus, on memory and neural development? And does that have an impact on the ability to discern spiritual truths and to serve God to the fullest?
    - Exercise
        - The law of exertion if you want something to get stronger you must exercise, physical development requires exercise.
        - But exercising the body also improves brain development. Exercise increases anti-inflammatory factors that protect the brain from oxidative stress, neurotrophins which improve neuroplasticity and the ability to adapt and learn, and endorphins and enkaphalins which improve mood, provide resilience, help manage stress, and all of these factors improve neural development.
        - Additionally, the circuits which initiate physical movement also have a role in initiating thoughts, and the circuits which make our movements fluid, smooth, and organized, have a role in organizing our thoughts. Thus developing the body is not restricted to the body, but to the mind, character, and spiritual development as well.
        - Did Jesus need to physically exercise, to engage in physical activity, including work to develop various motor skills that would help his thinking and mental processing? And do we?
        - If we don't live in harmony, to the best of our ability, with the laws of health, what happens? And do physical health problems impact our usefulness in God's cause?
    - Security and safety
        - Iraqi children in safe zones versus war zones
        - Children experience security and safety not from governments, or the reality of available resources, but from their parents. If the parents create a home in which the children feel safe, then the children are insulated from much of the stressors in the world around them.
        - Did Jesus need a home in which He was safe and not abused?
        - Can we choose to be godly parents and not exploit and abuse our children, and do all in our power to provide safety and security for them?
    - Love
        - Fredrick the Great's study on infants…
        - Did Jesus need to be loved as a child and to experience the love that is God's design for parents to provide for their children?
        - Can we provide that love to our children?
- Mental growth, growth in wisdom and understanding—what is necessary?
    - Nutrition
    - Exercise—physical and mental, education, problem solving, application

  - Security/safety—an environment where it is valued and safe to ask questions, to contemplate, to challenge orthodoxy, and access to sources of truth
  - Love
- Spiritual growth
  - A healthy body and mind from harmony with the laws of health
  - Truth, access to spiritual truth, Scripture, nature, and someone to educate on the meaning
  - Protection from indoctrination into falsehood
  - Safety and security—non-abusive environment
  - Love
  - Choosing to build a relationship with God, talk with God, seek to listen to God's answers, apply God's directions, trust God with outcomes
  - Application of the truth in practice, loving others, exercising mercy, grace, forgiveness, patience, kindness and self-control
  - Did Jesus need these elements to grow? Do we?
- Social/relational growth
  - Healthy mind, body, and spirit
  - Love
  - Security/safety
  - Exercise in application of healthy relational principles, being the healthiest person in governance of self that one can be while leaving others free.
  - Do we see Jesus doing this, governing self with godly methods and principles, while leaving others free?
    - Did His brothers try to influence His decisions? Did Jesus surrender His choices to the opinions and influence of His brothers?
    - Did Jesus tolerate rejection in order to do what was right?
    - Do we need to do the same if we want healthy relationships?
    - Does being healing in governance of self guarantee that we will have healthy relationships?
    - Were all of Jesus' relationships healthy? No! Healthy relationships require healthy people and His relationship with Judas ended in betrayal, why? Because Judas was selfish and refused the truth and love of God into his heart.
    - We cannot have healthy relationships with unhealthy people. And healthy people are not perfect people but people who are mature enough to be responsible for themselves, to look at their own contributions to problems, to be willing to own their own shortcomings and through God's grace, repent, ask for forgiveness and strive to overcome. But the unhealthy are those who refuse to take responsibility for their own shortcomings, who won't repent, who won't grow and mature, but who instead always blame others, make excuses, and never grow up. We can love them like Jesus loved Judas, but the relationship will not be healthy, and if they don't change themselves, the relationship will eventually come to an end.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Can people develop health by a checklist of rules? Or could rule-keeping result in harm while intending to help? What leads to health? Harmony with the laws of health!

MONDAY

Read first paragraph:

> "The dualistic theory of a mortal body with an immortal soul has generated various theories about the human body. For example, for ancient Greek philosophers, the human body was the prison of the soul, which was liberated by death. **In an echo of this pagan concept**, **many Christians today believe that the body is the temporal housing of the immortal soul, which will be reintegrated with the body at the resurrection**. By contrast, pantheists make the human body divine; they believe that God and the universe are one and the same. For them, all things are God and the human body is part of the one single integrated and universal divine substance. Surrounded by conflicting theories on the subject, we must stand firm on what the Bible teaches regarding the nature of humanity." (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 98)

Do you agree or disagree with the concept that the body is the temporal housing of the immortal soul?

What about for the righteous, for the saved, is the body the temporal housing of an immortal soul—a soul that becomes immortal because it has received the gift of eternal life from Jesus?

Jesus said:

> "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 NIV84).

Do those who believe in Jesus die or never die? If they never die does that mean they have received the gift of eternal life? And if they have received the gift of eternal life from Jesus does that mean this body is the temporal house for the now immortal soul that will be returned to a new body at the resurrection?

Are there other Scriptures that would support this?

> "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28 NIV84).

Is Jesus saying the soul is not destroyed when the body is destroyed on this earth?

What about 1Thessalonians 4:14, that Jesus will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Him? If they are asleep in Jesus are they destroyed or dead?

So, the error is not that the body houses a soul that does not die at the death of the body, but that humans possess in themselves inherent immortality and that righteousness or wickedness has no

bearing on whether a soul dies. The Biblical truth is that humans were created mortal and as long as Adam and Eve were sinless they would never die, but sin severed the connection with God who alone is immortal (1 Tim 6:16), and is the source of life and their condition became terminal. Thus, sinful humans are "dead in trespass and sin" we have a terminal condition that without remedy will result in eternal death.

However, Jesus became the second Adam, took up that terminal condition and eradicated the death causing principle and restored the life causing principle, the perfect connection with His Father and in Jesus humanity again possesses eternal life. For all those who are reconciled to Jesus they receive the gift of eternal life and thus even though the body dies, in Jesus they still live, their soul is not destroyed at the death of this mortal body, but sleeps in Jesus awaiting the resurrection. Thus, for the righteous they never die, they may sleep, but they never cease to exist.

Therefore, there is a truth that this mortal body houses the soul that, in Christ, will never die, but only for the righteous.

Read second paragraph:

> "Both Adam and Eve were created in God's own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26, 27), which was reflected not only in their character but also in their physical aspect. Because that image was marred and even hidden by the presence of sin, the work of redemption is to restore human beings to their original condition, including their physical health, to the degree possible for beings unable to partake of the tree of life." (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 98)

What is Satan's goal for humankind? Does Satan want to kill all human beings? Or does he have another goal in mind? Does Satan want to destroy the image of God in humankind and put his image where God's should be?

What do you think Satan would prefer—an earth devoid of all life where he reigns an empty lifeless planet or an earth filled with human beings who are like him in character and recognize him as their lord?

In fact, aren't we told that during the 1000 years Satan will be confined to this earth devoid of life and it is a prison to him. He has no desire for geographic territory nor, do I believe, he has a desire to simply to kill all humans. He wants to kill the humans who won't bend the knee to him, the humans who won't accept his mold upon their characters, the humans who are lights of God's love and truth that expose him as a murderer, liar, and fraud.

TUESDAY

Read 1 Corinthians 2:16:

> "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV84).

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?

Does it mean that Christ takes control of our minds, that we surrender the driver's seat to Him and He makes the choices for us?

Does it mean that we are good and obedient children who wait for Jesus to tell us what to do and then we following His instructions without question?

Does it mean we have our minds changed to love what He loves, value what He values, desire a world that He desires, practice His methods and principles, and have characters that are built in harmony with His character so that we are partakers of the divine nature and have the living law of God written upon our hearts as the motivating principle of action?

And how is it possible for a person to obtain the mind of Christ? Can Christ use might and power to impose His mind upon us? Why or why not?

Can people develop the mind of Christ on their own, with their own power?

Then if God can't achieve this through the exercise of His might and power and we can't achieve it by the exercise of our might and power, how can we experience the mind of Christ?

By faith, by trust—it is when we are won back to God in love and trust and open our hearts and minds to God, with a humble willingness to listen and follow, that we voluntarily choose to accept, assimilate, and apply God's methods and principles to our hearts and minds. And in that trust relationship the Holy Spirit is there to not only enlighten with God's truth, but to empower the individual to succeed in growing in God's truth.

This is the only method that transforms the soul while retaining the individuality of the person who is being saved.

This is why it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4) and why every person must be fully persuaded in their own minds (Romans 14:5).

It is why the Bible teaches that God's methods are not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord (Zechariah 4:6); it is the Spirit of love and truth working gently upon the heart, without intimidation, threat, or force that wins us to trust and changes the heart.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

How beautiful is our God!

Read the second paragraph,

> "The Lord had promised that under the "new covenant" He would put His law in the minds of His people and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:31-33, compare with Heb. 8:8-10, Heb. 10:16). It is no surprise, then, that in the Sermon on the Mount, **Christ broadened and deepened the meaning of God's commandments to the level of thoughts and intentions** (see Matt. 5:17-48). So, we can gain victory over temptation only by God's transforming grace and, at the level of thoughts and intentions, we should claim that promise so that we can stop sinful thoughts." (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 99)

Weren't the commandments always that broad?

What is the tenth commandment? Thou shall not covet—and what does that entail? Does it not focus on the level of the thoughts and intentions? And doesn't that demonstrate that all ten were always about the thoughts and intentions?

Then why did Christ have to explain it as He did? Did the people come to view the law as a list of rules to be kept, as imposed, as legal?

Do Christians today still struggle with this same misconception?

What is a better understanding of the Ten Commandments? They were a distillation, or codification, of the design law of love specifically written for sinful human beings and added for our benefit as a diagnostic instrument and protective hedge. The Ten Commandments did not exist in heaven when Lucifer sinned; angels didn't have a law to honor their mother and father, or a law about sins passing down the generations, or not to commit adultery, or not to covet their neighbor's wife, and the Sabbath had not yet been created.

The eternal design laws of God were already in existence, but the diagnostic code of the Ten were specifically written for sinful humans.

Read third paragraph,

> We will always have sinful natures until Jesus comes. But if we are in Christ, we are fully **covered by His righteousness**. **Although we are not yet perfect, we are considered already perfect in Him** (Phil. 3:12-15). "When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within." — Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 337. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 99)

What does it mean to be perfect? And what does it mean to be covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness?

From the same author in *Christ's Object Lessons* here is her view, which gives a great historic view of what the SDA church historically taught. Does it still teach this, or does it teach something different? Is this what you believe or do you believe covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness means something different?

> This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us… By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness**. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. {*Christ's Object Lessons* 311}

And what does it mean to be perfect? What law lens do you answer the question through?

I wrote a blog on this recently entitled Last Generation Theology, if you would like a full exploration of this question.

But the short answer is that Bible perfection is about maturity of character in our trust relationship with God. That we have come to a point that God can trust us to stay faithful to Him no matter what the problem.

- Job was described as perfect and he was a man who trusted God in the face of terrible tragedy, loss, sickness and friends and family that worked to undermine his trust
- Daniel and his three friends trusted God and wouldn't break trust with Him to save their own lives
- Revelations 12:11

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

> The Holy Spirit is God's powerful Agent who pours out the love of God into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), leads us into a true saving experience (John 16:7-11), guides us into all the truth (John 16:13), and empowers us to fulfill the gospel mission (Acts 1:8). Because it is the Holy Spirit who counteracts the degenerating work of Satan, it is no surprise that Satan tries by all means to distort our understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. While some deny His

> personality, others emphasize the gifts of the Spirit over His transforming power. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 100)

Do you think sinful humans can experience salvation without the Holy Spirit?

One Christian author, in the book *The Desire of Ages*, describes the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation this way, do you agree?

> "The Spirit was to be given as **a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer.** It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. **Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature.** Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church." {*The Desire of Ages p.* 671}

A simple description of the different roles the Godhead takes in our salvation is that Jesus is the one who procured the remedy to our sin condition and the Holy Spirit is the one who applies what Jesus has procured.

The species human was saved in the person of Jesus. Jesus became a real human being and lived a sinless life and destroyed the infection of sin Adam brought into himself and with which the rest of us are born (Ps 51:5). Jesus partook of that humanity and purified it in His person and thereby carried humanity to the perfection God intended for the species when He created Adam. Thus, in Jesus the species was redeemed. Jesus simultaneously procured the remedy that the Holy Spirit applies to us.

But without the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing what Jesus achieved into our hearts and minds no human could resist the corruption of sin in our lives. The Holy Spirit:

- Puts enmity between sinful human and Satan; in other words, the Holy Spirit puts a desire for good in our hearts, a longing for love and something better than evil and rebellion
- Convicts of sin
- Convicts of duty
- Reveals truth to us in ways we can comprehend, and then leaves us free to decide
- When we choose the truth the Holy Spirit provides divine power to succeed in living out that truth
- Comforts us
- Removes guilt and shame for those who trust God
- Instills new motives and desires that Christ wrought out

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Do you see why the Holy Spirit is under constant attack in a variety of ways?

How is the Holy Spirit attacked?

- By replacing the true Holy Spirit with false spirits of hysteria or emotionalism
- By denying the existence of the Holy Spirit
- By separating the work of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and love so that people advance one or the other but
    - Love without truth is not kind—it's cruel; Truth without love is not healing—it's destructive.

THURSDAY

What do we need to do to be ready for Christ's appearing?

If you could name one change or action you need to take to be ready what would it be?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 13
The Judging Process

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What does the title, "The Judging Process" cause you to think? What law lens do you understand judgment through?

Read the first paragraph,

> If Scripture is clear about one thing, it is the reality of judgment. God will judge the world. The texts, both in the Old Testament and the New, are numerous and without ambiguity. The justice so lacking here and now will one day come. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 104)

What does this mean to you?

- What is the purpose of God's judgment? –provide justice, as the lesson says?
- Then what does God's judgment do? –determine guilt, innocence, reward and punishment?
- Does God's judgment determine guilt or innocence?
- Does God's judgment determine punishment or reward?

Keep these questions in mind as we explore the various aspects of judgment.

Read second paragraph,

> The Bible says that God has "perfect knowledge" (Job 37:16, NIV) and "knows everything" (1 John 3:20, NIV), including our most secret intentions (Eccl. 12:14, Jer. 17:10). We can hide from everyone and everything else, **but nothing is hidden from God**.

Do you believe this to be true? Yes, I do also. But what about ideas like this from previous study guides:

> "Saving souls from death is possible only through the 'covering' of sins, by apply the gospel to our lives, and become instruments of mercy." (2014 fourth quarter *The Book of James* Lesson 12 Thursday).

> "no matter how bad sin is, God's grace is sufficient to cover it for those who claim His promises by faith." (2014 second quarter *Christ and His Law* lesson 7 Sunday).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What about ideas that suggest that for the righteous their sins are erased from the record books, that they wear the robe of Christ's righteousness so when the Father looks at them He doesn't known all their sins? Are the sins of the righteous hidden from the Father? In the judgment will the sins of the saved be known and revealed or hidden and covered up?

The Bible says:

> I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. (Isaiah 43:25 NIV84)
> For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more (Hebrews 8:12 NIV84).

Does this mean at some point some things are hidden from God? Or God does some selective memory erasure to cause Himself a form of amnesia?

No! Nothing is hidden from God, including the future. To God all reality is outspread, past, present, and future are alike to God. Nothing is hidden from Him.

The texts above are not about cognitive knowledge or awareness, they are about relationship relevance. When your child is sick and dying from a terminal condition, and you have a remedy to cure them, you must pay attention, you must focus on their sickness and the treatment to cure them. But when they are completely well, you don't have to focus on or think about their sickness, the vomiting, diarrhea, fevers, anymore. When the fully healthy child says, "mommy I'm sorry I vomited on your new shoes" you say, "its forgotten." It's over. This is what the Bible means, it is no longer an issue for God to focus upon because sin is no longer in us.

And that is what it means to blot out our sins and transgressions—God blots them out of our hearts, minds, and characters when He writes His law into our hearts and minds. God erases nothing from history, but He does erase fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and evil motives from our hearts, minds, and characters.

Thoughts?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

> For many, the idea of judgment means condemnation. And though that's part of the process, we mustn't forget that the idea of judgment has a positive side, in that judgment also involves the vindication of the righteous. Actually, the book of Daniel refers to an end-time judgment "in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:22, NKJV). God's judgment includes both — a principle found in this Old Testament text: "Then hear in heaven, and act, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, bringing his way on his head, and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness" (1 Kings 8:32, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 105)

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The lesson quotes the NKJV which reads:

> until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:22 NKJV).

But what do you think of these versions?

> until the Ancient One came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom. (Daniel 7:22 NRSV).

> until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:22 ESV).

> Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High (Daniel 7:22 KJV).

The Hebrew is יְהַב [yâhab /yeh·hab/] and has 28 occurrences, and is translated as "give" 21 times, "given" twice, "delivered" once, "laid" once, "paid" once, "prolonged" once, and "yielded" once. It means to give, provide. 1A2 to place, lay (foundations). (Strong, J. (1995). In Enhanced Strong's Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship.)

So is there a difference in the meaning of God pronouncing judgment in favor of the saints and God giving judgment to the saints?

What is the core problem in the Great Controversy? What is the root to sin and rebellion in God's universe? It is distrust of God! It is the lies of Satan that undermine our faith and trust in God.

Paul wrote:

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3–5 NIV84).

Paul wrote in Romans:

> God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, "You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried." (Romans 3:4 GNT).

> Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "***so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged.***" (Romans 3:4 NET)

What is God revealing to Daniel in Daniel 7:22? A time in human history when the saints are given judgment, discernment, the ability to see through the lies, the ability to make a right judgment about God. This corresponds with the final message to the world of the 3 Angels:

> Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Revelation 14:6-7 NIV84).

It is the time in human history for people to make a right judgment about God.

Why wait until this time in human history, hasn't God been calling people to trust Him and make a right judgment about Him all along?

Yes, this is not about individual salvation, that has been going on all along. This is about the worldwide movements that bring everyone to the point of making a decision as to what view of God they hold and whether they will believe and trust Him or deny Him.

The wine of Babylon are the false views of God taught throughout the world that intoxicates or confuses and benumbs the minds of people. The eternal gospel counters those false views, calling people back to worship the Creator, by expounding the reality of His design laws of truth, love, and liberty. These truths of God's character and how He runs His universe in genuine freedom and love based on truth, stands in sharp contrast to the totalitarian methods of earthly governments and the beast. Liberty of conscience draws people whereas coercive force drives people away from love and trust.

Thus, the final message is about God's character and government of truth, love, and liberty, of design law. We reject the imposed Roman-law fraud that has infected Christianity and call people out of that fallen system of imposed rules with a god waiting to use his power to inflict pain and suffering and death that would not otherwise be experienced if that god didn't do so. That view of God is pagan, it is a lie, and it destroys in the hearts and minds of those who believe it the very faculties that respond to love and truth.

Such a view of God, if embraced and practiced, will turn people into beings who will use external power and force to inflict punishment upon those who don't comply with their mandates.

So the judgment given to the saints is the revelation of the truth about God, His design laws, methods, and principles which exposes the imposed law system of Rome as a fraud and allows the saints to make the judgment that God is not the kind of person Satan says, but is completely trustworthy.

Further, it allows the saints to judge the methods they will embrace and employ in how they treat others. By choosing the methods of God, truth, love, and liberty, they give glory to God and reveal His character drawing more people to the truth about God and out of the fallen system of Babylon.

And even in the OT Bible verse quoted by the lesson to try and prove imposed law and a punishing God, the text reveals God's method are design law:

> Then hear in heaven, and act, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, **bringing his way on his head**, and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness" (1 Kings 8:32, NKJV).

Paul states this very directly in Galatians 6:7-9:

> Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows**. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:7-9 NIV84).

In the Bible there are five types of judgments, let's review them:

Legal judgment—which is based upon human law, and how human governments operate. It is when an external legal authority makes a legal ruling determining guilt or innocence and reward and punishment.

This type of judgment was used by the Sanhedrin and Pilate to judge and condemn Jesus to death.

This type of judgment does not exist in God's kingdom because the law upon which it is based does not exist in God's kingdom.

God's law is not human law and does not function like human law, made up rules. God is the Creator whose laws are design laws and biblical judgment has more meanings than external legal pronouncements.

The First Judgment
We have already discussed the first judgment, which is our judgment about God. This first type of judgment was first described in the Bible in Genesis, in Eden, when Adam and Eve had to make a judgment: Who would they believe, who would they trust—God or the serpent?

When we are presented with lies about someone we know, someone we love and trust, we have to make a judgment: Do we believe the lies or reject them? Likewise, the first judgment is our judgment of God—do we judge Him to be trustworthy or not? It is that simple.

We see this first judgment at Mount Carmel, when Elijah confronts the 450 priests of Baal and challenges the people:

> If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him! (1 Kings 18:21 GNT).

This judgment of God is not a judicial judgment, it is not a courtroom; it is the judgment of reality, the choice every sapient being throughout the entire universe must make in the aftermath of Satan's rebellion.

It is the judgment Daniel 7 is describing, God giving discernment to the saints to make a right judgment about God and break free of the lies that have held them in bondage.

Why was this necessary after Jesus Himself came and revealed the truth about God?

Tragically, shortly after the apostles died, the Christian church began embracing the Roman imposed law lies. And Christianity was corrupted into arbitrary and legal rules and requirements with a punishing god who needed a human blood sacrifice to propitiate his wrath.

Paul describes this infection of imposed law when he describes the man of lawlessness:

> Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thessalonians 3-4 NIV84).

This is describing Satan's attack to do away with God's law, the man of lawlessness. He comes with a theory, a philosophy, a theology that infects the minds of people and thereby sets himself upon in God's temple—the Spirit temple, the hearts and minds of people as the one to be worshiped. By embracing the idea that God's law functions like Roman law, and that God is a being who makes up rules and then enforces those rules with inflicted punishment, and who requires a legal payment be made to Him for our sins, Satan has replaced God in the hearts of people and enthroned himself into human hearts, the temple of God, as the one who is worshiped and adored.

He is lawless and is doomed to destruction because he sets aside the design laws of God for made up rules and the only outcome for those who continue to break God's design laws for life is ruin and death.

This perversion of imposed law has infected every branch of Christianity and judgment, for almost all Christians, has come to mean judicial proceedings: Satan, the accuser; Jesus, our defense attorney; and the Father, the judge who decides our destiny and grants rewards or inflicts punishments. But this way of legal functioning is a sinful-human law system. It is not the way God and His heavenly kingdom operate.

Thus, before Christ returns, God sends a message that contains the eternal good news about Him as our Creator. We are called to make a right judgment about God, to stop worshiping the imperial dictator of that fallen Babylonian system, and come out of that imperial legal distortion. It is now the time to glorify God by revealing His methods in our lives and by worshiping Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and springs of water. The hour of God's judgment has come, the question is how will you judge God?

The first judgment is our judgment of God.

The Second Judgment
When we understand design law, we can see that **Adam and Eve's sin did not create a legal problem; it created a lethal problem.**

They were not loyal, faithful, and holy beings filled with godly love and trust who were now suddenly in legal trouble with God. No—their sin altered them in such a way that without direct intervention from God, they would die. Their condition was terminal, and every human being born since is born with this same terminal condition.

The Messiah, the Remedy to our terminal state, was promised in Genesis 3:15; the seed of the woman would come to crush the serpent's head. While Adam's sin introduced the death condition, the promised Messiah would bring the cure—eradicate the death condition and reconnect humanity to the source of life.

Thus, the entire Old Testament is a record of the battle for human salvation—God working through His agencies to bring Christ, for the purposes of overcoming sin and healing humanity, and Satan working to stop God's plan.

How could Satan prevent Jesus from being born as a human? By getting every human being to harden their heart so that there wouldn't be a single woman willing to be the mother of our Messiah. God would not force a woman against her will, and God would not have Jesus born to a vile, hate-filled woman like Jezebel.

The Bible tells us that at the time of the global flood, there was only *one* righteous man left on the earth. Think about it: An entire planet of people and only one person was still loyal to God. The avenue through which the Messiah would come was almost closed.

So God made a "judgment." It was not a judicial judgment. It was a therapeutic judgment, a judgment of what reality required in order for God to save His precious creation.

God decided—judged—that He must protect the family of the one man left loyal to Him so that the Messiah could come, lest every single human be lost. Thus, God sent the flood not as a legal punishment for sin, but as a therapeutic intervention for all humanity, for those who died before the flood (they still needed Jesus to come) and those who have lived since. And also for those who died in the flood.

Noah preached for 120 years, warning of the coming flood and proclaiming God's grace in providing the ark for anyone who was willing to get on board. No one else did. But think of the gracious opportunity the flood provided those rebellious people. The rains and rising waters were evidence that Noah had been telling the truth. Those evidences gave the rebellious people time to repent before their mortal lives were lost and to experience salvation and receive eternal life. They would be like the thief

on the cross next to Christ; he had lived rebelliously but, at the end of his life, he accepted Jesus and received salvation even though his temporal death was unavoidable. The flood was a therapeutic act to keep open the avenue for Messiah to save the world, but it was also therapeutic for the people of that time, giving them one final opportunity to repent.

And sadly, some people have tried to impugn our position by quoting from one of the founders of the SDA church who wrote that no righteous died in the flood. This position, in the mind of those who prefer a human law view of things negates the argument I just made about giving one more opportunity. But that is because they mix issues. The issue I just described was about God, God's actions, God's character, it was not about any sinner? I just described how God's actions in bringing the flood was therapeutic to keep open the avenue for the Messiah, and was also therapeutic for those who died in the flood, giving them time to repent. That is true—I have no idea whether someone availed themselves of the evidence of the rains and rising waters and the truths Noah preached and actually repented. That is a different question. The question is what is God's judgment, is it judicial or therapeutic. Those who assume God's law is like human law see the world and the Bible through the warp of human legality and insist God must inflict punishment for sin and therefore, look to stories like the flood to prove God inflicts punishment for sin.

But even their own theology contradicts them. Even for those who insist on believing the lie that God's law functions like Satan's law, I would remind them that even in their false narrative, the judgment for sin is a future event—and punishment for sin is not inflicted before judgment. Further, punishment for sin according to Scripture is not sleep in the grave until resurrection, but the eternal death that happens after the 1000 years. Thus, the flood is not judicial in any shape or fashion. It is therapeutic.

We find God's "judgments" throughout history to fall into this category. God's "judgments" on Egypt were His therapeutic interventions to expose the Egyptian gods as false and to turn the hearts of the people—both Hebrew *and* Egyptian—to Him for salvation. We find God's "judgments" in the life of Jonah: When God sent him to Nineveh, and he ran away to avoid it, God sent a storm and the great fish; then after the warning was delivered and the Ninevites repented, God "judged" that destruction wasn't necessary. In other words, God's "judgment" was that the most therapeutic action was to send a message of warning, which worked. Further, God knew that Jonah suffered with certain prejudices and that this would be therapeutic for Jonah as well.

There is another aspect of God's healing, therapeutic, judgment: His work in the hearts and minds of people. David understood this and prayed:

> Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23, 24 GNT).

Malachi describes this judgment:

> "Suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his

> coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. **"So I will come near to you for judgment"** (Malachi 3:1–5 NIV84).

This is the "judgment" of the Great Heavenly Physician, our Creator: examining us, diagnosing what is wrong in us, and determining what is the best therapeutic intervention to bring to bear to heal and restore us. This is the judgment of our High Priest going on in heaven as He examines the people and prepares them for His return, to complete His healing of them so that when He does come, we will be like Him—for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2 NIV84). This healing, this transformation, this final work of preparation is what Malachi describes above—the cleansing of our temples, the purifying of the Levites (His people today), is all taught metaphorically in the Day of Atonement rituals, which is also taught in the wedding metaphor, Christ cleansing His bride and the two becoming one.

And today we are releasing our new magazine: *The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming*.

Just as with the first judgment, the second judgment is also not a judicial process. It is God's judgment of what is therapeutically needed for the plan of salvation to be realized on both a global and an individual scale.

The Third Judgment

The third judgment is the judgment that the righteous render during the thousand years after they are taken to heaven and all the evidence of history is before them.

> I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge.** And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6 NIV84).

This is also not a judicial process; it is an answering of all the questions people have about the great controversy. It is the assessment, discerning, and settling of minds regarding how God's laws govern all reality. It is the confirmation of what sin does and how salvation occurs—and why some are saved and others are not, when God loves all equally, and wants all to be saved, and is all powerful.

This judgment by the saints includes more than judging why some of our friends and loved ones are not in heaven; it also includes judging what the angels did and how they possibly could have rebelled: "Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3 NIV84).

The saints will review the history of what transpired on earth and the lives of the lost, humans and angels alike, and they will judge that there was nothing more that God could have done. God's design

laws and government will stand vindicated, and God will not be falsely blamed for any soul not being in heaven. Without this judgment, doubt about God's goodness would remain in the hearts and minds of those, who like the thief on the cross, were saved near the end of their lives and didn't have time to work through all their doubts and misunderstandings. This is the judgment in which the saved exercise their God-given ability to think, reason, discern and settle all their questions so that sin will never arise again.

The third judgment is also not a judicial process but a review of reality, of actual history, of applying our understanding of the design laws of God and making the judgment that all who are lost are lost because that is what they prefer and that there was nothing more God could have done for them.

The Fourth Judgment
The fourth and final judgment is the judgment that occurs at the end of the thousand years. It is often called the Great White Throne Judgment.

> I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

Surely this judgment must be judicial … right? No, it isn't.

What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

> Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned** (Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84).

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what the reality actually is. God is the God of reality, the builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols upon which life operates. There has never been a heavenly judicial law court like humans make; the idea that God is an arbitrary judge who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin is a lie from Satan.

The fourth and final judgment is not judicial; it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

> He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).

And so our memory text for this week about appearing before God's judgment seat, means appearing before the most accurate diagnostician, the one who perfectly and accurately diagnosis what is. This is how I rendered it in *The Remedy:*

> for we will all appear in Christ's examining room so that each one may be accurately diagnosed and receive what their condition warrants, whether from compliance or non-compliance with God's treatment plan. (2 Corinthians 5:10 REM).

MONDAY

Any questions about the pre-advent judgment?

Does the Bible teach this concept of Jesus examining people and cleansing the sanctuary from sin before He returns?

Where do you find this concept?

- Daniel 8:14
- The parable of the wedding guests being examined
- Malachi 3:1-5
- Also in the wedding and wedding supper
    - Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, "Write: '**Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**'" (Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84).
- But also in the symbolism of the annual feasts

And this is how we approach it in our new magazine:

The purpose of the ceremonial system was to teach the plan of salvation, to teach the reality of Jesus. In that symbolic system, there were seven annual feasts that were like a theatrical play meant to illustrate, to teach sinful humans, God's saving plan from the fall of Adam to the earth made new. Each of the seven major feasts had a real-life fulfillment and covered a portion of human history from Adam's fall all the way to the earth made new:

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

  This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to "passover" our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

  The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.
- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks** (Pentecost): The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from ad 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.
- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying

her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!

- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Just as the Old Testament Passover feast had a real and literal fulfillment when Jesus died as our Passover Lamb on Passover Friday, so also there is a real and literal cleansing, uniting, bonding, and at-one-ment of the Bridegroom and His bride that precedes the second coming. We are living in that time right now!

So Jesus is in heaven working through His agencies to heal the hearts and minds of those who have placed their faith/trust in Him to prepare us for His return.

TUESDAY

Any questions about the millennial judgment?

WEDNESDAY

Read the first two paragraphs:

> During the Middle Ages there was a strong tendency to portray God as a severe, punitive Judge. Today the tendency is to describe Him as a loving, permissive Father who never punishes His children. Yet, love without justice will turn into chaos and lawlessness, and justice without love will become oppression and subjugation. God's judging process is a perfect blend of justice and mercy, both of which derive from His unconditional love.
>
> The executive judgment is God's final and irreversible punitive intervention in human history. Limited punitive judgments occurred, for example, in the casting out of Satan and his rebellious angels from heaven (Rev. 12:7-12), the driving out of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3), the Great Flood (Genesis 6-8), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19, Jude 7), the death of the firstborn in Egypt (Exodus 11-12), and the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). So it is no surprise that there will be an executive judgment of the wicked also at the end of human history. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 108)

What is being described? What law lens are they presenting God, God's law, God's government, and God's justice through?

When I read stuff like this it makes me sick, breaks my heart, saddens me because this is the wine of Babylon, this in the view of the man of sin Paul wrote about, this is the way things are described when one accepts the lie that God's law functions like human law. This view obstructs the final message of mercy, this type of presentation is one the reasons the world has not yet been lighted with God's glory.

From one of the founders of the SDA church, in the book *The Desire of Ages* we read:

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

Do we see this very same argument, coming right out of the mouth of Satan being made in our own study guide? And we wonder why Jesus waits, why the latter rain has not fallen.

Will God pour out His Spirit upon people to empower them to take Satan's lies about Him to the world?

If we want the latter rain to be pour out upon us, we must reject the wine of Babylon, the imposed law lie, and return to worshiping the Creator whose laws are design laws and then as a people we will receive His power to lighten the world.

Viewing the Bible through the wrong law lens, the lesson makes a predictable and all too common mistake and that is using the Old Testament actions of God as evidence of the final end of sin and sinners, as God making judicial judgments and inflicting punishment.

First, every person who died in human history died the first death, the sleep death, and not the death that is the punishment for sin. To equate these two diverse experiences creates a lie.

The first death is an artificial state permitted because of God's grace to allow for the plan of salvation to be realized. The natural result of sin is separation from God and eternal death, the destruction of body and soul, annihilation.

But God so loved the world that He gave us His Son so that all who believe in Him would not die that eternal death. And Jesus was given to us from the foundation of the world, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

As soon as Adam sinned Jesus was there carrying out God's plan of mercy and applying His grace to hold at bay the full results of sin, which is eternal death. Thus God allowed for the first death to be experienced, in which bodies cease to operate but the individualities of people are stored on heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life. The Bible describes this first death as a state of sleep.

Every person who died from any cause in human history is sleeping, they have not experienced eternal death.

And the punishment for sin is eternal death, not sleep until resurrection. So the lesson creates a falsehood by using God's OT therapeutic intervention in putting some people to sleep as evidence of what happens to the unrepentant in the end.

Questions?

But the lesson quotes EGW, one of the founders of our church to suggest that God does inflict punishment, let's read the third paragraph:

> "God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements. It is not for a man — a criminal against God's holy law, pardoned only through the great sacrifice He made in giving His Son to die for the guilty because His law was changeless — to dictate to God." — Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, p. 208.

Do you see how this quote can serve those who believe God's law functions like human law? And the problem is that they take quotes like this in isolation to support the false view they already hold rather than allowing the author to describe the method of bringing punishment.

> This case is placed on record for our benefit. Just what took place in Pharaoh's heart will take place in every soul that neglects to cherish the light and walk promptly in its rays. **God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence.** When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. – {Testimonies vol. 5, p. 120.}
>
> The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.** Great Controversy 35.3
>
> **We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself**. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it

more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.** Selected Messages vol.1, p 235.

"I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;

"**They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, indepentent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

"**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress**, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3

Satan and sin destroy, God is the source of life and since sin God has been using His power to hold Satan, sin, and the ultimate result of sin—eternal death—at bay. God brings punishment NOT by dispensing power, but by ceasing to dispense power and allowing what naturally happens when sin is not removed, eternal separation from God and eternal destruction from sin, not from God.

THURSDAY

The lesson states at the end of the millennium the wicked are raised to receive their final punitive sentence.

Is that why they are raised? Does God raised people who are experiencing no pain, no suffering, not distress simply to inflict some pain and suffering on them and then kill them?

Understand, this is what the imposed law view says. That in order to be just God must raise dead people, bring them back to consciousness in order to use His divine power to torture them the appropriate amount of time to make them pay and suffer for their sins before He kills them.

Fortunately, this is a lie. When we return to design law we understand a completely different process is happening.

God raises every single person back to life and allows them to complete their lives as they freely choose, which will demonstrate the truth, that God keeps no one out of heaven, every single sapient being who is eternally lost is eternally lost because they prefer death over life in God’s kingdom.

At the end of the 1000 years the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven and the wicked are raised from the dead, a period of time goes by during which the wicked are building weapons of war. During this time the gates of the New Jerusalem are open, and not one single person on the outside comes in.

What does this reveal? It reveals that God is not keeping people out, they keep themselves out. Only when they march in mass to attack the city does Jesus order the gates closed.

> At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. **By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed**, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. GC 664.3

> Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. **The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance**. GC 665.1

Where does His fiery glory flow first? Into the city, and who is in the city? The saved, and the fire doesn't harm them in the least, demonstrating the fire is not the source of pain, suffering, or death. Sin is the source of pain suffering and death. And when the fires of infinite truth and love flow over the wicked, it causes overwhelming agony of mind and heart as each person has full awareness of their sin, the pain and suffering they have caused others, complete guilt and shame that they can no longer avoid with their lies and distortions and awareness of what they have given up. Eventually, person by person they all acknowledge they would rather not live than live in the fires of God's presence and they surrender letting go their hold on life. Some do this in a moment, others linger hours, others for days, and Satan the last.

But none of this is inflicted by God. God has been shielding His creatures from this fate the entire time. This is God's strange act, removing His protective shield and letting sinners reap fully the pain, suffering, and torment that unremedied sin causes.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Christian Psychiatrist Wanted: If you are a Christian psychiatrist, or know one, who is interested in coming to Liberty University to be part of our team in building a world-class scientifically sound but biblically consistent treatment program and residency program, then contact me at trjennings@liberty.edu.

THIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS FOR LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RELATED MATTERS ONLY. Please do not send personal emails to this address. If you have Come and Reason Ministry related questions or comments please use our requests@comeandreason.com email address.

NEW MAGAZINE: The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming is now available on our website as a free PDF download or in our USA eStore as a printed magazine.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2022 4Q On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 14
All Things New

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." (Revelation 21:5 NKJV)

Isn't this a beautiful promise? Aren't we looking forward to this day?

Have you ever considered what it means to makes all things new?

When Jesus says, "I make all things new," is this a current event or a future event?

The NKJV says "I make all things new" but this is how the NIV renders it:

> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:5 NIV84).

I am making everything new…does it make a difference to us if the making of all things new is future activity or present activity? Does the tense add meaning and implication to what God, through Jesus, is accomplishing?

When Jesus says He makes or is making all things new, is the focus of that promise on inanimate material like rocks, stars, moons and cities paved with gold with gates of pearl? Or is the focus upon removing sin from living beings, of making people new and removing all the corruption, damage, and sickness that sin has caused all the living organisms on this planet?

If God has the power, which He does, to make all things new, why has He not already done it? Why wait so long?

Can God cleanse the universe from sin by the use of might and power? Why or why not?

What is sin? It is distrust, rebellion, disloyalty, and selfishness, driven by lies and fear.

Can God, by using greater amounts of physical might, power, threats, and even execution, remove fear, distrust, rebellion, and disloyalty? He cannot, God wants our love, trust, loyalty, and devotion,

and none of this can be achieved through increasing physical pressure and external power. To do so destroys the very attributes that God cherishes most.

If God only wanted robots then He could resolve the sin problem with a snap of His fingers. But then the Godhead would live alone in a universe full of high-end robots that simulate life, but are, in reality, not alive, not sentient or sapient, but merely carrying out God's programmed algorithms.

If you had the power to build a world in which you lived alone with hundreds, thousands, millions of robots that you created, but all of them were merely acting out the routines that you programmed them to act out, would you ever truly be able to love them or be loved?

God doesn't want a universe of pretend, with self-delusion, and He won't have it. He wants a universe of reality, in which real intelligent beings know Him, appreciate Him and love Him for who He is, because He is worthy, loyal, faithful, true, a God of love and truth, who values our freedom and would die rather than use His power against us.

He wants us to know Him just like a loving parent wants their children to know, appreciate, and love them, not because the parent wants to be worshipped, but because the parent wants intimacy, understanding friendship, faithfulness, loyalty, and trust with their children.

And for us there is another reason in our relationship with God that God wants us to know Him, to be close to Him, to love and appreciate Him—and that is the law of worship, by beholding we are changed. God is the infinite source of all truth, love, goodness, and righteousness, and He created use to become like that which we admire, worship, adore, and choose. This is why He tells us to have no other God's before Him—on planet earth we are the highest created beings, there is nothing on earth that we can worship that will advance, develop, or improve us. Anything on earth that we worship degrades us, this is why God says to worship Him, the infinite One, for by beholding Him we are changed and we never stop developing through all eternity future. It is for our good not God's need that God tells us to worship Him. It is also why He wants us to know Him intimately, He wants us to be healthy, happy, and to grow and it is by placing Him at the center that this happens.

And the Bible is clear on what happens when we substitute any other object, concept, or false god construct for the true God, Romans 1 tells us that they exchanged the truth about God for images made with their own hands and their minds became darkened, depraved, and futile. Jeremiah 2:5 says:

> They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. (Jeremiah 2:5 NIV84).

So, with this in mind, how is Jesus making all things new? What is required? What methods will work and what methods won't work?

Can God make hearts and minds new by rules, by threats, by coercion, by force, by might and power?

This is Satan's primary strategy to represent God as an imperial dictator, whose laws are made up rules enforced through threats and inflicted punishments. As long as people believe this it obstructs the

ability of Jesus to make all things new because such beliefs obstruct love and trust and incite rebellion, fear, and selfishness. Further, such beliefs, via the law of worship, cause people to become like that God and they will begin to practice the pursuit of justice through the method of Satan, of imposed laws, more rules, more external control, more coercion and force, all in the name of justice and they will be ripe for Satan to come and impersonate Christ claiming he is coming to restore order and bring justice and punish wickedness and they will rejoice. We are seeing the world being deceived on issue after issue with these methods right now!

People may be religious, but their religion and rules are what they place their faith in, their theology and rituals are what gives them security, their claims of legal payment is what makes them feel safe and therefore anything that threatens their religion, theology, rituals, or legal payment incites fear and the response is anger, aggression, hostility toward those who bring the truth.

This is what Jesus experienced, this is what the Apostles experienced and this is what every person who advances the truth of God's kingdom of truth, love, and liberty experiences.

Read first paragraph,

> Scripture gives us this hope: "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13, NASB). (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 112)

What is the message of Scripture here? What does the future hold from a biblical worldview?

Is there a competing philosophy overtaking the world? Is there a different view of the future that is dominating society? And what is that different view? The Green Movement, the idea that climate change is threatening the planet, the idea that humans are the problem.

- What does the godless worldview proclaim about the future of humanity and the planet?
- Is the message different than the biblical one?
- Does one view bring hope and encouragement and the other fear and hopelessness?
- Does one view lead people to help others, a call to fellowship and unity, to be a blessing in their community, to sacrifice for the welfare of others, and does the other lead people to see others as competitors, polluters, resource devourers that need controlling and culling?
- Does one value people more than the planet while the other values the planet more than people?

I have said this last point many times, just reasoning out the philosophy of the Green Movement and the actions they are taking, but recently I came across documentation of this philosophy:

Alex Epstein, in his book *The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels* writes:

> Many leading environmental thinkers, including those who predict fossil fuel catastrophe, hold as their standard of value what they call "pristine" nature or wilderness—nature unaltered by man. For example, in a Los Angeles Times review of The End of Nature, McKibben's

influential book of twenty-five years ago predicting catastrophic climate change, David M. Graber, research biologist for the National Park Service, wrote this summary of McKibben's message:

> *McKibben is a biocentrist, and so am I. We are not interested in the utility of a particular species or free-flowing river, or ecosystem, to mankind. They have intrinsic value, more value—to me—than another human body, or a billion of them. Human happiness, and certainly human fecundity, are not as important as a wild and healthy planet. I know social scientists who remind me that people are part of nature, but it isn't true. Somewhere along the line—at about a billion [sic] years ago, maybe half that—we quit the contract and became a cancer. We have become a plague upon ourselves and upon the Earth. It is cosmically unlikely that the developed world will choose to end its orgy of fossil-energy consumption, and the Third World its suicidal consumption of landscape. Until such time as Homo sapiens should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along.*

In his book, McKibben wrote that our goal should be a "humbler world," one where we have less impact on our environment and "Human happiness would be of secondary importance." What is of primary importance? Minimizing our impact on our environment. McKibben explains: "Though not in our time, and not in the time of our children, or their children, if we now, today, limited our numbers and our desires and our ambitions, perhaps nature could someday resume its independent working." This implies that there should be fewer people, with fewer desires, and fewer ambitions. This is the exact opposite of holding human life as one's standard of value. It is holding human nonimpact as one's standard of value, without regard for human life and happiness.

There is a real difference between the biblical worldview and the godless worldview. The current worldwide Green movement is godless, it is part of Satan's end-time deception to trick good people into participating with their own destruction, and as everything Satan does it is based on lies and misdirection.

God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiple and subdue the earth, to grow the human population and make the planet take on our imprint, humans are not destroy, abuse, or exploit, but we are to definitely develop the earth and put our imprint upon it. In a world of sin, it would mean making the planet more human friendly, doing everything we can for human health and thriving, again without willful destruction and abuse.

The Green movement is the exact opposite, its intention is to curb human growth, human population, human development and to prioritize the planet over the people who are created in the image of God.

The green movement, critical theories, and COVID policies are all part of an anti-Christian, anti-Bible end-time movement of Satan to capture the minds of the human race and destroy the image of God in people.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Isaiah 65:17-25 and

> "Behold, I will create **new heavens and a new earth**. **The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind**. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or **an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth**; **he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed**. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. **For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people**; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and **the lion will eat straw like the ox**, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17-25 NIV84).

What do you think of this passage? Do we take it literally, exactly as it reads, or do we interpret it, seek out the meaning of what is being described in this word picture?

Will we have no memory of what Jesus did for us, no recollection of sin and the sacrifice of Jesus to deliver us? No recall of the evil of sin and how harmful it is? Or will we remember, but it won't be the focus, it won't be an issue needing to be addressed because all the questions are settled, all the disloyalty, fear and selfishness are removed and the rebellion won't come up again, the misunderstandings, the falsehoods, the lies about God will never take root again in any heart or mind.

What about people dying before one hundred being considered accursed, will people still die before or after one hundred years? No, so what is meant by this? In fact, while we will all live eternally, will any of us get elderly, decayed, and decrepit? No, so what does this mean?

Several possible interpretations exist, and they are not contradictory. One is that this is a blended prophecy, like Jesus in Matthews 24 in which He wove together the events around the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming. This would be a blending of the promises to ancient Israel in this temporal world if they had remained faithful they would have experienced better health, lived longer, but still died around a 100 hundred instead of the average age of death back then which was around 45-50. And they would have also received the eternal blessings of the new heaven and earth.

Another interpretation is that this is a word picture describing the joy of multigenerational families living together without being ravaged by war, pillage, disease, famine, or ravenous animals. In other words, the new heaven and earth will be a safe place where we all live together with our loved ones.

And both possibilities are likely true.

But what about Isaiah 35:8-10:

> And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. **No lion will be there**, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isaiah 35:8-10 NIV84).

Is this a contradiction in Scripture, where in one Biblical description we have lions that eat straw and in another there are no lions in the new earth?

Not at all, God is encouraging the people who live in a time when predators were a real threat, that in the new earth there will be no ferocious beasts.

Read the third paragraph,

> However, that plan did not materialize as expected. Then a new plan was established, but now with the church, composed of Jews and Gentiles from all nations (Matt. 28:18-20, 1 Pet. 2:9). The prophecies of Isaiah, therefore, have to be reread from the perspective of the church (2 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1-5). (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 113)

Did God have two plans of salvation or only one plan? Does God today have a different plan of salvation for those who are genetic descendants of Jacob than for the rest of humanity?

No, there is one sin problem which entered through Adam, and all human beings are descended from Adam. And there is one solution for the sin problem and that is the "second Adam" Jesus Christ, the new head of humanity.

Genetics does not determine salvation, reconciliation with God and receiving the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ does.

So, did the refusal of the Jews to fulfill God's calling mean God made a new plan, or that God continues to carry out the same plan with people who are willing?

MONDAY

What is your understanding of the Temple of God?

The problem I have seen most commonly when it comes to questions of the heavenly sanctuary, cleansing from sin, and the plan of salvation, is that people get stuck on material, on real-estate, on

geography, on inanimate matter and by doing so misconstrue the entire problem and God's amazing solution for it.

Let's establish some baseline points of agreement, or foundational truths.

- God is a real being who created a real universe made out of real physical matter operating under physical laws
- In God's universe there are real physical cosmic structures, stars, planets, moons, comets etc.
- Heaven is also a real physical place with real physical structures of various kinds, buildings of various kinds.
- God also made real living beings who are also made out of physical materials of various kinds, our bodies, made out of carbon, hydrogen, iron, calcium and other chemicals.

So any discussion about the meaning of the heavenly sanctuary in the context of the plan of salvation in no way invalidates the physical realities and structures God has created.

But with all that in mind let's ask some questions:

- When Lucifer rebelled in heaven, did he seek to occupy a building made out of inanimate material? Was the issue, the rebellion in heaven, one of real estate, of occupying some castle or temple or facility?
- Can molecules of gold and silver sin?
- Can inanimate materials joined together by God to construct buildings sin?
- Can sin happen outside of living beings?
- Is there some mechanism or means whereby a living sinner can have their sins or sinfulness physically removed from them, like some pathogenic bacteria, and have that sin placed on some heavenly surface and have that structure become contaminated with sin?
- When we confess our sins and receive God's grace and forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus, do our sins somehow get physically removed from us and placed into heavenly test-tube, petri dish, or specimen bottle or some book, parchment, hard drive, some special heavenly stasis field that is now contaminated, corrupted, filled with the worst filth and necrotic vileness in the universe. Is there a heavenly sin-filled sewer system festering and overflowing with all the sins being confessed and causing contamination that Jesus needs to decontaminate or cleanse?

When we speak of the temple in heaven, in the context of the plan of salvation, are we actually speaking about a physical structure built out of inanimate material, that now contains vileness and sinfulness that Jesus is going around spraying His blood upon to cleanse it or are we speaking of something else?

Consider what the Bible says when describing the fall of Lucifer in heaven:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Your **heart** became proud on account of your beauty, and you **corrupted your wisdom** because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade **you have desecrated your sanctuaries**. (Ezekiel 28:17-18 NIV84).

What does this mean? Is the Bible saying that some physical pathogen was created in a laboratory with gain of function research and released into the environment and that Lucifer's physical domain, his place of personal rectitude, his home, his safe-space, his sanctuary was physically contaminated?

Or is the Bible describing pride and selfishness, that took root in Satan's heart and mind and by choosing this path Satan desecrated his sanctuaries, the inmost place of his being where God's Spirit was to dwell, where God's presence was to live, where God's design methods for life is to be written by God as the core protocols for all action?

Where in the OT Sanctuary was the law kept? In the ark, in the Most Holy Place. Where in the New Covenant is the law kept? In our hearts and minds?

Which is the more literal, the box made of wood and gold, or our hearts and minds?

Can sin happen in wood and gold? Can cleansing from sin happen in wood and gold?

Does Satan work to possess more wood and gold or to possess hearts and minds?

Consider what Paul wrote in Thessalonians:

> Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of **lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he **sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God**. (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 NIV84).

What does this mean? What temple? Some building in heaven? Some structure on earth? Or the Spirit Temple, the hearts and minds of people? Where does Satan want to be enthroned?

And is the end-time cleansing of the sanctuary about cleansing structures, or cleansing hearts and minds from sin, rebellion, distrust, fear, and selfishness? Of writing God's law of love back into our sanctuaries?

This is what we describe in our new magazine The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

Read the first paragraph:

> The Bible says that God "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16, NRSV), and that "no one has ever seen God" (John 1:18, 1 John 4:12, NRSV). Does it mean that the saints in heaven will never see God the Father? Not at all. It is quite evident that not seeing God refers to the human beings after the Fall, because there are several indications in Scripture that the saints will actually see Him in heaven. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 115)

Does unapproachable light mean we cannot physically see God in the new heaven or Earth or does it mean something else?

Light is a Biblical metaphor for truth—God is the infinite source of truth, He knows all things about all things, and a finite being cannot assimilate infinite knowledge, thus He is unapproachable from the perspective of His knowledge, His power, His abilities. We will never be able to operate in infinite, with infinite knowledge, power, or abilities. However, that doesn't mean God doesn't allow us to see Him at some point in whatever physical way He chooses to appear to us. But whatever we see when we see Him will only be partial.

The Bible says that Jesus "has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself." (Revelation 19:12 NIV84).

This doesn't mean a word, a monogram, a label, it means Jesus is infinite and names represent character and no one but an infinite being can know the fullness of our infinite God, so none of us will ever know that name that encompasses the totality of His being.

But we will know His character of love, loyalty, truth, faithfulness and we will have been transformed to be like Him and we will see Him face to face for we shall be like Him in character qualities, in methods of operating, and in various delegated attributes like the ability to reason, think, choose, love, and act. But we will not be like Him in power, in infinite knowledge, in omnipresence etc.

In the bottom pink section the lessons asks us to Read 1 Peter 1:22 and then asks, "How does this text reveal to us the link between obedience and purification?"

> "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22 NIV84).

Any ideas triggered in your mind from this text and the lesson's question?

Any other texts say similar things? Jesus saying if we love Him we keep His commandments. But can love be commanded? Can we get more love by more rules and rule enforcement?

But Jesus and Peter have both connected love with obedience, what is going on?

The Greek translated obeying is ὑπακοή [hupakoe /hoop·ak·o·ay/] (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon), first half hypo like hypoglycemia or hypotensive and means low, under, submissive, and the second half is the root from which we get acoustic or acoustical, and means to listen.

So biblical obedience means a humble willingness to listen, a love for the truth, a willingness to have the lies removed with truth, a heart that is not prideful, not arrogant, but open to correction and will seek and follow the truth as soon as they are able to comprehend it.

The obedient are not those who know all truth, only God knows all truth. The obedient are not those whose doctrines are most correct. Think of the Jews who crucified Christ, they had better doctrines than the Roman centurion or the Samaritan woman at the well, and they followed the rules, the laws, but they were not obedient because they did not have hearts and minds that could be corrected.

When Jesus returns every single saved human will have things they believe that are not 100% accurate, but they will all have come to the point that they trust Jesus and are willing to be corrected, they humbly listen and following where Jesus leads.

And Jesus leads us to love our enemies, to forgive those who wrong us, to present the truth in love and leave others free, to not love our lives so much that we would be afraid to die and would find it justifiable to coerce others to take actions that would make us feel safe.

WEDNESDAY

Read fourth paragraph:

> We can trust that in the final judgment God will treat every single human being with fairness and love. All our loved ones who died in Christ will be raised from the dead to be with us throughout eternity. Those unworthy of eternal life will finally cease to exist, without having to live in an "unpleasant" heaven or in an ever-burning hell. Our greatest comfort derives from the fair way God treats everyone. When death definitively ceases to exist, the redeemed will shout joyfully, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54, 55, NRSV). (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 116)

What do you think of this statement? Any questions? Any concerns?

What does God do to the unrepentant lost in the end and why?

From last week's lesson there were some points we didn't get to and fit in here, so let's review them, from WEDNSDAY last week we find the following quotation from one of the founders of the SDA church:

> "God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements. It is not for a man — a criminal against God's holy law, pardoned only through the great sacrifice He made in giving His Son to die for the guilty because His law was changeless — to dictate to God." — Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, p. 208.

The question is not whether the wicked receive punishment, or whether God brings it to this conclusion, the questions are about the methods and means and why.

God has been using power to stop the pain, suffering, and destruction that sin brings. Even at the cross, when Jesus and the Father allowed the wicked to kill Jesus, God and Jesus were exercising power to hold at bay what the sinfulness of the sinners sins would do if God wasn't holding the natural state of things in His universe at bay.

The natural state of things in God's universe is that Jesus and the Father radiate infinite truth and love from their person that looks to us like fire. The nature state is that all holy beings are filled with God's living presence and they also radiate this glory. Angels are brilliant like fire, Moses coming off the mountain had a face that radiated some of this fire. Adam and Eve walked around before sin in clothing of fire or light. And there is nothing harmful in the fire, but this fire consumes sin, those with hearts and minds bent on evil find love, truth, kindness and mercy painful to be exposed to because they become aware of their own evil which they deny.

So, at the cross Jesus veiled His full glory, had He not, those trying to crucify Him would have fallen down stuporous if not dead, like they did with the smallest flash of His divinity was released when they came to arrest Him.

So, how does God punish the wicked? By letting them reap what naturally happens when sin is not removed. When God stops using power to protect and insulate people from what they have been choosing to do to themselves. This is described in the Bible as God's wrath, God letting people go to reap what they have chosen. In Romans 1:18-32 Paul describes this in detail.

In Revelation the four angels holding back the four winds of strife are described as having power to harm the land air and sea, how? By letting go that which they have been holding back.

So, if you read the founder of the SDA church they quoted, you will find that she agrees with us on this, and describes the method or mechanism through which God destroys or punishes, and it is via design law, letting people reap what they sow as Galatians 6:8 describes. It is not an external infliction of some artificial "fair" measure of torture before execution.

> **God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence.** When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. – {Testimonies vol. 5, p. 120.} [design law described as the means]

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.** Great Controversy 35.3 [notice the methods of God, how the punishment comes, it is when God stops using power to protect. Yet our own church teaches the view that God must use power to inflict suffering pain and death as punishment for sin. And we wonder why the latter rain hasn't come.]

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.** Selected Messages vol.1, p 235.

"I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;

"**They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, indepentent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

"**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress**, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3

God brings punishment NOT by dispensing power, but by ceasing to dispense power and allowing what naturally happens when sin is not removed, eternal separation from God and eternal destruction from sin.

Last week in **THURSDAY's** lesson it stated that at the end of the millennium the wicked are raised to receive their final punitive sentence.

Is that why they are raised? Does God raised people who are experiencing no pain, no suffering, not distress simply to inflict some pain and suffering on them and then kill them?

Understand, this is what the imposed law view says. That in order to be just God must raise dead people, bring them back to consciousness in order to use His divine power to torture them the appropriate amount of time to make them pay and suffer for their sins before He kills them.

Fortunately, this is a lie. When we return to design law we understand a completely different process is happening.

God raises every single person back to life and allows them to complete their lives as they freely choose, which will demonstrate the truth, that God keeps no one out of heaven, every single sapient being who is eternally lost is eternally lost because they prefer death over life in God's kingdom.

At the end of the 1000 years the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven and the wicked are raised from the dead, a period of time goes by during which the wicked are building weapons of war. During this time the gates of the New Jerusalem are open, and not one single person on the outside comes in.

What does this reveal? It reveals that God is not keeping people out, they keep themselves out. Only when they march in mass to attack the city does Jesus order the gates closed.

> At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. **By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed**, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. GC 664.3
>
> Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. **The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance**. GC 665.1

Where does His fiery glory flow first? Into the city, and who is in the city? The saved, and the fire doesn't harm them in the least, demonstrating the fire is not the source of pain, suffering, or death. Sin is the source of pain suffering and death. And when the fires of infinite truth and love flow over the wicked, it causes overwhelming agony of mind and heart as each person has full awareness of their sin, the pain and suffering they have caused others, complete guilt and shame that they can no longer avoid with their lies and distortions and awareness of what they have given up. Eventually, person by person they all acknowledge they would rather not live than live in the fires of God's presence and

they surrender letting go their hold on life. Some do this in a moment, others linger hours, others for days, and Satan the last.

But none of this is inflicted by God. God has been shielding His creatures from this fate the entire time. This is God's strange act, removing His protective shield and letting sinners reap fully the pain, suffering, and torment that unremedied sin causes.

THURSDAY

What does it mean to have God's name in the forehead? Name means character and it means we have the character of Christ reproduced in us!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes
Lesson 1: Part of God's Family

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1 NKJV).

What does it mean to be a child of God?

Have you heard some pastors ask if only your obedient children are considered your children? They say, aren't your rebellious children still your children and then ask, so aren't the wicked, the unrepentant, considered children of God—just children behaving badly?

Some might point to the genealogy of Christ in Luke chapter three which ends:

> the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:38 NIV 84).

And from this verse conclude since Adam was the son of God, and we are all descended from Adam then every human is a child of God, either good or bad, obedient or disobedient. What do you think of this idea?

What did Jesus mean when He said to the Jewish leaders:

> You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NIV84).

Does the Bible mean something more than merely being part of the *human* family in order to also be part of *God's* family?

Consider these verses:

> Yet **to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12-13 NIV 84).

What does it mean to be born of God? In order for a human to be part of the family of God, to be considered a son or daughter of God, must that individual first be born into the world, but then also be reborn and it is at the rebirth experience that they become a part of God's family?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider these verses:

> You are all sons of God **through faith in Christ Jesus** (Galatians 3:26 NIV84).
>
> **Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you **received the Spirit of sonship**. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:14-17 NIV84).

So how does one become a part of Satan's family? And how does one become a part of God's family? Consider this verse:

> The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. [What is the devil's work? What has Satan been working to accomplish? To destroy the image of God in man and put Satan's image where God's should be. Think about what it means to be a child of someone—don't the children of the parents resemble the parents, carry within them attributes of the parents, genetically, physically in appearance, but also in attributes of language, character, practice, and often beliefs. Does this have a bearing on what it means to be part of God or Satan's family? Would those who carry within themselves the attributes, characteristics, methods, principles of God, thereby resembling God, being restored to the image of God be the ones considered part of God's family. While those who instead internalize the methods, principles, practices, and characteristics of Satan and thereby become like Satan are considered part of Satan's family because they resemble him and carry around his image? Consider what John says next.] No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: **Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother**. (1 John 3:8-10 NIV84).

Does this verse make you uncomfortable? "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God."

Do we believe that via the Holy Spirit we are reborn, that we receive new hearts and right spirits, that the "seed" of God is planted within us. In other words, we receive the very life of God, we become partakers of the divine nature and it works a change in us and our motives, desires, attitudes, understanding, perspectives and practices change, we grow, develop, transform and become ever more like Jesus!

Or do we instead believe that we have a legal adjustment in a book and have adoption papers filed in the heavenly court and we are legally declared to be part of God's family even though we go on living sinful lives and still look like Satan in character?

Which idea are you more comfortable with:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- those born of God will go on sinning until Jesus returns
- those born of God will not go on sinning

What law lens do you understand this through? What is the essence or root of sin? Is it deed and task performance or is it attitudes of the heart? And the root attitude of sin is distrust of and disloyalty to God predicated upon fear and selfishness. Those born into the family of God may be tempted by fear and selfishness, they may have struggles in personal performance, they may make errors in judgment (like Peter when he didn't associate with the uncircumcised), but they do not break trust with God, they remain humble, they have hearts that love truth and are willing to be corrected and grow. They love God and love others. They do not lover their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11). Thus, they develop, advance and grow in godliness—just like children grow—this growth in godliness is evidence that they are children of God, that they are part of God's family.

So how do we know who is part of the family of God or the family of Satan? John tells us:

- This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

When we are reborn to lives that love God and others we are part of God's family. As you have done it unto the least you have done it unto Jesus!

Read first sentence,

> "As Christians, an amazing feature about our relationship with God is that He trusts us to manage His affairs on this earth" (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 6).

Why does God do this? What is God's purpose and goal?

What design laws are involved?

God does this for our growth and development, via the law of exertion. God wants us to mature, to develop, to comprehend, to become masters of ourselves and our environment—but not masters of others. Therefore, God places real responsibilities in our hands for it is by exertion, by application, by challenge that we develop and grow.

Jesus taught this principle in the parable of the talents. Those who invested their talents received more. Those with musical talent who apply themselves, practice, and play, will advance in their skill, and more talent will be gained—perhaps additional instruments, understanding the mathematical elements of music, becoming a song writer or composer etc. All of this happens in the brain as neural networks expand with use.

But if we don't use it we lose it!

As we love others our capacity to love grows. As we exercise or faith/trust in God our faith and trust in God grows.

Thus God gives us opportunities for growth and development, but does that mean God trusts us?

Did God give to the Jewish people various truths to take to the world via Scripture and the lessons contained in the sanctuary service?

Did Jesus trust those religious leaders when He was here? Why didn't Jesus trust them if God gave them this responsibility?

Did God choose for King Saul to be the first king of Israel and have Samuel anoint him? And in the end, could God trust King Saul?

Did God place Lucifer in a place of responsibility? And did Lucifer eventually become a being who God could not trust?

This is an important point to understand, people can be in positions of responsibility for God and even called by God to that position but that doesn't mean God can trust them or that we can trust them.

I have had people tell me that I have no right to question what a pastor says because they are the Lord's anointed and placed in that position by God. The implication was they were to be believed and trusted because of the office they held. But this is a lie. The Bible principle is that every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind. That people placed in positions of responsibility by God are to lead like Jesus did, truth, love, and freedom. Jesus left people free to disagree and leave and so must we.

Yes, God gives us responsibilities for our growth and development and God wants to trust us in those roles, like He was able to trust Job, and Daniel, and Moses, and so many others. But what is necessary for us in order for God to trust us?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Ephesians 3:14-15:

> For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. (Ephesians 3:14-15 NIV84).

What does it mean that God is called our Father, that Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father"?

When you think of God as our Father does it bring comfort, peace, security, confidence, or fear, doubt, and a desire for an intercessor?

Does our concept of what a father is and how our fathers treated us have any bearing on our ability to experience God as our heavenly Father?

If we had a father that was abusive, how do we get past that in our relationship with God?

Does God require us to consider Him our Father?

In the book *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young, he describes a man's encounter with God where God presented Himself to the man in for the form of a woman. In the context of the story, the man had grown up with an abusive alcoholic father and the man had terrible anger, resentment, and trauma issues around his father. So in the story God approaches this man in a way that would avoid having all that anger and resentment directed at God and allow the man to get to know God and work through his doubts, fears, anger, and hurt and ultimately find healing for his soul.

What do you think of this? Do you think God would stoop down and interact with us in humble ways in order to reach us in our struggles and lead us back to Him?

Consider what Paul wrote to the Philippians about Jesus:

> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself** and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8 NIV84).

Do we believe what Jesus said that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father? Do we believe the Father would also humble Himself to reach us?

Do we have any other examples of God approaching sinful humanity in gentle, humble ways, or describing Himself in humble ways?

- Calling out gently to Adam in the garden, "Where are you?"
- God and Jesus veiling their glory in order to reach us
- "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV84).

So how might a person who has had a human father that mistreated them and therefore struggles with connecting with God as our Father get past that?

What about the idea of God presenting Himself as female, as a woman? Is this biblical?

First question, who created Adam and Eve, male and female? And were they both created in the image of God or just the male partner? And in God's design is the image of God realized to its fullest extent

with just one of them, or does it take both Adam and Eve united in holy marital love to be a complete unit of godlike humanity?

So is the female, godly femineity, equally a part of the image of God as the male—godly masculinity?

Are there Bible examples of God taking feminine or female aspects to teach things about Himself?

- Jesus describing how He would like to be like a **hen** calling her chicks under His wings for protection? (Matthew 23:37)
- You deserted the Rock, **who fathered you**; you forgot the **God who gave you birth**. (Deuteronomy 32:18 NIV84)
- Can a **mother forget the baby at her breast** and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands (Isaiah 49:15-16 NIV84).
- As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you (Isaiah 66:13 NIV84).
- Yet I was the one who **taught Israel to walk. I took my people up in my arms**, but they did not acknowledge that **I took care of them. I drew them to me with affection and love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek; I bent down to them and fed them**. (Hosea 11:3-4 GNT).
- Like a bear robbed of **her** cubs, I will attack them and rip them open. (Hosea 13:8 NIV84).
- Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions (Deuteronomy 31:11 NIV84).
- For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, **like a woman in childbirth**, I cry out, I gasp and pant. (Isaiah 42:14 NIV84).

There is one more I want to share with you. It is a parable from Jesus, as I share this, I want you to note that this parable is one of three about finding that which is lost, the first is the lost sheep and the shepherd goes out to find the lost sheep. The last is the lost son who comes home to the father, and then there is this one placed right in the middle:

> "Or suppose a **woman** has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:8-10 NIV84).

In the parable of the lost sheep who is represented by the shepherd who finds the lost sheep?

In the parable of the lost son, who is represented by the father to whom the son returns?

Then in the parable of the lost coin who does the woman represent?

Did you know that the Bible represents God as a woman or with various female attributes this many times?

So, if a person has serious problems, like in the book *The Shack*, with God as a father, but they have many positive experiences with a loving and trustworthy mother, would God be okay with that person approaching Him as their loving mother, the hen who wants to take them under her wings?

Do you think there are aspects of the Godhead we have not fully appreciated because we tend to focus almost exclusively on the male aspects and minimize the female?

And has Satan exploited this in society today by advancing an ungodly, corrosive philosophy under the guise of promoting something good for women? Today's modern feminist movement is not about equality as God designed it for both men and women, it is about destroying godly masculinity, destroying the godly role of women as mothers and men as fathers, and destroying families under the guise of self-advancement. If you doubt it, just look at where the modern left has gone in advocating for biological males to compete against women in women's sports claiming honors, scholarships, and other advancements that women would have obtained. The goal of the modern feminist movement is not on godly equality that uplifts all parties and protects families and children, it is based on selfishness and exploitation and is destructive to all parties involved.

MONDAY

The title for today's lesson is "God Is the Owner of Everything" what do you think of this idea?

What is the Biblical basis for this idea?

- God is Creator and all things are His by the reality that everything was created by Him and everything holds together because of Him
    - "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters." (Psalm 24:1-2).
    - "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16-17 NIV84).
    - "For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine." (Psalm 50:10-11 NIV84).

If God owns everything, what role do we play in God's design?

- We are God's agents, representatives, ambassadors, stewards, delegates. People who have been given abilities, resources, talents, and responsibilities by God to carry out God's purposes.

- We are to live as God's friends and representatives using the resources God has placed in our hands for the advancement of the kingdom of God.
- And the more we give in God's kingdom the more we receive from God!

Are there competing methods in this world of sin when it comes to ownership? What are the two primary competing methods?

- Capitalism
- Marxism

Are either one of these God's methods? Do both of these methods result in abuses and injustices of various kinds?

The foundation of all human economies is the idea of ownership, of buying and selling. Nothing is free in this life; we must pay for it, and in this world we are taught that safety and security is found in owning things, the more we own, the safer we feel.

This is exactly the opposite of how God's economy works; it operates upon free giving, everything that lives gives and gives freely without expectation of payment.

- Freely you have received, freely give (Matthew 10:8 NIV84).
- Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed (Proverbs 11:24, 25 NLT).

The Bible describes God's economy as a system of free giving. It is by giving away that we become rich. But this is nonsense to a fear-driven, selfish world.

In Satan's kingdom, the more you take—hoard, store up—the more you have; if you give it away, you merely deplete your resources. It is only by consuming, taking, and possessing that one gets ahead in this world.

This is the opposite of God's economy, in which everything operates upon the design law of love—the principle of free giving.

> "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45 NIV84).

Satan hates God's system and design and in this world of sin there are two modern economic systems that Satan pits against each other to cause conflict and division in society—Capitalism and Marxism (socialism).

Capitalism is a system in which people, individuals, can own property—it is a system of personal buying and selling. Its primary motivator is the accumulation of wealth. Businesses and business

owners and board in capitalism have their number one priority is for their companies to make money for their shareholders, not do what is best for people. Without governmental regulation and self-restraint, this system always results in abuse and exploitation, with a few becoming extremely wealthy at the expense of the masses.

Marxism identifies the principle of "ownership of property" as evil, but it proposes a solution that creates an even greater corruption and more vile outcome than Capitalism. The Marxist solution is that no one can own anything; all property is owned by the state. Marxism, which is supposed to solve the problem of worldly selfishness and ownership by restricting all property ownership to the state, creates a system in which the state becomes supreme over everything—including the people. The state replaces God as the true owner, and people no longer answer to God as His stewards, but to the state. And this inevitably results in a functional outcome that most people who support socialism are blind to: In all socialist, Marxist, communist societies, the state is more valuable than the people. In Marxism, the individual is only useful as long as they serve the state. Rather than people owning private property, in Marxism, people ultimately become the de facto property of the state. And in every instance in human history in which socialism has been established, the governments eventually committed mass abuse—imprisonment, impoverishment, and even genocide—against its own citizens, which is why it's an even grosser perversion of God's economy than Capitalism.

But again, these two systems are not God's and Satan plays them off each other to divide society and cause conflict and harm

God's economy is the kingdom of love and free giving, the gospel of grace. The biblical metaphors of payment are not economic; they are objective achievement. If you donate a kidney to save your child who is dying of renal failure, you "pay a high price"—but the price isn't an economic (or a legal) price, nor is it arbitrarily or artificially set. It is the price reality itself requires to fix or heal the condition; and it is a price that love freely gives. God and Jesus *did* pay a price, but it wasn't economic (it also wasn't legal); it was the price our sin-condition required in order to heal and restore—and what love freely gave to save the object of their love.

Do we see conflicts in the world today based on these two economic models? But do you recognize the intrusion of Marxism when it focuses on something other than money?

Classic Marxist philosophy divided society based on economic power, focusing on the economic relationships in society. Those without wealth were pitted against the wealthy. But classic Marxism failed to make serious inroads in Western populations.

Various Marxist philosophers struggled to understand why Marxism failed to take hold in the west, and they finally realized Western countries were protected by the historic values and beliefs of Protestant Christianity, including the idea that God is the true owner, not the state, and we are His stewards.

Various Marxist philosophers realized that if Marxism remained focused exclusively on economic differences, its influence over people in the West would be limited. They concluded that to overthrow

the Western democracies and economies it would require a new ideology, specifically overthrowing the belief in the Christian God and biblical values and principles.

Therefore, these Marxist scholars developed and advanced what is today called Critical Theory, which is distinctly different from Traditional Theory.

Traditional Theory seeks to study and understand why people groups behave in certain ways, but it doesn't seek to change a people group. By contrast, Critical Theory specifically and intentionally seeks to change a society, particularly toward Marxism. M. Horkheimer, Marxist scholar, wrote the following in 1937:

> Whereas a Traditional Theory is meant to be descriptive of some phenomenon, usually social, and aims to understand how it works and why it works that way, a Critical Theory should proceed from a prescriptive normative moral vision for society, describe how the item being critiqued fails that vision (usually in a systemic sense), and prescribe activism to subvert, dismantle, disrupt, overthrow, or change it. … This use of the word "critical" is drawn from Marx's insistence that *everything* be "ruthlessly" criticized and from his admonition that the point of studying society is to change it. https://newdiscourses.com/tftw-critical-theory

Critical Theory seeks to understand society *in order to criticize it ruthlessly and to subvert, dismantle, disrupt, and overthrow the prevailing social order*. Critical Theory shifts focus away from *actual* economic power differences, from business owners and workers, and toward *perceived* "power" differences—the *oppressor* and the *oppressed*. Classic Marxist philosophy focused on economic relationships in society, those with wealth and those without, whereas Critical Theory focuses on the "power" relationships in society, those *identified* to be part of the power group versus those *identified* to be among the powerless or exploited.

Understand that in Critical Theory, objective individual power or powerlessness is not relevant; the focus is on group identity—to what group one belongs. If one belongs to a group that is *identified* as "oppressed," then one is automatically considered disadvantaged and as being exploited by the "oppressors." And if one is identified to be a member of an "oppressor" group, then one is automatically considered to be abusive, exploitive, sexist, or racist by virtue of membership in that group, irrespective of personal belief, attitude, or conduct.

Critical Theory has multiple branches of *identified* oppressed classes, with multiple branches of study to advance its philosophy. Subgroups of Critical Theory include:

- Intersectional Feminism
- Critical Sexual Studies (LGBTQ)
- Post-Colonial Studies
- Indigenous Studies
- Fat Studies
- Critical Race Theory

In Critical Theory, it is taught that these and other *identified* "oppressed" groups must take power from the "oppressors" in order for there to be "equity" or fairness. But because the inequities are presumed to be inherent in the institutions built by the empowered group, the only way to be rid of the inequities is by overthrowing the societal institutions that, as they claim, sustain the "oppressor" group in their position of power.

For instance, in Critical Sexual Studies, the "oppressed" are non-binary people or LGBTQ individuals and the "oppressors" are those who hold traditional Christian values of monogamous heterosexual marriage. Critical Sexual Studies teaches that it is not enough to gain equality under the law so that same-sex couples can marry. According to Critical Theory, a society that advances heterosexual marriage based on a divine design for human wellbeing is sexist, discriminatory, and abusive; and that any person who merely *identifies* as heterosexual is automatically part of the "oppressor" group. Whereas any person who *identifies* as LGBTQ is automatically part of the "oppressed" group.

So, according to Critical Sexual Studies, a gay actor or athlete millionaire with a private jet, $20 million home, chauffeur, personal chef, personal trainer, and exclusive access to the most elite elements of society is still "oppressed"—whereas, a heterosexual single mother living in poverty receiving food stamps is an "oppressor."

The goal of so-called equity along gender and sexuality lines in Critical Theory is to change the ideology of society regarding human sexuality, male-female relations, and even what it means to be male or female. In order to do this, the philosophical underpinnings for traditional marriage must be removed, which means destroying Christian values, and specifically in America, Christianity.

This same philosophy, methodology, and practice underpins every mode of Critical Theory, including Critical Race Theory (CRT).

In CRT, a nuclear family with a father and mother holding power over children would be deemed racist and "whitism," as parents having power are deemed "oppressive" and the children are understood to be "oppressed." CRT's solution is for the children to be raised by the community—in this case, the state—which is exactly the philosophy of Marxism and, by extension, Communism. This explains why in the USA today, wherever CRT is advanced, school officials believe it is their right and mandate to teach children various ideas, such as gender fluidity, that typically violate the values, morals, beliefs, and educational goals of the parents.

These CRT school officials intentionally exclude parents because the philosophy views traditional two-parent homes as racist and part of the institutions of society that need to be subverted and overthrown. This explains why, in some districts, school officials advance gender-affirming care, hormone therapy, and even gender reassignment surgery on minors without parental involvement. Traditional parenting is, by CRT standards, racist and a form of "whitism" and, therefore, must be opposed.

What is being opposed is Protestant Christianity, the belief in God, and the idea that God is the owner and we are His stewards to carry out His purposes. Socialism can have no other god before it, thus the state must become the most powerful and most sacred entity in the hearts and minds of the people. All Critical Theories have as their primary goal to destroy the belief in Jesus and the God of the Bible.

So recognize what is happening here on the US and other places is not a racial war, it is a culture war. The godless forces of Satan are working not merely to change capitalism to Marxism, but to destroy the principles of Christianity in society. And they are doing it through the guise of seeking various forms of so-called social justice. But all of it is a lie and part of the movements of God's enemy.

We need to not get caught up in the political fights, but we are called to a cultural war. Jesus said we are to fight with the weapons of heaven, truth, love, and liberty. We are to advance the kingdom of God by exposing the darkness and calling people back to God's kingdom, God's methods, God's principles in how they live their lives. And if people put God first all the Critical Theories would be destroyed.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on what God has given to us and provides to us for our welfare and eternal success.

What is the greatest gift God has given to humanity? Jesus Christ, "God so loved the world that He GAVE…."

God did not loan His Son to us, He gave Jesus to humanity. Even though Jesus is fully God, He is now also a real human being, a part of the species human. And He will retain that humanity for all eternity. Consider the implications, consider the condescension, consider the sacrifice, consider the love of God and Jesus in doing this for us!

And in addition to the Son, what else has God given us for our success? Jesus said,

> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26 NIV84).

Can we be saved without Jesus? No!
Can we be saved without the Holy Spirit? No!

It is the Holy Spirit that brings truth, convicts of sin, and leads us to repentance. It is the Holy Spirit that when we respond to the love and truth of God and open the heart, takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us, giving us the new birth, making us members of the family of God by reproducing God's character in us.

The Holy Spirit makes effectual in us what Christ achieved for us!

Another way to say it in a medical metaphor is, Jesus procured the remedy to our sin condition and the Holy Spirit administers or applies that remedy to our hearts and minds.

Thoughts?

Is there anything that is necessary for our salvation that God has not provided?

What other gifts has God provided for our healing and salvation?

- The Bible
- The lessons in nature
- Christian people and resources
- Angels
- Spiritual gifts
- Wisdom, discernment, insight
- Repentance, faith, love, forgiveness

Others?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on obedience and commandment keeping, as Jesus said, "If you love me keep my commandments."

Read, third paragraph:

> "Keeping the law? Obeying the commandments? For many Christians, unfortunately, the idea of obeying the law (especially the fourth commandment) is legalism, and they claim that we are called, simply, to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. However, God is clear: we reveal our love to God and to our neighbors by, yes, obeying His commandments." (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 10).

Any questions? Any concerns? What do you think the lesson is trying to tell us?

Is the principle right? If we love God do we live in harmony with His law, in other words obey the commandments?

If you love someone do you steal from them, or cheat on them, or lie about them, or murder them, or even covet their success?

So, the principle is quite right, if we have been restored to love and trust in God we live in harmony with God's law.

Then what about law-keeping? What is the relationship to love and law-keeping?

Can you get more love and trust by more rules and rule enforcement, more threats and punishments? Can you get love by commanding people to love you?

So how does this work? What law lens do we see this through? If we have a human law model, then God's law, including the Sabbath, is an arbitrary test of obedience, rules made up that God enforces with inflicted punishments. Such a construct will lead those who claim loyalty to God to keep the rules, but not love or trust God and ultimately become God's enemy.

This was demonstrated by the Jews 2000 years ago who had the right Sabbath and were the most rigorous Sabbath keepers in history, they were all about the law and obedience, but they had the wrong understanding of law, they operated from a human law model and they rejected and crucified Christ while keeping the law.

The same thing happens in every human heart that operates from law instead of love and trust. The Bible repeats this lesson over and over again, that salvation cannot come from the law or law keeping, it comes from faith or trust in God which is established by the truth that sets us free from the lies that broke our trust. It is the kindness of God that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4).

So what about the Sabbath? How do we understand it? What is its purpose? Why did God make the Sabbath for angels—oh wait, the Sabbath wasn't made for angels, it was made for humans.

Wow—think about that. In heaven when Lucifer rebelled and sin started there was no Sabbath.

The Sabbath was created after sin entered the universe, it was created at the end of creation week of this planet, for what purpose? It was a gift to humankind, why? What does it provide for us? Why do we need it? How does it benefit us and why does Satan hate it?

Read the last paragraph,

> "In Matthew 7:21-27, Jesus said that those who hear and do God's words are likened to a wise builder who built his house upon the solid rock. Those who hear and don't obey are likened to a foolish builder who built his house on the sand—with disastrous results. Both heard the word; one obeyed, one didn't. The results made the difference between life and death." (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 10).

What is the lesson trying to teach us? Is the lesson trying to tell us we must have the right law and law keeping we must obey or else we will be like the fool who builds on the sand and when the storm comes his house collapses?

Consider the parable for what it actually teaches—why will a house on a rock stand and a house on sand collapse when a storm comes? Is it because of some rules, some legal pronouncement, some

failure to get the proper building permit, or is it because of the laws of physics, design laws, how reality works?

And in the metaphor, what is the house? It is our character, and what is the rock? Jesus of course, and Jesus is the source of truth and reality, so building our character on Jesus means we build upon the truth, upon God's designs and methods, and a trust relationship with Him.

What does the sand represent? The shifting concepts of human philosophies and the ever-changing nature of made up laws and rules, including religious laws and rules, including Sabbath keeping. When we approach Sabbath keeping legally it creates confusion, uncertainty, conflict:

- Is it okay to swim on Sabbath or only wade?
- Can we bathe on Sabbath or do it before Sabbath?
- Is it okay to go out and eat on Sabbath so our families don't have to work?
- If we go out to eat on Sabbath should we pay for it ahead of time?
- What about travel on Sabbath how far can we travel?
- Is it okay to ride a horse on Sabbath? Is it work to saddle and unsaddle it?
- What about throwing a ball on Sabbath is that work or play and is that allowed?
- What about if a person lives in Tromso Norway where the sun set this year November 27 and won't rise again until January 15. If Sabbath begins at sunset and ends at sunset, they have no Sabbaths for almost two months in the winter and two months in the summer when the sun rises and doesn't set again for almost two months. Better hope the winter sunset doesn't happen on a Friday, you won't be able to go to work for almost two months….

Do you see how the legal approach to Sabbath is sinking sand?

What is the design law approach?

The Sabbath is a sign, a gift, an evidence, built into the fabric of time itself so that it cannot be removed or hidden that reveals to us the truth about God, His character, His methods, how He governs. The Sabbath is the sign of God's creatorship, His design laws, and how He presents the truth in love and then rests, stops using power and leaves His intelligent creatures free to decide for themselves. In other words, the Sabbath is a sign of liberty and the way God runs His universe. And this is why we are to remember it all week so that we remember the kingdom of God, the character of God, the methods of God and we apply them to our lives all week long.

THURSDAY

Treasure in heaven—what do you understand this to be? How do we get treasure in heaven?

What do you think of this passage, does it have any bearing on the question of treasure in heaven?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15 NIV84).

Consider how I rendered it in The Remedy:

> By using the wisdom, insight and understanding that God has given me regarding his plan for rebuilding the human heart and mind, I laid a foundation in harmony with his original design, and others are now building on it. For Jesus Christ is the only true foundation–the real source of God's character, methods and principles–and no one can replace him. One can build on this foundation using pure, holy and costly materials, or using ordinary, common and cheap materials, but ultimately, the work will reveal itself for what it is, because the day on which Christ returns will bring everything into the light of truth. On that day, the quality of a person's character-building will be revealed by the fiery glory of God's presence–for only those whose characters are in harmony with God's character will be able to stand in the fiery presence of his life-giving glory. And if those whom the builders have worked to build up in Christ survive, the builders will be rewarded with happiness and joy.15If, however, the builder's work is burned up, the builder will suffer great sorrow and loss: the builder will be saved, but only as one whose misunderstandings, errors, misconceptions and mistakes are consumed in the fire of God's truth and love. (1 Corinthians 3:10-14 REM).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Christian Psychiatrist Wanted: If you are a Christian psychiatrist, or know one, who is interested in coming to Liberty University to be part of our team in building a world-class scientifically sound but biblically consistent treatment program and residency program, then contact me at trjennings@liberty.edu.

THIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS FOR LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RELATED MATTERS ONLY. Please do not send personal emails to this address. If you have Come and Reason Ministry related questions or comments please use our requests@comeandreason.com email address.

NEW MAGAZINE: The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming is now available.

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon to order them at **australia@comeandreason.com**

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa! You can email him to order them at **comeandreason.sa@gmail.com**

Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 - Now Available in South Africa!

The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels: You can read the digital "flip book" at https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 2
God's Covenants with Us

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The Title, "God's Covenants with Us" suggests multiple covenants—how many covenants are there?

If you do an online search many Christian websites will list at least these five covenants:

1. **Noah Covenant**
   The first covenant appeared after the great flood. God solemnly promises never to destroy creation again (Gen. 9:8-11).
2. **Abrahamic Covenant**
   The second covenant of God is with Abraham. God chooses him and blesses him. Through him, blessings will come to nations. (Gen.12:2)
3. **Mosaic Covenant**
   Abraham's descendants, the tribe of Israel, were next to establish a covenant with God. As His set of people, the covenant expects Israel to obey the commands God gave to Moses. (Exod. 20)
4. **Davidic Covenant**
   The tribe of Israel then became a great nation ruled by King David. God's covenant with David involves David's descendants and promises that He will build a dynasty for David. (1 Chr. 17)
5. **New Covenant**
   The New Covenant is God's own solution to men's failures in keeping the covenants. And it is fully expressed through the Person of Jesus. He fulfilled all covenants.

Are there multiple covenants between God and humanity, or is there only one and all the various other covenants we think of, such as those listed above, are simply extensions of, or further development of, or the working out of the one covenant?

Does it make a difference if we see the covenants as multiple individual covenants or as the advancement and working out of a single covenant?

What do you think? One or multiple covenants? And does it make a difference which way we understand it, if so what is the significance?

- When we think of the sin problem and God's solution for it, how many sin problems are there?
- How many human species have fallen into sin?
- How many solutions are there to the sin problem?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

There is one human species—created in Adam—and one sin problem infecting the one human species, and one solution for that problem, Jesus Christ who is the second Adam.

This truth would suggest that there is one covenant, one plan, one remedy to the sin problem and every human who is saved is saved through the application of the same remedy provided by God through Jesus. Paul wrote:

> There is **one body** and **one Spirit**, just as there is **one hope** to which God has called you. There is **one Lord**, **one faith**, **one baptism**; there is **one God** and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6 GNT).

This perspective would cause us to read the Bible as a whole, to recognize a single story being worked out through the pages of human history—the battle between Christ and Satan. God's covenant in Genesis 3:15, the covenant of grace in which He promised to send Jesus as our Savior is the only covenant—and every other additional covenant is merely the working out, expansion, development, application of that covenant in human history.

For instance:

- the covenant to Noah was to keep open the avenue for Messiah to fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15—it was an act of mercy, a therapeutic action of grace with a promise not to fear such a worldwide flood again
- the covenant to Abraham was the focusing down on which branch of the human family through which the Messiah would come
- the Mosaic covenant was the working through that family to keep open the avenue for Messiah to come and to infuse into human culture and education the Bible and object lessons to teach the one covenant of grace
- the Davidic covenant focuses further down the branch of the human family through whom the Genesis 3:15 promise, the covenant of grace, would be fulfilled—through Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David but it is still the same covenant, but with the added promise of successful rulership
- the new covenant is the application into the hearts and minds of people the covenant of grace through Jesus which restores God's living law into people reconciling them to God.

If we fail to view the Word of God as a whole, if we instead break the Bible into different sin problems and different covenant solutions, then we obstruct the healing plan. We end up teaching different ways to be saved and introduce inconsistencies and confusion which obstructs the truth about God. For instance:

- the OT can be taught as the old covenant of law in which some people are saved through animal sacrifices and in the NT a new covenant of grace is introduced where others are saved through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Or that genetics actually matter and the genetic descendants of Jacob have some different path to salvation than the rest of us and that in the future God will renew a covenant with them that

> is different than the covenant with the rest of us, rather than realizing that any person saved regardless of genetics is saved through Jesus, through the only covenant—the covenant of grace.

It is Satan who wants to fragment the Scriptures into bits and pieces here a little and there a little and thereby introduce conflicting ideas, because if we accept such views it makes God out to be inconsistent and unreliable and we more easily accept the idea of an arbitrary rule-maker who needs appeasement or payment in order not to kill us.

It is when we recognize the larger view, the idea of a sin problem that began in heaven and spread to earth and see the Bible as a single whole that things start to fall into place.

Consider now, these historical views, written by one of the founders of the SDA church regarding God's covenant with humanity. Consider if you agree or disagree, and whether this is the way it is being taught today?

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." (Ephesians 1:3-4) Before the foundations of the earth were laid, **the covenant** was made that all who were obedient, all who should through the **abundant grace** provided, **become holy in character**, and without blame before God, by appropriating that grace, should be children of God. **This covenant, made from eternity, was given to Abraham hundreds of years before Christ came.** Fundamentals of Christian Education 403
>
> Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own **purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began**. 2 Timothy 1:9.
>
> **The purpose and plan of grace existed from all eternity**. Before the foundation of the world it was according to the determinate counsel of God that man should be created, endowed with power to do the divine will. But the defection of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent, and yet it did not deter Him from carrying out His eternal purpose; for the Lord would establish His throne in righteousness. God knows the end from the beginning.... **Therefore redemption was not an afterthought ... but an eternal purpose to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world but for the good of all the worlds which God has created.**
>
> The creation of the worlds, the mystery of the gospel, are for one purpose, **to make manifest to all created intelligences, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character**. By the marvelous display of His love in giving "his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," **the glory of God is revealed to lost humanity and to the intelligences of other worlds**…

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> **The terms of this oneness between God and man in the great covenant of redemption were arranged with Christ from all eternity**. **The covenant of grace was revealed to the patriarchs. The covenant made with Abraham ... was a covenant confirmed by God in Christ, the very same gospel which is preached to us.**... Paul speaks of the gospel, the preaching of Jesus Christ, as "the revelation of the mystery, which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25, 26, R.V.). God's Amazing Grace 129.
>
> **This same covenant [the covenant of grace] was renewed to Abraham** in the promise "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). **This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it, and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins**…
>
> **Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham,** it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; **yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant**. **The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God's law**… **The Abrahamic covenant is the covenant of grace**. "By grace are ye saved" (Ephesians 2:8). God's Amazing Grace 133.

In the first paragraph, the lesson states, "Amazingly enough, God has made contracts (covenants) with us." (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 14).

What do you think if this idea of God's covenants with us, including the covenant of grace, the covenant of salvation, being a contract?

Does the idea of a contract lead your mind to think of legal things?

Are there other ways to think of contracts? What about agreements? Do agreements have to be legal in the sense of human law, or can then be actual—cause and effect—design law, how reality actually functions, but we have misunderstood because we have reinterpreted the covenant of grace, the agreement we enter with God for our salvation, through legal imposed law lenses?

This idea of a contract comes from many places, but one of them is Hebrews 11: "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1 NKJV)

The word translated substance is *hypostasis* and ancient papyrus documents have been found in which this term was used for various legal contracts or agreements. Thus, for those who read the Bible with a human law lens the use of this word gives support to their idea that faith is a legal contract with God and salvation is a legal process.

It is true that saving faith is a trust transaction between the sinner and God. It is a bond of intelligent, functional understanding—a loyal, devotion, trust, and confidence in God that results in real action and real change in the sinner.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

But is it a legal process or actual?

The Greek word translated as "substance" is *hypostasis*. The first part of the word (sub) is from the Greek hypo and means low or under, as in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) or hypotension (low blood pressure). The last part of the word (stance) is from the Greek stasis and means standing. This Greek word (hypostasis) was translated into a Latin-based word (substance); the first half, sub, means low or under, as in subway or subterranean; the last half, stance, means standing.

Translated into modern English, faith is our "understanding of things hoped for." This understanding has two meanings, both of which apply to our faith: 1) an understanding of God, and 2) an understanding with God.

First, our faith is built upon truth, our understanding (comprehension) of reality—the reality of God's existence, His character, goodness, trustworthiness, methods, design laws, and also what sin is, our terminal condition, our inability to save or heal ourselves, and what God has provided for us through Christ. With this understanding of reality Satan's lies are displaced and we are won to trust in God.

Second, now that we comprehend God's trustworthiness and the beauty of His character, and our terminal sin-condition, we eagerly enter into an *understanding* (agreement) with God. This understanding with God is a covenant transaction—not a legal transaction. It is like the marriage covenant. When two people get married (as God designed, not as the state legally encodes), they commit to be faithful, loyal, and devoted to one another, forsaking all previous and all other potential love-interests. They commit to go to each other and work together through difficulties, to overcome obstacles together, and not to betray the best interests of the other.

As sinners, we're unable to promise our spouses that we will never make mistakes; rather, we promise that when we do make mistakes, we will work through them together—that despite such mistakes, we will stay faithful, honest, loyal; own up to our own shortcomings; repent when we are wrong; and seek to do better.

The covenant of marriage is symbolic of our faith relationship with God, which is the agreement known as the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace, we have the *understanding* that God is love, that He so loved the world that He gave His only Son not to condemn the world but to be the remedy that cures our terminal condition (John 3:16, 17). We have the *understanding* that we cannot save or heal ourselves, so we enter into an *understanding* with God. We go to God and say:

> "God, because of all you have done through Jesus, all the evidence you have revealed about your trustworthiness, I am won over to you. I trust you and surrender myself to you, and I know that you will heal my heart and mind from sin. Going forward, I will honor you by cooperating with you and following your instructions. I know you are always faithful to me, Lord; now I choose to be faithful to you too. I give you my heart, my mind, my soul, and my strength. In the life I now live, I will live to honor and bring glory to you. In good times and in

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> bad, it is you, Lord, that I cling to; it is you that I will faithfully run to; it is you that I will always seek, for you and I are now 'one' just as you and Jesus are one" (John 17:20–23).

In this marriage-like covenant of faith, Jesus is the groom and we are the bride. The faithful bride is not a sinless people, but they are sinners who have "died" to the old me-first life of sin and have been "reborn" into a new life of love, with hearts being transformed and renewed because they have entered into a covenant relationship with Jesus in which they maintain their connection to Him. They stay faithful; they do not turn away from Him when they are hurt, frustrated, angry, assaulted, threatened, tempted. Instead, they remain faithful when trials, tribulation, and shortcomings occur; they always run straight to Jesus, faithfully seeking Him in every problem, even their failures. These are the ones described as being pure brides, dressed in white, who did not betray their faith, their covenant relationship, by going after other gods (i.e., other solutions to their sin problem).

This is the agreement, the contract, the covenant we are to have with God. This is not a legal contract, it is an actual union of intelligent beings into a faith relationship where each agrees to be faithful to the other.

The lesson sites another promise from God, given after the Flood, we are very familiar with the promise never to destroy the entire world by water, and the sign of the rainbow. But God gave another promise after the Flood:

> "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (Genesis 8:22 NIV 84).

What do you think of this promise? Do you believe it to be true? Is there any implication for us today if we believe this promise?

What about the worldwide climate change messaging going on? Is the message of climate change in harmony with this promise or does it contradict it?

Do the political powers of this world that constantly harp climate disaster and use it to advance various policies do so from a biblical or godless worldview?

What is the impact upon people of the messaging and ideas of climate change? Does that message inspire with hope, does it reduce fear, does it bring people together in love, does it result in greater freedom and liberty in society, or more fear, more conflict, greater restrictions of liberty, coercion, and control?

- **We are not facing a global climate disaster—we are facing a global spiritual disaster**.
- We are not facing man-made global warming—we are facing man-made global coldness of heart; Jesus said, "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12 NIV84)

Satan blinds people to reality by getting them to focus on something emotional as a distraction to what is really happening:

> "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV 84).

Look at the various philosophies dominating the world all rooted in godless evolutionism, the denial of God, the Bible, and the principles of Christianity.

- Global warming or climate change is a godless philosophy coming from those who deny what the Bible teaches about God and the future of this planet. It will incite fear and cause people to surrender liberty and take actions that actually hurt humanity.

- Worldly economics as we discussed last week, Capitalism versus Socialism—deny that God is the owner and we are His stewards. As long as Christianity is the primary belief system and people recognize that God is the owner and we are His stewards, then Socialism could make no headway because the root of Socialism is that the state is the owner of everything and we are the agents of the state. So, all the various socialist movements have focused on advancing godless evolutionism in our schools and society in order to destroy Christianity.

- All Critical Theories are based in godless evolutionism and socialism in which economic differences are replaced with identity power differences, so called oppressed and oppressors. But the goal is to destroy Christian values and principles. The goal is to destroy families and have children raised, indoctrinated by the state, to be loyal party members, to efface and destroy the image of God in people. This is why we see the assault on marriage, male-female identity, and the corrosive teaching to little children in public schools ideas that parents oppose and without parental consent.

Satan's end-time push is active and aggressive. The purpose and goal is to increase chaos, disorder, confusion, uncertainty, and fear so that people, longing for security and safety will accept a totalitarian ruler who uses force to restore order.

The Christian fights against this with the divine weapons given to us by God. With truth, presented in love, while leaving others free:

- we do not use coercion
- we do not use propaganda
- we do not restrict liberties
- we do not mandate others do what we say
- we do not collude with and support philosophies and systems based in godlessness
- we discern the difference between the godless green movement that leads people away from Jesus, away from fulfilling our responsibility to be good stewards of the Earth and have dominion over it; and instead we actively seek to develop the Earth to make it every more human friendly in ways that are not destructive and abusive.

- we value people more than the planet and realize that no matter how well we do as God's stewards this planet is being destroyed and replaced with a new one.

Do we remember God's promise after the flood that seasons will continue until Jesus comes, or do we reject biblical truth and accept the religion of the green?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

> The Death of Christ on Calvary made salvation possible for every person who has ever lived or who will ever life. Unlike the promise of the seasons, salvation is not unilateral—it is not given to everyone, regardless of what they do. The belief that everyone will be saved is called "universalism." (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 15).

Without the sinless life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ no human being could be saved from sin. Jesus' coming as a human and dying as our Savior is an absolute requirement for salvation.

But why? Why did Jesus have to die to save sinners? Couldn't God just forgive us and save us?

What is the problem that sin caused that the plan of salvation was designed to fix?

When Adam sinned:

- Did God get changed?
- Did God's law get changed?
- Did the condition of humankind get changed?
- Then where must the work of Christ occur to save humankind?

And what must be applied to save sinners?

> "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84)

What is Satan's power?

- Lies—Satan is the father of lies. John 8:44
- Life eternal is knowing God. John 17:3
    - Eternal death is not knowing God.
    - Satan's power is the lies he tells about God, that if we believe will keep us from knowing Him.
    - Christ revealed the truth which destroys the lies and wins us back to trust.

The first healing element Christ had to bring in order to break Satan's power and save humankind was the truth. "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" John 8:32

Why is this the first step in saving human sinners? Because without restored trust no one would open their heart to God and allow Him to save them. Without restored trust we would all remain in fear, selfishness, and rebellion against God.

But while revealing truth to restore trust is an absolute requirement to save sinners, is it enough, or is something more than the revelation of truth and restored trust needed?

If you were dying of a terminal condition and your father was a wonderful trustworthy, loving doctor, and your father had a remedy that would cure your condition, but you believe lies about your father, and you believe he will kill you if he gets close to you. What is required in order for you to experience healing or to be saved from your terminal condition? The truth must destroy the lies so that you are won back to trust and allow your father to apply the remedy to you.

But what if you have a wonderful, trustworthy, loving physician father who you do love and trust completely, but your father has no remedy to your condition. Will your trust result in your healing or being saved from your condition if he doesn't have a remedy?

We need both. We need the truth that destroys lies and restores us to trust and we need an actual remedy that heals our condition. We could not provide either, so Jesus reveals the truth, and as a human Jesus destroyed the death causing principle that Adam brought into humanity and restored in humanity the life-causing principle, thereby becoming the second Adam and the source of salvation for all who obey Him.

> "Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84)
>
> "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." (Hebrews 5:9, 10 NIV84)

Wasn't Jesus always perfect? **He was always sinless!** Bible perfection is about character, and character cannot be created; it must be developed by the choices of the individual agent. Jesus became a real human, was tempted in every way just like we are but without sin, and overcame every temptation by living out God's perfect design law and methods of love and thereby, in His humanity, in His human brain, developed a perfect human character, He became the source of salvation or healing.

In order to destroy death, Christ had to restore humanity back into harmony with the law of love—the law of life.

- He revealed truth, which exposed Satan as liar, secured the unfallen universe, and won humanity back to trust:

- He destroyed Satan and his power.
- He destroyed the infection of selfishness and cured humankind.
- "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." 1 John 3:8

Satan has worked to efface the image of God in humanity and put Satan's image where God's should be. In Jesus God's image was perfectly restored into the species human.

Now, because of Jesus, we can have the lies about God removed and be restored back to trust in God. And in that trust relationship we open our hearts and the Spirit enters and takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us. Jesus taught this in symbol when He said:

> "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:53-54 NIV84)

Flesh—is symbolic of the Word of Truth. Jesus is the Word made Flesh. And as we take in food it becomes the substance that builds our bodies. Likewise when we take in the truth the truth becomes the building blocks of our understanding, concepts, beliefs, and mindset. The Flesh was replaced with the symbol of Bread—the truth destroys lies and wins to trust.

And having partaken the flesh, the bread, the truth and been restored to trust, we then partake the blood—the life is in the blood—we, via the Holy Spirit, receive the life of Christ, a new heart and right spirit, we get new desires and new motives, "… it is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20 NIV84). Or as Peter says We become "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4 NIV84).

This is why Christ had to die to save sinners. Christ saved the species human in His person, and revealed truth to win us to trust and procured the remedy, a sinless human character that He gives to us when we open our hearts and invite Him in.

And simultaneously, the revelation of the truth, solidified the loyal angels in their loyalty.

> "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." Colossians 1:19, 20

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Israel as a chosen people. For what? What was God's purpose in choosing Israel? What were they chosen for?

Did God choose Israel for salvation while neglecting or rejecting all the other peoples of the world for salvation?

God's call to Israel was not for them to receive exclusive salvation, but for them to be the branch of the human family tree through whom the Messiah would come, and as such be His helpers, His assistants, to take the truth, the gospel to the world so that all humans could be saved.

Did Israel fulfill their purpose? Well, God intervened over and over again to protect a remnant through whom Messiah would come, for without Jesus no human could be saved. So, that branch of the human family had enough faithful people last to fulfill the purpose of Jesus being born into the world.

But what about them embracing their mission, accepting the gospel commission, accepting what God has provided in Jesus and sharing the truth about God with the world?

Jesus had already told them that their genetics made no difference, their claim to be children of Abraham by biological descent was irrelevant because they embraced Satan's character and were therefore considered children of Satan.

Right before His crucifixion, Jesus did something more. He exposed and condemned their false version of Judaism. There was a true version of grace which Jesus lived out which was love and truth that included everyone, Roman, Samaritan, Jew. And then there was the false version which excluded everyone except those who adhered to these false leaders' legal system of rules. In Matthew 23 Jesus eviscerates their false system and makes it clear that in rejecting Him, the fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 covenant of grace, their entire system is left devoid of any saving grace:

> 13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.
> 15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.
> 16 "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' 17 You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? 18 You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' 19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.
> 23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.
> 25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

27 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.
29 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. 30 And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!
33 “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? 34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.
37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:13-39 NIV84).

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about tithe and tithing. What do you understand the tithe to be? Is tithe the same as offerings? What is the difference?

Is tithing a legal requirement?

Is tithing a practice of trustworthy partnership?

Is tithe a measure of our righteousness, our faithfulness to God?

Did those who demanded Christ be crucified pay tithe? Even on the herbs in their garden.

The fact that the betrayers of God paid tithe does not mean that tithe is not part of a healthy relationship with God, only that it cannot be used as a measure of our relationship with God.

What is the purpose of the tithe? What is it to be used for? For advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To whom is the tithe to be given?

If you lived 1000 years ago, during the Dark Ages, to whom would you pay your tithe? Would you be advancing the gospel by giving it to the Roman Church?

What about today? Would God have His tithe given to institutions or organizations that are mispresenting Him, especially if there are other organizations that are advancing the true gospel?

Do we have a responsibility to evaluate where we pay our tithe, or should we blindly pay it to the organization of our upbringing?

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote this:

> "There are ministers' wives… who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised. The Word says, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Luke 10:7. When any such decision as this is made, I will, **in the name of the Lord**, protest. **I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls**.{DG 106.1}
>
> **It has been presented to me for years** [by whom?] **that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient [income to] properly to support their families**… {2MR 99.3}
>
> **I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this, and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury,** [wait, it wasn't being given to the organized church, yet was not withheld from the Lord's treasury, why?] **it is not a matter that should be commented upon**, for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best. {2MR 99.5}
>
> **Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, *as God has instructed me to do*. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will; and I have done so...** {2MR 100.1}

Did you notice that this person believed that her tithe was to go directly to people who were not funded by the institution, but who were promoting the true gospel message, she was 1) acting at God's direction and 2) the money was going into God's treasury, i.e. storehouse.

What do you think?

I think the gospel would advance much more rapidly if every person took seriously the responsibility of where they place their tithe. This would require of them to study and determine what is the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and then examine where they are placing their tithe and decide, is that organization advancing the true gospel, not just in the list of right doctrinal beliefs, but in the methods

they practice in how they run their organizations and how they treat others?

If people did this, it would change the people giving tithe to become more effective in their own lives and the gospel would lighten the world!

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 6:25-33, but let's include verse 34:

> "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?
>
> "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV84).

Where is Christ focusing the attention?

Where does our modern world focus our attention?

Did you know the various social justice movements actively reject this passage of Jesus? In fact, they argue that scripture is designed to keep people oppressed, to advantage oppressors. That people should not trust God with their lives, that they should not be at peace and seek God's solution for this only perpetuates poverty and exploitation. Instead, people should rise up and demand what is theirs by right, take what has been denied them by the powerful and use any means they can to do social justice, if that means going into stores owned by the wealthy and stealing, that is only the proper redistribution of wealth to the oppressed.

Jesus focuses upon our hearts, minds, characters, and eternal life, not the specifics of this temporal world, but eternity. Jesus Himself had no possessions, no earthly pomp or wealth, yet Jesus is supreme over all.

Do you see how the philosophies and movements of this world are designed to cause envy, jealousy, dissatisfaction, distrust in God, division and hostility?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

We have a better message a message of Jesus, of our Creator God of love, who is coming back to restore all things to perfection and who will provide eternal life for all who trust Him.

Just as Jesus said for those who trust Him, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NIV84).

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 3
The Tithing Contract

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think of the title—The Tithing Contract?

Is tithing a legal requirement? Is the tithing a business contract? Is tithing a business deal?

Or is tithing part of the covenant of grace, a part of the love relationship covenant between the believer and God?

Does it impact you the same way if tithe is a business relationship versus a love relationship?

Consider the difference upon you between these two possibilities: you and God have entered into a legal business contract in which 10% of any profits are God's and 90% are yours, versus you have entered into a love/trust relationship in which everything is God's from the start, but God gives you 90% of all gain to manage as His steward for your own necessities, recreation, charitable giving, etc., and He only retains 10% specifically designated for the advancement of His kingdom on Earth?

Does it make a difference on you to approach tithing in these two ways? What is that difference?

If we approach it as a legal business contract and think that as long as we give our 10% then God is required by the legal contract to continue to use His divine power to bless us with more wealth—what motive might that develop in the heart?

If our tithing is part of a love/trust relationship and everything is already recognized as God's and we experience all gain as blessings from God and He graciously gives us 90% of it retaining only 10% specifically for gospel ministry, what motive does that engender into the heart?

Which way do you think God would have us approach tithing?

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

> The first mention of tithe in the Bible is in Genesis 14, which tells the story of Melchizedek's meeting with Abram. The last mention of tithe in the Bible recalls the same encounter, but the words "tenth" and "tithe" are used interchangeably (see Heb. 7:1-9). Note in the Hebrews story

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> that neither Melchizedek nor Christ were of the tribe of Levi, so tithing precedes and follows the specialness of the Levites. Tithing is not exclusively a Jewish custom and did not originate with the Hebrews at Sinai. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 23).

What do you take away from this paragraph?

- This combination of texts, Abram paying tithe and then that event being described later as a tenth is a good way to define that the tithe does indeed mean a tenth or 10%
- What is the significance for us of the fact that tithe was paid to someone not of the tribe of Levi?
    - The lesson makes the case that the tithe is not restricted to the Old Testament and is not a Jewish custom, but is for all believers.
    - Another possible lesson is that this story gives biblical basis that the tithe is not restricted to one single group, denomination, or family, but is to support the advancement of the gospel and be placed wherever the Holy Spirit leads the person to return it, just as Abram was led to do. What are your thoughts about this?
    - Keep this idea in mind as we go through the rest of the week's lesson.

Read the bottom green section:

> Why is it important to understand that tithing, like the Sabbath, was not something that originated in the ancient Israelite legal or even religious system? What message should we, who live after the cross, take from this truth? (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 23).

What is the difference between the things we find in the Bible that are specifically part of the legal and religious system of ancient Israel and the things that are not?

Can you think of other teachings that were part of ancient Israel, like the Sabbath and tithing, but did not originate with them and are not restricted to their system? And can you think of elements that were restricted to their system?

First, practices that did not originate with ancient Israel and are still healthy for us to practice today?

- Marriage between one man and one woman
- Various duties and responsibilities to family and community—to love
- Work—useful labor give in Eden
- Dominion over and godly development of the Earth
- Ownership of various types of property and managing it as good stewards of God
- Principles of healthy diet—clean and unclean meats, which are based upon the laws of health and not the ceremonial laws, and were established at the Flood when seven of the clean animals were taken onto the ark and only two of the unclean.
- But what about animal sacrifices—they originated before ancient Israel's legal and religious system, why don't we practice those any more but we still advocate for marriage, the Sabbath, tithing, healthy diet, good stewardship etc.?

- Because it isn't simply about when it started, but about its purpose and function. All of the things we carry forward, Marriage, Sabbath, healthy diet, good stewardship, godly management of resources, tithing all have design law functional impact on our health, welfare, and development. The sacrificial system of animals never had any direct functional impact, but served as an object lesson and teaching tool until the reality of Jesus came. When humankind fell into sin, God provided an object lesson to teach them the reality of what sin does and also point them to Jesus as the solution. But that object lesson became perverted with legalism and people came to believe multiple lies, that the animal sacrifice had some saving benefit, that God was pleased with death, that God required offerings be given to Him instead of realizing that the offering was being given by God to us not us to God. In other words, Satan had corrupted that object lesson so that it came to teach the exact opposite of what it was supposed to teach, so it had to be swept away and replaced with the reality of Jesus.

What about the annual feasts? They were specifically given to Israel and were part of their theatrical system of acting out the plan of salvation. Just as we are to participate in the reality of what the sacrifices represented by presenting ourselves a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God and receive the sacrifice of Jesus via the Holy Spirit into our hearts, but not bring an animal to some temple and kill it, we are also are to participate in the reality of what the annual feasts represented or taught.

- Passover—blood applied to the doorpost and they ate the flesh of the sacrificial animal. We are to eat the Word of God, the flesh, Jesus is the Word made flesh and be won to trust and then open our hearts to receive the life of Jesus "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" which is symbolized by the blood applied to the doorposts, the life is in the blood, we get new hearts and right spirits etc.
- Unleavened Bread—We partake the unleavened bread, meaning we continue to ingest the Word of God unmixed with the errors and selfishness of this world to nurture us and grow
- Wave Sheaf—We recognize Jesus is the wave sheaf and the first fruit with His victory over death and lives as our Savior in heaven.
- Pentecost—We receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who applies in our lives what Christ achieved, renewing us and equipping us to carry the gospel forward
- Trumpets—we recognize the call for the church to gather, to cooperate for Christ for His return occurred with the Great Awakening in the late 19th century.
- Atonement—we live in the day of cleansing of the bride, of Jesus finishing His work for the final people on Earth preparing them to meet Him when He comes and we participate with Him being sealed, cleansed, settled beyond being shaken from loyalty no matter what trials come.
- Tabernacles—we look forward to the second coming when Christ makes all things new and we tabernacle with our Savior in an Earth made new.

So we celebrate the ancient feasts by embracing and living out the reality to which those theatrical lessons pointed.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

Read from the middle question to the end of the lesson:

> Read Deuteronomy 12:5-14. These verses do not indicate that God's children could use their own discretion as to where their tithe was deposited. What principles can we take from these verses for ourselves today?
>
> As members of God's family, we want to understand and practice His will regarding what to do with our tithe. In the biblical narrative, we learn that three times in each year — Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles (Exod. 23:14-17) — God's people were to travel to Jerusalem to bring their tithes and offerings personally and to praise and to worship God. Then the Levites distributed the tithe to their brethren all over the land of Israel (see 2 Chron. 31:11-21, Neh. 12:44-47, Neh. 13:8-14). In harmony with this biblical central storehouse principle, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has designated the local conferences, missions, and unions of churches as storehouses on behalf of the world church, and from which the ministry is paid.
>
> For the convenience of church members, the tithe is brought to the local church, where, as part of their worship experience, members bring their tithes and offerings, though some use online giving. The local treasurers then forward the tithe to the conference storehouse. This system of tithe management, outlined and ordained by God, has enabled the Seventh-day Adventist Church to have a worldwide and growing impact in the world.
>
> Imagine if everyone decided to give their tithe to whomever they wanted to, at the expense of the Adventist church itself. What would happen to our church? Why is that practice, then, such a bad idea and contrary to Scripture? (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 24).

What is the message you are hearing from this section?

Do you hear the following message:

- Ancient Israel was not allowed to use their own discretion as to where to place their tithe
- Church members today are not to prayerful consider and use their own discretion as to where to place their tithe
- If you prayerfully, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit place your tithe with any other person or group than the SDA church you are acting contrary to Scripture

Is this the message the lesson is trying to communicate? Is this message what the Bible teaches?

It is always good to go back to the Bible and examine the evidence for ourselves and not allow the lesson or others to tell us what the Bible says.

The lesson referenced Deuteronomy 12:5-14, let's start with 12:1:

These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land. Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.

You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. [What is the context? These are the first four verses, the next verse is where the lesson starts our quote, but note the context is to ensure that the people did not practice worship like the pagans. Why? What is the issue at hand?] But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; **there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.** [Is this section about tithing, or is it more than tithing? Why does the lesson pick out tithing from this section while ignoring all the other instructions?] There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit, since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. [What does this mean, not do as everyone sees fit? Why not? What is the context, what is happening? God is taking a group of former slaves, who had many pagan ideas in their minds and practices and is forging them into a cohesive force to resist the pull of the pagan practices FOR THE PURPOSE of keeping open the avenue for Messiah.] But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD. And there rejoice before the LORD your God, you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you. (Deuteronomy 12:1–14 NIV84). [Is the instruction about not worshiping wherever one pleases primarily about the tithe, or about the animal sacrifices? Why? Because God doesn't want them to participate in pagan fertility worship. He wants them to move past appeasement and cult worship, to true worship of our Creator God who sacrifices Himself for us. Thus, they are to restrict their worship to the places and means God has directed.]

But even more interesting, in this same set of guidelines given by God that the lesson references, we find a specific section on tithing just two chapters later, but the lesson left it out. Let's read these specific set of tithing instructions that are part of this same set of instructions the lesson referenced and consider why the lesson didn't include these, and what it means that the lesson is using Scripture to support their claim that we are not at liberty to decide what to do with the tithe, where to place it, but are required by God to give without thinking.

Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. [We had a few tomato plants this year and they produced a lot of tomatoes. But it didn't cross our minds to place 10% of our tomatoes into an offering plate—should we have? Do you think the institutional church would be happy if we did bring a bag of tomatoes to put in the plate? The instruction in Deuteronomy seems to indicate we are to do this. Are we not living according to Scripture if we don't? Or has culture changed, as well as what we recognize as our wealth or income from our work from that of the Hebrews of old?] **Eat the tithe** of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, **so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always**. [Wait, so we are to eat the tithe ourselves, wow, good news, we feel a lot better realizing that we are to eat the tithe and not give it to the church, as long as we do it with thanks and rejoicing for the Lord. But I thought the tithe was to be given to the church for the church to consume it, why is God telling the worshipper to consume the tithe? What is the purpose of the tithe? It is to advance the gospel—and what is the gospel? The good news—about what? About God—so what is God's purpose in having the ancient Hebrews spend His tithe on items that they consume in worship? What is God contrasting? What had He told them not to do? God is contrasting Himself with the false gods of Egypt and the pagan cults all around them. All false systems of gods that make up rules and inflict punishment upon sinners for rule-breaking. As such the sinner, the worshiper, is required to bring gifts and offerings to the offended god to appease the wrath of the God, or to pay for their sins, or to influence the god to forgive or give blessings. The more costly the gift, the greater the influence on the offended god. Thus pagan worship often devolved into human and infant sacrifice because nothing was more valuable than one's firstborn son. But God is demonstrating by action that He is NOT like the pagan gods, that He gives of Himself for us, we don't bring things to Him to buy Him off, or influence Him. So God specifically directed that the tithe, which was understood to be His, would be used for the people to buy and consume items in worship of God—and the people learn that God is good! The tithe was used in this way to advance the gospel, the good news about God!] But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, **wine or other fermented drink**, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. [What did God instruct them to do with the tithe? Why isn't the lesson applying this as a rule that we are to do today? Not only does it instruct to use the tithe to buy fermented drink and other staples, but the worshiper is to consume it, not merely give the silver to the church. Do you see some inconsistency in how the Bible is being used, picking texts that support a certain conclusion while excluding others? What do you think these texts mean and how do they apply to us today?] **And do not neglect the Levites** living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. **At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns,** so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your

> hands. [So if we use these instructions to ancient Israel as the sole basis of our tithing method the tithe is to be given to the church every three years, with the other two years being used for the celebration of God by the members. Thoughts?] (Deuteronomy 14:22-29 NIV84).

How do we understand the issue of buying whatever they want including fermented wine and celebrating before the Lord?

What happens to wine without refrigeration or vacuum sealing? It either ferments or turns to vinegar.

Fermented wine was a common drink of the day. God is not endorsing drunkenness, in fact the Bible specifically warns against drunkenness. But God is meeting people in the reality in which they live. They routinely drank weak fermented wine and God was telling them, in this context, whatever they prefer to drink with their meals, that drink is a gift from God and is to be used to rejoice in the Lord and experience the reality that God is good, God gives of Himself to bless and uplift us. It is that simple. It would be an error to use this text to make a case for or against alcoholic beverages.

Is tithe a measure of our righteousness, our faithfulness to God?

Did those who demanded Christ be crucified pay tithe? Even on the herbs in their garden (Luke 11:42).

The fact that the betrayers of Jesus paid tithe does not mean that tithe is not part of a healthy relationship with God, only that it cannot be used as a measure of our relationship with God.

What is the purpose of the tithe? What is it to be used for? For advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To whom is the tithe to be given?

If you lived 1000 years ago, during the Dark Ages, to whom would you pay your tithe? Would you be advancing the gospel by giving it to the Roman Church?

What about today? Would God have His tithe given to institutions or organizations that are mispresenting Him, especially if there are other organizations that are advancing the true gospel?

Do we have a responsibility to evaluate where we pay our tithe, or should we blindly pay it to the organization of our upbringing?

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote this:

> “There are ministers' wives… who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. I tell them to go forward and all such

decisions will be revised. The Word says, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Luke 10:7. When any such decision as this is made, I will, **in the name of the Lord**, protest. **I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls**.{DG 106.1}

It has been presented to me for years [by whom?] **that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient [income to] properly to support their families**… {2MR 99.3}

I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this, and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, [wait, it wasn't being given to the organized church, yet was not withheld from the Lord's treasury, why?] **it is not a matter that should be commented upon**, for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best. {2MR 99.5}

Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, *as God has instructed me to do*. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will; and I have done so... {2MR 100.1}

Did you notice that this person believed that her tithe was to go directly to people who were not employed by the institutional church, but who were promoting the true gospel message? And in doing so she was 1) acting at God's direction and 2) the money was going into God's treasury, i.e. storehouse?

What do you think?

I think the gospel would advance much more rapidly if every person took seriously the responsibility of where they place their tithe. This would require of them to study and determine what is the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and then examine where they are placing their tithe and decide, is that organization advancing the true gospel, not just promoting a legal list of doctrines or rules that we may very well agree with, but do they say of God what is right? Do they teach the truth about God's character, methods, and design laws and what methods do they practice in how they run their organizations and how they treat others?

If people did this, it would change the people giving tithe to become more effective in their own lives and the gospel would lighten the world!

TUESDAY

What is the purpose of the tithe? There are two reasons, one, is to advance the gospel—and the second is described in the third paragraph,

> Tithing is important because it helps us establish a relationship of trust with God. To take one-tenth of your income and "give it away" (though, technically, it belongs to God anyway) truly takes an act of faith, and only by exercising faith will your faith grow. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 25).

This is a great point, our faith and trust in God grows through exercise. Tithing is one way to help us practice faithfulness to God and experience greater faith and trust in God.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks the question whether we should pay tithe on the gross or the net income. What do you think of the question?

The lesson goes on to argue that tithe should be paid on the gross income, what do you think of this?

Does the directions of Paul from Romans 14 apply to the question of gross or net tithing?

> Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind** (Romans 14:1-5 NIV84).

What is the point here? What does it mean if one has great faith then they can eat anything but if one has weak faith then they should eat only vegetables? Is this talking about the laws of health, dietary health, or something else?

It is talking about the heart, mind, and conscience. In Paul's day, meat sold in the market was often the butchered meat from animals sacrificed to pagan gods. Some of the believers were afraid that eating the meat sacrificed to pagan gods would give those gods power over the one who ate the meat. Paul is saying if you have mature faith you know pagan gods are nothing but wood and stone and cannot affect the nutritional quality of the meat, and that the demonic forces behind the wood and stone have no power over those protected by God. Thus the mature in faith can eat the food without fear or worry. But, for those of immature faith, who still have superstitious fears in their mind, and by eating such

meat would feel guilty, afraid, or believe that the demons or false gods have some power over them, then it is better not to eat. The problem is not with the meat, the problem is with the beliefs about the meat. One of Satan's powers is lies, is getting falsehoods into our minds and hearts that disrupt our unity with God. This is why the truth sets us free.

The children are fearful of making mistakes and they want simple lists of rules to behaviorally obey, like don't eat meat offered to idols, so that they can feel safe. They don't have to think, comprehend, understand, and they don't mature and develop. But God wants us to mature and develop, so He wants every person to be fully persuaded in their own mind.

This applies to the tithe, if a person pays on the net, but they believe that in doing so they are cheating God, the problem isn't the amount of tithe, but the choice to do something they believe is cheating. That choice will cause them to experience guilt, fear, shame, and harm their relationship with God. Conversely, another person who believes that they tithe only on what they receive and they do so with an honest heart, then they may tithe on the net without any damage to their character or relationship with God.

Why do you think the lesson makes such a hard case for mindless paying of tithe on the gross and only to the organized church?

The last sentence in the lesson is a quote from EGW which reads:

> "Everyone is to be his own assessor and is left to give as he purposes in his heart." — Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 469.

Would that suggest that we are to mindlessly give what the organized system has told us, or that we are to evaluate for ourselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with a clear conscience what we are to return in tithe and also what we are to give in offerings?

Why is this important? Does it make a difference to our own development if we give mindlessly to obey rules, to avoid guilt, to avoid legal trouble, versus we give because we know and love God and we have thoughtful calculated what is right to give?

THURSDAY

The lesson states the following:

> This week we have reviewed several of the constituent elements of the tithe:
> 1. The amount — which is a tenth, or 10 percent, of our income or increase.
> 2. Taken to the storehouse — the place from which the gospel ministers are paid.
> 3. Honoring God with the first part of our income.
> 4. Used for the right purpose — the support of the ministry.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> It is our responsibility as church members to uphold the first three items; it is the responsibility of the storehouse managers to make sure that the tithe funds are used properly. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 27).

Do you agree or disagree?

It is true that whatever organization receives funds from donors, once those funds are received those with management responsibilities for that organization are responsible for how those funds are used.

However, does that mean those who donate to various organizations have no responsibility to assess how the organization they are donating to is using the funds?

Do we have a responsibility to use our tithes to support the gospel in the most effective way we understand the gospel is being advanced? And does that mean prayerful and intelligent consideration of where to place our tithe?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 4
Offerings for Jesus

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Last week we discussed tithing, this week we explore the question of offerings.

Any questions about offerings? How about this:

- Since God created everything (Genesis 1)
- Since everything already belongs to the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:14)
- Since all things are sustained by Him (Hebrews 1:3)
- Since He holds all things together (Colossians 1:17)
- And since God has said, "If I were hungry, I would not ask you for food, for the world and everything in it is mine" (Psalms 50:12 GNT).

Then why are we to return tithe and give offerings? This is not a question of what those funds are to be used for, we answered last week that the tithe is to be used to advance the gospel, the kingdom of God. No, this question is why does God instruct us to return tithe and give offerings—does He need it?

What are the two primary antagonistic principles at war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan?

Love versus selfishness

And what is the natural orientation of our heart as we are born into the world? We are bent toward selfishness and would be hopelessly lost to selfishness if it wasn't for God's grace intervening in our hearts to convict us of a better way, to draw us back, to lead us away from sin, to make us dissatisfied with selfishness and bring us to conversion. This is why salvation is more than being born into the world, we must also be reborn into God's kingdom of love. Which means the bent of our internal self, our inmost hearts drives, shifts from selfishness to love, we are still capable of being tempted by selfishness but the converted person doesn't identify with or desire to be selfish, doesn't justify selfishness, but grieves when they stumble and longs to be free of selfishness.

So, understanding that we have a bent toward selfishness, which is driven by fear and the desire to make self safe, and we need to be reborn into God's kingdom of love and then grow in love, why do you think God has instructed us to return tithe and give offerings?

To exercise both faith and love—to help us open the channels of our selfish hearts to give and the Bible says the more you give the more you will receive.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

This doesn't sound right to the selfish world; it sounds like foolishness to them. The world teaches you get more by taking and hoarding and have less by giving. And the world frightens people into hoarding and not giving by focusing on shortages, catastrophes, and seeks to break down families and communities that support each other so that fear increases.

But God teaches we get more when we give, how is that possible?

First, is God's promise primarily about receiving stuff if we give or about something else? Is God's promise about increasing earthly treasures—stocks, bonds, gold, silver, lands, houses, or increasing heavenly treasures—fruits of righteousness, peace, love, joy, faith, godliness, honesty, integrity, wisdom, discernment, Christlikeness, and maturity? What is it that heaven treasures material wealth, or Christlikeness of character? Then what do you think God wants to primarily pour upon us, to give us more of, stuff, or the attributes of Himself, the principles and practices of heaven?

Jesus said:

> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19–21 NIV84).

What do you think it means? How do we store up treasure in heaven? Notice how Luke recorded these instructions—he added some details:

> Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?
>
> "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.
>
> "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:22-34 NIV84).

- Do you see how the world inflames our fear of not having, and seeks to get us to be more selfishness by creating situations in which people are in need?
- How much is peace of mind worth?
- How much is peace of heart worth?
- How much is good health worth?
- How much is living a life of love and trust worth?
- How much is being useful to God and fulfilling His purpose, knowing your life matters, knowing that through you God's kingdom advances and your life makes a difference for good?
- How much is reconciliation with God and eternal life worth?
- And how are we able to experience peace of mind and heart, live lives of love and trust, fulfill God's purpose? Is it by our initiative, our creativity, our strength, our innate abilities—or is it by receiving what God has provided to us through Jesus and sharing that love, joy, wisdom, energy, time, money, food, clothing, with others?

Consider the garden hose on your house and the fire hydrant on the street in front of your house. If you open both of them up full blast, which gives more water away? The fire hydrant—and in so doing which receives more water to it?

We are the metaphorical hose or fire hydrant. God is the municipal infinite source of water, as we allow the love of God to flow through us to others we receive more of God's love flowing into us. The more love we give away, the more we receive from God!

Jesus told the woman at the well,

> "whoever drinks some of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up" (John 4:14 NET).

There is a song by Michael. W. Smith called *Give it Away* and these are the lyrics:

> *She asked him for forever*
> *And a promise that would last*
> *He said, "Babe, you know I love you*
> *But I can't commit to that"*
> *She said, "Love isn't love*
> *Till You give it away"*
>
> *A father lived in silence*
> *Saw his son become a man*
> *There was a distance felt between them*
> *'Cause he could not understand*
> *That love isn't love*
> *Till you give it away*

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

You gotta give it away

As we live
Moving side by side
May we learn to give
(May we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice

We can entertain compassion
For a world in need of care
But the road of good intentions
Doesn't lead to anywhere
'Cause love isn't love
Till you give it away, yeah
You gotta give it away

As we live
Moving side by side
May we learn to give
(May we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice

Love is like a river
Flowing down from the Giver of life
We drink from the water
And our thirst is no longer denied
You gotta give it away

As we live
Moving side by side
(Moving side by side)
May we learn to give
(May, may, may we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice

There was a man who walked on water
He came to set the people free
He was the ultimate example
Of what love can truly be
'Cause His love was His life
And He gave it away
You gotta give it away

As we live

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Moving side by side
May we learn to give
(May, may we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice

You gotta give it away

This is the purpose of God in providing us the privilege of tithing and giving offerings, to help us grow in love for God and others and strengthen our faith/trust in Him. God wants us to grow and mature in godliness. We do this by practicing His methods, so He wants us to regularly make decisions that are contrary to the practices of the world, to regularly exercise our ability to live out God's law of love and to exercise our faith in God, to say no to fear, no to selfishness and yes to the kingdom of God.

But, let me be clear—it isn't about the act of giving, it is about the motive of giving. A person can give from a selfish motive, a guilt motive, a fear motive, a resentful and bitter motive, a political motive and if a person gives from such motives they will grow more selfish, bitter, fearful, or resentful.

This is why the Lord loves a *cheerful* giver, not merely a giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

So, with this in mind, that God gave us the practice of tithing and giving offerings as therapy for our souls, a therapeutic tool or practice to help us resist the infection of fear and selfishness and help us open the rusted channels in our hearts where love is to flow, and help us grow in godliness, understanding all of this, what is the offering that is the most important that we are to bring to God, the offering that He wants most?

- "Certainly you do not want a sacrifice, or else I would offer it; you do not desire a burnt sacrifice. The sacrifices God desires are a humble spirit—O God, a humble and repentant heart you will not reject" (Psalm 51:16-17 NET).

- "What I want from you is plain and clear: I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me" (Hosea 6:5-6 GNT).

- "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2 NIV84).

What is the first and primary offering we are to bring to God? Ourselves! Only after we have given ourselves to God, can we bring other offerings that are pleasing, because only with renewed hearts will our giving be cheerful and be therapeutic in God's design law kingdom to help us grow to be more like Jesus.

Does that mean a person is not to give anything until they are first converted? **It means what God wants is us not stuff.**

In the process of conversion, an individual may be moved by the Holy Spirit with motives to give to certain causes and those motives of love, compassion, desire to bless and help are evidence of God's Spirit working upon the heart even before full conversion. So God would absolutely want such a person to follow those motives and give as they are responding to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. And in doing they will gradually be drawn closer to God and will experience conversion.

So anyone, regardless of their conversion status who experience compassion for others, the motives of love, altruism, and is convicted to give to help others should do so, it is part of God's plan moving in the living being to strengthen the spiritual attributes of His kingdom in the person and bring them ultimately to full conversion.

But beware, Satan perverts tithing and the giving of offerings. Satan understands the issue isn't the amount given but the motive in giving. He perverted the OT animal sacrifices and offerings to be viewed as appeasement. He got them to think God would be happier with thousands of slain animals and flowing rivers of blood. And they brought these expensive offerings, but what happened? They ended up killing Jesus.

If Satan can get people to give from fear, from guilt, from obligation, from legal requirement, from a business contract, from selfishness, because they are afraid of God, because they are trying to buy God off, pay for their sins, alleviate their own guilt, if Satan can get people to give from any reason other than godly love, then even the act of giving can be used to corrupt the soul and undermine trust in God.

Consider this story from Scripture:

> To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9–14 NIV84).

Is it only about giving, or does the motive matter?

Read third paragraph:

> Our offerings are an evidence of our willingness to self-sacrifice for God. They can be a deeply spiritual experience, an expression of the fact that our lives are wholly surrendered to God as

> our Lord. To us, as an English idiom says, it is "putting our money where our mouth is." You can say you love God, but generous offerings help reveal (and even strengthen) that love. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 31).

Thoughts? Do the first and second sentences sound just a little different than the first sentence?

"Our offerings **are an evidence** of our willingness to self-sacrifice for God" versus "They **can be a deeply spiritual experience**"?

Would it be slightly more accurate to say, Our offers *can be* an evidence, rather than *are* an evidence?

Maybe I am being too picky, but I think for many legalists, the act is what matters rather than the motive and thus, if you give, you have fulfilled your legal requirement and thus the giving is the evidence. People like to think this way, just like the Pharisees Jesus was addressing in the text above, because they can do things to make themselves feel good about themselves while they retain a selfish and unconverted heart.

So, I don't think I am being too picky here, I think the motive is really more important than the act and focusing only on the act can perhaps interfere with some people experiencing true conversion.

The lesson seems to validate this concern in the next paragraph which reads,

> An offering comes from a heart that trusts in a personal God who constantly provides for our needs as He sees best. Our offerings rest on the conviction that we have found assurance of salvation in Christ. They are not an appeasement or a search for God's acceptance. Rather, our offerings flow from a heart that has accepted Christ by faith as the only and sufficient means of grace and redemption. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 31).

So I very much like the lesson included this paragraph, because it is the motive that matters more than the act. But, **once the motive is correct the actions are necessary to solidify the right motive into the character**, to change the wiring of the brain, to establish the new motive as the automatic and engrained pattern of living.

MONDAY

Read Deuteronomy 16:17:

> "Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you" (Deuteronomy 16:17 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you? Does it apply to us or only to ancient Israel? Is this to be taken literal or metaphorical? How literal?

- If your dog gives birth to a litter of puppies do you donate one of the puppies to the church? Or, do you follow the instructions God gave Israel of the first born sheep and sacrifice the firstborn puppy and burn the body on an altar? How literal do we take these instructions?
- If the Lord has blessed you with children, do you, like Hannah, take one of your children and leave them with church leaders to raise?

Is the instruction in Deuteronomy a rule or a principle? And what is the principle? The principle is love. God wants His people to experience more of His goodness, more of His love, more of His healing and transforming power and ultimately eternal life. So God directs His people how to participate in His kingdom. Jesus said it this way: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8 NIV84).

The lesson quotes Jesus saying the following:

> "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48 NKJV).

What does this mean?

This quote is plucked out of a parable Jesus told, perhaps it would help us to read the entire parable:

> The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.
>
> "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."
>
> "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." (Luke 12:42-53 NIV84).

What is the lesson? What is Jesus describing? Who are the managers or stewards? What does it mean for the Lord's managers to berate and neglect and abuse? Did you see this being fulfilled during the last three years and how some church leaders rather than protecting their flock from abuse and coercion of conscience, aligned with governments around the world to coerce consciences?

What does it mean to be beaten with many or few blows? This text is often used by the imperialists, those who wrongly believe that God's law works like human law, that God will be required to inflict punishment for disobedience, so how do we explain this text?

And how do we understand Jesus saying He didn't come to bring peace but division? Isn't He the Prince of Peace?

Is this passage difficult to understand and explain?

What law lens are we reading through? What is our understanding of the natural state of humanity after Adam sinned? Selfish—and with whom do sinners naturally align if not for the intervention of God? They align with Satan and practice his methods. Thus, Jesus did not come to bring peace with sin and selfishness but to divide, to cut away sin and selfishness, to pull people out of pain, suffering, sin-sickness, and corruption and into peace, health, happiness and eternal life. **He cannot provide eternal life to people who refuse to leave sinfulness behind**. Thus, we must separate from the cause of pain and death, which is sin.

From *The Remedy:*

> Jesus gave this answer. "Who then is an intelligent and wise manager — one qualified to share the Remedy effectively in order to nurture the master's staff? It will be the most awesome experience for that aide when the master returns to find them reliably doing so. Truly, that aide will be trusted with all the master possesses. But what if the master's aide is self-centered and says to themself, 'The master has been gone a long time, and who knows when he will return?' and rather than nurturing the staff, they berate, abuse and mislead them, and then go and use the master's resources to party with gluttons and drunkards? That aide will be totally surprised, caught completely unaware, on the day their master returns. The master will let that wicked servant go, cutting their relationship and casting them out with all the other counterfeits and frauds who have peddled false remedies.
>
> "The aide who understands the Master — his design, the problem being addressed, and how to apply the Remedy — and either doesn't heed his instructions or applies a false remedy will suffer many blows: a guilty conscience, warped character, damaged reason, broken relationships and ultimately, a destroyed soul. But the one who doesn't know about the Remedy or how to apply it and therefore doesn't share it, or applies a false remedy will suffer few blows–regret, disappointment, and grief. The more you are given, the more you possess to share with others; the greater your abilities, the more gifts you have to give away.

> "I have come to ignite the fire of truth and love upon the earth, and oh how I wish it were already an inferno! But I have a mission to complete, and the pressure on me to complete it is overwhelming. Do you think I have come to make peace with this selfish world? Absolutely not! I have not come to make peace with selfishness but to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. From now on, those who choose the Remedy will cut dysfunctional family ties, and a family of five will be divided — two against three and three against two. Love will free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, and a father from the selfish exploits of his son; love will sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, and a mother from the selfish demands of her daughter; love will cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law, and mother-in-law toward daughter-in-law." (Luke 12:42-53 REM).

Do you see how design law clarifies this and makes it so easy to understand, but more than that? Do you see how reading this through the lens of God's design law causes our love, admiration, reverence, respect, and trust in God to grow?

The lesson asks us to read Psalms 116:12-14:

> How can I repay the LORD
> for all his goodness to me?
> I will lift up the cup of salvation
> and call on the name of the LORD.
> I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
> in the presence of all his people. (Psalm 116:12-14 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

Can we repay the Lord? Not in some way that is legal, or in some way that covers the expense of what the Lord has done. So if we think in human terms we can never repay the Lord.

But if you think about what God wants as a return from us for His sacrifice, for His investment in us, what do you think? What would make God say, "it was worth it" and make God say, "well done" to us, is there something we can do to repay the Lord in this way?

We can give Him our love, our trust, our loyalty, our faithfulness, our energy, time, our lives in service of His kingdom, which spreads the gospel and plants the seeds of truth into other hearts which the Spirit waters bringing more people back to God. How much would you cherish and feel it was worth it if your sacrifice resulted in saving one of your children from death, but in so doing your child responds by sharing the remedy that saved them with your other dying children and in turn they were also saved?

So this is how I rendered it in the Remedy:

> What can I give to the Lord

for all the goodness he has given to me?
I will carry to others his remedy to save them
and proclaim God's healing character of love.
I will keep my promise to the Lord
to share his remedy with all the nations. (Psalm 116:12-14 REM).

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

> "The Bible does not give us an order of service for worship. But it appears that at least four things are present in worship services. In the New Testament this list includes study/preaching, prayer, music, and tithes and offerings." (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 33).

If you were to practice worshiping like the New Testament Christians, those who accepted Jesus and came together to worship God after the crucifixion, what might that look like?

I am going to list a list of worship practices. Some are from the Bible describing the New Testament church in worship and some are from the pagan cult worship practices of the first century, and some are from both. I want you to tell me, which are from Christianity and which are from pagan cult worship:

- Meeting in some type of a temple, church building or professional worship center—pagan
- Meeting in nature or someone's home—the early church
- Having a professional paid speaker give an inspiring sermon to an observing audience—pagan
- Having a group discussion led by someone understood to be more spiritually mature—early church
- Having an elevated pulpit for the speaker—pagan
- Having a division between the priesthood and laity—pagan
- Celebrating Christmas and Easter—pagan
- Worshiping together on Sunday—pagan
- Collecting offerings during worship service—pagan
- Worship leaders who dress in exclusive and distinct clothing that distinguishes them from the non-religious leaders—pagan
- Every member having a role, spontaneity, freedom, little regulated structure, open discussion—the early church

Where did today's order of worship originate—the New Testament and first century Christian practices or the Catholic mass? The order of worship that most Protestants practice originated in the Catholic mass, not the new testament church. What we do here, with our open discussion, ability for any member to ask questions, and have conversational study of Scripture is much more closely how the early church worshipped.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following, about worship as we approach the second coming of Christ, do you agree or not? And if you agree what would the benefit be?

> **There should be less preaching and more teaching**. There are those who want more definite light than they receive from hearing the sermons. Some need a longer time than do others to understand the points presented. If the truth presented could be made a little plainer, they would see it and take hold of it, and it would be like a nail fastened in a sure place.
>
> It has been shown me that our camp meetings are to increase in interest and success. **As we approach nearer the end, I have seen that in these meetings there will be less preaching and more Bible study**. There will be little groups all over the ground with their Bibles in their hands, **and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures**" (Testimonies to the Church volume 6, p. 87).

This description of little groups having conversational studies of the Scripture is how the early church worshipped, except they had few copies of the Scriptures.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Mark 21:41-44:

> Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44 NIV84).

What are the lessons you derive from this story?

What is more important to God, the amount of the gift, or the motive of the heart?

What about to whom the gift was given? Did that matter? For the purpose of the giver it matters what they believe about the organization and purpose of the gift they are giving.

Read the first two paragraphs,

> Jesus and His disciples were in the temple courtyard where the treasury chests were located, and He watched those who were bringing their gifts. He was close enough to see that a widow had given two copper coins. She had put in all that she had. "But Jesus understood her motive. She believed the service of the temple to be of God's appointment, and she was anxious to do her utmost to sustain it. She did what she could, and her act was to be a monument to her memory through all time, and her joy in eternity. Her heart went with her gift; its value was

> estimated, not by the worth of the coin, but by the love to God and the interest in His work that had prompted the deed." — Ellen G. White, Counsels on Stewardship, p. 175.
>
> Another very significant point is that this is the only gift Jesus ever commended — a gift to a church that was just about to reject Him, a church that greatly deviated from its calling and mission. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 34).

Was the organization she was donating to actively advancing the true gospel or working against it?

Jesus twice overthrows their money tables and drives out the greedy false leaders and tells them they are misrepresenting God.

Yet, this woman didn't know it. She believed that the money was going to be used in the service of God and God recognized her sincerity and she experienced His blessing in her heart and mind and growth in godly character.

However, aren't we also told that Jesus disciples carried a money bag to use in helping people? What if this woman had had more information, perhaps had observed Jesus overturning the money tables, perhaps had a brother who was one of the deceitful priests and she knew the corruption and misuse of funds going on, perhaps she had listened to Jesus and was convicted that He was the Messiah and therefore she gave her two mites to His disciples instead of the collection box at the Temple—if she had done that would she have been wrong? Would she have experienced less of a blessing? Would she have been going against God's will? Or would she have had an even greater blessing because not only would she be giving from a faithful and loving heart, but her gift would more directly support the true gospel, and she would have had greater understanding, insight, appreciation of God's will, principles, methods, kingdom and would have been able to share the true message of Jesus with others.

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read the story recorded in Mark 14:3-9:

> While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.
> Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.
>
> "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached

> throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." (Mark 14:3-9 NIV84).

What lessons do we take from this story?

- Why did some criticize her?
- Whose heart motives were right?
- What did Jesus value?
- Would she have been wrong if she had chosen instead of using the money on ointment to anoint Jesus to instead give it to the disciples to distribute to the poor?
- Were the critics wrong for recognizing the money could have been used in another way?
- Were the critics wrong in bringing up the fact the money could have been used in another way? Why?
- What if they were sincerely interested in blessing others and they were simply frustrated seeing so many people still in need and they simply wanted to use this money to help others—if their motive would have been sincere and not selfish, would it then have been right to criticize this woman's use of the money? Why or why not?
- Does Romans 14 apply here, every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind?
- Who is responsible for deciding where to donate the funds and resource they have in their possession?
- So it wasn't the place of others to determine the motive, reasons, or leading of the Holy Spirit upon another person in how they worship God or return offerings to God. So, even if their motives were good, it was wrong for them to publicly criticize this woman and question her donation. Thoughts?

While in God's kingdom people are to freely decide where to return their tithes and offerings, are there people active in Christ's day and active in our day that make it their goal to get people to donate without the person investigating or considering what the organization stands for, or how the funds are being used?

> Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." (Mark 12:38049 NIV84).

What does it mean they devour widows' houses? Does it suggest taking the wealth of the vulnerable? And don't you think they did so under the guise of advancing God's kingdom?

Jesus said to those religious leaders:

> "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted

> to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mark 7:9-13 NIV84).

What is the lesson?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph:

> The heavenly record book of remembrance also notes the financial faithfulness of God's family members. "The recording angel makes a faithful record of every offering dedicated to God and put into the treasury, and also of the final result of the means thus bestowed. The eye of God takes cognizance of every farthing devoted to His cause, and of the willingness or reluctance of the giver. The motive in giving is also chronicled. Those self-sacrificing, consecrated ones who render back to God the things that are His, as He requires of them, will be rewarded according to their works. Even though the means thus consecrated be misapplied, so that it does not accomplish the object which the donor had in view, — the glory of God and the salvation of souls, — those who made the sacrifice in sincerity of soul, with an eye single to the glory of God, will not lose their reward." — Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 518. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 36).

What does this mean? Is this literal accounting, list of deeds or amounts of donations, or is this symbolic of something else?

What is recorded in the heavenly records? Names, and names represent what? Character, and what happens in a person's character when they are honest, loyal, faithful, true, generous, when they give? What happens in a person's character when they lie, cheat, and exploit?

And what is the reward and what is the punishment?

Read and discuss questions

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 5
Dealing with Debt

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

> The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. (Proverbs 22:7 NIV84).

What do you think of the idea that the rich rule over the poor? Does this still happen in society today?

There are multiple ways the rich exploit the poor:

- Charge high interest on loans
- Tax laws the give advantage to the rich
- Inflation—which is the increase in prices because more money is printed and flooded into circulation, this reduces the buying power of people's savings
- And one of the primary ways that the elite exploit and control the masses is through getting people into debt.

Do we gain more freedom or less by incurring debt? Have you known people who made decisions in life that they would not have otherwise made because they were servicing their debt? Decisions like, staying in a job or taking a job that was not their calling, perhaps a job that was actually harmful to them, like a third-shift job? Have you known people to go along with practices that they would not have gone along with had they not been in debt?

When we are under financial pressure are we more vulnerable to compromising our principles? And if we compromise our principles because of financial pressure, happens to our minds? The normal response to compromising one's beliefs or principles is to feel guilt, if financial pressures prevent repentance, then the way to alleviate the guilt is to warp the mind, to rationalize and justify and the choice to avoid guilt and shame, which means we lose critical reasoning ability, our discernment is undermined, we actually come to believe things to be a certain way when we would not have had we not gone along?
I saw many people do this curing COVID, compromise long standing principles and ethics in how they treat others and then rationalize and justify why it was good to do so.

There are multiple ways to manipulate people, one is through propaganda, misinformation, and deceit. Another is through financial incentives, either through reward, or threat of loss. If persons can become indebted then they can be more easily manipulated through means to service the debt and pressures on them to call the debt or undermine their ability to service the debt.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider the current higher educational system in America—structured so that people can go to school, get an education, but enter the workforce with a high debt. Does entering the workforce with high debt increase the freedom of the worker, or make it easier for corporations and governments to manipulate the professional, get them to take jobs they might not otherwise take?

And in the medical profession, not only do many physicians enter the workforce with large student debt, starting a practice often requires substantial investment of money to buy the equipment and set up the practice. In order to stay financially viable, it is important to have hospital privileges, to be in various insurance networks, and accept government reimbursements. If one doesn't do this, their income is threatened, their ability to service their debts—school debt, professional debt, personal debt such as a mortgage—is threatened.

So, pressure can be brought to bear on physicians to accept treatment protocols, algorithms, practice policies that the physician would not have otherwise accepted had they not been in debt. Once having accepted the protocols, many will justify, see the good in it, close their minds to alternatives that would expose the protocol as suboptimal because that would cause guilt, require action, threaten income, incite fear and insecurity. Have we seen individual physician autonomy and independent decision-making has been severely curtailed over the last 30 years?

When I became a physician more doctors owned their own practice than were employed by corporations, today more than 75% of doctors are employed by corporations. The practice of medicine in America is no longer primarily about health, about making people the healthiest they can be, it is about profit for the corporations; it is a medical industry and physicians are the pawns in the corporation of machine that are manipulated by the industry. Nothing exposed this more than COVID when the long-standing ethics of medicine were set aside and physicians colluded with government and industry to violate their oaths and coerce people into participating in medical experimentation, taking an experimental medical treatment with no proven safety, and no proven effectiveness, and which has now proven to be ineffective, to not do what it was proclaimed to do and worse, to cause serious harm. Yet, having compromised, having rationalized, and justified, and lied to themselves millions still believe the lies.

Now more than ever we can see the wisdom for the historic Adventist lifestyle message of living in harmony with God's principles of health, which reduce sickness and diseases, decreasing the need to put oneself in the hands of a for profit medical industry.

And do you see the wisdom in, as far as possible avoiding debt.

Getting people into debt is a way to manipulate and control them.

How easy is it in our society to get into debt, to get a credit card, to get a loan, to borrow on your next paycheck, to get a title loan?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Are people required to have a worthy need, a good purpose, in order to get into debt, or can someone borrow money for essentially anything?

Some might argue that loaning money is to help people, if that were the case, then would it be so easy to get debt for almost any reason? Or would there be actually safeguards in place to protect people from foolish debt? Parents would you allow your children to take on debts for any frivolous reason if it were up to you?

How easy do you think it would be to borrow money if this biblical principle were applied to all loans in America today?

> "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate" (Exodus 22:25-27 ESV).

Would it be so easy to get into debt today if the loan institutions couldn't charge interest?

And recognize the rich loan money to both make money, but also to manipulate and control people. If the profit option was not available, loans would still be made, less loans, but they would still be made as a way to manipulate and control those in debt.

Second paragraph,

> Why is debt an almost international scourge at every level — personal, corporate, and government? Every society has always had at least a small percentage who were in debt. But today a much larger portion of the people are in debt, and it's almost never to their benefit. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 38).

Do you think it is an accident that the US has so much debt?

The US government currently is over $31 trillion dollars in debt. Is this a good thing? That amount of debt is almost $100,000 of debt for every person in America.

Is debt and debt management of nations going to play any part in events leading up to the second coming of Christ?

When Revelation warns of the beastly system using economic sanctions, no one buying or selling unless they receive the mark of the beast, what would be required to bring that about?

Would financial systems of the world need to be integrated?
Would physical cash need to go away and money become electronic?
Would tracking of financial transactions need to occur?

What would cause people to participate in such a global restructuring of economies?
Would fear play a role? Would the threat of the loss of basic resources, food, clothing, shelter, heat, etc., cause people to cooperate with increasing governmental control?
Would a global financial crisis have a role to play in bring this about? And would large national debt have a potential role to play?

Consider these questions:

- How would our nation function differently if we had no national debt?
- Would our ability to invest in national infrastructure be improved?
- Would our ability to invest in communities and community development be improved?
- Would our ability to provide academic scholarships improve?
- What would happen if we created real jobs for people and have real accountability?

What are some of the reasons the US has so much debt?

- Politicians spending money to reward constituents?
- The government itself is too big
- Is there an agenda to cripple the government with debt?

Do you remember the mortgage crisis that occurred back in the early 2000s? Do you know how that came to be?

Some of the factors, I will not claim this is all of the factors, but some of the factors are that during the Clinton Administration they wanted congress to fund more housing for low income and inner-city development. Congress refused, so the Clinton Administration directed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to change the rules on mortgage loans so that low-income people, who under the previous loan guidelines could not qualify to get alone, could now get home loans. Further, they changed rules on how mortgages were handled, allowing them to be broken up into various investment vehicles and sold and traded. All of this worked to cause housing prices to inflate, by infusing billions of dollars into the housing market, causing housing inventories to decrease and prices to increase. Millions of people got approved for loans that they were not qualified for—i.e. more debt than their income could handle, and worse the mortgage greater than the home was worth. Thus, people were upside down in houses, with loans they could not pay, and homes that even if sold would not pay off the loan. While this was going on, the mortgages were being traded and sold, making billions of dollars for investors, until the people who were not qualified defaulted on their loans.

The banks recognized they had billions of dollars loaned out that would not be paid back and many of these major banks would fail if they were infused with money, so congress passed the bailout bill and bailed out the banks—which got the corporations and the wealthy elites out of debt, but kept millions of Americans in debt as they still owed on their mortgages, while passing the debt long to you and me the tax payer as all that bad debt is now part of our national debt that our taxes will have to eventually pay off. And where did all the money go? It went into the hands of the big corporations and wealthy elites.

If they were going to do this, why didn't they approve the same amount of government bailout of the mortgage industry, but instead of paying it directly to the banks they required the banks to use the money to pay down $250,000 on every primary home mortgage they held? If they would have done this, the banks would have been made solvent, and the people would have been relieved from debt. Those with homes with mortgages less than $250,000 would have had their debt paid off, and others would have had significant equity established which would allow them to refinance at better terms or sell their homes and get something more affordable.

But the government leaders didn't do this? Why? Because much of what the government (and this true for all human governments throughout all human history) does is not for the benefit of the people, it is for the benefit of the powerful at the expense of the people.

All governments on earth are part of Satan's kingdom, not God's. Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world. Satan's government operates on a few ruling elites exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites.

The US Constitution was established to protect the people from the government, an abusive church, and the corporate elites. It has been the best human government ever established in this sinful world, however, its protections have been eroding and the Bible tells us that before Jesus comes, every human government, including the USA, will be part of the beastly system—the system with a few ruling elites exploiting the masses.

Recognize what is happening, don't get discouraged, lift up your head and recognize redemption is drawing near.

SUNDAY

The lesson suggests that there are three primary reasons people get into financial difficulty:

- Ignorance—people just don't know about finances and make mistakes
- Greed and selfishness—living beyond their means, seeking pleasures of various kinds, ego wanting to look good to others
- Misfortune or tragedy—health problems, disasters, accidents, wars etc.

These are the big categories as to why people get into financial trouble, but what about taking on debt in the first place? What can motivate that?

- A desire to improve one's life and that of their family—so a business loan, a student loan, a home loan, a car loan to have a car to go to work. There are a lot of righteous reasons people will take on debt. Does that mean debt is good? No, debt is not good, the motive for someone to accept debt may be altruistic, it may not be selfish, but the debt is still not good.
- For greed and selfishness
- Ignorance, getting tricked by someone

The point of this review is that no debt is good—if the same outcome and problem can be resolved without debt, it is better to do so. You will retain greater freedom. But debt in and of itself is not evil—it just isn't the best. However, the motive for the debt, and the motive of those loaning can be either good or evil.

What can help us from taking on bad debt, foolish debt, trivial debt? Does this biblical wisdom have any bearing?

> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,
>
> "Never will I leave you;
> never will I forsake you."
>
> So we say with confidence,
>
> "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
> What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6 NIV84).

Does being content with one's life, advancing and developing along the pathways of life that God leads one down protect a person from foolish debt?

Does this world want people to be content with what they have within God's will for their lives? Or do the leaders of this world actively do things to incite jealousy, envy, greed, lust for wealth, and discontent?

Why does God say to be content and the world says "it isn't fair that others have more"?

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 6:24:

> "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matthew 6:24 NIV84).

The lesson also points us to 1 John 2:15, but let's read through 2:17:

> **Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him**. For all that is in the world—the **lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 NKJV).

How is this connected to not serving two masters?

Is the focus really about money, or something else? What is it about?

What are the two antagonistic principles that are warring for every heart and mind? Love versus selfishness!

Remember the cascade of sin in the human heart? God created Adam and Eve in sinless perfection. They had love and trust for God operating in their heart and they lived in open communion with God. What happened? They believed Satan's lies about God and that resulted in what?

- Lies believed break the bonds of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, character, body, relationships—a terminal condition

John elucidates the three primary avenues through which fear and selfishness tempt us through our evil desires:

- lust of the eye = materialism, greed, love of money, and possessions
- lust of the flesh = sensualism, the pleasures of the senses
- price of life = egotism, pride, arrogance, elitism, power over others

All of these motives are selfish, driven by fear and the need to control, hoard, dominate, and promote self at the expense of others. They are the exact opposite of the motives of God, who so loved the world that He gave—gave Himself to uplift us.

So as we follow Jesus, our hearts become circumcised, cut away, from valuing stuff, or physical pleasures, or power over others and instead we value God, Jesus, the truth, and others and we experience joy in living for God, fulfilling His purpose, helping free other hearts and minds from the traps of this fallen world.

Read last paragraph:

> We enter into our church membership with praise and thanksgiving to our God, who has created and redeemed us. In point 9 (of 13) in our baptismal vows, we were asked, "Do you believe in church organization? Is it your purpose to worship God and to support the church through your tithes and offerings and by your personal effort and influence?" As Seventh-day Adventists, we all said yes. So this text (Ps. 50:14, 15) is a promise to those who offer thanksgiving to God and are faithfully paying their vows. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 40).

Do you have any concerns about this? Anything about this make you stop and go, "something seems off here"? Or do you think, this is right?

Is the process and practice you read described in this paragraph Scriptural? Is it from the Bible?

What is the process you read described here? It is the process of baptizing people—but what is it that the paragraph describes that people are being baptized into?

In the New Testament, when people were baptized, were they baptized into the Jewish nation? Were they baptized into the Roman church? Were they baptized into the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Adventist, or any other denominational church? What were they baptized into? Into Jesus, baptism was not denominational, it was a public witness of a person entering into an eternal bond of love and trust with Jesus. Baptism was dying to an old life and rising to a new life as an individual who is bonded to Jesus with cords of love and trust, wash clean of the old life of sin and arisen to a new life with Jesus.

Consider this example from the New Testament and see if this sounds like what the lesson described. If these are different, consider what elements are different, what impact those differences have, and why would the procedural differences be employed?

> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."
>
> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.
> "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him…
>
> The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.
>
> As they traveled along the road, **they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him**. (Acts 8:26-31& 34-38 NIV84).

Is this the same process you heard described in the paragraph from the lesson?

What is the difference?

The New Testament baptized people into Jesus, whereas today people are baptized into organizations.

Notice how the process is changed, and the impact it has upon the believer, turning powerful love/trust relationships which would cause believers to change the world like the New Testament church did,

into fear-ridden, legalistic, religionists with a form of godliness without any power, just like Paul described would happen.

Here is what has caused this change. Rather than baptizing new converts into Jesus when their hearts are converted, modern Christianity has substituted the sinner's prayer. And then enrolled the convert into baptismal classes that can last weeks and months, in which they are required to both attest to believing certain doctrines and often change lifestyle practices. The smoker must give up smoking, they must quit their Sabbath job, quit eating certain foods, gain the victory over their addictions, and once they have improved their life enough THEN and ONLY THEN are they permitted to be baptized—because they are being baptized into the organization and not to Jesus, all of this indoctrination and personal life change must be done FIRST in order to protect the organization from people becoming members that are not conforming to the standards.

This process destroys the love and trust in Jesus the new converts have and places the organization into the place of devotion where Jesus should be. This is intentional, the organizations want loyal and devoted followers to their brand, their system, their club, and thus BEFORE baptism the baptismal candidates have to give a public vow to adhere not to loyal love to Jesus, but to the creed or fundamental beliefs of that system—including their promise to financially support that system.

I personally find no objection to supporting denominational churches with our money—they do many good things, schools, hospitals, missions, community service, feeding the hungry etc. I object to inserting the denominational system into the conversion process and supplanting Jesus as the one to whom our vows of loyalty are made.

How should this function? We should baptize people into Jesus whenever they are truly converted, like the Ethiopian. And AFTER they are baptized into Jesus we should invite them to join our organization and educate them about what our organization stands for, what our mission is, what it means to be a member in good standing and instruct them to pray and ask God if God's wants them to serve in our organization or if God has another field for them to serve Him in.

TUESDAY

The lesson gives a three-step plan on how to get out of debt:

Step 1: Stop accumulating new debt, cease all credit spending.

Step 2: Make an agreement with God that as He blesses you, you will faithfully apply your resources to paying off your debts and quickly as possible. You will not buy new stuff with your new income, but pay off debt.

Step 3: Make a list of all debts, largest to smallest, bring all debts into compliance and then begin with the smallest and pay extra on it until it is paid off and then add that amount to the next smallest debt, and keep doing that until all debt is paid.

This is a guide, it is a not a set of rules, but a general guide to be applied individually to a plan that works best in your circumstance to get your debt paid.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph:

> The Bible is very clear that God does not want His children to become responsible for the debt obligations of others. In the book of Proverbs, the Lord has warned us against surety — that is, cosigning or being guarantor for another person. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 42).

Did you know this was a Bible principle?
Consider these Proverbs:

> "Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you" (Proverbs 22:26–27 NIV84).

> "He who puts up security for another will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to strike hands in pledge is safe" (Proverbs 11:15 NIV84).

> "If you promise to pay a stranger's debt, you will regret it. You are better off if you don't get involved" (Proverbs 11:15 GNT).

Why are we not to give security or guarantee another person's debt?

Read second and third paragraph:

> Surety usually occurs when a person with poor credit seeks a loan from a lending institution and does not qualify for the loan. The loan officer will tell the unqualified person that if he or she will get a friend with good credit to cosign with him or her, then the bank will grant the loan and hold the cosigner responsible in the event of a default.
>
> Sometimes a fellow church member will come to you and ask you to cosign. Your response should be: "The Bible says I should never do that." Please understand that the Bible encourages us to be helpful to those in need, but we should not become responsible for their debts.

Could this be one reason?

> "The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously" (Psalm 37:21 NIV84).

Could we be advised not to secure another person's loan to prevent them from defaulting, from defrauding even? And what happens to that other person if they do this?

If a person is a responsible person and wants to pay off their debt, but they have debt that they cannot pay off for reasons beyond their control, what happens within them? Do they have more peace, less worry, less anxiety, less guilt, or do responsible people who have such debt get injured by not being able to pay it back? The conscience of the honest responsible person is not seared by such circumstances, but their mental and emotional health might be undermined with worry, less sleep, overwork to try and pay the debt, feelings of fear and inadequacy, guilt, shame etc.

And what happens to irresponsible people who take on debt and don't pay it back? What happens to their characters, their consciences?

So what about giving money away—will giving money away to people who are capable, but not mature, or capable and not responsible, make the lives of the recipients better?

Is it a Biblical principle to give money away to people who are less well off financially, but who are capable and yet not actively working to improve their station?

What do you think of this Biblical counsel?

> Our brothers and sisters, **we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to keep away from all believers who are living a lazy life** and who do not follow the instructions that we gave them. You yourselves know very well that you should do just what we did. We were not lazy when we were with you. We did not accept anyone's support without paying for it. Instead, we worked and toiled; we kept working day and night so as not to be an expense to any of you. We did this, not because we have no right to demand our support; we did it to be an example for you to follow. While we were with you, we used to say to you, **"Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat.**"
>
> **We say this because we hear that there are some people among you who live lazy lives** and who do nothing except meddle in other people's business. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command these people and warn them to lead orderly lives and **work to earn their own living.** (2 Thessalonians 3:6–12 GNT).

Why is this a godly thing to do and giving handouts to people who are capable is destructive—including government handouts?

What is happening in society today? Do we help people our communities by giving away resources to the capable? Or do we destroy?

If you are an employer, have you noticed in the last few years with the rich government aid programs that it is more difficult to find quality willing workers?

In my 2018 blog, The Benefits of Work, I described how work benefits people in multiple ways.

In Eden, before sin — a perfect world — God gave Adam and Eve work to do. Human beings are created in God's image, and God is a creator. In the likeness of God, we have a built-in desire to be industrious, to engage in meaningful activity, and to use our energy, creativity, and ingenuity to build, construct, devise, make, or otherwise produce something of value, consequence, or purpose.

Such creativity is built into our being, and when we do engage in meaningful activity, whether it be work for the sake of making money to provide for one's family, or gardening, because one loves flower, or drawing, painting, writing, playing music, caring for animals, being a homemaker, or any of a myriad of other industrious activities, we experience growth and a greater sense of wellbeing, meaning, and purpose as human beings. Our sense of wellbeing, of usefulness, of confidence, and even joy all increase.

When we are active, industrious, and engaged in meaningful employment (not necessarily for pay), we are healthier, happier, and experience greater peace.
Conversely, idleness, a failure to engage one's abilities in development or meaningful application, is damaging to one's wellbeing. It undermines a person's dignity, while increasing feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame, and worthlessness, which leads to pleasure-seeking and other acting-out behaviors in an attempt to alleviate the sense of inadequacy. As the old saying goes, *idle hands are the devil's workshop*.

Doing nothing, refusing to engage in constructive activity, and not investing one's energies and abilities into meaningful employment (when one is capable), degrades the human being.
Understanding this, what action could people take if they wanted to demoralize others — to destroy other people's dignity and undermine their God-given individuality? They could take away their usefulness, take away their meaningful employment, and create programs or systems that free the capable from useful labor. They could promote public policies designed to give money, food, clothing, housing, cell phones, cars, and a variety of other resources to otherwise capable people who choose not to work.

I want to be clear: I am not concerned about politics; I am concerned about people — about their health, wellbeing, and integrity.

Throughout time, many others have recognized what I'm saying here:

- "If we take the route of the permanent handout, the American character will itself be impoverished." — Richard Nixon, Republican, 37th President of the USA
- "Working moms, and increasingly working dads, don't want a government handout, but they do need a hand up." — Madeleine Kunin, Democrat, Governor of Vermont and U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland
- "The desperately poor may accept handouts, because they feel they have to. For those who consider themselves at least middle class, however, anything that smacks of a handout is not

desired. Instead, they want their economic power back." — Robert Shiller, Nobel Laureate in Economics and Sterling Professor of Economics at Yale

- "At Year Up, our students — low income 18- to 24-year-olds — come to us having already faced substantial obstacles in life. They are not in search of a handout; what they want most of all is the ability to take ownership of their own futures." Gerald Chertavian, founder and CEO of Year Up; has worked with urban youth for more than 25 years.

I have seen the destruction of wellbeing, the demoralization that occurs when people are given things that they could otherwise earn — whether it be from well-meaning parents, family, friends, church members, or society. When we receive handouts that we don't believe we merit, we experience guilt, loss of esteem, a falling sense of worth, and often feel guilt and inadequacy. This leads to an unconscious need to alleviate the guilt with justification for the handout, contributing to either a sense of entitlement and identifying oneself as being downtrodden, mistreated, or wronged in the past and, thus, the handout is simply compensation and is deserved, or by experiencing physical or mental symptoms of illness that justifies the handout.

Let me be clear here as well: I am not saying that there are no people suffering from real physical and mental illness; there are, and they need our compassion and help. What I am saying is that when handouts are received by those who could otherwise provide for themselves, it causes in them a need to justify the handout, and this can take a variety of forms — either by seeing oneself as deserving, because of some perceived social injustice, or by experiencing some physical or mental problem.

THURSDAY

The lesson contrasts the Bible method of setting limits on debts, and every so often all debts were canceled and the debtor was set free of their debt, versus the practice today of essentially lifelong indebtedness.

Are there any types of debts that are reasonable to take in our society? And why?

- Debts for which you already have the funds to cover and the debts are taken for other financial purposes—perhaps as a tax deduction, because the debt will be forgiven as part of an incentive program etc.
- Using credit cards for convenience that is paid off every month with no interest.
- What about student loans?
- Mortgages versus renting?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 6
Laying Up Treasure in Heaven

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The title for this week is "Laying Up Treasure in Heaven" how do we do that?

When you think of treasure what comes to mind?

Think of some of the movies that have been made:
- Treasure Island
- National Treasure
- King Solomon's Mine
- Treasure of the Sierra Madre

When the idea of treasure comes up, what typically comes to mind?

Do you think that in a world where gold is used as pavement, jewels are used as foundation blocks, and pearls are used for gates, that gold, jewels, and pearls are considered treasure?

What is considered treasure in heaven?

Despite the treasures that the world tries to get your heart to value, in moments of quiet reflection, what are the things you genuinely treasure most?
- The love of your spouse?
- Your 5-year-old, with grass stains on their knees, and dirt on their face bringing you dandy lions with a big smile and "Mommy I love you"?
- Seeing your child give their heart to Jesus?
- Being reborn, having peace with God, freedom from guilt and shame?
- Choosing to serve God and knowing you are useful to God and have a higher purpose than simply accumulating earthly wealth?
- Being part of a movement that advances the kingdom of God and seeing other people freed from the mental and emotional chains of sin and false religion?

What things do you truly treasure?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What do God and the heavenly beings treasure?

Let's look at what Jesus was teaching His disciples about heavenly treasure when a man asked Jesus how to get eternal life. We find this in Matthew 19:16 and we will read through to 20:16:

> Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" [How does this man address Jesus? Does he acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior, God in human form? No, he asserts that Jesus is no different than any other Rabbi or teacher of the Torah. And, where is the primary focus of this man's concern? On self, on securing for himself eternal life. Is his question the same as asking, "What must I do to bring honor to God?" Or "What must I do to fulfill God's purpose for my life?" Or "How can I serve God most fully?" Or "How can I know God's will for my life?" How often do religions encourage the same focus as this man? In other words, how much evangelism suggests the primary gospel message is individual salvation? Certainly, Jesus came to save sinners—absolutely true—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son…" But what does it SAY ABOUT GOD that He loves us so much that He would sacrifice Himself to save us? It is good news that we can be saved from sin, but isn't the better news that God is love? And we are called to bring sinners to Christ for salvation. But can Christianity, if we take the primary focus off of God and His character of love and place the focus on us, become something selfish? Something that burdens people because it is about what they must do, focuses on their behavior, the do's and don'ts with lists of rules, keeping self the center with our fears of sinning, the memories of our past sins with subsequent guilt and shame, our feelings of not being good enough? And can this create a religion of works? Is this man possibly operating from that motive, "WHAT CAN I DO…?" And how does Jesus respond?]
> So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." [What is Jesus trying to do with His question? When Jesus says there is only One good but God, is Jesus suggesting He is not fully God? No, He is trying to get the young man to recognize that Jesus is in fact good, to get the young man to realize he is talking to God. But Jesus is also saying to the man, "If you don't recognize me as God, if you recognize me only as a teacher, then why are you calling me good—all goodness comes from God." Why did Jesus tell Him if he wants to enter into life He needs to keep the commandments? Is Jesus promoting a legal religion, a system of rule-keeping? Is it possible to have health while violating the laws of health? No! Jesus is trying to help this man understand that life is only possible in harmony with the design laws that God built life to operate upon. The commandments are a succinct description of how love function. Love honors others, love doesn't seek to harm, exploit, take advantage of others, therefore love doesn't murder, or cheat, or bear false witness, or steal, love doesn't even have the desire in the heart so love doesn't covet. Jesus is saying, "if you want to have life, you must be restored to my kingdom of love and then you will keep the commandments." But the man didn't understand. he was still thinking of externals, of behavior, so…]
> 18 He said to Him, "Which ones?"
> Jesus said, " 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” [Where in the 10 commandments do we find “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”? Why did Jesus add this to the end of quoting some of the commandments? This is evidence that Jesus was not reciting a list of rules for a legal religion of rule-keeping, but He was describing what people look like when love is restored in the heart. People who love others don’t murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness. So Jesus added such people love others as themselves. Jesus is revealing that the commandments are not legal, they are not a code of conduct to be legally enforced, they are a description of how love functions and how people who love others function. This is what we will do when we love. We will affirmatively NOT commit adultery, steal, murder, bear false witness because we LOVE them and it would go against all we are as people to do such things. Just think of how offensive it would be to you to even consider harming your own child, abusing them in some vile way. If you have love in your heart you would rather die than do such a thing. This is what Jesus is describing, people who love simply do NOT do these things to others. But how did the man respond? Did he respond by saying, “I have loved like this my entire life”? Or did he miss the point and focus on external behavior, rule-keeping, a legal religion? Now, consider. If this young man had been obeying all these commandments his entire life—why is he asking Jesus what he must do have eternal life? Why does he ask Jesus, “what is it I still lack?” Isn’t the fact he is asking Jesus these questions evidence that his rule-keeping is not sufficient, that he still recognizes something is wrong, that he does not have peace with God, that his conscience is not clear, that his guilt and shame are not removed? And what happens to religious people who keep the lists of rules but who have not found the peace with God that comes from genuine rebirth and a new heart that loves God and others? What kind of people do they become? Pharisaical, legalists, judgmental, critical, controlling of others, imperial just like those religious people who crucified Jesus. Notice what Jesus tells him.]

21 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” [We are talking about treasure in heaven today. Is Jesus setting up a new rule, a new commandment that if we want to have treasure in heaven, to be perfect and enter into eternal life then we must sell all we have and give it to the poor? Are we to enter a monastery, nunnery, commune, cloister, or perhaps do like Simeon Stylites who lived in Spain between 390 and 459 AD, and who built a small platform on top of a pillar and lived there for 37 years, he owned nothing, and he did nothing. He did this so he would not sin, since he didn’t interact with anyone. Is this what it means to be perfect? Is Bible perfection about task performance, rule-keeping, commandment compliance, or is it maturity, entering into a mature love/trust relationship with God? It is about maturity of character. Job was described as perfect, because even though Job had many questions, didn’t understand many things, when faced with horrible tribulation and trials, Job never broke trust with God. Bible perfection is about trusting God with our entire being. And this rich man trusted his riches. So Jesus is telling him if he wants to be perfect, then he needs to stop trusting in earthly wealth, stop trusting in rule-keeping, religious rituals, membership into the right church organization, and start trusting in Jesus! How is giving to the poor establishing treasure in heaven? Is there an angelic accountant in heaven that keeps track of all your donations to Goodwill, the Samaritan Center, the Food Kitchen, or your local church, and those who donate to such good programs get credits listed by their names in the books of heaven and

will have more stars in their crowns, bigger mansions, larger estates on the new earth? What is the treasure? Does giving to help others from a heart that loves and trusts God and loves other do something in the heart, mind, character of the one who gives? And is that something to be treasured? Does God treasure that? As a parent if you see your child give something of theirs to help another, do you treasure that?]

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. [Why was he sorrowful? Think about it? What does this reveal? Where did this man place his security, his trust, and what did he value? If you had five children that you love with all your heart and they were kidnapped, and the kidnapper was demanding $50 million dollars to return your children and if you scraped everything you own together you have exactly $50 million dollars. Would you go away sad because you have great wealth, or would you rejoice that you have so much wealth? Why would you rejoice? Because your wealth could be used to free your children and you treasure your children more than your possessions. Consider the response of Zacchaeus after Jesus went to his home.

> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."
> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:8-10 NIV84).

Do you notice the difference between Zacchaeus' response and that of the rich young ruler? Zacchaeus found something he valued more than money and he suddenly found joy in using his money to help others. Can't you just imagine that after this event Zacchaeus started some community help center and for the rest of his life he was a giver, using his resources to help others?

But—wait, Zacchaeus only gave half his wealth to the poor and paid back four times what he took fraudulently. He kept some of his wealth for himself. Didn't Jesus say to be perfect the man must give away all his possessions—Zacchaeus didn't meet this, he didn't give away all but Jesus said he found salvation, he found eternal life. What does this reveal? It isn't about the objective material possessions, it is about the heart's attitude and connection to those possessions. Zacchaeus had his heart set right, had his love for wealth severed, and his affections reset on Jesus and heaven. The rich young ruler did not.]

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" [Why were the disciple astonished? Because the theology, the belief of the day, was that if you were healthy and wealthy you were blessed of God, but if you were sick and poor you were cursed of God. So to the disciples Jesus was saying those who are the most blessed by God, the good people, will have the most difficult time entering into heaven. It didn't make sense. That is because they held a false belief about health and wealth. This same false belief was revealed

when they asked Jesus, about the man born blind, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2 NIV84). Of course, Jesus said neither.]
But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." [Men cannot change their own heart. We cannot recreate godly desires, affections, or genuine love within us. But God can transform hearts, cut away the lust for the things of this world and establish His methods in our hearts—IF we trust Him and invite Him in. We must choose to say yes to God and God does the healing and transforming as we continue to say yes and choose to follow where He leads.]
27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" [What is Peter doing here? Where is Peter's focus? Can you see Peter rubbing his hands together and saying, "Okay, cool, we gave up everything to follow you, YEAH, what are we going to get out of it? What is our reward?" What does this reveal? Doesn't it reveal Peter still has some healing to do? Don't you love Peter? I love God, love the Bible, love how the Holy Spirit inspired these accounts to be recorded, love Peter for being so much like me. I have had these same thoughts, and traveled over this same ground. Isn't this how we think at some point in our journey with God? Jesus doesn't rebuke Peter. But notice what Jesus says.]
So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first. [What is Jesus saying here? Is He focusing on earthly success, accolades, wealth, or on the new heaven and earth, when Jesus comes again? And when He comes again isn't it true that every single sacrifice or thing we gave up here for Jesus will pale in comparison to what we receive there? What of the idea that the first will be last and the last will be first? What is valued most in God's kingdom? When all power was given to Jesus in John 8, what did Jesus do? He washed dirty feet. In Philippians 2 it describes Jesus who was equal with God giving up all His power and position and humbling Himself all the way to death on the cross in order to uplift us—and therefore Jesus is elevated to the highest position of honor and glory. The sacrifice of Jesus reveals the sharp contrast between Satan and Jesus. Satan's kingdom runs on power over others, taking from others to elevate self—a few powerful elites rising over the masses, making up various rules or laws that are enforced upon the masses to exploit, control, and dominate the masses for the benefit of the ruling elites. This is true of every human government in history. And Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world. In Jesus kingdom the one with the most power sacrifices or gives the most for the benefit of the least. Jesus gave up everything that was rightfully His in order to benefit us. And those who live like Jesus will give of themselves for the benefit of others. Then Jesus tells an incredible parable that doesn't make sense at all to the thinking of this world.]

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I

will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'
"So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." (Matthew 19:16-20:16 NKJV)
[What do you think of this parable? What is Jesus trying to teach? Is the landowner being unfair? Who are the actors in this parable? Who is the landowner? Who are the workers? What are the wages? This is a great parable because it exposes the fallacy of imposed law – the lie of penal (legal) salvation. The workers who worked one hour got the same pay as those who worked all day. What did those who worked all day think? What do you initially think when you hear this story? What if we added to the story that those who worked all day were people of color while those who worked only one hour were white – and they all got the same pay? Is that fair? It is totally unfair if we have an imposed-law view, but if we have a design-law view and understand how reality works, we immediately see just how fair God's kingdom is. The payment is eternal life; this is the reward. The field is the earth, where we work with Jesus to save souls. Those who worked all day had salvation early in their lives and the privilege of working with God and, therefore, coming to know Him and His truths more fully and growing in character and skill in God's methods. They applied His methods early in their lives and became more skilled in laboring for Him and applying His principles, which means they became more mature in character than those who worked only an hour. The thief on the cross came at the last hour and got the same pay (eternal life), but he did not have a lifetime of growing in friendship with God. But if one holds the human-law model, the penal lie, then this parable appears unfair. This is why the Pharisees hated what Jesus taught!]

So, what is treasure in heaven?

SUNDAY

The lesson is about Noah and how Noah's life drastically changed when he followed God's command to build an ark and preach about the coming Flood.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Read second paragraph,

> Noah could have spent his time and resources building a home for himself, but he chose to make a drastic change in his life and to spend 120 years of that life in following the call of God to build the ark. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 47).

Yes, Noah had the freedom to choose to spend his time and resources on himself—but he could not do that if he also wanted to:

- Be loyal to God
- Keep open the avenue for the promised Messiah
- Save his family
- Save friends and other humans
- Save the animals
- Save himself

Yes, Noah had a choice, and it was a choice between life and death, not just temporal life and death, but eternal life and death. Noah's choice was made from a heart that loved and trusted God, and a heart that wanted to fulfill God's purpose, a right heart. That is why Noah is described as a right or righteous man because his heart had been set right with God.

Read third paragraph,

> Many skeptics today dismiss the story of the Flood as a myth, often based on scientific speculations about the known laws of nature. This is nothing new. "The world before the Flood reasoned that for centuries the laws of nature had been fixed. The recurring seasons had come in their order. Heretofore rain had never fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist or dew. The rivers had never yet passed their boundaries, but had borne their waters safely to the sea. Fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks." — Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 96. Before the Flood, people argued that a flood could never come based on a faulty understanding of reality; after the Flood, based on a faulty understanding of reality, they argue that it never came to begin with. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 47).

Do we find the same dynamic at work today but in reverse? My blog for the week is God's Promises and the Climate Change Lies Part 1 and is part one of a two part blog on the current climate change lies.

> If you approach life from a biblical worldview, then you understand that there are two antagonistic forces at war on planet Earth—God's kingdom of truth, love, and freedom versus Satan's kingdom of lies, selfishness, and coercion.
>
> These two systems originate from two different living beings: our infinite God of love, who is the source of all truth, love, righteousness, purity, holiness, virtue, goodness, and life itself, and

Satan, who is the originator of lies, selfishness, evil, pain, suffering, disease, deformity, corruption, and death.

God's agencies of light battle against Satan's agents of darkness; truth and love war against lies and selfishness. And this battle enters into every phase of our existence.

God is constantly seeking to lead us out of the darkness of misunderstanding, confusion, and error and into the light of truth. But throughout human history, Satan has been persistently and effectively introducing lies, false narratives, which are intended to replace the truth and entrap hearts and minds in fear and selfishness.

In Eden, God warned that breaking trust with Him and violating the laws He built life to operate upon would result in ruin and death. Satan advanced an alternative narrative—that God lied, that sin does not result in death, and that God was not giving the warning to protect humans from self-inflicted injury and death but rather to prevent them from becoming more powerful and godlike so that God could hoard power and control for Himself. Sadly, Adam and Eve believed the false narrative and humanity became corrupted by sin.

Cain also accepted a false narrative and rejected God's directions, substituting his own works in place of God's provision. In doing so, he was unavoidably corrupted; his rejection of truth and God's instructions led to uncontrolled jealousy of his brother Abel, whom he eventually murdered.

At the time of Noah, God sent a message of impending climate disaster: The world would be destroyed by a worldwide flood in 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Noah faithfully preached that message, warning Earth's inhabitants of the coming climate disaster and offering them the only means of escape—getting on the ark he was building (2 Peter 2:5).

But the ungodly, following Satan's leading, rejected God's warning and presented an alternative narrative. You can imagine these deniers of God mocking Noah as an extremist, an alarmist, a crazy person. They would point to the "science" that proved rain had never occurred, that the waters of the seas and rivers had never left their shores. They would claim that it was scientifically impossible for a flood to happen. They would counter God's revelation with scientific measurements from nature, claiming that there were no such things as floods.

What happened? Jesus shed light on this, saying:

> **As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood** came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Despite Noah's preaching of the impending flood for 120 years, the people didn't know, they didn't understand, they didn't recognize what was about to happen. Why? Because they accepted the false narrative and rejected the message of truth coming from God.

If you lived back in Noah's day, with your current belief in God and the Bible, who would you have believed: Noah or the media and scientific experts of the day?

Jesus said something similar would happen in our day: As His second coming approaches, people will be unaware of and will be unprepared for His return. Why? Because they, like the wicked antediluvians, will reject the message of God and, instead, choose to believe the false narrative that comes from Satan.

And one of Satan's false narratives deluding the world today is a direct denial, rejection, and replacement of a promise given to humanity by God in the aftermath of the Flood:

> As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22 NIV 84).

God's promise is that our climate and seasons will continue stably until the second coming of Christ—that is, "as long as the earth endures."

But the lie of Satan, the false narrative of this corrupt world, is that of "climate change," climate disaster, the ending of human life through the destruction of the climate.

And just like the antediluvians, we must decide which view we believe: the godless, the evolutionists, the pundits of this world, the same people who foisted COVID mandates upon the world, restricted our liberties, and injured our children—or our Creator?

What is the impact on people who believe the climate change falsehood? Does that message inspire people with hope, reduce fear, bring people together in love, and result in greater freedom and liberty—or does that anti-biblical message incite fear, stir conflict, inspire restrictions of liberty, and lead to coercion and control?

Understand this clearly:

- **We are not facing a global climate disaster—we are facing a global spiritual disaster.**
- We are not facing man-made global warming—we are facing man-made global coldness of heart; Jesus said, "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12 NIV84).

Satan blinds people to reality by getting them to focus on something emotional as a distraction to what is really happening:

> The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV84).

Satan's end-time push is active and aggressive and turns the mind away from God, away from the Bible, away from the hope of a new heaven and new earth, to a future in which we supposedly destroy ourselves through overpopulation and climate disaster. Thus, we must save ourselves through activities that actually harm the people—the many various solutions proposed by the so-called "green" movement. Their proposed solutions are anti-human, anti-science, and anti-liberty, and they are pro-elite, designed to help the ruling class dominate and control others. The green movement of climate change propogandists is a movement of the godless bent on destroying the image of God in people and the liberty of conscience.

The purpose and goal of the climate change proponents is to increase chaos, disorder, confusion, uncertainty, and fear so that people, longing for security and safety, will accept a totalitarian ruler who uses force to restore order.

So when you hear the climate change fear purveyors, remember God's promise that the seasons will not change "as long as the Earth endures," reject their lies, and cling to the truth as it is in Jesus.

In my blog this next Thursday I will unpack in part 2 the lies about CO2 and how burning fossils fuels is not destroying the planet, but doing the exact opposite, making the planet more habitable, more green, more human friendly, which Satan hates and the godless, the evolutionists, the green movement purveyors are not advancing God's kingdom—but Satan's anti-god, anti-human thriving, false narrative designed to incite fear and justify totalitarian beastly control.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Abraham trusting God, leaving his home, and following God's calling in his life.

The lesson emphasizes that through Abraham all the families on the earth would be blessed. Why? What is that about? It is about the promise of Genesis 3:15, the promised Messiah that would crush the serpent's head and save humanity from sin. God reveals in this promise to Abraham that it is through Abraham's descendants that the promised Messiah would come.

God gives Abraham, in addition to the promise that all the nations or families of the earth would be blessed through the Messiah, that his descendants would inherit the land. And the lesson points out that this promise was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This is important because Abraham had other children and this makes it clear the promises were not given to Ishmael, or to Esau, but through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But what about the land of Israel today? Is the nation state of Israel today part of this same promise?

There is no doubt that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promising that that region of land would be given to them and their descendants and that through them the promised Messiah would come. But does that mean the nation-state of Israel today is part of that promise, or is it possible that we may have missed a larger promise from God because we have remained focused on that smaller regional promise? Is it possible that this promise to Abraham and his descendants is a dual-fulfillment prophecy and we have not fully appreciated its larger applications?

The Bible is filled with dual prophecies and promises:

- Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:28–32) is also applied by Peter to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–21).
- Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 both start out referring to an earthly king and then transition to the fall of Lucifer.
- Jesus' prophecy about the second coming is also blended with the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24).

In all these dual-fulfillment prophecies, there is a lesser application and a greater application—the lesser is regional; the greater is global.

The promise given to Adam and Eve is the promise given to the entire human race, for all humans were in Adam and Eve. The promise given to Abraham was a regional fulfillment of that global promise. It was the promise that through Abraham's family the earlier promise would be realized; that through Abraham's genetic family, the Seed of the woman that will deliver the descendants of Adam from sin and death will come. This is the focus of Scripture, the plan of salvation. This is why the Bible's focus is on Abraham's children and not the Chinese or Eskimos, not because God doesn't love all people—He does—but because the Messiah was not going to come through those other branches of the human family. The Bible even continues to narrow our focus as we get closer to Christ's arrival. We don't follow all of Abraham's descendants, such as Ishmael's or Esau's children, but only Jacob's line because it is through Jacob's children that the greater promise would be realized. And eventually, we follow only Judah, the ten tribes to the north being assimilated and dispersed.

And what was the promise given to Adam and repeated to Abraham? That a Descendant of theirs, a real human, would come and destroy sin and Satan and save the human race from eternal death.

The covenant with Abraham is the same covenant that was given to Adam, but with Abraham we now have the identification of the specific branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come. And with the recommunication of the covenant to Abraham, God gives a dual-fulfillment prophecy concerning the land: 1) A smaller, local, regional promise that Abraham's genetic descendants would inherit the land of Canaan in order to fulfill their mission to be the genetic family through whom Jesus would be born; and 2) the larger, global, spiritual fulfillment, that the true descendants of Abraham, those who are like Abraham in faith and character would inherit the entire earth!

The covenant with and promises to Abraham focus on two promised lands. The local application is the one in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan for the purpose of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come so that Jesus can fulfill God's greater promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent's head so that the "meek will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)—the true Promised Land.

- The genetic descendants inherited Canaan in order to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that …
- … the spiritual descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

Satan has tricked much of the Christian (and Jewish) world today into believing that the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's children to inherit the land are exclusively to genetic descendants occupying a small strip of land in the Middle East. God's promise is much bigger than that. The promise for the genetic descendants to occupy the small land of Canaan has been fulfilled—Jesus has come. Jesus has confronted Satan, and Jesus has won the victory. Now the promises to Abraham are to be fulfilled on the global, not regional, scale when Jesus returns and we, the faithful, finally inherit the earth.

Here is the biblical evidence for this position:

> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7).

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

> The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84).

This is the larger, global, promise—that the entire earth (east, west, north, south, all points of the compass) will be given to the people of God; the earth will be made new, and those who are like Abraham in character, in faith, whose hearts have been circumcised from sin, will be heirs to this promise and inherit the earth.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin and a highly trained Jewish theologian of the first century, wrote:

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26–29).

Jesus Himself explicitly told the Jewish leaders of His day these very truths, that genetics did not determine who is considered an heir of Abraham and who would inherit the promise. We find Jesus' explanation to the Jewish authorities in John 8:34-45:

> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. [If we don't experience freedom from sin through Jesus, then we are not part of the family of God—that is, not part of Abraham's family.] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." [Jesus tells them plainly that even though they are genetic descendants of Abraham, God doesn't see them as being children of Abraham, but children of a different father. Note, the Jews, to whom Jesus was speaking, understood this point and protested, claiming their genetic heritage.]
>
> "Abraham is our father," they answered. [Jesus' response disallows their genetics as being a valid basis for being considered a descendant of Abraham.]
>
> "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. [Those recognized by God as children of Abraham are those who have the same faith in God as Abraham did and who act on that faith as Abraham did.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." [Jesus again tells them that their heritage is not determined genetically but characterologically. Who do they look like, whose image do they bear, that of God or that of Satan? They have embraced another father, but again, they protest and claim a higher father than Abraham.]
>
> "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [The Jews claimed God as their Father because God created humanity. But Jesus disallows this claim as well, for we are born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and Jesus already said that those who remain slaves to sin have no permanent place in the family of God. Only those who, through Jesus, are freed from sin become part of the family of God and are considered children of Abraham. Note Jesus' answer.]
>
> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a

liar and the father of lies" (John 8:34–45 NIV84). [Jesus unequivocally destroys the idea that genetics determines who is an heir of Abraham, and He makes it clear that it is all about faith, character, love, and trust like Abraham.]

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points.

- The starting point of the global promise was in Eden, in Genesis 3:15; the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur.
- The ending point of the global promise is when Jesus recreates the earth and the meek inherit it; the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people to be the avenue for the Messiah and take the gospel to the world was when they crucified Christ and Jesus said to them, "Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38 NIV84).

Jesus masterfully weaves these two aspects of the promises together in His prophetic description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming as described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. The destruction of Jerusalem occurs because the regional fulfillment of the promise has ended. The genetic descendants kept open the avenue, Messiah had come, but they rejected Him and now there is no further purpose for a regional land to be occupied by them. The gospel must now go to the world. It is time for the global application, which culminates in the second coming and the meek inheriting the earth.

Israel as a political entity today is not the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a great nation. That great nation is the global nation whose ruler is from the line of David. As the angel said to the virgin Mary about her Son, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32, 33 NIV84).

And the writer of Hebrews agrees with our assessment. Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived "in the promised land" (Hebrews 11:9)—"did not receive the things promised" (Hebrews 11:13), that they were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "All of these people" of faith "did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. … They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that "all of these people" did not receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn't he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous. Then the promise will be realized and we, who have faith like Abraham, will receive our inheritance of a goodly land, a beautiful home, perfect and flawless that God intended Adam and Eve to possess. It is true that the meek will inherit the earth, for what God has promised He will fulfill.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the last paragraph the lesson points out that Abraham bargained with God to spare the city.

When God revealed to Abraham His plan to destroy Sodom and the other cities, why didn't Abraham say, "God said, I believe it, that's all there is to it"?

If Abraham had faith in God shouldn't Abraham have simply said, "If you say so sir"?

Was God upset with Abraham for questioning Him?

Is this an example for us? Does God want blind, unthinking, servant-like obedience, or does God want understanding friends who obey because we agree? And if we don't understand what God has said, and we still love God and want to obey Him, does God want us to ignorantly go along or to talk to Him, to question Him?

The lesson points us to Genesis 18, let's read some of this from The Remedy:

> When the men finished their meal, they stood up and headed off toward Sodom. Abraham walked with them for a while to say his goodbyes. Then the Lord turned toward his two companions and said, "Should I hide from Abraham the therapeutic action I must take in order to protect Abraham's descendants from corruption, so that they will become a great and powerful nation – a blessing to all the peoples of the earth – through whom I will fulfill my promise of grace? For I know Abraham and have chosen him to head the family through whom I will fulfill my promise to save humanity. He will teach his children and their families to live in harmony with me and my design for life, to do what is right and exercise good judgment, and I will fulfill through Abraham what I promised him I would do."
>
> So the Lord said to Abraham, "The wail of discord, caused by deviations from my design of love, coming from Sodom and Gomorrah, is so great and their selfishness so malignant that no more time given them will do any good. I have come in person to examine if their selfishness is beyond healing. If not, I will know."
>
> The two angels, in the appearance of men, left and headed toward Sodom, but God stayed with Abraham. Abraham's heart was heavy with concern for the Lord, and in empathy he said, "In the act of cleansing, will you sweep away the spiritually healthy, godly people, together with the malignantly unhealthy – the terminally selfish, who are beyond healing? What if there are fifty spiritually healthy, godly people in the city? Will you really eradicate the whole city rather than seek to uplift it through the righteous? Let it never be that you would do such a thing; you would never destroy the spiritually healthy in order to eradicate the terminally selfish. You would never treat the godly like the wicked – never! Surely, the Ruler of all the earth will do what is right!"

> The Lord said, "If I find fifty spiritually healthy, godly people in Sodom, I will not remove it." (Genesis 18:16-26 REM).

And Abraham keeps negotiating all the way down to ten and God keeps agreeing all the way down to ten.

What does this tell us about God?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jacob who becomes Israel.

How did Jacob become Israel?
When did Jacob become Israel?
What was necessary for Jacob to become Israel?
Could Jacob become Israel on his own?
What took so long?
Is there a lesson in this for us?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on Moses—how old was Moses when he started his ministry for God—when He went back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and lead the people out of bondage?

He was 80 years old! Does this mean perhaps, that Moses, while choosing God over the riches of Egypt, still had some things to learn, some maturing to do before he was ready to fulfill the mission God had for Him?

Does the fact that Moses used his own might to murder an overseer at age 40 give some evidence to the fact that while Moses was choosing God and his people over Egypt, he still had some spiritual maturing to do before he was ready to fulfill the mission?

And what does it tell us about how God determines who is useful in His cause versus how humans determine who is useful?

- What are the chances today, that an 80-year-old murderer would become the president of the general conference?
- What about a known cheat and fraud who tricked his own father in order to steal his brother's birthright?
- What about an adulterer and murderer who seduced a friend's wife, got her pregnant, and then had the friend murdered to try and cover it up?

- What about an uneducated fisherman who publicly curses and swears that he doesn't know Jesus?

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

When Moses returned to Egypt, was he immediately received as a hero and leader by the Hebrews? Or, perhaps some remembered him as a murderer?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 7
Unto the Least of These

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think of the title "Unto the Least of These"? What does it mean?

Jesus gave a description of what it will be like when Jesus comes again:

> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. [When Jesus comes He separates all the peoples of the world. This division of people is called here, the sheep and the goats, but is also called the wheat and the tares, the pure woman and the harlot, the fruitful vine and the withered vine, the righteous and the wicked, the saved and the lost.
>
> Who determines into which group a person finds themselves? I was reading recently in a magazine from another organization that was presenting its views of the 3 angels of Revelation, and they take the position that God determines which group people are in during the judgment. Is that right? When Jesus separates into the two groups is He determining who ends up in the two groups?
>
> If a shepherd separates sheep from goats, does the shepherd determine which animal IS a sheep and which IS a goat, or does the shepherd simply separate the animals based on what they actually are? So in this object lesson, Jesus is telling us that His judgment to separate into two camps does not determine who is a sheep and who is a goat, but merely confirms what is—some are sheep and some are goats and He separates them accordingly.
>
> Then who does determine who is a sheep and who is a goat? We do, it is our choices that determines what type of people we become. And what are the decisions that we make that ultimately puts us into one camp or the other? To believe the truth Jesus revealed about Himself and His Father, to trust Jesus with our hearts and minds, to value Jesus' methods, principles, design laws, practices, and choose to say yes to them and apply them ourselves. This means that the methods we choose to practice in HOW WE TREAT OTHERS determines what kind of character we develop, for how we choose to live and treat others is the fruit of who we trust and what principles we value.
>
> So God divides people based upon whether they live in harmony with His character, methods, design laws—the principles He built life and health to operate upon or not. He separates what is healthy from what is harmful and destructive.
>
> What is the underlying basis of God's division—the law/principles that people choose to embrace and which become written in their hearts. The sheep, the people of God, have God's law written in their heart, they love truth, they love God and others, they respect and protect

the liberty of others, whereas the unrighteous may believe the same list of doctrines, they may observe Sabbath, believe in baptism, claim Jesus as their Savior, tithe faithfully, believe in the Bible, in Creation, and so much more, yet accept the wrong law, the imposed law with its coercive method of pursuing righteousness such that the ends justify the means and they will use power over others to control, coerce, and punish—just like the religious leaders did to Jesus.

Does the world also divide society, people? Along what lines does the world divide? The root motive of worldly division is not love, it is about power and control. So the world always divides in a way that, if you look for it, you will find that a few elites are exploiting the masses through the divisions in society that they incite, inflame, and magnify. Examples:

- Religions used by the unrighteous to exploit the masses, keep groups divided, and empower a few elites—and these religions will always be some form of imposed rules with punishing gods, never do we see religions that live like Jesus seeking to exploit the masses
- Human legal systems that create legal castes or divisions in society that benefit the elites and put obstacles in the way of the masses in achieving true success and autonomy. This includes:
    - Historic state sponsored slavery, which has occurred in almost every society in human history
    - Jim Crow laws
    - Caste systems
    - Divine rights of kings, separating royals from commoners
    - Laws that divide aristocrats from commoners
    - Tax laws, property laws, zoning laws, etc.
    - Laws related to affirmative action and diversity and equity

  Notice the difference between human laws and God's law. Human laws divide by setting up all kinds of arbitrary divisions to "legally" cause and enforce various divisions in society that pit the masses against each other while a few ruling elites siphon off resources and are empowered by these divisions. Whereas, God's laws are the design protocols upon which life is built. Human beings cannot change them, we only live in harmony with them or not. The laws of God treat every person the same regardless of tribe, language, nation, religion, or people group. Break God's law and all people suffer the damaging consequences, return to harmony with God and His law and all people reap the benefits.

  Satan and the elites do not like this, they want power, they want control, and therefore **they want a system that they can manipulate artificially by inserting rewards and punishments that require people to seek them, adore them, worship them**, conform to their demands in order to either reap a reward or avoid punishment. Satan tricks the masses into focusing on individual cases of abuse but miss the bigger picture of who is running the system and who is truly benefiting, and in earthly kingdoms it is rarely the people. The systems of this world are corrupt and exploit the masses for the benefit of the elites.

- So selfish elites exploit people by inflaming division along the lines of race, tribe, language—but wait, didn't God cause this division at the tower of Babel? Yes, why?
    - What happened in the world prior to the tower of Babel? The Flood—and why did the Flood occur? Because the entire world, every living human being other than Noah and his family, hardened their hearts against God in a worldwide confederacy of rebellion and sinfulness to such a point that no truth or love could reach them. And if God did not act, the human avenue through which the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15 would be born was about to be snuffed out and the entire human species lost. So God acted to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. And shortly thereafter, what are the peoples of the world doing? They are uniting again in a worldwide rebellion against God seeking to build their own way into heaven. So God acts at Babel and introduces divisions into human society—language changes, scattering the people around the world, causing the various racial changes—not as punishment, but as a therapeutic intervention to slow the lies of Satan and prevent a worldwide rebellion against heaven in order to keep open the avenue for Jesus to come.

      The divisions of society along race, language, and tribal lines have **NO** moral value—in other words, race, language, nationality, tribe of origin etc. has no bearing in determining who is righteous and who is wicked, who is a sheep and who is a goat. The value in introducing these divisions was to slow the spread of Satan's lies and false narratives.

      And God reverses this division when Jesus comes: We read in Revelation that a great multitude from every nation, tribe, kindred, people and language are saved, gathered around the throne, all worshipping Jesus—meaning they have become one people group united in righteousness, in love for God and others, having God's law written upon their hearts, and they will all received glorified heavenly bodies that will not carry the trace of sickness, disease, and various genetic and epigenetic differences that separate us into different racial groups—we will again be one human race descendants of Adam and Eve but reborn into the family of God with God as our Father and Jesus our Savior. And we will all speak the same language, and it won't be English, or Greek, or Hebrew, or German, or Spanish it will be the language of heaven.
- Wealth
- Politics and political party
- Fame
- Nationality
- Sports team fanatics
- Gender—God divided humankind into male and female with His intention that the two should become one. That the joining of the paired partners in the bonds of intimate and godlike love would result in an experience of mutual love and growth that cannot be experienced in isolation. And the marriage bond of love is a metaphor for the relationship the people of God are to have with God, an intimate union of heart, mind,

motive, method where individuality is retained but a cohesion of trust and love builds creating a greater unit of oneness than can be experienced as a singularity.
    - But the world perverts the godly division of male and female in which our differences are intended to enhance, compliment, and support both parties. The world approaches the godly differences not from love, but from fear and selfishness, therefore differences are a threat, someone must have more power than the other in order to rule over the other, one must submit; or the more recent attacks on godly male and female divisions have been on gender itself, seeking to destroy human individuality, corrupt character, destroy minds, and make people into mindless bots controlled by various elites—they are doing this through a perverse and corrupt diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda along racial and gender lines.

- You can identify all of this evil if you watch the methods being employed. The methods evil uses include:
    - Lies—lies upon lies are told to advance all the various diversity, equity, and inclusion agendas—including the lies attached to these various words.
    - Arbitrary laws and made-up rules
    - Coercive pressures of various kinds, fines, loss of accreditations of institutes, loss of professional licenses, loss of job
    - Accusation—remember Satan is the accuser. Look at how frequently and quickly the DEI proponents are to accuse anyone who doesn't submit to their agenda of being a racist, sexist, misogynist, homophobe, anti-trans or any other label they can accuse a person or business or church of being in order to pressure them to conform to their agenda.

God divides and the world divides—but the divisions are not along the same lines. God divides based on character—those who are like Him and practice His methods because they have returned to love and trust in Him, and those who are like Satan and prefer his methods and practice his principles. But the world divides upon innocuous lines that have no moral importance, but always result in people, in either camp who fight along those lines, becoming more solidified into the satanic mold. Notice as Jesus continues where God divides:]

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'
"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' [What is Jesus focusing upon that makes a person a sheep, one of the righteous? It is how we treat others—why? Because how we treat others reveals

what law, methods, principles we have chosen to accept and apply to ourselves. It reveals whose kingdom we prefer, the kingdom of God or Satan.

What is implied by their question "When did we see you…and do this?" Doesn't the question indicate that they were not doing these good things to earn credit in heaven, or as a requirement from God, or as a rule, or a means of getting themselves off the naughty list and onto the good list, but this was at outworking from hearts that have been changed? We have choices in life, to trust or distrust God, and then in that trust to apply His methods in how we live, which means in how we treat others. And the methods we employ in how we treat others solidifies into our characters the law that we value.

Do we value the law of God or the laws of men. The Jews who crucified Christ valued the laws of men, even though they claimed they worshipped God, and they demanded Jesus be taken off the cross to keep the Sabbath law of God—the truth was that they valued and practiced coercive force over others, not love, truth, and liberty. They were not willing to leave people free to choose for themselves, but instead used their power and position to bring external pressures to bear to force their way upon others. This is the method of Satan.

And this is the method used during COVID and the forced business closures—please don't buy into the lie that those closures were necessary to stop a virus or save lives, please be wise and discerning enough to realize that the virus was not stopped or slowed by these interventions—because the interventions were never intended to stop the virus. This was a division in society inflicted for the purpose of the elites exploiting the masses to empower the elites. Notice that the big businesses didn't close, but the small businesses for forced to close—the businesses owned by a single mother struggling to support her family were closed, but the corporate businesses were not. I guess the virus new not to enter a national chain business. Realize that liquor stores were kept open while small businesses were forced to close—is alcohol a necessity for life? Does alcohol improve the immune system? No it makes one more vulnerable to infection. Or the arbitrary and completely ineffective mask mandates—including outdoor mask mandates—did this stop the spread? No, and multiple studies prior to this documented that such actions don't stop community viral spread—again evidence that the action was not intended to stop the virus but for another reason—power, control, and condition people to accept arbitrary governmental, anti-constitutional, coercive authority. Or the forced injection with a substance that has no ability to prevent infection, reinfection or stop the spread—yet coercion was used. Understand, what happened with COVID was societal manipulation, behavioral and psychological conditioning of the masses, to justify ungodly methods in the pursuit of a claimed good cause so that people will be even more willing to coerce their neighbor and use ungodly methods on their own families the next time. And it is coming! And those who would use these ungodly methods on others… well Jesus describes them next.]

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' [I was a single parent working to support my family and you forced my business to close. I was a healthcare worker and you threatened my job if I didn't violate my conscience in the care of my Spirit Temple.]

> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
> "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'
> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46 NIV84).

Understand, the methods we choose to practice in how we treat others determines the God we accept, the law we practice, and the kind of people we will become.

Satan is not deceiving the majority of the world into overt Satan worship. He didn't trick the Pharisees in Jesus' day with idol worship—he tricked them into embracing and practicing his evil methods in the pursuit of what they believed was right.

The lesson draws our attention to the Scriptures that focus on caring for the alien, fatherless, and widows.

What is the significance of this? Is it merely their status as aliens, fatherless and widows, or did those three groups signify something more?

In Bible times, how were strangers or aliens to be treated?

Do we have examples from how Abraham treated the angels that were appearing as men?

Is there some element of hospitality that is expected for a traveler in those days? Why?

Did they have:

- Rest stops?
- Convenience stores?
- Fast food restaurants?
- Travel lodges and hotels?

So for the stranger and alien what is God wanting people to do? To act in love, mercy, grace, kindness—to help others. And what does that do for the people of God? And what does that do for the kingdom of God?

What about the fatherless—what were the issues and what do they represent to us today?

- Certainly there were elements of financial security, having a home, food, and protection, and often times inheritance came through the father
- But in that society were fathers supposed to provide something more?
- The fathers were supposed to be the priests of the home, to lead the family into the knowledge of God, to instill into their children the love of God, teach the children the commandments of God, the purpose of their existence as individuals and as a people group, to lead them to honor

God in the methods they practiced in how they lived and dealt with others. Thus the father was a symbol of our heavenly Father, of Jesus, and the fatherless would be symbolic of those who don't know about God, are not a part of God's family.

- Caring for the fatherless was to both inspire them and us to act in love and help provide for the temporal needs of the orphans, but also inspire people to search out the spiritually fatherless and bring them to God and invite them into the family of God, to be adopted as sons and daughters of God.

What about the widows?

- Again, in that culture there was certainly the aspect of daily needs, home, clothing, food, work and providing for their sustenance.
- But was there something more represented in this instruction as well?
- There are the literal widows that need temporal assistance with sustenance and in providing that assistance people grow in love as they practice godly methods.
- But widows also serve as an object lesson. They represent people without a husband—a husband is the symbolic representative of Christ. We were created in Eden to be in a holy union with Christ, but because of sin we have been separated from that perfect union and are born into the world in the position of the widow, one who doesn't have a husband. Christ is the groom and we who make up the church are the bride of Christ. The widow has no husband no one to provide a home, a name, a position and those who do not enter into the love/trust relationship with Jesus don't have a heavenly home, a new name, or a position in God's kingdom. It is only through being reconciled to Christ that we find our home, name, and place. So the widow represents those who are not saved, those who haven't accepted Jesus, they are alone, starving, homeless i.e. without a heavenly home. And we are to introduce them to Jesus and invite them into the family of God.

We should not neglect the literal physical needs of the less fortunate—but we should recognize that providing only for the physical needs and not ministering to their spiritual needs is ultimately meaningless. Our true goal is to introduce people to Jesus, to bring God's love, methods, principles into their lives—which will certainly work to reduce suffering and deprivation in this world and advance human health and thriving, but all for a higher purpose and that is to know God, honor God, live for God, advance God's purpose on this earth, which is to love God and others. In doing so real human suffering is reduced, but more importantly hearts and minds are transformed to receive eternal life.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the time Jesus went to the Synagogue and read from Isaiah 61:1,2 and applied it to Himself.

Let's compare what is recorded in Luke that Jesus read with what is written in Isaiah—see if you notice any significant differences:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18–19 NIV84).

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn… (Isaiah 61:1–2 NIV84).

Did you notice that Luke records that Jesus left out "and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn"?

Why do you think Jesus left this out when He read it and then said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21 NIV84)?

What were the Jews looking for? They were looking for a Savior who is like Satan in character. They were looking for a powerful being who will use physical might to destroy their enemies, to punish the Roman, to have the same earthly system of imposed laws and forced compliance, only with the Jews in charge to run that satanic system—and, of course, they only wanted to have such a system of power and control in order to save lives.

So Jesus left off the only line from Isaiah's prophecy that could be misconstrued to teach the false satanic version of God that they preferred. Jesus wanted to draw the distinct contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.

Some might ask, but why did Isaiah even have that line in there about God's vengeance if God wasn't going to, at some point, use His power to take vengeance?

Or, some argue that Jesus left that line out because that wasn't part of His earthly mission. He was here to take our sins and pay or legal sin debt by sacrificing His life, the vengeance part of Isaiah's prophecy comes at the end of time. So Jesus left it out back then because it didn't apply to the mission He was fulfilling at that time.

What do you say about this?

What law lens do you read and understand it through?

If we have the human law lens, then what is vengeance? It is using power to harm someone, to make them pay, to inflict some recompence upon them.

But what if we have design law, then what is vengeance?

We only have to let the Bible interpret itself, Isaiah interpret his own use of then term and we have our answer:

> Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities" (Isaiah 1:24-25 NIV84).

Doctors take vengeance upon disease, cancer, infections, not upon patients. God takes vengeance upon sin, not sinners. He seeks to destroy lies with truth, selfishness with love, rebellion with loyalty, cruelty with kindness, and coercion with freedom.

Notice what Malachi says, and this is describing the time in human history right before the second coming, the time when the sanctuary is cleansed or when the bride of Christ is cleansed and prepared to meet Jesus face to face:

> "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. [Who is this messenger? In Jesus' day this was John the Baptist, who went before Jesus and prepared the way for Jesus. The Apostles asked Jesus wasn't Elijah to come before the Messiah and Jesus said that John was the fulfillment of that coming in the spirit and mission of Elijah. This is from Malachi chapter 4, where the prophet says that the Lord will send the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Before the second coming a message goes forth like the one Elijah gave to prepare the people for the return of the Lord. And what is that message? What did Elijah famously confront and call the people to do? He confronted Baal worship. And who was Baal?
>
> Baal was the son of El (i.e., El-ohim or El-Shaddai). He was the god of weather and was often called "Almighty" and "Lord of the Earth." Baal was the god who brought rain, thunder, lightning, who fertilized the earth, controlled the sun, and brought the harvest. Baal fought the great serpent leviathan, as well as battled against Mot, the god of death. And most amazing of all, it was taught that Baal died in his battle with Mot and was resurrected to bring life to earth.
>
> So what was the problem with worshiping a god who was the "husband and protector of Israel," the son of El, who controlled the weather, who brought rain, sunshine, and fertility, who blessed with a full harvest, who warred against the great serpent and death, who died and was resurrected to bring life to the earth? What was wrong with this god? What was Elijah opposing? What made Baal worship false?

Baal required payment, appeasement, sacrifice be offered to him in order to receive blessing or benefit.

Baal become Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people, and Jesus Christ to all people who believe that God's law is like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed penalties, and requires the blood of a human sacrifice be offered to Him in order to pay Him not to kill us.

So today God has a people who have a message to the world that is to prepare the way for Christ to return. It is a message that God is the Creator and His laws are design laws, the protocols life is built upon. That sin is transgression of God's law, and sin causes pain, suffering, and death, and that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to take up our terminal condition and destroy the cause of death and restore the cause of life in humanity and thereby reconnect humanity to God. Thus the Bible says that Jesus "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light" 2 Timothy 1:10, and that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

This is the message we are giving, to prepare the world for Christ's return! As this message is advancing, Malachi continues:]

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. [What temple? Is this a building made of stones and wood? Is it a building in heaven made out of inanimate materials? Or is this speaking of the spirit temple, the corporate body of believers that are founded on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ and built upon the apostles? What does the text say next…]

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.** [So what is being purified when Jesus comes to His temple? The believers, who are represented as the Levites, the priesthood of believers. So, what temple does He come to? And this is God working to remove all our dross, the impurities in our lives that we have asked Him to remove, that we long for Him to remove, even the ones we haven't yet identified.] Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. [What are the offerings we bring? Present yourselves as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual or acceptable or true worship (Romans 12:1). Or as David prayed, "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:16-17 NIV84). This is what God wants, to heal all the damage with in us. Malachi continues]

"So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 3:1-5 NIV84). [What judgment? What law model? This is diagnosis, this is accurately diagnosing what is actually the condition of the heart and mind. Notice who he would testify against, those who oppress widows and the fatherless…He is separating sheep

from goats. And what determines who is a sheep and a goal? The actual condition of their characters. This is not a judicial process. This is God working to cleanse the hearts and minds, to take vengeance on sin, rebellion, lies, selfishness by removing it and restoring us to oneness and friendship with him. But, He leaves every single person free and in the end God respects the free choice of every person and separates them based on what they have chosen.]

So Jesus read to them that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled to them and how did they receive Jesus' message? They hated Him and didn't want His kingdom.

How do you think we as Christians today would receive His message? Have we seen over the last several years the sheep and goats manifesting their characters in how they treat others? Have you seen many people, under the guise of righteousness, claiming only that they want to love others, advancing the methods and practices of Satan?

The lesson goes on to point out that Jesus overthrew their ideas about who was right with God and who wasn't. He rejected their false idea that poverty meant a person was cursed of God and that wealth meant a person was right with God. The lesson states in the last paragraph, "Jesus' love for the poor was one of the greatest evidences of His Messiahship…" thoughts about this?

We all agree that Jesus loves every human being regardless of race, tribe, language, social status, wealth or poverty, sickness or health—so we agree that Jesus loves the poor.

Questions:

- Did Jesus multiple a few loaves and fishes to feed multitudes on more than one occasion?
- Did Jesus have gold coins appear in a fish's mouth?
- Did Jesus have the nets of the disciples overflow to bursting with fish?
- Did Jesus have the **ability** to provide gold coins, or baskets of fish, or storehouses of grain to the entire nation? Then why didn't He?
- Couldn't Jesus have provided resources to every single human being in Palestine while He was here to lift them all out of poverty? Then why didn't He?

Was His primary mission to relieve poverty?

What would have happened if Jesus would have done this?

Can we, by giving wealth to people, make them righteous?

Can you save people from themselves, from sin, by giving wealth?

Does that mean we don't ever give to help the less fortunate? Of course not, but it does mean that we must recognize what Jesus said that we will have the poor with us until Jesus comes, that programs designed to eradicate poverty are misguided and will almost always cause more harm.

Our godly goals are to create opportunities for people to embrace and participate with Jesus and the things of God, to experience improvement in their lives—which means people have to make the choice to say yes to God and to embrace His methods into their lives.

Often times, it is the experience of the pain of our foolish or rebellious choices that breaks people out of their denial, their self-delusion, and they become open for the seeds of truth to be implanted into their hearts. In various 12-step programs this is called hitting rock bottom. We see this in the parable of the prodigal son, who squandered all his wealth, ended up homeless living with pigs and eating pig food. The father remained wealthy and could have hired a social worker to go to his son and buy him food from Pizza Hut, and put him up each night in a government paid hotel, and buy him a bus pass, and give him a cell phone—but if the father would have done that, do you think the boy would have, as the Bible says, "come to his senses" or would perhaps the boy thought "I am doing okay" and remained in his self-destructive lifestyle and never returned to his father?

Was the father being unkind, unloving, selfish, or cruel by refusing to reach out and help his son in his homelessness?

Has Satan tricked many empathetic and good hearted people into giving to people what they could legitimately provide for themselves and thereby becoming enablers that enable and collude with the self-destruction of these souls?

Most of the pro-social programs in our society do not help people from a godly perspective, they function to destroy godly character and ultimately keep people trapped in discouragement, dependency, and helplessness.

Consider the Bible method of helping the less fortunate in **MONDAY's** lesson first paragraph:

> In their writings, the Bible's authors included many of God's provisions for the poor, the strangers, the widows, and the fatherless. We have records of this all the way back to Mount Sinai. "Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove" (Exod. 23:10, 11, NKJV). (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 58).

Can you recall any people in Scripture who were benefited by this system to help the poor and the widows? Ruth and Naomi and while these poor women were allowed to get grain without paying for it, for free, how did they get it? They had to go out and glean it themselves, and then who had to thresh it, and then grind it to flour, and then cook it?

What are the lessons from this method and the benefits of it?

- What was provided? That which they could not provide for themselves. They did not have fields to sow, nor seed to sow, nor did they have money to buy, so God made provision that the food would be available as they had no means to grow it or buy it for themselves. But did they

have the means to glean, thresh, grind, and prepare it themselves? Yes! And this they were required and expected to do.

- And what did requiring them to do as much as they were capable of doing for themselves result in?
    - They would be physically active. This results in all kinds of physical health benefits to mind and body.
    - Their useful labor would give them a sense of accomplishment, purpose, worth, which would diminish the discouragement and hopelessness that can come from uselessness. It would help them build a sense of autonomy, a sense of achievement, to inspire them to do continue to develop themselves.
    - It would prevent them from burdening others with that which they could still do for themselves.
    - The work with minimal returns, enough to feed themselves, might motivate them to seek better employment that would not only allow them to buy as much food as they gleaned, but to improve their station.
- What happens when we provide for people that which they could legitimately accomplish for themselves, but through choice, through negligence, or laziness refuse to do?
- What happens if we give passing grades to children who do not actually learn the material or achieve passing grades—regardless of the reason? If a child comes from objective disadvantage such that they have no books to read, no teachers to teach, no environment to learn and they somehow end up in our classroom, would it be a benefit to such a child to give them a passing grade even though they cannot read? Why or why not?

In the second paragraph, the lesson tells us to defend the poor in addition to the fatherless—this identifies another group besides the fatherless and the widow—the poor. And the poor are the literal economic poor, but they are also representative as an object lesson to the poor in spirit, the discouraged, the down in heart, the exploited, those who don't know the joys of salvation in Jesus.

The lesson contrasts the godly ministry to the less fortunate, which seeks to relieve immediate needs while provide opportunities for individuals to become autonomous, mature, develop, and grow into the full stature of sons and daughters of God—not simply relieve immediate needs, with another worldly corruption. Read the last paragraph,

> In contrast, even in more modern times, particularly in England, under the impact of what has been known as "Social Darwinism," many thought that not only was there no moral imperative to help the poor but that it was, in fact, wrong to do so. Instead, following the forces of nature, in which the strong survive at the expense of the weak, "Social Darwinists" believed that it would be detrimental to society to help the poor, the sickly, the indigent because, if they multiplied, they would only weaken the social fabric of the nation as a whole. However cruel, this thinking was the logical outgrowth of belief in evolution and the false narrative it proclaims. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 58).

What is the difference between "Social Darwinism" described above and what Paul describes "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10 Niv84)?

The Darwinists believe that there is no God, that we are in the process of evolving to higher life forms through the stronger surviving to pass along their genes, therefore it is helpful to future generations for the weaker people with weaker genes to be removed from the gene pool and over time the species advances. In passive application it would mean not helping those struggling but allowing them to die. In active application, it would mean actively killing those who can't defend themselves—kill or be killed.

The Bible view is that we are made in the image of God and life and health only happen in harmony with God and His design laws for life. One of those laws is the law of exertion, if you want something to grow in strength you must exercise it, because if you don't use it you lose it.

Therefore, godly people provide opportunity for others to apply their God-given abilities in useful and productive ways which helps that person mature and develop, but we do not assist people in destructive activities for doing so helps the pathology grow stronger.

Providing subsistence for a person who could provide for themselves and are only hungry because they refuse to work, enables corrupt traits of character in that person. Providing them an opportunity to make a living, or earn a meal, is a godly way to provide for those who are capable.

THURSDAY

Has us consider Job—what are the lessons you value from the book of Job?

Read last paragraph,

> Ellen G. White suggested, "Do not wait for them [the poor] to call your attention to their needs. Act as did Job. The thing that he knew not he searched out. Go on an inspecting tour and learn what is needed and how it can be best supplied." — Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 151. This is a level of money management and stewardship of God's resources that is beyond the practice of many of God's children today. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 60).

Does this Christian counsel harmonize with or contradict what we have been saying in class today?

The key to this statement and is differentiating what is "needed" from what is "wanted" or what the world sets up as a standard of need. And then to answer "how best it can be supplied," "best" meaning what? Most economical? Easiest for the helper? Or best for helping the person in need recover the image of God within them and fulfill the purpose God has for them?

Might the best in one situation being giving money as a scholarship for a student who cannot pay for themselves? But does the scholarship donor attend the classes, read the books, do the studying, write and turn in the assignments, or does the scholarship recipient still have a lot of work to do in order to develop themselves?

Might the best thing in another situation be to provide an admittance to a university but not provide funding and allow the student to work their own way through?

Isn't it easier to just give money blindly than to investigate and determine what is actually needed and then decide what is the best way to provide it?

Wouldn't it be even easier if, because we care so much for others, if we could convince our government representatives to pass laws to tax our fellow citizens who are not as caring and godly as we are and take their money and create various social programs to help people, giving away vast sums of money to people who are poor but without inspection of the actual need and no pursuit of the best way to provide the need?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 8
Planning for Success

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think of from the title, "Planning for Success"? The lesson rightly asks, how do we define success?

When you think of planning for success, what do you consider to be success? What standard do you use?

What determines whether you are successful or not?

My granddaughter Lennox played on the Standifer Gap SDA school basketball team this year and they did not win one game—were they successful?

Well they…

- Improved their basketball skills
- Improved their cerebellar brain function, which helps develop their overall brain organization and impacts thought organization later in life
- Experienced the physical health benefits of exercise
- Learned teamwork
- Experienced team bonding and improved friendships
- Learned how to handle themselves responsibly and focused upon being good sports, having positive attitudes, affirming others, being kind to the other team members etc. and while they didn't win a game their team was the unanimous choice of all the other teams for the sportsmanship award.

Were they successful or did they fail? Doesn't it depend on what criteria one uses to measure success and failure?

- I am proud of Lennox—not for how well she played basketball—even though I saw improvement in her physical skills. What I am truly proud of her for is her spirit, her attitude, her choice to stay positive, to focus on kindness, and caring about the people, including the other team members, more than winning. That is evidence of Jesus in your heart!

What is the standard that determines success in God's kingdom?

- Is it the Ten Commandments?
- If we keep that list would that be the measure of success?

- Would the motive in the heart have any bearing on whether one is a success when keeping that list?
- Love for God and others?
- Living in harmony with God's design laws?
- And what does living in harmony with God's design laws look like?
- Is it measured primarily by performance, how well one does on tasks and deeds, for instance we know loving others helps, so do we measure success by counting how many people we feed, or how many articles of clothing we give to the poor, who how much money we give? Or is success determined by attitudes and motives of the heart when carrying out the action? The Bible says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV84).
- So would success be a person who:
    - Loves God and others
    - Loves the truth and is willing to grow in new truth
    - Is honest, kind, loyal, faithful, and trustworthy
    - Is mature and self-governed
    - Is wise in the principles, methods, and design laws of God

How does a person become like this?

- By beholding we are changed—we must first and foremost have the truth about God as revealed by Jesus at the center of our lives.
- We must be won to love God and cherish Him and value His character and methods and long to be like Him.
- Then we eagerly open our hearts and actively ask God to come in and transform us. We experience new motives and new desires and then we must choose to apply the truth God has revealed to our lives and then we experience the joy of living out the principles of God. The selfish and corrupt things of this world become offensive and disgusting to us. And as we choose to live out God's principles we mature.
- When we slip up, we know God loves us and we go to Him in sorrow, in repentance, in disappointment with ourselves, and experience His grace, forgiveness, and healing power so that the next time we face a similar situation we will be quicker to recognize the danger and choose a different path.

What is the standard that the world measures success by?

- Power
- Position
- Wealth
- Fame
- Clicks, followers, or views
- Gold medals, awards of various kinds
- Performance, how well one completes a task—winning at all cost
- Survival

Do we sometimes confuse these two standards?

Consider this historic quote from *Christian Education* about the Christian school at Battle Creek MI, what do you think? Any relevance for us today?

> Our College at Battle Creek is a place where the younger members of God's family are to be trained according to God's plan of growth and development. **They should be impressed with the idea that they are created in the image of their Maker, and that Christ is the pattern which they are to follow**. [Is this the message our young people will get in the public-school systems? Does it make a difference in the development of our children if they believe they are made in God's image and are to pattern themselves after Christ, or if they believe there is no God and they are just the final link in an evolutionary chain of evolving animals in which the strongest kill the weakest?] **Our brethren** permit their minds to take too narrow and too low a range. They do not keep the divine plan ever in view, **but are fixing their eyes upon worldly models**. [Who is doing this? Our brethren, our fellow church members, leaders, and educators. Do you think she is suggesting that our brethren are rejecting the belief in God and the Bible, and are teaching that we evolved from lower life forms? No—she is not suggesting that. She is saying that our Bible believing, God fearing brethren have in some other way had a narrow view and have been fixing their eyes on worldly models. What might that be? Could it be the worldly model of law and justice? A worldly model of a god who makes up rules and is required to use his power to punish rule-breakers and that that god requires some legal payment be made in order to propitiate his wrath? And what happens to the heart and mind if that kind of a god is internalized?] Look up, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and then labor that your pupils may be conformed to that perfect character. [What is the recommendation? Take our eyes off worldly standards, and instead make Jesus the center. Is there a law involved in this recommendation? The law of worship—we become like the one we admire and worship. And what do we see in Jesus? We see the Father.] Christian Education 41.
>
> **If you lower the standard in order to secure popularity and an increase of numbers, and then make this increase a cause of rejoicing, you show great blindness**. If numbers were evidence of success, Satan might claim the pre-eminence; for, in this world, his followers are largely in the majority. [Do we ever get tempted to measure success by numbers? Have churches ever had numbers of baptisms as the measure of success for their pastors? And what about lowering the standard to keep our governments approval of us, our government funding, Medicare reimbursements of our healthcare institutions? When is it okay to exchange the principles of God for the methods of this world? Have we seen over the last several years various Christian organizations justifying the use of coercive force on others, even claiming to do so is an act of love?] **It is the degree of moral power pervading the College, that is a test of its prosperity**. It is the virtue, intelligence, and piety of the people composing our churches, not their numbers, that should be a source of joy and thankfulness. Christian Education 42.

What is to be the thing that we are to value, that we hold as a standard of whether we are successful or not? Christlikeness of the people in our institutions.

Do you know what the motto of Liberty University is? *Training Champions for Christ.*

In every leadership meeting that I have attended, they make this mission central—they make Christ central, make standing for Biblical truth central and actively seek methods of teaching that incorporates the truth of God's kingdom into every aspect of learning.

As I was thinking about these things in preparing the lesson, I came across this historical quote from one of the founders of the SDA church. I feel confident that the faculty at Liberty would agree with this, what do you think?

> It should be the fixed purpose of the youth to aim high in all their plans for their life-work. They should adopt for their government in all things the standard which God's Word presents. [What government? Their government, in other words, how they govern themselves. What is the standard that God's Word presents that we are to adopt for our self-government? Is it a list of rules? Should we go to the Bible and find a list of approved foods and prohibited foods and then make a rulebook and not only apply it to ourselves, but also judge others who claim to be Bible believers by that list? If we see people eating foods on the naughty list then can we be sure that they are not following the Bible? Or perhaps rules about dress, or jewelry, or religious rituals. Is this what the author means by living by the standard in God's Word?] This is the Christian's positive duty, and it should be also his positive pleasure. [Do you hear any contradiction in this sentence? Or do you recognize this author's understanding of design law? Can you make a rule that your child is required to eat turnip greens? Can you even enforce that rule so they will eat them to fulfill their duty to eat foods on the healthy list? Can you make them take pleasure in it? So how can our fulfillment of Biblical duties be a pleasure? God instructed throughout Scripture that His people were to observe Sabbath, but in Isaiah, He told them in order to truly keep the Sabbath they must delight in it. This is design law. We don't really obey God until we move from children who obey out of duty, out of fear of punishment, out of obligation, because the rules say so, into mature people who have come to recognizes that God's laws are the laws life are built upon and we freely do it because we not only want to, but we delight in it. Consider teeth brushing, how a child does it because of a rule, but as an adult we delight to brush our teeth because we love keeping our teeth healthy.] Cultivate respect for yourself because you are Christ's purchased possession. [What is the lesson here? What is the idea being taught? Why should a person have self-respect? Because God so loved us He not only created us in His image, but Jesus died to redeem us from sin. We are valued and cherished by God and we are to recognize our value and respect ourselves as children of God. In other words, our value comes **in who we are**. Is that the world's standard? Or does the world place value on what people do not on who they are? In the world we are valued because we get good grades, hit the most home runs, can run faster, jump higher, sing better, speak more eloquently. Does the world value people for who they are or for what they do? God wants people, including our children, to understand who they are as His children and respect themselves as His redeemed and cherished people and to value themselves and others for who they are.] Success in the formation of right habits, advancement in that which is noble and just, will give you an influence that all will appreciate and value. [What determines what is noble and just? Don't we hear a lot about justice in the world and doing what is just? What is God's standard of justice? It is God's law, and how does that function? It is the law of love, truth, and

liberty—the laws of reality. We cannot be just if we violate God's law. One of Satan's traps is to get people to pursue some justice via his methods, methods that violate God's design laws—made up rules by enforcement, manipulation, and coercion rather than truth, love, and conversion.

And how do we develop habits of any kind? By repetition, by doing things over and again until neural networks are laid down that make our responses semi-automatic. This includes motor habits like how you button your clothes or tie your shoes, but also habits in how we process information and treat others. Notice the counsel on the types of habits we are to develop.] Live for something besides self. [Is this a rule? Interestingly, the author did not say live for someONE besides yourself, but for something besides yourself—in other words a higher purpose that survival-driven me first. It is a call to altruistic living, to serve a greater purpose than self-advancement, which will mean our lives become blessings to others.

But what happens if we use force to make a person do something that is beneficial to others, that that person doesn't agree with? What happens inside the one forced? God's government does not function like human governments. God does not use force to get our compliance. He will, with children, act the role of a loving parent and discipline, but in the end, when He knows we have had enough truth to make our decision, He leaves us free to reject Him if we desire. So, is living for others a rule or a principle? Notice what is said next.] If your motives are pure and unselfish, if you are ever looking for work to do, if you are always on the alert to show kindly attentions and do courteous deeds, you are unconsciously building your own monument. [This is all design law—about the motives and the motives of unselfish love leading to actions that apply those motives in the world around us and this builds a monument, what kind of a monument? It builds Christlike character, reputation, recognition of trustworthiness, beauty, and reliability—not necessarily in the eyes of the worldly, those who selfishly reject God, but in the eyes of God and the heavenly beings—those who see reality for what it is.] This is the work God calls upon all children and youth to do. Do good, if you would be cherished in the memory of others. Live to be a blessing to all with whom you come in contact, wherever your lot may be cast. Let the children and youth awake to their opportunities. By kindness and love, by self-sacrificing deeds, let them write their names in the hearts of those with whom they associate.—The Youth's Instructor, February 7, 1901.

Does this description sound like people whose lives would be successful?

But what if some people do take the position that Bible standards for our success does mean that we are to use the Bible to find the "right" rules, and then we should make a list of those rules, like the "right" and "wrong" foods, clothes, rituals and not only live by them but seek to get everyone else to live by them too?

Have you ever met people like this—I assume they really want to do good, but have you found their influence to be good or disruptive?

Well, as I was thinking about these things, and in light of the health message given to the SDA church—which has been a huge blessing to many and is simply a message calling people to live in harmony with the laws of health, learning to care for the Spirit temple so that people can experience

the best possible health to be of the greatest use in God's cause—I was thinking of some who fail to understand the laws of health, the principles involved, and instead approach it as a list of rules and how doing so can harm. And then I came across this historical quote, also from E.G. White, who was integral in advancing the value of living in harmony with the laws of health. What do you think of this?

> While we would caution you not to overeat, even of the best quality of food, **we would also caution those that are extremists not to raise a false standard and then endeavor to bring everybody to it.** There are some who are starting out as health reformers who are not fit to engage in any other enterprise, and who have not sense enough to take care of their own families or keep their proper place in the church. And what do they do? Why, they fall back as health-reform physicians, as though they could make that a success. They assume the responsibilities of their practice and take the lives of men and women into their hands, when they really know nothing about the business.—Testimonies for the Church 2:374, 375 (1869). CH 161.2

Do you love it when people speak truth clearly and plainly?

She is applying the principle of Romans 14—let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind. Don't try to bring everyone else to your standard.

She describes people who have their own responsibilities that they have not managed well.

- The natural result of not fulfilling one's legitimate duties, when one is capable of doing so, is to experience guilt, shame, and inadequacy.
- If they refuse to respond to the godly conviction of guilt by humbly seeking Jesus, asking for enlightenment, and then repenting and choosing to reform and begin fulfilling their responsibilities—if they fail to do this, then their guilt, shame, and inadequacy only worsens.
- Having rejected the path of truth and repentance, they then seek to offset their guilt and shame by some activity that they invest with goodness, some behavior that they can point to and claim as evidence of righteousness, virtue, or fulfilling God's purpose for their life. They become an extremist in some behavioral element of life that they can control, such as diet and food choices, or dress, etc.
- Their fastidious compliance with their righteous food list makes them feel good and allows them to avoid the suppressed guilt and shame for neglecting their actual duties in life.
- Having taken this position as a means to avoid their own guilt, shame, and inadequacy, they cannot tolerate any feedback that suggest a different course is equally righteous. They cannot tolerate others not eating according to their rigid standards and also being considered as equally righteous, because if one could be righteous while deviating from the food list, then that would mean their hard work is not righteous and it would no longer serve the purpose of allowing them to avoid their own guilt and shame.
- Thus, they criticize and find fault with those who don't eat according to their rules, may seek to get others removed from offices in the church for not eating according to their rules, and do all they can to convert others to their stringent and extremist eating patterns.

Such an extremist may very well consider their life a success—but is it?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph:

> As youth matures into adulthood, thoughts will arise about having to provide for basic needs-food, clothing, and shelter. Jesus Himself has told us how to prioritize our needs when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Of course, for those who are older and who didn't make the choice for Jesus when they were young, there is still time to make the right decisions regarding stewardship. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 65).

What do you think of Jesus promise: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33)?

What does it mean?

- Does it mean if we don't have adequate food, shelter, clothing then we are not seeking God's kingdom?
- Does it mean that if we don't have adequate food, shelter, clothing and want more we need to conduct more Bible studies?
- Is Jesus setting up a quid pro quo system of receiving blessings if you serve in His system—and thus health and wealth become good measures of righteousness?

If we think only of this temporal life Jesus' words here may be confusing, but if we approach life from a Biblical reality, then this comes into clarity. What do I mean?

Because of Adam's sin we are all born in sin and conceived in iniquity—we are born with a terminal condition that without remedy will result in eternal death. What difference does it make if we have all earthly wealth and then die eternally? Jesus is saying prioritize eternal life over temporal life. That doesn't mean that God doesn't care about our temporal wants—He does, He provides and Jesus provided all kinds of temporal blessings, healing, food, etc. when He was here. The point of this statement however, is that we must value eternal things over temporal things.

We must be so settled into the truth that we would not:

- bow to an idol to avoid a fiery furnace
- stop praying to God to avoid a lion's den
- stop preaching the gospel to avoid arrest and imprisonment and even execution
- We will not embezzle to pay our house payment, or steal to get money to go to school, or bear false witness to get a promotion etc. etc.

It would be better to be like so many martyrs who sleep in death awaiting the resurrection into eternal life than to live a few more years on earth, and then sleep in death anyway, and lose eternal life.

Recognize God's priority for everyone—which would be our priority for ourselves and our loved ones if we sat where God sits—and that is eternal life. Where God sits eternal life is what matters, not years of temporal life.

If you had a rope from our sun to our Earth, that would be a rope 93 million miles long. And if every inch on that rope represented one year of life. And if a person lived 969 years Methuselah or 10 years—a child dies, is there a significant difference between 969 inches and 10 inches on a rope 93 million miles long? And God's rope is an infinite rope. God's design for our lifespan is eternity. So God is primarily concerned with bringing people into a trust relationship with Him where He heals the damage of sin and gives them the gift of eternal life. If they sleep, like Daniel, for a few years or a few thousand years, it really doesn't matter as long as they have been restored to trust in Him for they will have eternity to live, thrive, and grow.

Again, that doesn't mean God doesn't care about our temporal needs and struggles, He does, but we must look beyond the temporal to the eternal.

The paragraph ends by affirming even if we were not faithful in stewardship when we were young, we can choice to be faithful now. This is so true—we cannot change history, we can only choose to surrender to God, be transformed and live in new ways moving forward.

Read last paragraph,

> After Jacob made his spiritual and financial commitments to God, the Lord directed him to Rachel at the well (see Gen. 29:9-20). It is fitting to make your spiritual decision and your lifework decision before committing to marriage. Your future spouse should know "what they are getting into." Is this person a committed Christian? What type of work will he or she be involved in? Will this person be a teacher, a nurse, a lawyer, a laborer, whatever? What kind of life will I be committing to? Other questions that need answers before the marriage commitment are: What level of education has been completed? What amount of debt will come into the marriage? Am I willing to accept this situation as part of my responsibility? (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 65).

What are your thoughts?

- Did anyone give you advice before your chose your spouse? What advice was given?
    - I remember a Bible teacher telling us to trust God with finding our spouse. What are your thoughts about this advice?
    - Does the kind of God people believe God to be, have an impact in their ability to trust Him?

    - What if people believe in God, but have a punitive, legal, view of Him? Could that make them believe but not trust? Could they believe that God would pick someone they won't like?
    - I think it is better to get to know God for who He is first.
    - If we don't know God, if we aren't friends of Jesus, then we probably are not ready to be getting married—what do you think?
- What advice have you given to your children or grandchildren regarding finding their spouse?
- Any advice would you give today that is different than what you gave in the past?
- What advice do you wish someone would have given to you before you chose your spouse?

The lesson, in the green section, points us to 2 Corinthians 6:14 about not being yoked together with unbelievers. What are your thoughts on this?

Is it enough for a potential spouse to believe in Jesus, to have been genuinely converted to Christ? Or is something more required than this in order for two individuals to be equally yoked as God intends? Would the level of maturity of the converted Christian matter?

Can a person genuinely be converted to Christ but still be immature in the things of God, perhaps approach their Christianity from a rule-keeping perspective, very much like a child who seeks to be a very good little boy or girl. They want to know the rules and they want to keep them—they don't have any interest in why, they just want to know what to do in order to be good, to get a gold star, to avoid getting sin registered in their record, and to avoid getting punished.

Now, is the attitude, the desire to be good, to be obedient, to have mommy and daddy say "well done" evil, sinful, or wrong? Not at all, it shows the child's heart is rightly aligned with the parents. This is a converted Christian, they want to please God, they are not in rebellion—so they would meet the qualification of being a believer. But would such a person make a good spouse? Not likely, not until they grow up. Perhaps two people at that same level of maturity could marry and then in humble faith grow together as the Holy Spirit leads.

But what happens to children who are eager to obey as children, as they grow up if they never discover the reason for the rules? What happens to Christians who as newborn babes in Christ are eager to know the rules and obey, if they never grow up but stay stuck in rule-keeping?

And what if you are mature in your Christian walk, above the level of the child that Hebrews five describes, and marry a genuine believer that is immature, someone who is at the rule-keeping level? Wouldn't that almost certainly result in problems?

Can you think of one of God's design laws that is perhaps the most important when it comes to establishing healthy partner relationships? Certainly love—but what about the law of liberty?

What happens in a relationship when liberty is violated? And could an immature Christian, one who wants to please God, but hasn't yet grown beyond the rules, have a motive of love for God and their spouse, but then sees their spouse breaking one of the rules and think that the spouse is sinning, so

because they love their spouse they seek to get their spouse to comply? And what happens if the spouse who broke a rule doesn't agree that their behavior was a sin? Will the love and concern of the rule-keeping spouse prevent the damage if they seek to pressure and force compliance?

What other elements are important in finding a life partner?

- Healthy relationships require healthy people—so instead of asking God to help you find the right partner, ask God to help you become the right person for the partner He knows is best for you.
- Not just Christians, but of similar maturity and similar practice, vision, goals, and calling. It would be a poor match if a person who was called by God to third world mission field married a person who was called by God to lead cancer research.
- Similar lifestyle patterns—i.e. an outdoor camping enthusiast would not do well with an indoor bookworm.
- Compatible IQ—if the difference is too great then they have little in common to talk about
- Do they live God's design laws in governance of self and how they treat others?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on seeking godly counsel—what does this mean to you?

I think this is very wise counsel, but what is the danger in this?

Because it is absolutely true that we want godly counsel and not worldly counsel, but how do we know the person we are seeking for godly counsel actually knows God?

- Are we supposed to surrender our decision-making to those from whom we seek counsel?
- What if they are the pastor, or conference president?
- Does a pastor necessarily have better counsel that the church janitor?
- What determines if the counsel is godly or not? Does authority of office?
- Does the view of God one holds impact the counsel they give?
- How about if a person is a Christian of another denomination—can they give godly counsel? Would the quality of the counsel be determined by the denomination a person belongs to?
- What standard do you use when you give godly counsel?
- Would a list of rules from the Bible be a good basis for godly counsel?
- What about application of God's design law principles?
- If we are following God's plan will we apply principles the same in all circumstances?

TUESDAY

The lesson states in the third paragraph:

> The children who are brought into the world during this segment of life are called "a heritage from the LORD" (Ps. 127:3, NKJV). We must remember that children bring with them an awesome responsibility. The goal of Christian parents is to train their children to become independent adults in this life and to fit them for the life to come. Here are three points to help parents (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 67).

And then the lesson lists these three:

1. Provide a Christian home environment.
2. Teach children a willingness to work and an appreciate for it.
3. Help with a good education.

Do you disagree with any of these? I think these are excellent and I agree with them, yet something struck me as I read this. I remembered multiple people with whom I grew up, and with whom I attended Christian school, and spent time in their homes and saw their parents do these things—yet they have left the church. I know of families where every child in the home where these things were done left the church.

What happened? How can parents:

1. Provide a Christian home environment.
2. Teach children a willingness to work and an appreciate for it.
3. Help with a good education.

And the children leave?

Now we need to be very clear here, before we explore this further, even with perfection—God parenting Lucifer and Adam and Eve, free-will beings can still choose to rebel. So, a child in rebellion is NOT evidence of poor parenting.

But does that mean there are not methods with higher likelihood of a positive impact and methods with a higher likelihood of a negative impact?

Can you think of any? And to be sure some of these change with age, time, place, situation. One might employ any of these in a particular place, but I am specifically thinking of the general rule, practice, and method across the landscape of parenting the child, not in emergencies.

- Do it because I said so
- Obey because the Bible says so
- Good is determined by how well you obey
- Rule-keeping as a measure of righteousness
- God is the source of inflicted punishment for sin

- Sin is doing bad things and requires punishment
- Forgiveness is getting our sins pardoned by accepting the blood payment of Jesus
- Jesus is in heaven pleading to the Father to protect us from His wrath
- God sends His angels to watch over you, but if you go into a movie theater you guardian angel will stay outside, but the recording angel will go in and record your sin
- You can't go out to eat on Sabbath, but you can work in the church-school cafeteria on Sabbath and get paid as long as the money goes to pay for your Christian education, but you can't use the money for anything else. And you can't get a job in a local restaurant on Sabbath to earn money for school, even though the tips will result in three times the income from the cafeteria and you will only have to work one Sabbath instead of three each month to pay for your tuition.

Could God be presented to children in such a way that He is not friendly, and worse, He isn't even rational, but comes across as capricious, arbitrary, and even mean and untrustworthy?

Now, does that mean there is no place for parental rules, or church standards, or teaching our children by setting of rules?

Consider how you taught your children to brush their teeth, or not play in the street? Was there a time you had a rule? Was there a time you had to oversee and enforce that rule? And was there a time you didn't have to do that anymore? Why not?

What is different about our rules for bushing teeth and playing in the street and our religious rules?

If God's laws are design laws, then won't the same methods of teaching apply?

But wouldn't that require that WE KNOW why there are rules? And if we have never learned why we brush our teeth, and only do it because good people do and bad people don't, then we will be able to help our children learn why?

So, why do we do what we do as Christians?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson in the second paragraph brings out an excellent point:

> God calls His children to a higher standard in work and life. That standard is God's law written in our hearts (see Jer. 31:33) and reflected in our characters. As society erodes and Christian teaching is diluted and minimized, it will become even more important for the individual Christian to live and work on a level that is above reproach. The Bible says, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Prov. 22:1, NKJV). (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 68).

One of Satan's strategies is to get us to take our focus off of Christ and focus on the world and its standards, to tempt us to think that if everyone else is giving bribes to the city inspector we will need to bribe them also if we want to have our business succeed. But the lesson is correct. We are responsible for governance of ourselves. We are not responsible for:

- How others govern themselves
- What others think of us
- How things turn out

Many people I see in my practice forget this and get caught up into frustration, anger, or jealousy when they see others cheating. Or they get very upset if others accuse them or think badly of them, and rather than simply doing in governance of self what is right, rather than simply being the most Christlike person they can be, instead they focus on persuading others' view of them. And many rather than focusing on making the wisest choice they prayerfully can in humble openness to God's leading and then trusting God with how it turns out, instead seek to make things turn out a certain way they believe is best.

MONDAY

The lesson explores the benefits of work. What do you think?

Human beings were created in the image of God. He is the Creator, and, therefore, we are designed to be creators in our own sphere. We are built to be industrious, creative, builders, designers, and workers!

When we engage ourselves in activities that are productive, whether they result in an income or not, we experience joy, fulfillment, and expansion in our abilities. We grow healthier and more capable as we apply ourselves and expend our energies to useful outlets.

Regular work has multiple benefits:

- **Improved self-esteem**, from actual accomplishment and achievement
- **Better physical health**, from increased physical activity and the reduced firing stress pathways as we experience satisfaction with completing tasks, or fulfilling our life goals, aspirations, and dreams. Additionally, physical activity produces factors in the brain that causes the neurons to stay healthy, improves the ability of neurons to make new connections, thus improving learning and reducing the risk of dementia as we age.
- **Development of our brain circuits** that control physical movement, which in turn improves our thinking and reasoning. When we engage in physical activity, the striatal pathways in our brain, that initiate motor movement, develop, but these pathways not only initiate physical movement, they also initiate thinking, so as we develop and use these pathways, we improve our ability to initiate thoughts. The cerebellum, which is involved in making our physical

movements smooth and coordinated, also helps smooth and coordinate our thoughts. Thus, when we stay physically active, we ultimately improve our thinking processes.

- **Blesses and benefits those around us.** As we engage in useful activity, it results in blessings in our environment, whether we are creating works of art or music to brighten the heart, or are mopping, vacuuming, and picking up trash to create clean environments, or growing food, all useful activity blesses those around us.
- **Reduces burdens on others.** By staying active, we reduce the likelihood of our own disability and the need for others to care for us.
- **Harmonizes with the law of love,** which is the principle of giving. The more we give, the more we receive. In a community, active people are constantly blessing those around them, while simultaneously being blessed from others. We receive benefits of electricity, clean air, water, emergency services, road crews that keep the roads clear, and so much more from people we will most likely never meet.
- **Reduces the opportunity for temptation.** This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of useful work. Any time spent in usefulness not only produces all the blessings above, but is time unavailable for engagement in destructive and harmful activities. You've heard the old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." When we are not engaged in useful activities, we are more vulnerable to temptations that result in harm to ourselves and others.

When we divert our energy, our mind, and abilities away from useful work—activities that may or may not generate income, but are beneficial (housework, lawn care, gardening, sewing, painting, sculpting, building, writing, playing musical instruments, drawing, developing systems or programs of education, parenting, coaching, and so many more)—and instead use the majority of our energies on entertainments, diversions, and indulgences (video games, TV, amusement parks, playing games), we undermine our physical and mental well-being. We become internally restless, lose our sense of peace, and often look for actions to change our feeling state, too frequently in alcohol or other substances, or more entertainment and avoidance of real-life responsibilities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Billboard Resource: In response to requests from our listeners, we are designing billboards with various themed slogans, each one to be released periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community. Find the FIRST slogan "Discover The God You Can Trust" in our new Resources > Billboards menu item on our website.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 9
Beware of Covetousness

by Mark Cox

SABBATH

MEMORY TEXT: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the thing he possess" Luke 12:15 NKJV

The Memory Verse for this lesson is a **WARNING!** Nothing good comes from coveting! It is also a **REMINDER!** The purpose of our life / the meaning of our existence, is more important then having what we think we **need**, **want** or **desire**.

As we will see in our lesson the **cause and effect of coveting** is full of heartache, pain, suffering, death and destruction. Nothing but **DISASTER** comes from the heart bent on coveting.

And yet it is so commonly human that we have to be **WARNED** again and a again to avoid it! And **REMINDED** over and over that there is meaning in life beyond what we posses.

> **Everywhere its slimy track is seen.** It creates discontent and dissension in families; it excites envy and hatred in the poor against the rich; it prompts the grinding oppression of the rich toward the poor. And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church. How common even here to find selfishness, avarice, overreaching, neglect of charities, and robbery of God "in tithes and offerings." PP 497.1

THOU SHALT NOT COVET
It is God's **Tenth Commandment**

> "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Exodus 20:17 NIV

The **Tenth Commandment** is unique, because coveting, is more specifically, **not as selfish behavior**, but **selfish thoughts and emotions.** Allowing the heart and mind to obsess over needing, wanting or desiring something that is not ours to have, or that belongs to someone else, like **Wealth / Power, Position or Possessions.** The tenth commandment, **stop coveting**, means **don't even THINK about it**! ——Stop it!

Think about What We Think

> 3For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to

> demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**. 6And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

No One's Gonna Know / Who's Gonna Know…what you are thinking and feeling until it reveals itself. The **danger of coveting** is you may not be found out till it is too late. Thus the **WARNING!** Take responsibility of **thoughts** and **emotions** or reap the consequences of unrestrained random thoughts.

Provoking Thought: A young married woman raises the question to a man she had become fond of. "If you commit to one person in marriage, is it possible to have thoughts and feelings for another person?" The wise man gives her this answer, "**When you commit to one person, you won't allow yourself to have thoughts and feeling for another.**"

Metaphor of Conception that gives Birth to Death.

> 14 but **each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed**. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives **birth to death**. James 1:14-15 NIV

Coveting is not the kind of sin you would say is **"as bad as"** other sins. No! This is the **ultimate disaster** with **Immediate, Short Term and Long Term Consequences** in relationship with our fellow man and for eternity.

We can recover from disaster, however, the **danger of coveting** is that the damage to the **heart and mind** might be so severe that **recovery is impossible**. The **disease incurable**. The **sin unpardonable**.

IF GOD DIDN'T POINT IT OUT - We would be unaware of our own condition

> 7 I would not have known what evil and selfishness looked like if it wasn't for the diagnostic efficacy of the law. **I would not have realized that coveting was evil and selfish if the law didn't say, "Don't covet."** 8 But selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the law is only a diagnostic instrument—and not a Remedy—magnified every covetous desire within me. For apart from the diagnostic ability of the law, sin is unrecognizable. 9 **Once I thought I was healthy and free from the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness, but then the commandment examined me, exposed how utterly infected I was, and diagnosed me as terminal**. Romans 7:7-9 Remedy

*******Recommend reading **Romans 7 & 8** in **The Remedy** for a more detailed discourse of the Ten Commandments - God's **Intervention**, to **diagnoses** and **remedy for our condition.**

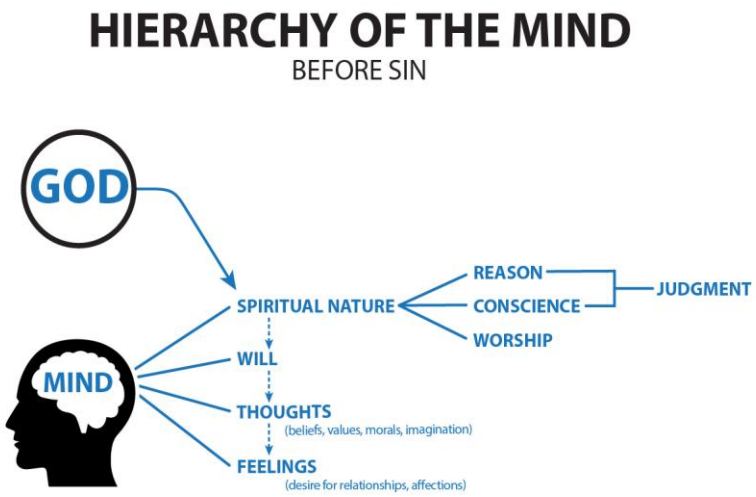
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Examples

Mark 10:17-27 **Rich Young Ruler** - Keep the commandments but was unaware his heart loved his wealth - position, Power and possessions - more than God.

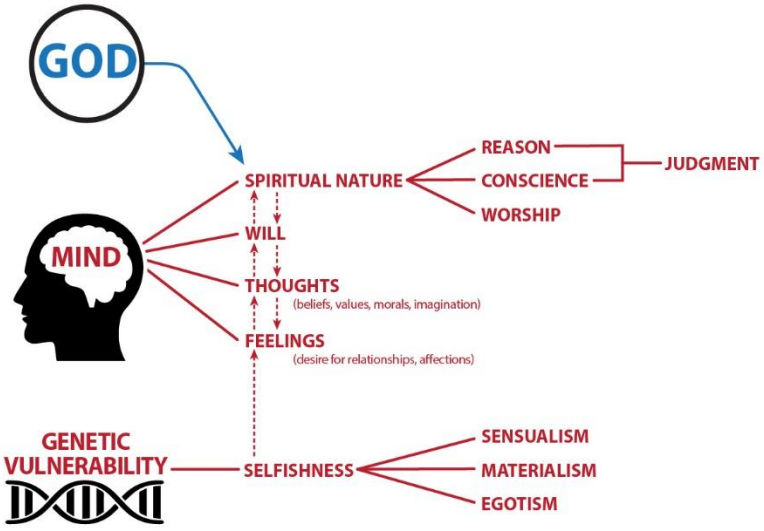
Daniel Chapter 4: **Nebuchadnezzar** - becomes a lunatic - then his understanding and reason restored.

Recommended Reading
"**Could it be This Simple**"

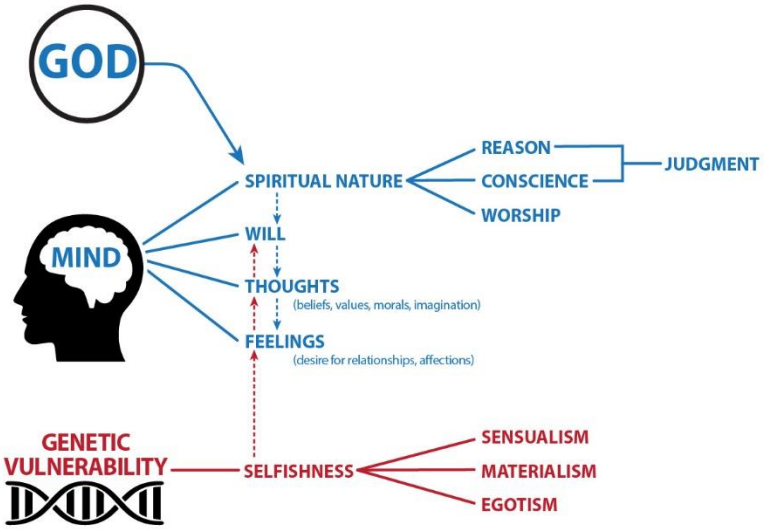


PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

HIERARCHY OF THE MIND
AFTER SIN / BEFORE CONVERSION



HIERARCHY OF THE MIND
AFTER SIN / AFTER CONVERSION



PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THE SINFUL HUMAN CONDITION - Self-destructive - Creatures of Habit

> "He acts on the **principles** to which he has accustomed himself. Thus **actions repeated for habits**, **habit form character**, and by the **character our destiny** for time and eternity is decided." COL 356.2

SINS - Fear and Selfishness in our **Character - Moral Failure**. Behavior, Thoughts and Emotions.

> "16 If anyone sees his brother **sinning a sin which does not lead to death,** he will ask, and He will give him life for those who **commit sin not leading to death**. There is **sin leading to death**. I do not say that he should pray about that. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is **sin not leading to death**." 1 John 5:16-17

TRANSGRESSION - Fear and Selfishness in our **Relationships - Violating Trust** with God and Others or even Self - ie. We can lie to God, others and ourselves. John says,

> "**Sin is the transgression of the law**" [**The Law of Love**] 1 John 3:4 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:37-39

INIQUITY - Fear and Selfishness in our **Community/Society/Life Style - Wickedness abounds.** There is no room for good. Crooked is normal. Bent is the new straight.

> "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20 The wicked are destroyed "**because they did not love the truth and thus be saved**." 2 Thes 2:10.

> 6 **"…The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,** 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving **INIQUITY** and **TRANSGRESSION** and **SIN**, **by no means clearing the guilty**, visiting the **iniquity** of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:6-7 NKJV

For God so loved the work that he gave his son Jesus Christ - Gods heart towards us is **Love** and **Forgiveness**, but our hearts are distrustful because of lies believed about God, we become **fearful** and **selfish** - But **Jesus** restores us back to a right relationship God through **Truth** and **Love** and heals our **Characters**, **Relationships** and **Communities.**

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, 2 Corinthians 5:19

THE LESSON - Four Stories - Four Tragic Ending.

1. **Lucifer**
2. **Achan**
3. **Judas**
4. **Ananias & Sapphira**

We are **warned**, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Luke 12:15. "Let it not be once named among you." Ephesians 5:3.

> **We have before us the fearful doom of Achan, of Judas, of Ananias and Sapphira. Back of all these we have that of Lucifer, the "son of the morning," who, coveting a higher state, forfeited forever the brightness and bliss of heaven.** And yet, notwithstanding all these **warnings,** covetousness abounds. – PP 496.4

No Good Ending for our characters! Which begs the question, "**Where's the Gospel in the Story**? Where's the Good News?"

The Gospel in each of these stories is the revelation of God character of Love. Each story we see God's principles and methods to save, not just humanity, but angels and unfallen worlds. In our four stories we will see God save the **Heavenly Universe**, the **Nation of Israel**, the **Disciples**, and the **Church**.

> The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, **is the revelation of His character of love**." Christ's Object Lessons, p.415.3

The Healing Metaphor - The Good Physician intervenes, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth**, Diagnoses** the **Human Condition** and offers the **Remedy**. The Remedy continually rejected, the carnal heart unrestrained, the Condition intensifies until the infection becomes incurable. The **last resort is Surgery.** Remove the infected flesh before the whole body dies. **Surgery** is both **good news** and **bad news**. Because the Remedy was rejected we can save the body but we can't save the member of body.

> **We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy**. **It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan**.....God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the **rejectors of His mercy** to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan**..... – GC 36.1

SUNDAY

The Ultimate Original Sin

The Perspective is a Cosmic View - Lucifer, Jesus and the Heavenly Universe

The Responsibility - God surgically removes covetousness from the Heavenly Universe.

Post Surgery - The **Good News** is the Heavenly Universe is saved. The **Bad News** is the terrible loss of Lucifer, his Angels and all who habitually reject the Remedy and following Lucifer's principles and methods.

What do we know about the story?

> 7 **And war broke out in heaven:** Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Revelation 12:7-9 NKJV

Lucifer coveting in the society of Heaven

> "Not content with his position, **though honored above the heavenly host**, he ventured to **covet homage due alone to the Creator**. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And **coveting the glory** with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to **power** that was the prerogative of Christ alone."
> Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 35 Introduction "Why was Sin Permitted"

> "**God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer**. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first **indulged the spirit of discontent**, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. **Long was he retained in heaven.** Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission. **Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise were made to convince him of his error**. The **spirit of discontent** had never before been known in heaven. **Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting**; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, **Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong**, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at this time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, **he would have been reinstated in his office.** <u>But pride forbade him to submit.</u> **He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker**." – GC 495.3 Chapter 29 "The Origin of Evil"

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.

It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God. Of Lucifer the Lord says, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." Ezekiel 28:12. Lucifer had been the covering cherub. He had stood in the light of God's presence. **He had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe.** After he had sinned, his power to deceive was the more deceptive, and the unveiling of his character was the more difficult, because of the exalted position he had held with the Father.

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force**. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. **The Lord's principles are not of this order**. His authority rests upon **goodness, mercy, and love**; and the **presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**.
It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. **Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe**. – {DA 759.2}

"**How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!** How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! **For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into** heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." Isaiah 14:12… NIV

"**You were the anointed cherub that covers**, and I had put you in the holy height of God where you were; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you. 16 By the multitude of your goods they have filled your midst with violence, and you have sinned. So I cast you profaned from the height of God, and I destroy you, O covering cherub, from among the stones of fire. 17 **Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have spoiled your wisdom because of your brightness. I will cast you to the ground;** I will put you before kings, that they may behold you. 18 By the host of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trade, you have profaned your holy places; so I brought a fire from your midst; it shall devour you, and I will give you for ashes on the earth, before the eyes of all who see you. 19 All who know you among the peoples shall be astonished at you; you shall be terrors, and you will not be forever." Ezekiel 28:12-19 NKJV

Lucifer's principle, **Survival of the Fittest,** and his methods of **lies, compelling force, coercion and manipulation**.

Jesus's life principle, **Disinterested Benevolence** reveals God's Character of Love - and the **prevailing power of Truth and Love** are his methods.

Jesus meets Lucifer in the wilderness

> "1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, **"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."** 4 Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 **"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:** '"**He will command his angels concerning you,**
> **and they will lift you up in their hands,**
> **so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.**'"
>
> 7 Jesus answered him, "**It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"** 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 **"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."**
>
> 10 Jesus said to him, **"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"** 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him." Matthew 4:1-11.

Satan's fruitless rebellion he imposes on the world.

> "Satanic agencies confederated with evil men in leading the people to believe Christ the chief of sinners, and to make Him the object of detestation. Those who mocked Christ as He hung upon the cross were **imbued with the spirit of the first great rebel**. He filled them with vile and loathsome speeches. He inspired their taunts. But by all this he gained nothing." – DA 760.4

Jesus plan to save the Heavenly Universe.

> "**But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man.** It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but **it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe**. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Savior looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: **"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw**

all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin." – PP 68.2

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. **The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown**. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is **"alienated from the life of God."** Christ says, **"All they that hate Me love death."** Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that **His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.** – DA 764.1

A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity and peace would be torture to them; the **glory of God would be a consuming fire**. They would long to flee from that holy place and would **welcome destruction**, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the **wicked are incurable**. Their will has been exercised in revolt. When life is ended, it is too late to turn their thoughts from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love. – HF 333.5

While the earth was wrapped in the fire of destruction, the righteous abode safely in the holy city. Upon those that had part in the first resurrection, the second death has no power. [Revelation 20:6; Psalm 84:11.] **While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, he is to his people both a Sun and a shield.** [Revelation 20:6; Psalm 84:11.] – GC88 673.3

14 The sinners in Zion are terrified;
trembling grips the godless:
"**Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire**?
Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"
15 Those who walk righteously
and speak what is right,
who reject gain from extortion
and keep their hands from accepting bribes,
who stop their ears against plots of murder
and shut their eyes against contemplating evil
Isaiah 33:14-15 NIV

1 Lord, **who may dwell in your sacred tent**?
Who may live on your holy mountain?

2 **The one whose walk is blameless,**
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart;
3 whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others;
4 who despises a vile person
but honors those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,
and does not change their mind;
5 who lends money to the poor without interest;
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.
Whoever does these things
will never be shaken.
Psalms 15

MONDAY

The Accursed Thing in the Camp

The Perspective is a World View - Achan, Rahab and the Nation Israel

The Responsibility - God, through Israel, surgically remove covetousness from among them. 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: **"*There is* an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."**

Post Surgery - The **Good News** is Israel as a nation is saved and their influence as a nations is restored and Rahab and her family are saved by Israel. The **Bad News** the terrible loss of 36 Israelites at the battle of Ai and Achan and his family stoned and burned.

What do we know about the story?

Human trafficking

> **No Israelite woman shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any Israelite man be a cult prostitute**. You shall not bring the **fee of a whore** or the **pay of a dog** into the house of the Lord your God in fulfillment of any vow, for both are abhorrent to the Lord your God.—Deuteronomy 23:18-19 NJPS

Solomon's High Places / The Synagogue of Satan 1Kings 11; Rev 2:9; 3:9
Corruption and Destruction - Kingdom of Fear and Selfishness based on Lies

1 Kings 11: Then did Solomon build an **high place** for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the **abomination** of the children of Ammon.

Abomination - Child Sacrifice - The Greatest Sin / Evil Possible
Leviticus 18:21 Leviticus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 12:31; Deuteronomy 18:10; 2 Kings 3:26-27; 2 Kings 16:2-3; 2 Kings 17:16-17; 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 28:1-3; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Psalm 106:37-38; Jeremiah 19:2-5

Mixing the two Temples - The Unholy and the Holy - Abomination in the house of God
Jeremiah 7 - They Worshiped their own gods and then came to worship in the Temple of God. Each worshiped their own god at their own alters in the Temple of God.

Matthew 24:15-16 "So when you see standing in the holy place '**the abomination that causes desolation**,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

2 Kings 23:3-10

> "...bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven....And he put down the idolatrous priests...that burned incense unto Baal...he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove....And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech."

Ezekiel 23:37-39

> "...Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to them as food. "Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My sabbaths. "For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo, thus they did within My house."

Joshua's encounter with Christ before the Battle of Jericho

> 13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, **"*Are* You for us or for our adversaries?"**
> 14 So He said, **"No, but *as* Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."**
> And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, **"What does my Lord say to His servant?"**
> 15 Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, **"Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy."** And Joshua did so.
> Joshua 5:13-15 NKJV

Rahab saves the Israel spies

> 11 And as soon as we heard *these things,* our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, **for the Lord your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath**. 12 Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."
>
> 14 So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the Lord has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you."
> Joshua 2 NKJV

> **The advancing hosts of Israel found that knowledge of the mighty workings of the God of the Hebrews had gone before them**, and that some among the heathen were learning that He alone was the true God. In wicked Jericho the testimony of a **heathen woman** was, **"The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."** Joshua 2:11. The knowledge of Jehovah that had thus come to her, proved her salvation. By faith **"Rahab perished not with them that believed not."** Hebrews 11:31. And her conversion was not an isolated case of God's mercy toward idolaters who acknowledged His divine authority. In the midst of the land a numerous people—the Gibeonites—renounced their heathenism and united with Israel, sharing in the blessings of the covenant. – PK 369.2

Rules of Engagement

> 17 Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. **Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house**, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18 And you, **by all means abstain from the accursed things**, **lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.** 19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."
> Joshua 6:17-18 NKJV

> 22 **But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country**, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." 23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. 24 But they burned the city and all that *was* in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. 25 And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. **So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.**
> Joshua 6:22-25 NKJV

Defeat at Ai

7 **But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel**.
2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are* few." 4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.
6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord God, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! 8 **O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it,* and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"**

The Sin of Achan

10 **So the Lord said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? 11 Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them.** For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff. 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. **Neither will I be with you anymore**, **unless you destroy the accursed from among you**. 13 Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: **"*There is* an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."** 14 In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families; and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households; and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man. 15 Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel." '
16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

19 Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me."
20 **And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."**
22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23 And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. 24 **Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.**
26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.
Joshua 7: NKJV

TUESDAY

The Heart of Judas -

The Perspective is the Soul View - Judas, Mary and the Disciples.

The Responsibility - Jesus surgically removes coveting from among the Disciples. Man among men.

Post Operation: The Good News, the Disciples of Christ saved from the poison of covetousness. The Bad News, Judas commits suicide.

What do we know about the Story

Judas loves money, dips into the purse for his own benefit,

Judas sees Jesus as a self-help guru and way to improve his status - easily parts company.

Mary sees Jesus as the savior of her soul and cannot live without him.

> **The history of Judas presents the sad ending of a life that might have been honored of God.** Had Judas died before his last journey to Jerusalem he would have been regarded as a man worthy of a place among the twelve, and one who would be greatly missed. The abhorrence which has followed him through the centuries would not have existed but for the

attributes revealed at the close of his history. **But it was for a purpose that his character was laid open to the world. It was to be a warning to all who, like him, should betray sacred trusts.**

Judas had naturally a strong love for money; but he had not always been corrupt enough to do such a deed as this. **He had fostered the evil spirit of avarice until it had become the ruling motive of his life. The love of mammon overbalanced his love for Christ**. Through becoming the slave of one vice he gave himself to Satan, to be driven to any lengths in sin.

Judas was highly regarded by the disciples, and had great influence over them. He himself had a high opinion of his own qualifications, and looked upon his brethren as greatly inferior to him in judgment and ability. They did not see their opportunities, he thought, and take advantage of circumstances. The church would never prosper with such shortsighted men as leaders. **Peter** was impetuous; he would move without consideration. **John**, who was treasuring up the truths that fell from Christ's lips, was looked upon by Judas as a poor financier. **Matthew**, whose training had taught him accuracy in all things, was very particular in regard to honesty, and he was ever contemplating the words of Christ, and became so absorbed in them that, as Judas thought, he could not be trusted to do sharp, far-seeing business. **Thus Judas summed up all the disciples, and flattered himself that the church would often be brought into perplexity and embarrassment if it were not for his ability as a manager.** Judas regarded himself as the capable one, who could not be overreached. In his own estimation he was an honor to the cause, and as such he always represented himself.

Judas was blinded to his own weakness of character, and Christ placed him where he would have an opportunity to see and correct this. As treasurer for the disciples, he was called upon to provide for the needs of the little company, and to relieve the necessities of the poor. When in the Passover chamber Jesus said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27), the disciples thought He had bidden him buy what was needed for the feast, or give something to the poor. In ministering to others, Judas might have developed an unselfish spirit. But while listening daily to the lessons of Christ and witnessing His unselfish life, Judas indulged his covetous disposition. The small sums that came into his hands were a continual temptation. Often when he did a little service for Christ, or devoted time to religious purposes, he paid himself out of this meager fund. In his own eyes these pretexts served to excuse his action; but in God's sight he was a thief.

Christ's oft-repeated statement that His kingdom was not of this world offended Judas. He had marked out a line upon which he expected Christ to work. He had planned that John the Baptist should be delivered from prison. But lo, John was left to be beheaded. And Jesus, instead of asserting His royal right and avenging the death of John, retired with His disciples into a country place. Judas wanted more aggressive warfare. He thought that if Jesus would not prevent the disciples from carrying out their schemes, the work would be more successful. He marked the increasing enmity of the Jewish leaders, and saw their challenge unheeded when they demanded from Christ a sign from heaven. His heart was open to unbelief, and the enemy supplied thoughts of questioning and rebellion. Why did Jesus dwell so much upon that which

was discouraging? Why did He predict trial and persecution for Himself and for His disciples? The prospect of having a high place in the new kingdom had led Judas to espouse the cause of Christ. Were his hopes to be disappointed? Judas had not decided that Jesus was not the Son of God; but he was questioning, and seeking to find some explanation of His mighty works.

Notwithstanding the Saviour's own teaching, Judas was continually advancing the idea that Christ would reign as king in Jerusalem. At the feeding of the five thousand he tried to bring this about. On this occasion Judas assisted in distributing the food to the hungry multitude. He had an opportunity to see the benefit which it was in his power to impart to others. He felt the satisfaction that always comes in service to God. He helped to bring the sick and suffering from among the multitude to Christ. He saw what relief, what joy and gladness, come to human hearts through the healing power of the Restorer. **He might have comprehended the methods of Christ. But he was blinded by his own selfish desires**. Judas was first to take advantage of the enthusiasm excited by the miracle of the loaves. It was he who set on foot the project to take Christ by force and make Him king. His hopes were high. His disappointment was bitter.

Christ's discourse in the synagogue concerning the bread of life was the turning point in the history of Judas. He heard the words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." John 6:53. He saw that Christ was offering spiritual rather than worldly good. He regarded himself as farsighted, and thought he could see that Jesus would have no honor, and that He could bestow no high position upon His followers. He determined not to unite himself so closely to Christ but that he could draw away. He would watch. And he did watch. – {DA 716 - 719}

To put this picture together I used,

Matthew 26:6-13;
Mark 14:3-11
Luke 7:36-50
John 12:1-11
Desire of Ages - the chapter entitled - The Feast at Simons house
2SP CHAPTER 32 - Mary's offering

Let's put the story together.

JESUS - God, Savior, Best friend to Lazarus, Martha and Mary
SIMON - Pharisee, Leper healed by Jesus,
JUDAS - Simons son and cousin to Mary - Disciple, Thief and betrayer. Embarrassed , revengeful - sold Jesus 30 pieces
JEWS / PHARISEES, RABBIS - Planning to murder Jesus and Lazarus
LAZARUS, MARTHA, MARY- BROTHER and SISTER, FRIEND of Jesus, COUSIN to Judas. Simon was their UNCLE.
Lazarus- raised from the dead.
Martha - always serving

Mary - **It was Mary who sat at His feet and loved to learn of Him** , Mary was the Women caught in adultery - probably the first time Jesus met her and probably how Jesus became acquainted with Lazarus and Martha. Being at Jesus feet was a special for Mary. It at Jesus feet Mary cast and condemned of sin - by self righteous men. It wasn't until it was all quiet that Mary began to look up - and the first thing she saw were Jesus Feet.
Mary was a Prostitute - how she became a Prostitute is interesting - **Led into sin by uncle Simon,**

Jesus cast out **Seven devils,.**

It was Mary who poured upon Jesus/God head/feet the precious anointing oil, she bought with her own money at great price - money earned from prostitution - some of the money was earned from religious leaders
Mary bathed His feet with her tears.
Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher.
Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection.
It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour

Incest / Rape

> As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself. **Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised.** She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the woman were represented. Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence. – DA 566.5

Judas Heart Exposed at His Father's House - Simon the Leper

> 1Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2Here a dinner was given in Jesus 'honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus 'feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.
>
> 4But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5"**Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages**." **6He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.**
>
> 7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." John 12:1-8 NIV

3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*"
5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. Matthew 27 NKJV

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."
18 (**Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out**. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)
20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms:
'Let his dwelling place be desolate,
And let no one live in it';
and,
'Let another take his office.'
Acts 1 NKJV

WEDNESDAY

Ananias and Sapphira

The Perspective is a Church View - Ananias and Sapphira, Jose's/Barnabas and the Church.

Responsibility - God, through the church, surgically removes covetousness from among its members.

Post Operation: The **Good News**, God saves the church from covetousness and becoming corrupted by persecution. The **Bad News**, Ananias and Sapphira - Sudden Death!

What do we know about the story?

Joses/Barnabas - Moved by the Holy Spirit sold his land and gave freely.

Ananias and Sapphira - Coveting position and money - sold their land and regretted it, hold back money and lie to the Holy Spirit

> 1Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.
> 2With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles 'feet.
>
> 3Then Peter said, "Ananias, **how is it that Satan has so filled your heart** that you have **lied to the Holy Spirit** and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?
> **4Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?** What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."
> 5When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.
>
> 7About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"
> "Yes," she said, "that is the price."
>
> 9Peter said to her, "**How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord?** Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."
> 10At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. Acts 5:1-11 NIV

Recommend reading Tim's Blog - **"The Sword of God"**

The following are some excerpt of Tim's Blog. **Emphasis provided.**

Consider the following verse:

> Revelation 19:19-21 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. **The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth** of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Notice the sword is coming out of the rider's mouth – the Rider is Christ, do you think He will have a large piece of metal sticking out of His mouth when He returns? No, what comes out of a person's mouth? Words and what kind of words does Christ always speak? Truth! Therefore, the sword is symbolic of the truth. "**The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart**." Hebrews 4:12

The wicked are destroyed "**because they did not love the truth and thus be saved**." 2 Thes 2:10. In other words the wicked have hardened their minds in lies, solidified their characters in falsehood, warped their selves in deception and the sword of God is the truth that cuts through their lies right to their inner self.

When people sin they are convicted with guilt, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. No one likes guilt and we all want it to go away. **There are only two ways to resolve appropriate guilt**, God's way – *repentance and restoration and reconciliation.* And Satan's way, **lies, denial, distortion, externalization**. Adam said after his sin, "It wasn't me. It was that woman you gave me. If she had not brought me the fruit I would have never ate it. Don't blame me, blame her."

This is the hardened condition of all those who have not opened their hearts and minds to the Spirit of Truth here. What will it be like for those who have lived in the darkness of lies to come face to face with infinite truth, truth which can not be denied, truth that cannot be avoided, truth which sears through to their souls? Their minds cannot take it and they die.

THURSDAY

Overcoming Covetousness

Remedy / Cure / Treatment / Surgery

What does life "consist of"?

The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven.

> This spirit finds its highest manifestation in Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In our behalf the Father gave His only-begotten Son; and Christ, having given up all that He had, then gave Himself, that man might be saved. The cross of Calvary should appeal to the benevolence of every follower of the Savior. The principle there illustrated is to give, give. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6. – AA 339.2 On the other hand, **the spirit of selfishness is the spirit of Satan**. The principle illustrated in the lives of worldlings is to get, get. Thus they hope to secure happiness and ease, but the fruit of their sowing is misery and death. – AA 339.3

God's Remedy for Selfishness and Covetousness

> The **giving** that **is the fruit of self-denial** is a wonderful help to the giver. It imparts an education that enables us more fully to comprehend the work of Him who went about doing good, relieving the suffering, and supplying the needs of the destitute. AH 370.3

Constant, self-denying benevolence is God's remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness.

> God has arranged systematic benevolence to sustain His cause and relieve the necessities of the suffering and needy. He has ordained that giving should become a habit, that it may counteract the dangerous and deceitful sin of covetousness. **Continual giving starves covetousness to death**. Systematic benevolence is designed in the order of God to tear away treasures from the covetous as fast as they are gained, and to consecrate them to the Lord, to whom they belong.... AH 370.4

The constant practice of God's plan of systematic benevolence weakens covetousness and strengthens benevolence.

> If riches increase, men, even those professing godliness, set their hearts upon them; and the more they have, the less they give to the treasury of the Lord. Thus riches make men selfish, and hoarding feeds covetousness; and these evils strengthen by active exercise. God knows our danger and has hedged us about with means to prevent our own ruin. He requires the constant exercise of benevolence, that the force of habit in good works may break the force of habit in an opposite direction. AH 371.1

"I came across this lovely anecdote from a book by late Vanguard founder John Bogle. This was an exchange Bogle witnessed at a party given by a billionaire on Shelter Island in New York.
The late novelist **Kurt Vonnegut** informed his pal, **Joseph Heller**, that their host, a hedge fund manager, had made more money in a single day than Heller had earned from his wildly popular novel Catch-22 over its whole history.
Heller responded – 'Yes, but I have something he will never have . . . enough.'
Fittingly, John Bogle titled his book 'Enough.'"
Joseph Heller and "Enough"

Be Content in all things

> **4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
>
> **8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.
>
> Thanks for Their Gifts
>
> **10** I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. **11** I am not saying this because I am in need, for **I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content in**

any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **13** I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. **We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers**—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1Timothy 1:9-11

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. I John 3:4 [**Law of Love**]

What, then, was the **purpose of the law**? It was **added because of transgressions** until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come… So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Galatians 3:19, 24 [**The Ten Commandments**]

"I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. **What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ?** I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments." 1SM 233.1

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: **"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1**. Their sufferings are often **represented as a punishment** visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By **stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy**, **the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them**, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control. – GC 35.3

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap".....Just what took place in Pharaoh's heart will take place in every soul that neglects to cherish the light and walk promptly in its rays. **God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence**..... 5T 120.1

"GOD DESTROYS NO MAN."

COL 84. "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction;" **Gal 6:8.** "**Evil will slay the wicked**." **Psalms 34:21.**

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 10
Giving Back

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The title of the lesson is Giving Back, and the memory verse is:

> Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."
> "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." (Revelation 14:13 NIV84).

What do you think this memory verse has to do with Giving Back? The lesson is focusing upon the last years in our lives, retirement and preparing for our deaths, estate planning, legacy planning, what we give back or leave to others when we die.

Read second paragraph:

> As people get older, they almost naturally begin to worry about the future. The most common fears are: dying too soon (before the family is taken care of); living too long (outliving their assets or savings); catastrophic illness (all my resources could go at one time); and mental and/or physical disability (who will take care of me?). (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 80).

I see many patients with anxiety and one of the most common anxieties I see are worries or fears about the future. This is a very human experience that we have all had. Younger people worry about whether they will find a spouse, or get a good job, or have money for college, while older people worry about many of the things listed in the lesson. But we are all tempted to worry about the future.

What is the difference between worrying about the future and wise planning for the future?

Is there a difference between worrying about whether one will be able to support their family in the future and a person who prayerfully plans out what college classes they need to obtain a marketable degree, how they will pay for it, and then daily applies themselves to that plan?

Is there a difference between a person worrying about retirement and one who makes reasonable choices in how they spend and invest their resources today?

What about the people who never worry about the future and therefore never make a plan, never seem to invest themselves in productive living but just assume it will always work out, and often have other family, friends, or even the state provide for them when their irresponsible choices land them in dire circumstances? Is it better to approach life like these people who never seem to worry about the future? Why or why not?

There is a ditch on both sides of the healthy path—on the one side is the person who never considers the consequences of their actions and never seems to plan out their choices. What kind of character do they develop? And then there are the people who are consumed with fears and uncertainties of the future to the point that they seem paralyzed from acting, or at least from ever experiencing joy in this life.

What is the best way to handle fears of the future?

- Step back and reflect on one's duties, choices, responsibilities, and actions today—ask, am I doing what is right, healthy, and reasonable in harmony with my understanding of God's will for my life today? Are there any actions or choices that I could make today that I believe God would have me do, that are healthier, or wiser, or necessary for me to fulfill God's purpose for my life? If so, then make those choices.
    - What we are doing by asking these questions is refocusing the mind away from the future and back on today, refocusing away from what we have no authority or control over onto what we do have authority and control over. The future is unknown, our responsibilities and choices today are not. We are unable to act in the future, we are able to act today. We have no authority over the future, but we are exercise authority over ourselves. So we refocus our attention where God has given us authority to act and that is in governance of self today.
    - We certainly seek God in prayer and ask Him to enlighten us to any choices that He would have us make that is currently outside of our awareness, but having done all of this then…
- We trust God with the outcome, the future.
    - The Bible says: "The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11 KJV)
- We turn the future over to God and let Him take care of it.
- But as we make choices today, we assess the new evidence that comes from those choices and make new choices based on that evidence.
- Example: At a crossroad with no signs or maps or anyone to tell you what is down each road. It is better to make a choice and start down a road, even if it is the wrong road, then to make no choice and never go anywhere. Having made the choice to go down the wrong road along that road new information will be obtained to let you know it isn't the right road and you can reverse course and go down another path.
    - Going to college and not knowing what to major in. Make a choice, take some classes, in experiencing those classes you will either confirm or refute that that major is the right one for you and if you discover that no, you definitely don't want to go down that career path, you make a new choice and change majors.

But what about worrying about mental or physical disabilities? How do we apply what I said to that?

Instead of worrying whether we will be mentally or physically disabled in the future, we step back and inquire: Am I living as healthfully as I can? Am I making choices in governance of myself today that are designed to maintain my spirit temple (body) to the best degree possible. Do I make healthy choices in food, exercise, study, mental stimulation, rest, sleep, relationships, boundaries, and fulfillment of duties?

My book *The Aging Brain: Proven Steps to Prevent Dementia and Sharpen Your Mind*, goes into great detail on almost every aspect of our lives documenting how our choices today either accelerate aging or slow it, and either contribute to greater likelihood of disability or reduce it, both physical disability and late onset Alzheimer's dementia.

So rather than worry about the future, we examine our lives and make the healthiest and wisest choices we can in the habits and practices of life we engage in today and then trust God with the future.

In fact,

- Chronic worry activates inflammatory pathways that damage the brain and increases both mental and physical disability
- Study of 5000 individuals found that neuroticism—which included feelings of guilt, anger, anxiety, depression—chronic patterns of negative and worried pessimistic thinking—was associated with a greater risk for dementia. In contrast, conscientiousness was shown to be protective against dementia. (Lee-Fay, L., et al., Does Personality Affect Risk for Dementia? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis; American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry. VOL 21, ISSUE 8, P713-728, AUGUST 2013 http://www.ajgponline.org/article/S1064-7481(12)00031-0/fulltext)

So what are some of the choices we can make today that can reduce our risk of mental and physical disability as we age?

Six Keys to maintaining wellness as we age:

- Physical Conditioning
- Mental Stimulation
- Rest—Physical and Mental
- Stress Management
- Anti-inflammatory Diet
- Healthy Spirituality

Exercise

- Older Adults who exercise regularly are 40% less likely to experience disability [1]
- Increased IL-10 and decreased inflammation [2]
  - Exercise improves insulin sensitivity
- Turns on all neurotrophins [3] [4]

- Older persons who exercised saw, over 1yr, 2% growth in hippocampus reversing two years of aging [5]
- Older persons walking 15 min/day decreased AD [6]

1. Ettinger, WH Jr., et al. A randomized trial comparing aerobic exercise and resistance exercise with a health education program in older adults with knee osteoarthritis. The Fitness Arthritis and Seniors Trial (FAST). *JAMA* 1997 Jan 1;277(1):25-31
2. Helmark, I., et al., Exercise increases interleukin-10 levels both intraarticularly and peri-synovially in patients with knee osteoarthritis: a randomized controlled trial, *Arthritis Research & Therapy,* 2010;12(4):R126.
3. Jin, K., et al., Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) stimulates neurogenesis *in vitro* and *in vivo, PNAS*, September 3, 2002
vol. 99 no. 18
4. Banitalebi, E. et.al., Exercise improves neurotrophins in multiple sclerosis independent of disability status. Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders; Volume 43, August 2020, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msard.2020.102143
5. Erickson, K. I., Voss, M. W., Prakash, R. S., Basak, C., Szabo, A., Chaddock, L.,et al. (2011). Exercise training increases size of hippocampus and improves memory. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 108, 3017–3022. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1015950108
6. Liang KY, Mintun MA, Fagan AM, et al. Exercise and Alzheimer's disease biomarkers in cognitively normal older adults. *Ann Neurol*. 2010;68:311-318

Mental Stimulation:

- Mental Stimulation
  - New Learning: Mentally stimulating activities and certain brain-training programs are in the long term associated with lower brain amyloid levels and a decreased risk for AD, as are graduating from college or engaging in life-long learning.[1,2]
  - Turns on neuroprotective genes [3, 4]

1. Belleville S, et al Training-related brain plasticity in subjects at risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Brain. 2011;134:1623-1634.
2. Landau SM, Marks SM, Mormino EC, et al. Association of lifetime cognitive engagement and low ?-amyloid deposition. Arch Neurol. 2012;69:623-629.
3. Reti, IM, et al., Prominent Narp expression in projection pathways and terminal fields. *J Neurochem*. 2002 Aug;82(4):935-44.
4. Xiao MF, Xu D, Craig MT, et al. NPTX2 and cognitive dysfunction in Alzheimer's disease. *eLife*. 2017 March 23;6.

Rest—sleep and Sabbath rest:

- 1-2% of body mass
- Uses 20% body energy
- High state of flux
- Many waste products
- During sleep the brain cells contract expelling metabolic waste and increasing clearance from brain, including beta amyloid[2]

- OSA – Cognitive impairments, mood disorders and loss of gray matter which reversed with treatment[1]
- Systemic Metanalysis of over 12,000 articles found
    - breathing related sleep disorders increase risk of all cause dementia, AD, VD[4]
    - Insomnia increases risk of AD[4]
- Benzodiazepines increase memory problems [3]

1. American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, Vol. 183, No. 10 (2011), pp. 1419-1426. doi: 10.1164/rccm.201005-0693OC
2. Science 18 October 2013: Vol. 342 no. 6156 pp. 373-377 DOI: 10.1126/science.1241224
3. Pariente, A., et al., The Benzodiazepine-Dementia Disorders Link: Current State of Knowledge. *CNS Drugs*. 2016 Jan;30(1):1-7. doi: 10.1007/s40263-015-0305-4.
4. Sleep Medicine Reviews, Volume 40, August 2018, Pages 4-16

- Blue Zones
    - Ikaria, Greece
    - Nicoya, Costa Rica
    - Okinawa, Japan
    - Sardina, Italy
    - Loma Linda, CA
- What unique about Loma Linda
    - Hetergeneous
    - SDA
- Lessons from Loma Linda
    - "Find a sanctuary in time to decompress. …Observance of the Sabbath strictly occurs from Friday to Saturday night, giving Adventists a weekly time to focus on family, friends, God and nature."
- SDAs also:
    - Eat healthy (high percent of vegetarians)
    - Don't smoke, use alcohol or illegal drugs
    - Exercise more than most
    - Less obesity
- http://www.bluezones.com/live-longer/education/expeditions/loma-linda-california/

Here is an interesting quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, did your teachers ever quote this one to you when you were in school?

> **Intemperance in study is a species of intoxication, and those who indulge in it, like the drunkard, wander from safe paths and stumble and fall in the darkness**. The Lord would have every student bear in mind that the eye must be kept single to the glory of God. **He is not to exhaust and waste his physical and mental powers in seeking to acquire all possible knowledge of the sciences**, but is to preserve the freshness and vigor of all his powers to engage in the work which the Lord has appointed him in helping souls to find the path of righteousness. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* 405.

There are design laws involved in this. One is the law of exertion, if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it because if you don't use it you lose it. So if you want stronger music skills, language skills, math skills you must study and apply yourself to these fields.

But, the corollary law is the law of restoration, as finite beings once we expend energy we must rest and recover lest be injure ourselves and burn out.

One of Satan's strategies if he cannot get good people to choose evil, is to over tax them with good works to do without adequate rest so that they exhaust and burn out.

This author recognizes this design law and describes its violation, overstudy, in very strong language to convict people of the damage they do to themselves in failing to get adequate mental rest.

Healthy Diet

- 3 distinct nutrient biomarker patterns (NBPs) in blood related to cognitive performance & (MRI) measures of brain aging.
- 2 Diet patterns with favorable cognition and brain volume
  - High in plasma B vitamins (B1, B2, B6, folate, and B12), as well as vitamins C, D, and E (Fruits, Nuts, Grains, Vegetables)
  - High in plasma marine omega-3 fatty acids. (Oily Fish)
- Diet with less favorable cognition and brain volume
  - A diet high trans fat pattern (fast food, junk food)[1]

1. G.L. Bowman, et al., Nutrient biomarker patterns, cognitive function, and MRI measures of brain aging. *Neurology* Jan 2012, 78 (4) 241-249; DOI: 10.1212/WNL.0b013e3182436598

- After Age 70 the brain shrinks by 0.5% per year
- 1,111 women age 70 no dementia at the beginning of the study
- 8 years later: women with the highest EPA and DHA blood levels at the study's outset had brains that were about two cubic centimeters larger overall than women with the lowest levels.
- Hippocampus was 2.7% larger in women who had fatty acid levels twice as high as the average.
- The analysis adjusted for other factors that could influence the women's brain size, including education, age, other health conditions, smoking and exercise.[1]

1. James V. Pottala, et. al., Higher RBC EPA + DHA corresponds with larger total brain and hippocampal volumes WHIMS-MRI Study. Neurology Feb 2014, 82 (5) 435-442; DOI: 10.1212/WNL.0000000000000080

Healthy Spirituality

- Meditate on a God of love—12 minutes per day activates anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) calming amygdala, reducing stress cascades. Adults over 65 who did this for 30 days had larger ACC, and the ACC where we experience altruistic love calms amygdala where we experience fear, perfect love casting out fear. This caused reduction in blood pressure and individuals had

30% improvement in memory testing. Newberg, A. *How God Changes Our Brain*. Ballantine Books, New York. 2009: p.49.

- Adults who volunteer (after accounting for variables such as education, baseline health, smoking, etc.)
- Live longer, have less illness, less disability, less depression, less dementia and live independently longer than those who did not. Post, S. *Altruism and Health Perspectives from Empirical Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007: p. 22,26).

- **REST Gene (Repressor Element 1-Silencing Transcript)**
  - Cell Conductor – turning genes on and off
  - Impacts neuronal and brain circuitry development
  - Protects memory circuits—low levels increased risk of dementia
  - Turned off my chronic mental stress
  - Turned on by meditation and healthy spirituality Ashton N, Hye A, Leckey C et al. Plasma REST: A Novel Candidate Biomarker of Alzheimer's Disease Is Modified by Psychological Intervention in an At-Risk Population. *Transl Psychiatry*. June 6, 2017; 7(6): e1148
- Healthy Spirituality
  - Activates PFC and ACC, calms amygdala, lowers inflammatory response resulting in improved mental and physical health
  - Altruistic activities result in better mental and physical health
  - Reduced anxiety and worry
  - Healthier lifestyle so reduced oxidative stressors
  - Healthier relationships lower stress

We have much we can do in developing and creating habit patterns that promote health, reducing toxic damage to our bodies, slow aging, maintain our vitality and reduce risk of disability. However, we cannot control the future. Once we are doing what we know is healthiest, if we want peace of mind, we must trust God with how things turn out.

Read last third paragraph:

> When commenting on these fears, Ellen G. White wrote: "All these fears originate with Satan. … If they would take the position which God would have them, their last days might be their best and happiest. … They should lay aside anxiety and burdens, and occupy their time as happily as they can, and be ripening up for heaven." — Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 424. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 80).

Does this make sense? Is it hard to do? What makes it hard to do? Has anything made it easier? How about if we spend more time in thoughtful meditation on the life of Christ?

In light of the science we just reviewed about meditating 12 minutes a day on a God of love and the benefits of doing so, consider this quotation from the book *The Desire of Ages* which is a book about the life of Christ:

> It would be well for us to spend **a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ**. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, **especially the closing ones**. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, **our confidence in Him will be more constant**, [what is another name for confidence? Faith!] our love will be quickened, [what does love do to fear?] and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. (Desire of Ages 83).

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Luke 12:16-21:

> And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'
> "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." '
> "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'
> "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21 NIV84)

What is the lesson of this parable? Is the lesson that:

- We should not have any savings accounts or retirement plans or any plans for our future needs?
- Our resources are only to be used on absolute necessities for ourselves, that we are not to take vacations, or spend money on anything that is comforting or a luxury for such spending would be selfish?
- We are not to live selfishly; we are not to ignore the things of God; we are to live to glorify God; but in that godly lifestyle of altruistic living we are certainly to care for self, which includes vacations, and reasonable comforts and spending on maintaining one's wellbeing and health.

Read fourth paragraph,

> The general picture given in the Bible is that a person works and remains productive as long as he or she is able. In fact, it is interesting to note that the authors of the great prophetic books of Daniel and the Revelation were, many believe, both in their 80s when they completed their

> work. This was at a time when the average age at death was about 50 years. Ellen G. White published some of her best-known and best-loved books, such as The Desire of Ages, after about age 70. Age, then, as long as we are healthy, should not mean that we stop being productive and, to whatever extent possible, doing some good. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 81).

This is a great paragraph. One of the things that contributes to loss of vitality as we age is the idea that productivity ends at 65, that at 65 we are to retire, quit useful labor, and relax, watch TV, and do very little. Such actions will accelerate aging and death.

Those who remain active and useful maintain their vitality and wellness longer, for it is a law, the law of exertion, that if you want to gain or maintain strength you must exercise the ability for if you don't use it you lose it.

So, while we might retire from a job at 65, we should never ever retire from useful labor, whether in our homes, or in our communities and churches.

- Mindset – does our mindset matter on aging?
  - For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. (Prov 23:7 NKJV)

- Interesting Study:
- 1979 – Men 75 years old
- 1 week at a retreat, no material dated later than 1959
- 1 week they were to pretend it was 1959
- Given ID's with their 55 y/o picture
- Tested before and after: physical strength, posture, perception, vision, cognition, memory.
- Results?
  - In every measure they improved
  - Greater flexibility
  - Better posture
  - Much improved hand strength
  - Eye-sight improved by 10%
  - Memory improved by 10%
  - More than half had improved IQ scores
  - Appeared younger
  - when before and after pictures were shown to random strangers Langer, E. (2009), *Counterclockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility.* New York: Ballentine.

How old was Moses when God met him at the bush and called him into ministry? 80! Moses wasn't ready to start his ministry until he was 80 years old. So don't ever think that you are too old to start working for God!

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

> Not only does life go by quickly, but when you die, you take nothing with you, at least of the material goods that you have accumulated. (Character? That's another story.) "For when he dies he shall carry nothing away" (Ps. 49:17, NKJV), which means that he or she leaves it behind for someone else to get. Who will get it, of course, depends upon what plans are made beforehand. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 82).

The lesson focuses on estate planning. Do you have a will? Have you decided where you want your assets to go?

And this doesn't mean only money, it can mean other resources, like books.

When I was in my residency, I was attending church in Augusta Georgia, and I was teaching a SS class. There was a beautiful elderly lady who loved God who came to my class. A few years later, I had graduated my residency and been transferred to another army base and she passed away. But in her will, she left me her hard bound set of the Conflict of the Ages series. And I read that set through, underlining, marking, writing notes in it and it has been a tremendous blessing to me.

As you consider your estate planning, don't just think about money. Think about people you can bless in other ways.

- Consider writing a letter to key people in your life, sharing with them what they mean to you. Share key points of life's wisdom that you have learned and want to pass along, let them know of hope that you will see them again when Jesus comes. Let them know you are looking forward to sitting down in the New Jerusalem with them and letting them tell you about their life after you passed.
    - We find that Jacob, prior to his death, gave each of his sons a message specifically for them. Genesis 49
- Consider ways to support the advancement of God's kingdom after you have passed that continues the work for God that you have been doing throughout your life.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points to several Bible texts and asks what principles we take from these texts in how to deal with money?

> Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm

> foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19 NIV84).

- Thoughts? Do commands telling people not be arrogant work?
- What about commands to be generous? Can a person give millions to charity and still not be generous? Is generosity primarily the act of giving, the amount given, or the heart attitude in giving?
- Most versions use the work *command* but the KJV uses *charge*. What do you think?

This is how I rendered it in *The Remedy NT:*

> Instruct those who are wealthy in worldly goods not to be so self-absorbed, nor to put their confidence in riches which can evaporate so quickly, but instead, to put their trust in God, who abundantly provides us with everything we need for health and eternal happiness. Instruct them to 'do what is right because it is right,' to be rich in love for others, and generously give of themselves for the good of others. This is how they should live to be in harmony with God's design, develop character that will last eternally, and be rich with love and friends in heaven; this is living as God designed life to truly operate. (1 Timothy 6:17-19 REM).

Next verse is 2 Corinthians 4:18:

> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18 NIV84)

- What does it mean to fix our eyes on what is not seen? Is it talking about our physical eyes or our mental awareness, focus, attention, interest, heart's desire?
- How do we do that today?
- Does this apply to the perspective that we understand world events through?
- Are we to understand world events through the lens of the Great Controversy?
- Would that include planning for the future?
- What is seen is temporary—would that include political parties, social justice movements, nations? What about churches—are denominational churches temporary? Should our focus be on the church institution or on God's plan, methods, movements, practices, principles, and eternal realities?

The next text is Proverbs 30:8:

> Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. (Proverbs 30:8 NIV84).

- What does this mean to you?
- Over the last three years have you prayed—"Lord keep falsehood and lies far from me"? Have you recognized the miasma, the constantly flooding of the airwaves, media,

social networks, news outlets, medical news with propaganda, falsehoods, and lies? I have prayed for the truth to shine forth, for the lies to be exposed by the truth.
- What is the daily bread referenced here? Is it merely physical food for the body, or is the author referencing something else?
- Jesus said when tempted in the wilderness: "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4 Niv84).
- What does it mean to live by every word that comes from God?

The next verse is Ecclesiastes 5:10:

> Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. (Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV84).

- Have you found this to be true?
- The people who love money are driven by fear and insecurity and no matter how much they get they don't have enough because money cannot take away fear, and the money they have can be lost or taken away. So they seek more, but because they are fear-driven they see threats all around, threats that something or someone might take their money and they have made money their security, which only causes them to live in more fear.

Read last paragraph,

> "I saw that many withhold from the cause while they live, quieting their consciences that they will be charitable at death; they hardly dare exercise faith and trust in God to give anything while living. But this deathbed charity is not what Christ requires of His followers; it cannot excuse the selfishness of the living. Those who hold fast their property till the last moment surrender it to death rather than to the cause. Losses are occurring continually. Banks fail, and property is consumed in very many ways. Many purpose to do something, but they delay the matter, and Satan works to prevent the means from coming into the treasury at all. It is lost before it is returned to God, and Satan exults that it is so." — Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 154. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 84).

Why does Jesus not want deathbed charity? What is the difference in lifelong charity versus deathbed charity?

In order to mature, grow, and develop godly character one has to exercise their power of choice to live out the methods and principles of God.

We cannot grow in faith if we never exercise our faith. Charitable living, giving to others, is a means of exercising our love for God and others and also our faith in God, that He will provide.

If we hold all our resources until death we have lived a life of distrust, of self-centeredness which increases fear of the next life, and to offset that fear, to make oneself feel hopeful for the future, some

people have left their wealth to some charity, as if that one act of giving their wealth to charity when they could no longer use would change their character from lifelong selfishness to love.

God wants our hearts to be transformed to be like Jesus, and that transformation happens through living a life of trust in Jesus, applying His methods, and developing habits in harmony with God's design laws for life.

THURSDAY

highlights the many advantages of giving now:

1. The donor actually can see the results of the gift — a new church building, a young person in college, an evangelistic campaign funded, etc.
2. The ministry or person can benefit now when the need is greatest.
3. There is no fighting among family or friends after your death.
4. It sets a good example of family values of generosity and love for others.
5. It minimizes estate tax consequence.
6. It guarantees that the gift will be made to your desired entity (no interference from courts or disgruntled relatives).
7. It demonstrates that the heart of the donor has been changed from selfishness to unselfishness.
8. It stores up treasures in heaven.

What is the treasure we store up in heaven?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Billboard Resource: In response to requests from our listeners, we have developed some billboards, and will be developing and releasing new ones periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community.

Find them at https:/comeandreason.com > Main Menu > Resources > Billboards

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 11
Managing in Tough Time

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> Offer to God thanksgiving,
> And pay your vows to the Most High.
> Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
> I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. (Psalm 50:14-15 NKJV)

What does this text mean to you? What is the message?

What does it mean to pays one's vows to God?

- Other versions have fulfill your vows to God, which makes sense, to fulfill one's vows means to be honest, loyal, faithful, true, responsible—to do what you say.
- I am just not sure about the word pay, it makes it sound more mechanical, more transactional, more commercial, something we have to do to get something from God.
- In reality our loyalty, faithfulness, honesty with God doesn't change God, it is necessary for us to be able to stay attuned with God, to align with God, to be in harmony with God, to connect, hear, understand, and value what God values, to receive the wisdom and power of God to be victorious.

What does it mean to call upon the Lord and the day of trouble and God will deliver us and we will glorify God?

- Have you known people who have found themselves in troubles not of their own making—maybe a victim of a thug, someone who was trafficked, or in a war zone and displace, someone suffering from a terminal disease and such a person called upon God to deliver them, but the war didn't stop, the crime was not interrupted, the disease wasn't cured?
- Do you think the martyrs called upon God when they were being tortured in the arenas of Rome?

How do we explain this Bible verse to those who have called upon the Lord in times of trouble but the trouble was not taken away?

Does the deliverance that God promises mean rescue from all earthly difficulty?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Jesus said:

> "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life." (Luke 21:12-19 NIV84).

So what do these texts mean? How can God promise to deliver us but then say that we will be persecuted and some even put to death, but not a hair on your head will perish? Does the Bible contradict itself? Does God make false promises?

How do you explain this?

What is the entire point, focus, purpose of Scripture? The plan of salvation! Is the plan of salvation the plan of temporal deliverance or eliminating sin and restoring sinners to eternal life?

The God's promises and actions are always geared toward the plan of removing sin and restoring sinners to eternal life.

Jesus said,

> "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." (Matthew 10:28 NIV84)

He is saying in Luke 21 that the evil powers in this world will seek to destroy the righteous, that evil forces may even kill the body of the righteous, but we will not perish, not the smallest piece of our true selves will perish, i.e., be eternally destroyed, for all who trust in Jesus will be resurrected to eternal life.

So, this is how I rendered our memory verse:

> So bring me what matters — a heart thankful to God,
> and give the Most High your loyalty, just as you have promised;
> call upon me when you are hurting and distressed,
> and I will heal you, transforming your character, and you will glorify me." (Psalm 50:14,15 REM).

Read first paragraph,

> Sometimes our world seems to be spinning out of control: wars, bloodshed, crime, immorality, natural disasters, pandemics, economic uncertainty, political corruption, and more. There is a

> strong urge for individuals and families to think first of their own survival. Accordingly, much thought is given to seeking security in these uncertain times, which, of course, is understandable. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 88).

What is described? What is driving people to seek security? Fear—do only the wicked experience fear or are the righteous also tempted by fear?

And are there different options to resolve fear available to the righteous that the rejectors of God do not have? What are the options the righteous have that those who have rejected God do not have to resolve our fear?

- Trust in God
- Prayer
- Claiming God's promises
- Trustworthy friends of God
- The protection of angels
- The presence of the Holy Spirit
- Love for God and others poured into our hearts
- Purpose bigger than self

If the rejectors of God do not have these means to cope with fear, what actions do they take to seek security?

- Running away to somewhere they believe is safe
- Fighting—seeking to destroy what they perceive as the source of their fear

And what methods will the ungodly use?

- Force, coercion, control over others
- Mandates
- Restriction of liberties
- Restriction on free speech
- Accusations, name calling
- Propaganda and lies
- Economic sanctions and financial pressure

Have you seen this happening in the world?

Why do you think this is happening?

Where is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit on Earth? In the hearts and minds of people—and what happens as billions of people harden their hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit? The Spirit slowly withdraws.

And as the Spirit withdraws, what happens to Satanic forces? They get more liberty to act. And what do satanic forces do with more liberty? And things become more debased, chaotic, destructive.

But why would God allow this? Why not just intervene and stop it?

Over the last couple of years, I have attended several medical conventions in which the presenters spoke in positive ways of how wonderfully the health delivery system, and they the doctors and nurses, did during COVID. They were specifically praising how they rallied and worked so hard to lock down, wear masks, and give as many injections as they could.

They were completely oblivious to how such actions, taken globally, killed millions more people than any that might have been saved by their actions.

I could see the truth, but these people didn't. What needs to happen for them to break out of their delusion? Reality based consequences over time.

I realized that God permits people to make their choices and then lets the consequences come to bear, and when things get more chaotic these events will awaken the people who have the capacity to still recognize truth to ask what is going on, what is happening in the world? But those who have already destroyed the faculties God has given us that respond to truth and love will misinterpret the evidence and will blame the righteous for the cause of the chaos and destruction.

It will be important, when the sleeping people wake up and ask what is happening, that God's people are ready and capable of telling the truth about what is happening of intelligently advancing His kingdom—being able to explain and demonstrate the difference between the methods and principles of God and those of this world. This goes far beyond a list of doctrines, but to understanding reality and its operations, meaning understanding God's design laws and their application to every phase of our existence. We need to have resources available tracts, magazines, books, videos, podcasts that are all presenting the truth.

And from the witness of God's faithful a great multitude will respond and embrace the truth and be saved.

Sincerely asking what is going on with no one to present the truth would be a sad thing. Paul wrote in Romans 10:13-15:

> "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:13-15 NIV84).

So, what is God waiting for? Why the delay in the second coming? Why does God still hold back the final events? Because God is waiting for His people to be sealed, to be settled into the truth about Him so that they cannot be moved, so that He can pour out the latter rain upon them to empower them to take the final message of mercy to the world. And when that happens then the four winds loosen and

things continue to unravel, a great multitude from every nation, tribe, language and people will hear the witness of God's friends and be saved.

This is what it means that judgment starts with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). God's people are the first to recognize the truth and make the right judgment about God, to reject the imperial Roman dictator view of God as a god who makes up rules and then uses His power to punish rule breakers and instead worships Him as the Creator, the One who made the heaven, earth, sea, and fountain of waters. We do this by rejecting the imposed law lie and realizing God's laws are design laws.

As we settle into the truth about God, returning to Creator worship, judging Him to be completely trustworthy, we open our hearts to receiving the indwelling Spirit of God that heals and transforms us and empowers us to not only resist the corruption of this age, the godless philosophies of the green earth-worshippers, and the godless critical theorists, and the godless greedy corporate merchants of the earth—we resist the powers of this age and stay true to the design laws and principles of Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY

The title of the lesson is Putting God First and focuses our attention on the famous story of Jehoshaphat and the army coming to destroy Judah and how the king, when he heard of the threat, immediately decided to inquire of the Lord and called a fast for all of Judah. And after prayerfully inquiring of the Lord, the prophet of God told the king this:

> He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them… You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.' " (2 Chronicles 20:15-17 NIV84).

The lesson then asks what are the spiritual principles we can take from this story?

- Always seek God first!
- Trust God with the future, with how things turn out
- Don't give in to fear and discouragement when things of this world seem beyond you

Other lessons?

Does this mean that we are never to engage in any battles, that we are never to actively fight in any type of conflict, that we are always to remain passive in every conflict and exclusively wait for the Lord to act and deliver us?

If so, what does 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 mean?

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

Are there battles in which we are to seek God, surrender to Him, trust Him, follow His direction, but to also to actively fight?

Paul makes clear here that we are to fight but we are not to use the weapons of the world—and Jehoshaphat demonstrates how he did not use the weapons of the world. We are not to go to war seeking to dominate and control people with physical might and coercions. We are not to seek to destroy or kill our enemies.

What about using the power of the state to bring order, to govern, to pass laws? Are we to seek to control the state to pass laws to force others to live as we believe is in harmony with God's will?

If we are not to do this does that mean we should have no laws and let crime flourish?

The only righteous use of might and power is in the restraint of those seeking to actively harm others. In restraining the evil-doer we protect all parties, we protect the innocent, and we protect the evil-doer from doing more damage to their own characters and consciences. But restraint does not advance righteousness. Any time governments move away from setting healthy boundaries for maximizing human liberty to instead advancing some moral agenda, such as the green movement and many other woke policies currently being advanced, but it could also be religious right policies such that we saw in history requiring church attendance, either way, such laws that seek to coerce conscience and force moral behavior always results in causing more harm, inciting rebellion, and leading to fractures in society.

We are not to restrict liberty, we are not to threaten people's livelihoods, or restrict commerce—the beast is the one who tells people they cannot buy or sell unless they receive his mark.

What are the divine weapons we are to use? Truth, love, liberty, prayer, faith/trust in God, hope, wisdom and discernment, patience, kindness, gentleness, meekness.

We are to present the truth, in love and leave others free. We are to trust God with outcomes; we are to remain hopeful, but we are to be active in the cause of God, not passive, yet wise in our actions, not purposely antagonizing or casting our pearls before those who we know will only be offended and have no interest in the truth.

Besides opposing lies, policies, and practices that are contrary to the kingdom of God and destroy minds, increase fear, and incite selfishness where else are we to do active warfare or engage in serious conflict and battle?

Here are two historic quotes that speak of battles that we are to be active in, yet in a strange way. What do you think?

> **Battles are to be fought every day. A great warfare is going on over every soul, between the prince of darkness and the Prince of life**.... As God's agents you are to yield yourselves to [God], **that He may plan and direct and fight the battle for you, with your cooperation**. The Prince of life is at the head of His work. He is to be with you **in your daily battle with self,** that you may be true to principle; that passion, when warring for the mastery, may be subdued by the grace of Christ; that you come off more than conqueror through Him that hath loved us. Jesus has been over the ground. He knows the power of every temptation. He knows just how to meet every emergency, and how to guide you through every path of danger. Then why not trust Him? Conflict and Courage 117.
>
> **The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought**. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, and being clothed with humility, possessing that love that is pure, peaceable, and easy to be entreated, full of gentleness and good fruits, is not an easy attainment.... **The soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in knowledge and true holiness**. The holy life and character of Christ is a faithful example. His confidence in his heavenly Father was unlimited. His obedience and submission were unreserved and perfect. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others. He came not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him. In all things he submitted himself to Him that judges righteously. From the lips of the Saviour of the world were heard these words, "I can of mine own self do nothing." [John 5:30.] Gospel Worker 376

Does the battle with self require our active engagement? But what is the active choice or action we are to take? To actively surrender to Christ, we cannot win the battle with selfishness and fear by our own effort or willpower, we win by being won to trust in Jesus and surrendering ourselves, our longings, our fears, our desires, our hopes and dreams, our futures to Him and trusting Him. He then works a change in us, instilling love and removing guilt, shame, and fear and our faith, confidence, trust, hope, joy, peace all increase. We are transformed to live lives in harmony with Him rather than in harmony with the survival methods of this world.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on our need to trust God and not our own resources and uses the story of King David being tempted to take a census of Israel when God told him not to.

Why didn't God want David to take a census? Because David would be tempted to put his faith in his spearman, chariots, warriors, and money rather than God. So Satan tempted David to take a census as a means to get David to take his focus off of God and place it onto the things this world values—power, might, and wealth.

Do we ever struggle with the same temptation today?

Most of us don't have soldiers to count, so what kinds of things does the devil tempt us to trust in rather than God?

- Wealth?
- Retirement plans, SSI?
- Fame?
- What about agreement of others, what others think? I have many patients who live their lives in constant pursuit of and fear of the what others think of them. If others affirm them, they fell good, if others are upset with them or criticize them they fall into emotional distress. Are we to make the attitudes and opinions of others the source of our peace and wellbeing?
- Our own intelligence?
- The government?
- Science and medical experts?
- Injections, masks, lockdowns?
- Others?

Was God trying to instruct, through this story with David, that all His faithful followers should not keep accurate records of their assets and resources, that we should not have accountants, that we should not know the size of our estate or the number of employees in our business?

Not at all, God was teaching the simple lesson that we should not place our faith in anything other than Him.

Read the fourth paragraph,

> In our immediate context, it is very tempting to trust in the power of the government or in our bank accounts, but in every crisis mentioned in the Bible, when the people trusted in God, He honored their trust and provided for them. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 90).

Have you seen people placing their trust in the government rather than God over the past couple of years? And how has that turned out?

I saw this division quite clearly, those who love God and others did not advance a cause based on fear. They presented a course of action that they believed was the best course, but they were willing to leave others free to decide for themselves what was best for their lives.

But those who were not motived by love, but instead were motivated by fear, believed that science, or the government could keep them safe. They believed that it was right and good to force others to act in certain ways, to restrict freedom of speech, worship, assembly, travel, commerce and even force people to take drugs they did not want. And many of the people who did this convinced themselves they were only do this to save lives, because they loved others.

But it was all a grand evil manipulation of minds by fear and propaganda and those in whose hearts fear was stronger than love turned to the governments and supported the ungodly actions of the beastly systems of this world.

It was an object lesson, a wakeup call, a warning of the abomination that causes desolation that is about to break upon the world for the final conflict before Christ returns. The events around COVID—a worldwide orchestrated violation of the principles of God—serve in a similar way to the Roman army surrounding Jerusalem in AD 70. The Romans surrounded Jerusalem, then pulled back, the Christians remembered Christ's warning and fled, and when the Roman army came back and destroyed the city no Christian lost their life there.

We have just had our warning to prepare our hearts and minds for the methods and practices of the final worldwide beastly system. All those who have embraced God's design law methods are called to leave the systems of this world, to leave Babylon, God's call recorded in Revelation is "come out of her my people." This isn't a geographical leaving, it is leaving with your heart, cutting your ties of loyalty and affection to systems and organizations that would use beastly methods on its members or support the governments in doing such things to its citizens. It is a call to solidify your hearts, minds, and characters into the methods and principles of God in how you treat others.

It is only a short time and final events are going to unfold on this world.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph:

> What should Seventh-day Adventist Christians do in response to difficult times? Do we hunker down in a survival mode? No, in fact, just the opposite is true. Because we know that the end of the world and the second coming of Christ is near, we want to use our assets to tell others the good news of the gospel and what God has prepared for those who love Him. We understand that someday soon everything on this earth will be burned up. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 91).

How are you preparing for the final events preceding the coming of Christ? Are our primary preparations for the final events to be physical preparations, prepare bunkers, food caches, and emergency shelters to flee to? Or are our primary preparations to be preparing our hearts and minds to stand firm in the face of persecution, to solidify our faith and trust in God?

The lesson asks us to read 2 Peter 3:3-13, I will read it from The Remedy:

> First of all, understand and don't be surprised that in the last days, scoffers and doubters will arise: they will prefer the sickness of selfishness while ridiculing the cure, labeling the infection of selfishness as 'normal. 'They will say, "Survival-of-the-fittest is the way the universe runs: this is why we are here — not because of divine creation. Where is this so-called

> God? Where is the coming he promised? Ever since human history has been recorded, the principles of evolution have governed life, and all things continue just as they always have. "But these scoffers deliberately deny the truth and ignore the fact that long ago, by God's Word, the world was created out of water and with water. They reject the fact that it was by these same waters that a flood destroyed the world, and they refuse to believe that the same Word has testified that the present world, which is kept for the day of final diagnosis and the elimination of everyone and everything deviant from God's design, will be destroyed by fire.
>
> But don't forget the true nature of God's kingdom of love. Understand that the Lord lives outside the constraints of time, and with him a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. There is no delay on his part in keeping his promise to return: he is simply waiting for what he has always been waiting for–the Remedy to be taken to the entire world so that none who remain curable will be lost.
>
> But the Lord's return — coming suddenly like a thief — will surprise many people: There will be a loud roar and the sky will disappear; the very elements will melt in the intense heat, and the entire planet will be laid bare.
>
> Since everything the world values will end in this way, what kind of people are you to be? Each person must partake of the Remedy and be healed, live a life that loves others and honors God as you anticipate our Lord's return, and work to speed his coming. On that day, the atmosphere of selfishness will be consumed by fire, and the very elements contaminated by sin will melt in the intense heat. But just as promised, Jesus will make a new atmosphere and an entirely new earth–free from disease and defect, free from the infection of selfishness–the eternal home of the healed. (2 Peter 3:3-13 REM)

The lesson reminds us that we are to have this eternal reality in mind as we live. While we must occupy until Jesus comes, we are not to live for the pleasures of this world, but to be purposeful in taking actions that are designed to spread the good news about God and hasten the day of His return.

That is what Come and Reason Ministries was founded to do, to advance what we believe is the final message of mercy to the world, the truth about God's character of love and His methods of truth, love, and freedom. And the key to properly understanding Scripture and God's character of love is how one understands God's law—if we understand God's law to be functionally no different that the imposed rules made up by humans then we teach ideas about God that make Him out to be no different in character than us—a rule-monger who uses power over others to force His way and inflict punishment for rule breaking. But when we return to worshiping the Creator we realize God's laws are the protocols reality is built upon and any deviation from those laws causes injury and eventual death unless remedied by our Creator. In this view God is the source of life and health, the Healer and Savior of our souls and it is sin that is the cause of pain, suffering, and death.

This truth about God, when embraced and internalized transforms the soul.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read 1John 2:15-17:

> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 NKJV).

What does this text mean?

There are two antagonistic principles or motives vying for every heart and mind—fear/selfishness versus love.

God's kingdom is the kingdom of love whereas Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of selfishness based on fear. The more fear the more self-centered we become and the more willing we are to harm others. The more love the less fear and the more willing we are to sacrifice to help others.

John is telling us that the survival drives of me-first fear driven selfishness of this sinful world manifests in three primary ways or avenues or desires or drives:

- The lust of the flesh—sensualism
- The lust of the eyes—materialism
- The pride of life—egotism

The Bible tells us that after Adam sinned we are all born of a sinful mother and a sinful father, we are "born in sin, conceived in iniquity" (Psalms 51:5). Which means we are born genetically vulnerable to these various selfish desires.

Some are born genetically more vulnerable to the sensual sins, the addictions, and lusts of the flesh. Others are born more genetically vulnerable to greed, materialism, or ego and pride.

But the Bible teaches that despite these vulnerabilities of our birth, because of Jesus and God's grace we still remain free to decide whether we will give in to these temptations or instead surrender to God for the renewing of our mind and the recreation of new hearts and right spirits within, which gives us new desires and new motives.

We have the choice, say yes to the temptations, or say no and surrender to God.

As we open the heart to God the Holy Spirit comes in and, using the Bible metaphor, circumcises our hearts. This means the Spirit of God cuts away from our affections, our longings, our reward pathways, the attachments we have to the destructive things of this world and establishes attachment to the things of God. But this work of reorienting our heart to the things of God requires a daily surrender to God, requires our active choice and agreement with the Spirit of God.

The transformation that happens within the heart and mind of a sinner is accomplished by the power of God but by our choice—we choose to say yes to God and no to temptation and evil, we choose to surrender to God, to open the heart, to believe the truth, to trust God with our lives, but it is God who provides the truth, changes the desires, and provides the divine power to succeed.

We can never experience a new heart and right spirit by our own effort. But God can never transform a heart into righteousness against the will of that person. That person must freely choose—why? It isn't that God doesn't have the power. He is God He has the power. But to use divine power to change a heart against the desire, intent, and will of the person would destroy that person's identity and individuality and effectively erase that person from existence. What would be the result would be either a robot or a new intelligent being, but the previous individual would be lost. This is why God doesn't use power to force a change of heart, and why it requires are active and willful participation.

Can you trust a God who would not only sacrifice Himself to save you and me, but operates in such a way that we never lose our freedom. He never uses His power to override our individuality?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Revelation 13:11-17:

> Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:11-17 NIV84)

What does this mean?

If you haven't read our recent magazine Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 &17 I encourage you to do so. You can read it online if you like, or if you have a US postal address email us and we will mail you one at no cost. This is also available in South Africa, so if you are in South Africa and would like a physical copy you can send an email to comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Billboard Resource: In response to requests from our listeners, we have developed some billboards, and will be developing and releasing new ones periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 12
Rewards of Faithfulness

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What are the rewards of faithfulness?

Read first paragraph:

> Though we can never earn salvation, the Bible uses the hope of reward as a motivation for faithful living as undeserving recipients of God's grace, for in the end whatever we receive is, always and only, from God's grace. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 96).

Do you like the language that we are "undeserving recipients of God's grace"?

Isn't the definition given by many that God's grace is something we don't deserve?

In the Adult Study Guide on Deuteronomy in the 4th quarte of 2021 in lesson 7, on Monday November 8 it states:

> Even the most cursory reading of the book of Deuteronomy shows how crucial obedience to the law was for the nation of Israel. In a real sense, it was the people's covenant obligation. God had done so much for them and would continue to do so much for them — things that they couldn't do for themselves and **that they did not deserve to begin with (which is what grace is, God giving us what we don't deserve**). And what He asked in response was, well, obedience to His law. (2021 4Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide lesson 7 Monday).

What do you think of this? How is this true and how is this not true?

It is true that none of us have earned God's grace. His grace is not a paycheck, a medal, or a reward for some achievement on our part. So in this sense God's grace is not something we can claim by our work or action.

But to limit our definition in this way restricts our understanding of grace, God, and our value to God. It is really an incomplete definition or understanding that emerges from holding the imposed law model rather than design law.

The reason it is taught that we don't deserve God's grace is because we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that all our righteousness is filthy rags—which are true statements. But when these truths are applied to the question of deserving grace through the imposed law lens it focuses on our performance rather than on God's character our creation and purpose in God's

estimation and therefore ends up with the classic definition of deserving being based upon our performance, conduct, or action.

However, design law understands deeper truths. That Adam, Eve, and Jesus were the only humans who had a choice not to sin. The rest of us are born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). We all sin because we are all born with a terminal sin condition that we did not choose and will keep sinning unless we experience God's grace. Therefore, the statements about *all our righteousness being filthy rags and how we have all fallen short of God's glory* **are diagnostic statements** and statements designed to reveal the futility of legal or human-devised treatment plans to the sin problem.

So the design law way of understanding the idea of deserving grace does not focus on our goodness, our works, our efforts to save ourselves, but on God and what He values and who we are in God's order and we can ask a question like this:

Does a child born with a terminal illness deserve to be treated with kindness, compassion, and offered a remedy if one exists to restore them to wellness—even though they have done nothing to earn such treatment? Why would they deserve it? Does a child, simply by being a human child, deserve the love of its parents—not because the child earned anything but because of who the child is to the parents? Do we have value and worth to God, not because of our achievements or any work we have done, but because of who God created us to be, because of what God has designed for us and invested in us?

And thus, God's grace doesn't say anything about how good we are, but about how good God is and how much He loves and values us.

Read second paragraph:

> As David wrote: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:7-11, NKJV). (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 96).

What does this mean?

What law is perfect converting the soul and making us wise etc.?

Is this speaking of the Ten Commandments? Is it speaking of the Torah? Is it speaking of the reality of God's design laws, truths, principles, and methods?

How do we understand the perfect law? Let's examine a quote by one of the founders of the SDA Church, written 130 years ago and see if there are any insights that apply to us today in regard to this question of God's law and how we understand it:

The Jewish nation stood forth among the nations of the earth as a proud, haughty people, who claimed to have great knowledge and to manifest great piety. [Was the Jewish nation chosen by God and identified as His special people? For what purpose? Exclusive salvation? No! To be the avenue through whom Messiah would come and simultaneously be God's helpers in preparing the world for the first advent of Jesus. Thus, they were blessed with the inspired written Word of God and also the other various ceremonial teaching tools. And what happened when Jesus came? Did the nation, the Jewish officials and religious institution, their General Conference known as the Sanhedrin, accept Jesus? Does their history serve as an object lesson? Is there an organization on earth today that stand in a similar place—an organization that claims to be especially called by God to prepare the world for the second Advent, and claims similar blessings to those that the Jews claimed such as: Inspired writings, the Sabbath, a health message, a sanctuary message? And could this organization take the same route the Jews did 2000 years ago claiming to have great knowledge and manifesting great piety yet end up opposing Christ? Jesus said that when He returns there will be people who thought they were serving Him and He will tell them to be gone, that they were workers of iniquity. And when they ask Him when had they mistreated Him, He tells them "as you have done it to the least of these you have done it unto me." What did the SDA church leadership officially do to its members during COVID? They abandoned them, sided with the state to coerce the consciences of their employees, patients, students, and members.] The Jews looked down upon the Gentiles as upon those who were far beneath them, because of darkness and error. [Do SDAs do this? What do SDAs call counties in this country where there are Christian churches from other denominations but no SDA presence? "Dark counties."] Yet the pretentious fig tree bore not fruit, but leaves only. If they had had spiritual understanding, they would have seen and understood the mission of Christ. [What does spiritual understanding mean? It means understanding reality, God's design laws, the larger view, rather than a list of religious rules. What about today, could this be said of many church leaders today, that they don't have spiritual understanding and therefore they don't understand the mission of Christ. They think His mission was to pay a legal penalty to an offended God and then offer that blood payment in our behalf to propitiate the anger and wrath of that god. This is paganism, it is built upon the imposed law lie. Thus we are called to return to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws.] The light dimly seen at first would have increased in brightness, expanding unto the perfect day. If they had followed on to know the Lord, they would have known that his goings forth are prepared as the morning. Oh, what a light would have shone upon Judah and Jerusalem had they but welcomed the light that was sent them of heaven! What a transforming power would have been manifest in life and character! [Where would the heavenly light have had its impact? Upon the hearts, minds, lives, and characters of the people! People who embrace heaven's light become more like Jesus. Could this same lament be said about the church today?] They would have been just what Jesus longed to have them be,—a living, shining light in the darkness. They would have borne the noblest credentials that any one of the followers of Christ can bear. They would have been representatives of Christ, monuments of the power of the Spirit of God upon human hearts. The Spirit of God would have worked **a miracle upon the heart**, changing it from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. They would have known what is meant by the **regeneration of the Spirit**, for the whole moral taste would have

been **changed**, and they would have loved the things they once hated, and hated the things they once delighted in. Signs of the Times November 13, 1893, par. 1 [Again where is the impact of Christ's sacrifice to occur? Not in record books or courtrooms but in hearts and minds of people. Satan has succeeded in shutting away the victory and power of Christ to many by getting them to conceive of Christ's mission through human law, through legal application of payments to God in heaven, rather than the reality of our healing Remedy.]

The words of Christ to the Pharisees come home with power to every living soul to whom the light of the Sun of Righteousness has been revealed. [This applies to us today.] To those who have caught a glimpse of celestial truth, to whom have come some rays of enlightenment, is the warning given. For your souls' sake do not turn away and be disobedient to the heavenly vision. **You may have seen something in regard to the righteousness of Christ**, but there is truth yet to be seen clearly, and that should be estimated by you as precious as rare jewels. [This is the righteousness by faith message, the message the SDA church leadership rejected in 1888. The message that through faith we become the righteousness of God (2Cor 5:21). This was replaced with the penal/legal lie that through faith we get legally accounted or declared righteous even though we are not. It was a rejection of the truth of God's design law and an embracing the imposed law lie. Notice what this author says next.] **You will see the law of God and interpret it to the people in an entirely different light from what you have done in the past, for the law of God will be seen by you as revealing a God of mercy and righteousness.** [The law of God must be taken out of the imposed law setting which always has God punishing for justice sake and put back into its true setting of the design protocols the Creator built reality to operate upon. Then we see God as our loving Creator, Savior, Redeemer, and Healer—our Great Physician who seeks to fix all the damage that sin has caused. Only when we see God's law as design law do we understand the reality of God's character of love, what the sin problem is, why it results in death, why Christ had to die, what Christ accomplished for us and the victory we can experience through faith today! And notice what happens when we place the law in its right setting] **The atonement, made by the stupendous sacrifice of Jesus Christ, will be seen by you in an altogether different light. You will see sin in its heinous character**. [When we understand God's law in its true light as design law **then we understand sin is not a legal problem, it is a lethal problem**. We understand sin is like a cancer—a malignant disease, a corrosive, virulent and destructive virus—and we understand the supreme sacrifice that Christ made was necessary in order to eliminate this death causing principle from humanity and restore His life-giving power in us.] **But this the Jews did not desire to see**. [Do we desire to see this?] Jesus said to them, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."… Signs of the Times November 13, 1893, par. 2

Read the third paragraph,

In various places the Bible talks about our rewards, what we are promised through Christ after the Second Coming and this terrible detour with sin is once and for all over and done. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 96).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Are the rewards only experienced after the second coming? I wish they would have said the "full and complete" rewards or the "ultimate" rewards or something like this, because there are real rewards that we can experience here and now, unless they truly think of rewards only as something arbitrarily given?

If we think of having peace with God, the removal of guilt and shame, peace of heart, new motives, love, joy, patience, self-control, wisdom, discernment, conversation with God and sometimes specific interventions in our daily struggles—then aren't there rewards now? Life is absolutely better in a love trust relationship with God here and now than living in the world without God.

But perhaps they don't consider any of that a reward, maybe they think of rewards as artificially bestowed, perhaps they think of things like:

- The size of the mansion one gets in heaven
- The number of jewels in your crown
- How close your seat is to God's seat at the heavenly supper table
- The number of worlds you get to govern

Well consider this historic quote from the book *Our High Calling* regarding rewards in heaven—do you agree or disagree and if you agree, are these rewards earned by us or bestowed by God?

> The **reward**, **the glories of heaven, bestowed** upon the overcomers, will be **proportionate** to the degree in which they have represented the character of Christ to the world. "**He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly**." 2 Corinthians 9:6. Thank God that it is our privilege to sow on earth the seed that will be harvested in eternity. **The crown of life will be bright or dim, will glitter with many stars, or be lighted by few gems, in accordance with our own course of action.** Day by day we may be laying up a good foundation against the time to come. By **self-denial, by the exercise of the missionary spirit, by crowding all the good works possible into our life, by seeking so to represent Christ in character that we shall win many souls** to the truth, we shall have respect unto the recompense of reward. Our High Calling 123.

What do you think of this statement? The author says "bestowed," but then describes what appears to be fruits of one's own work—what are the rewards and what does it mean?

What is it that heaven values most? People! And if we become like Christ, what will we value most? Others! And therefore, what will give us the greatest joy, reward, happiness, cause for celebration in heaven? Won't it be the number of people we know and love who are there? Will our reward, what brings us the most joy be multiplied by the number of people whom we love and are loved by?

This is an outworking of the design law of love. But what does it mean to bestow such a reward? Certainly it would require God to heal our sin-ravaged bodies and give us immortal bodies so we can live in His presence. But is simply living eternally the reward—or is it the quality of our experiences

and relationships with others that makes eternal life rewarding? Would it be a reward to live eternally in the traditional description of hell, or with a god who is like Satan alleges?

So, perhaps God bestows our reward by making the links, the connections between people, the introductions, by bringing to the hearts and minds of the saved the knowledge of those who it was that gave the donation that resulted in them receiving a Bible, or a tract, or a magazine, or who it was that placed a magazine in a certain stand or table, or who was the one who wrote a book that witnessed Christ. Perhaps God introduces us to people who read a book, listened to a class, overheard a conversation on an airplane, read something we sent, or shared and had the seeds of truth planted in their heart and came to salvation through your witness. And when God makes these connections known, what happens in the hearts and minds of these saved people in heaven? Love and appreciation and rejoicing and reward, and that love is described in Scripture as a burning fire a flame and the more of those connections we have been involved in making here on this earth, the brighter we will shine and the greater will be our reward.

What do you think of this idea?

SUNDAY

The lesson is entitled Reward for Faithfulness

Does the law lens one holds impact our understanding of this phrase?

What is the reward for faithful law-keeping?

What is the reward for faithful friendship to God?

Can one be a law-keeper and not be a friend of God?

Can one be a genuine friend of God and not keep the law?

Does the parable of the landowner who hired people throughout the day give insight into this?

Consider what the last paragraph is trying to say:

> Being rewarded for faithfulness, however, is not the same as salvation by works. Who among us, or among any of the characters in the Bible, had works good enough to give them any merit before God? None, of course. That's the whole point of the cross. If we could have saved ourselves by works, Jesus never would have gone to the cross. Instead, it must be by grace. "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Rom. 11:6, NKJV). Rewards, instead, are the mere outworking of what God has done for us and in us. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 97).

What does this mean? Do you get the sense they are working very hard to try and make the point that *rewards* and *salvation* are not the same? Why are they working so hard at this? Because they operate in the wrong law model. In design law model we recognize we have a terminal sin condition that we could never heal or procure the remedy for. That Jesus, unassisted by us, overcame and procured the remedy to our sin condition, and He offers that cure to us absolutely free. But we must choose to trust Him and accept His treatment plan and actively participate. Our participation, our work, is required to benefit, i.e. partake of what He procured, but our work, participation never produces the remedy. Just consider taking penicillin for an infection—you must comply and take it for the penicillin to work, but no work of participating in the treatment plan ever credits you with procuring the penicillin.

So in the parable of the landowner the imposed law legalists believe the reward is the coin they receive at the end of a hard days work. And it isn't fair to them that all receive the same bestowed reward or payment when some worked harder than others.

But design law understands that the coin represents salvation and it is offered to all who will enter God's field, God's employ, a trust relationship with God, it is the same healing and recovery from sin with eternal life given to all. But the reward is the relationship with the landowner, those who worked all day had more time in working for God, in learning of God, in apply God's methods to their lives in how they advanced the kingdom of God working for a harvest of souls for God. And they will have the joy of having reached more souls, i.e. harvested more grain, and thus will have more love relationships in heaven and will have a greater reward, than those who experienced salvation like the thief on the cross, but didn't have time to reach many souls for God's kingdom.

MONDAY

The lesson is on Everlasting Life—what is the key to everlasting life?

The lesson states in the second paragraph

> "Our part is simply to believe Him, rest upon the merits of Jesus, and by faith obey His Word."

What does this mean? What are the merits of Jesus? Does the law lens we hold impact our understanding of this?

Is this the same as what Jesus said,

> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3 NIV84)?

What does it mean to know God? Is it the same as knowing about God?

How do we come to know God and Jesus Christ?

Do we experience God and Jesus with the same trust, love, confidence? Do we see them with the same attributes of character?

Do we believe God is for us or do we believe God needs convincing?

Do we believe that God is for us because we are claiming the merits of Jesus as we approach the Father?

What does it mean to rest upon the merits of Jesus? Does that mean we claim them as our legal payment for our sins?

What would the Father do to us if we don't have a legal payment of Jesus' blood applied to our account in heaven?

Does Jesus *merit* being our Savior? Absolutely, because of what He achieved—but how does His achievement, His merit help us? What does resting upon Jesus' perfection do for us?

What law lens are we looking at this through?

Consider this historic quote—we will hear terms like justified, courts, unmerited favor, faith, works, substitute, merit—all of this. Do you hear something legal or do you hear something healing and restorative? Does our law lens make a difference?

> **Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God**. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner's substitute and surety**. But while **he is justified because of the merit of Christ**, he is not free to work unrighteousness. **Faith works by love and purifies the soul.** Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. **Where faith is, good works appear**. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, **they love the children of God**, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. **Christ and the believer become one, and His beauty of character is revealed in those who are vitally connected with the Source of power and love. Christ is the great depositary of justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace**. 1Selected Messages 398.

What does this mean? What are the merits of Christ? How do they benefit us?

In the last paragraph the lesson states,

> And, perhaps more than anything else, Christ's death on the cross at His first coming is our greatest assurance of His second coming, for without the Second Coming, what good was His first one? (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 98).

What do you think of this question? If there is no second coming was there no good in Christ's first coming?

If Jesus did not come the first time, meaning there was no promise in Genesis 3:15 for a Messiah to save us from sin, so there was no enmity between the children of God and Satan, meaning we would all be helplessly enslaved into sin, we would all be fear controlled, abusers, exploiters, liars, cheats. In other words, the only way we can live lives that love others, lives that are true, loyal, kind, responsible, free of guilt, shame, and vileness is because Jesus came—and is that not good? So while we rejoice in the promise of the second coming, isn't it true that all the good we have in the world is because of His first coming?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

> The biblical description of the New Jerusalem is what Abraham saw by faith. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). The New Jerusalem is God's masterpiece, built for those who love Him and keep His commandments. The New Jerusalem will be the home of God's faithful children in heaven during the millennium and, afterward, on the new earth for eternity. There is good news for those of us who don't like packing or moving. God takes care of everything. John says he saw the city. "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2, NKJV). (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 99).

What do you think of this? Does it open your mind to new ideas? What does it mean that the New Jerusalem is the Bride of Christ?

How does the New Jerusalem become adorned as a Bride for Christ?

What kind of adornment would this be?

If you haven't read our magazine The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming I encourage you to read it. We explore this very symbolic description of the church—did you realize the church is described as the Bride of Christ? And the New Jerusalem is described as the Bride of Christ?

And the Bride has to be cleansed and made pure—because a healthy marriage cannot be achieved with a cheat, it requires healthy partners. Thus, in order for the church to be married to Christ the members must be cleansed or purified.

Can you think of another place in Scripture where this cleansing is taught?

The cleansing of the sanctuary—and when did the cleansing of the sanctuary take place? On the Day of Atonement—the day of at-one-ment. And what happens at a wedding—two become one. The day of atonement ceremony is a symbolic description of the cleansing of the bride which is the joining of the people to eternal union or at-one-ment with God.

- The Most Holy Place is the shape of a cube and the NJ is in the shape of a cube
- The MH place is covered in gold and the NJ is paved with gold (which is symbolic of sinless righteousness)
- The MH place is lighted by the shekinah presence of God and the NJ is lighted by the physical presence of God
- The MH place has the angels on the lid of the ark; the NJ has the angels in bodily form
- The MH place has the law in the box; the NJ has the law written in the hearts of all the saved

In the last paragraph the lesson states, "Also, flowing from the throne of God is the pure river of life, and on either side of the river is the tree of life."

What do you think this is? Is this H2O? Does this text have any bearing?

We are talking about the river of life—what do you think of the following description from Daniel, is this river the river of life and if so what does it mean?

> As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. **A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him**. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." (Daniel 7:9-10 NIV84)

Is this river of fire, flowing out from the throne of God the river of life? Have you thought of the river of life as being a river of fire? Is that a river of lava or something else?

Notice millions are standing in this river of fire and it doesn't harm, it gives life, so what is this river?

Well what do you think of this historic quote—does it support or confuse the idea that the river of life is the river of fire coming from the throne of God, also does this support our healing design law view or a legal penal view? How do you hear this?

> Thank God that He who spilled His blood for us, lives to plead it, lives to make intercession for every soul who receives Him. [How do you hear this? Do you default to legal Christianity with

> Jesus interceding with His Father to pay or sin debt? Or to you ask, interceding with who? Who needs the blood of Jesus, which represents the life of Jesus? Does the Father need to be convinced of how good Jesus is? Does the Father need to won to trust in Jesus? Does the Father have lies that He needs to be cleansed of? Who has distrust in God? Who has lies that need removal? Who needs to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus be cleansed of all their sins? So who is Jesus interceding with to convince? It is you and me and it is our hearts and minds that need cleansing by the blood of Jesus. Notice what comes next] "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. **The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.** [The blood, which represents the sinless life of Jesus, does not cleanse a record book, it cleanses our hearts and minds. We become partakers of the divine nature as Peter says. Or Paul, it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me. We partake the life of Christ and the old is gone and the new has come.] It speaks better things than the blood of Abel, for Christ ever **lives to make intercession for us.** [Intercession with whom?] We need to keep **ever before us the efficacy of the blood of Jesus**. [Who needs to be reminded? Who needs the blood?] That **life-cleansing, life-sustaining blood, appropriated by living faith, is our hope**. We need to grow in appreciation of its inestimable value, for it speaks for us only as we by faith claim its virtue, keeping the conscience clean and at peace with God. Our High Calling 47.4
>
> This is represented as **the pardoning blood**, inseparably connected with the resurrection and life of our Redeemer, **illustrated by the ever-flowing stream that proceeds from the throne of God, the water of the river of life**.21 Our High Calling 47.5

What is this river of life? What does Leviticus say is in the blood? The life is in the blood. So the blood of Christ represents His life, and what does the river of life represent? The life of Christ which flows out freely to each and every one of us!

Then what about the river of fire? How is God's life-giving power manifested? It looks like fire, but it is the energy, glory, life of God—you could call it His blood—for the life is in the blood and it is the life of God that flows out from Him giving life to every living thing.

WEDNESDAY

The title for the day is The Settling of Accounts—what does this title make you think?

It speaks of the parable of the talents and the minas and how the owner came back and asked how these were invested and held the individuals accountable.

Those that invested well were given more, and those that buried their talent had it taken from them.

What do you think this means? How does this apply to the end of time?

What law lens do you understand this through?

We are most familiar with the parable of the talents told in Matthew, but the lessons our attention to the parable of the Minas told in Luke 19, and points out it is just not natural abilities that we have a responsibility to God to invest and develop, but also other resources placed in our hands.

Let's read that parable from The Remedy:

> "A prince went to a distant land to have himself anointed king and then to return home. So he called ten of those who volunteered to serve him and gave them each a gold coin. He told them, 'Put this money to good use until I get back.'
>
> "His people hated him and they sent a delegation to him, saying, 'We don't want you to be our king.'
>
> "He was made king anyway, and returned home. He sent for the ten servants, to whom he had entrusted money, in order to find out how well they had invested it.
>
> "The first one reported, 'Sir, with your gold coin I earned ten more.'
>
> " 'You have done well and are a good servant!' the king replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in this small matter, I am placing you in charge of ten cities.'
>
> "The second one said, 'Sir, with your gold coin I earned five more.'
>
> "The king answered, 'Well done, I am placing you in charge of five cities.'
>
> "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your gold coin: I have kept it safe for you, hidden in a cloth. I believe you are a hard man, and I fear you too much to risk losing what you gave me. I believe you take what is not yours and reap when you have not sown.'
>
> "The king replied, 'It is by your own words and beliefs — not by my true character — that you will be diagnosed, for your words reveal the wickedness of your heart. If you believed that I am a hard man, taking what is not mine and reaping where I did not sow, then why didn't you at least put my money in the bank to earn interest?'
>
> "Then he said to his attendants, 'Take the gold coin away from this negligent servant and give it to the one who earned ten.'
>
> "But the servant protested, 'Sir, they already have ten. It's not fair!'
>
> "The king replied, 'I tell you the truth of God's kingdom: Everyone who uses what they have will receive more, but if you don't use it, you will lose it. But as for those enemies of mine and my kingdom of love — those who value selfishness and don't want me for their king — bring them to me; and in my presence they will die.' "

- What are the lesson from this parable?
- Any design laws involved?
- Why will people lose what they don't invest?
- What was the problem with the unfaithful servant?
- Why with the unfaithful die in the end?
- Isn't God's presence the River of Life, which is the River of Fire—so why don't they receive life in this river?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

The lesson points our attention to 1Timothy 6:6-12:

> But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
>
> But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:6-12 NIV84).

The lesson then states:

> From the biblical perspective, prosperity is having what you need when you need it. It is not the accumulation of possessions. Prosperity is also claiming the promise of God in Philippians 4:19: "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Finally, prosperity is to be thankful for what you have in the Lord and trust in Him in all things. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 101).

Is this how you have thought of prosperity? I found this quite comforting, what are your thoughts about this?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 Q2 Three Cosmic Messages: Lesson 1
Jesus Wins – Satan Looses

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

The information in Revelation 12 we are studying today is in preparation for the Three Cosmic Messages, or Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14. This is the theme for 2nd Quarter this year.

Revelation was given to the Apostle John while he was on the rocky island of Patmos, where he was exiled by the Roman Emperor Titus Flavius Domitianus in AC 95 as a criminal because he could not be killed with boiling oil. He was the last of the Apostles to die, most of which had been put to death by sword or crucifixion. While all the distractions of a busy life were gone, John grew even closer to Jesus. Is there a parallel to our lives with Jesus?

Revelation starts off with a statement of the reason this book is needed, I'm using the New International Version/NIV:

> "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who heart it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."

Let's read Revelation 12, so we can "get the lay of the land" we are about to explore.

For many people, the symbolism of Revelation is very perplexing, so they prefer to focus on the easier books of the Bible. Leave Revelation to the scholars! But what if we read Revelation and skip the symbols? What could we learn about Jesus, his mission, our mission and our future? Here's what I read when I summarized each page of Revelation in my Bible, leaving out the symbols:

- This calls for taking it to heart
- He loves us and has freed us from our sins
- Repent, go back to your first love, do what you did at first, overcome
- Do God's will to the end, remember what you received and heard, obey it and repent, be earnest
- Worthy is the Lamb (allow me a bit of symbolism here, as I'm pretty sure we have all figured out that the Lamb is "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29, which are the words John the Baptist spoke about Jesus), He purchased men for God
- God will lead to springs of living water – we will never again thirst for spiritual life
- Repent of the work of your hands and acts
- It is time for God to judge the dead

- Overcome by taking the remedy for sin Jesus created with His life, death and resurrection, as well as your testimony about him
- Obey God's commands, hold to the testimony of Jesus
- This calls for faithfulness, patient endurance and wisdom
- Stay awake and keep your clothes on – He comes like a thief!
- Abandon the confused messages about God, so you don't sin or receive plagues.
- God's Judgments are just and true – He gives us the righteous acts we do
- The dead are judged by what they have done
- God will live with us, wipe every tear from our eyes and make everything new
- Worship God – "I AM coming soon' to give to everyone according to what he has done

Try it yourself and see what comes to your mind as you do this. Revelation is less of a march through time, and more like examining the facets of a beautiful diamond, viewing the same thing from different angles.

Now, this lesson's title, "Jesus Wins – Satan Loses" is pretty self-explanatory, and is what we are praying will happen very, very soon. We live inside a life and death spiritual war, in the prisoner-of-war camp of the universe. Satan has held us prisoners, where, as far as we know, only Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven without dying. So, very few people get out alive.

When prisoners hear of rescue plans their hearts leap for joy and they pray that those who are coming to rescue them will be stronger than their captors. The Bible assures us that our "Savior" is indeed stronger than our captor. And could it be that our captor is ourselves, our own beliefs and actions that have aligned us with Satan's beliefs and methods?

- Isaiah 1:24, 25 says, "Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: 'Ah! I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you. I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.'"

- Isaiah 35:3, 4 says, "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'"

We know Satan is doomed, no matter how strong he may appear. He is depicted as the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night. Earthlings are warned in Revelation 12:12, that even though Satan and his angels were thrown down from heaven, he has come to us, "filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

Satan is described as sleepless, relentless, ruthless, destructive, malevolent, and exceedingly deceptive. A roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He knows us better than we know ourselves, better than our spouse knows us. He knows just what buttons to push, where our weaknesses are and how to manipulate us. He may not be able to read our thoughts or our unspoken prayers, but he is really good at interpreting our body language.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Isaiah 14 Talks about the end of the one who oppresses the people with unceasing blows and relentless aggression, calling him the "king of Babylon". He is described as the one who fell from heaven, from being the morning star, son of the dawn, because he said in his heart that he would ascend to the heavens, enthroned on the mount of assembly and make himself like the Most High. He is accused of making the world a wilderness, overthrowing its cities and not allowing his captives to go home. He will be brought down to the realm of the dead, and his followers are slain by the sword. The final judgment against him comes in verse 20, "you have destroyed your land and killed your people." This is the result of the war we are part of.

But just because Jesus wins, does that mean we do? We are in the same situation that Israel was when thinking about leaving Egypt and heading for the promised land, and when leaving the desert for the promised land on the West side of the Jordan River. To them, and to us, God says:

Deuteronomy 30:11-20:

> "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, 'Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' No, the word is very near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord you God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord you God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Ezekiel 18:23:

> "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"

Ezekiel 18:32:

> "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"

So, the overview is about choosing the winning side; weighing the consequences of life and death and choosing Life, who wins over death and Satan.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Memory Text: "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17

SUNDAY

The Battle in Heaven

The importance of freedom is highlighted in Sunday's lesson. This has been one of the key points of Come and Reason Ministry and of the Bible.

The third paragraph says: "The power of choice is closely aligned with the ability to love. If you take away the power of choice, you destroy the ability to love, for love can never be forced or coerced. Love is an expression of free will. Every angel in heave was faced with the choice either to respond to God's love or to turn away in selfishness, arrogance, and rode. Just as the heavenly angels were confronted by love with an eternal choice, Revelation presents each one of us with eternal choices in earth's final conflict."

So, why do so many Christians say, "God is in Control?" If He were in control of Satan, would Satan have sinned, along with a third of the angels, as mentioned in Revelation 12: 4, 7-9
What is God in control of?

- His actions – loving, forgiving, creating, serving, judging (diagnosing) - living and dying for us to create the remedy for our lethal problem of sin, healing of our mental, spiritual and physical issues, protecting us from Satan's design to kill us and destroy everything we are and have, allowing us to torture and kill him so that we could understand who He really is, and who Satan really is
- His laws – They way He created the universe – physics, science, music, art and beauty, upholding and maintaining them

The last paragraph on Sunday's lesson says, "…all we have to do, using our free will, is choose to be on His side, the winning side. How great to be able to choose a side in a battle that you know, beforehand, it will win."

But the Bible warns there is a cost to our decision, either decision:

Choose Jesus:

- Matthew 16:24-27 – "The Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and they he will reward each person according to what they have done."

Choose Satan:

- Isaiah 33: 14-16 – "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless. Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with the everlasting burning? He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil – this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress."

- Luke 23:28-31 – "Jesus turned and said to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, "Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'. Then "'they will say to the mountains "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"". For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

- Job 38:1, 17 – "Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: ...Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of deepest darkness?

- Job 10:20-22 – "Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and utter darkness, to the land of deepest night, of utter darkness and disorder, where even the light is like darkness."

MONDAY

Satan's Attack

Shall we plunge into the symbols and see if we can't decipher and understand them? Revelation is not a sealed book, like Daniel's was. It is meant to be understood by us, here in the very toenails of the end of time. World events, natural disasters, and the other fulfillments of prophecy are shouting to us, "The end of all things is at hand."

Monday's lesson starts with Satan trying to kill Christ when born, during the wilderness temptation, before and at his death on the cross. The attack actually started in heaven…a character assassination of Michael (who we know as Jesus) and God. Isaiah 14 says that Satan is described as the one who fell from heaven, from being the morning star, son of the dawn, because he said in his heart that he would ascend to the heavens, enthroned on the mount of assembly and make himself like the Most High. He was jealous and suspicious of the ruler of the universe and thought he could do better, have a better result.

What do these symbols mean?

- Dragon – Satan – Revelation 12:9 – "The dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels

with him." Described as being enormous and red, having 7 heads, 7 crowns on his heads, and 10 horns.

- Woman – Church – Ephesians 5:25-27 – "Husbands, loves your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Described as being clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. Pregnant, crying out in pain and about to give birth to a male child.

- Male Child – The Messiah, Christ, Jeshua, Jesus – Ephesians 5:32 – "This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church." Described as ruling all the nations with a rod of iron. He was snatched up to God and to his throne.

- Rod of Iron – Or Scepter of kingship. – Psalms 2:4-11 – "The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.' I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: "He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth you possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter (or rod); you will dash them to pieces like pottery.' Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

The second paragraph of Monday's lesson points out that a rod is a symbol of dominion or rulership. A rod of iron is a symbol of an unbreakable, all-powerful, invincible rulership. Jesus faced every single temptation that we experience, but He came off a conqueror. When we accept Jesus by faith, His victory is ours.

Jesus is the only being in the universe safe with ALL power. He will not use it to beat us, his sheep, but to lead, protect, serve and provide all things needed….healing of our lethal sin condition, and cleansing us from all unrighteousness, which makes us perfect and healthy.

.

TUESDAY

Accepting Jesus' Victory

I would like to examine the difference between "Accepting Jesus' victory by faith, and being cured by Jesus through faith.

For those who value E.G. White, Desire of Ages, pg 309,

> "The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ's day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has

been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul. It does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness. A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life. The darkest Chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists. The Pharisees claimed to be children of Abraham, and boasted of their possession of the oracles of God, yet these advantages did not preserve them from selfishness, malignity, greed for gain, and the basest hypocrisy. They thought themselves the greatest religionists of the world, but their so-called orthodoxy led them to crucify the Lord of glory. The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world."

E.G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, pgs 311-314,

"Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence, No fig-leaf garment, no worldly citizen-dress, can be worn by those who sit down with Christ and angels at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided, can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul…..This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God 'was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.' Sin is defined to be 'the transgression of the law.' But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law….By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us, He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah….All must pass the scrutiny of the great King, and only those are received who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. Righteouness is right-doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine. It is not enough for us to believe that Jesus is not an impostor, and that the religion of the Bible is no cunningly devised fable. We may believe that the name of Jesus is the only name under heaven whereby man may be saved, and yet we may not through faith make Him our personal Saviour. It is not enough to believe the theory of truth. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll...'Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.' This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness….Every jot and tittle of the word of God is to be brought into the daily practice…..When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ."

This lesson talks quite a bit about our debt being canceled, and our sins forgiven, and that means we stand perfect in the sight of God. But something seems to be missing here.

We must know God well enough to trust Him, open ourselves to Him and allow Him to clean up the utter mess that is inside our brains. Christ's life and death provided the right to do this work, and the means to complete it. He must rewire us with new hearts and minds that are "up to code." He must fill us with unselfish love and compassion, clip off all bad ideas and habits, heal our wounds, hurts, resentments. This work is done intimately, between us and God. This is what it means to "know Him." To be "united to Him." To have "a new mind", "a new heart", "a new spirit", "the mind of Christ", "a heart of flesh". It cannot be done by hope and wishing alone. "Many people will be fat wishing and hoping to be thin." To be thin, you must take action. To be saved, you must hold on to your relationship with Christ for dear life. Don't let anything else take priority in your life.

WEDNESDAY

The Woman in the Wilderness

Revelation mentions three different periods that are all the same – 1,200 days 3 1/2 years (Time = 1 year, times = 2 years, half a time = half a year), or 42 months. If we do the math, they all come out within a day or so of one another. If we use 30-day months (as many prophecies do), they come out exactly 3 ½ years to the day.

Revelation 12:6, 14-16 mentions a 1,260 year timeline, one of which describes the 1,260 years as "time, times, and half a time." This same time period is found in Daniel 7:25, and Revelation 11:2. We know from Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4-6 that a day stands for a year in prophecy.

A prophetic calendar year of 360 days, or twelve months of 30 days each, is used in prophetic chronology.

So, the 1,260 years of this prophecy is generally understood to be the period of AD 538 to 1798. This time period of oppression and persecution by a corrupt church together with a corrupt state we now call "The Dark Ages." It started when the barbarians, who did not accept the Catholic religion, controlled the city of Rome until 538, when the armies of the eastern Byzantine Empire under general Belisarius began a series of victories in the Gothic wars that would ultimately allow Rome to become an effective center for the Roman Catholic authority that ruled during the Middle Ages, It ended when Berthier, one of Napoleon's generals, at his command, took the French army to Rome, made the bishop of Rome, Pope Pius VI, prisoner, and carried him to France, where he died. The civil power of the papacy was curtailed and a republic was set up in Rome.

The woman or God's church, fled into the desert (Rev 12:6) to a place "prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days." In verse 14, the woman was given 2 wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place "prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care

of out of the serpent's reach." Fleeing and flying refer to the same thing, leaving quickly to go into hiding. During the Dark Ages, the Waldenses hid in the mountains, for example.

Satan's methods of oppression and persecution were used by the serpent to try to sweep away God's people from the earth, but "the earth helped the woman." God provided for his church while they were in hiding, as he will for his end-time people, "the remnant." The wicked will use Satan's time-tested methods in the end, as well.

THURSDAY

God's End-time Remnant

Since Satan couldn't kill Jesus or cause His mission to fail, he turned to "make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The third and forth paragraph of Thursday's lesson state,

> "Earth's last war is not centered in the Middle East and the various conflicts there; it is centered in the minds of God's people scattered all over the world. It is a battle between two opposing forces, Christ and Satan. Again, no one is neutral. The central question in this final war is, 'Who has our loyalty? Where is our allegiance?' Heaven calls for believers who are so charmed by Christ's love, redeemed by his grace, committed to His purposes, empowered by His Spirit, and so obedient to His commands that they are willing to face death itself for His cause."

E.G. White, Council to the Churches, pg 261,

> "Great blessings are enfolded in the observance of the Sabbath, and God desires that the Sabbath day shall be to us a day of joy. There was joy at the institution of the Sabbath. God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All things that he had made He pronounced 'very good.' Genesis 1:31. Heaven and earth were filled with rejoicing. 'The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Job 38:7. Though sin has entered the world to mar His perfect work, God still gives to us the Sabbath as a witness that One omnipotent, infinite in goodness and mercy, created all things. Our heavenly Father desires through the observance of the Sabbath to preserve among men a knowledge of Himself. He desires that the Sabbath shall direct our minds to Him as the true and living God, and that through knowing Him we may have life and peace. When The Lord delivered His people Israel from Egypt and committed to them His law, He taught them that by the observance of the Sabbath they were to be distinguished from idolaters. It was this that made the distinction between those who acknowledge the sovereignty of God and those who refuse to accept Him as their Creator and King. 'It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever,' the Lord said. 'Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.' Exodus 31:17, 16. As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God's people as they come out from the world to enter the

heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law. It distinguishes between His loyal subjects and transgressors."

E.G. White, Desire of Ages, pg 308,

> "'Till heaven and earth pass,' said Jesus. 'one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' The sun shining in the heavens, the solid earth upon which you dwell, are God's witnesses that His law is changeless and eternal. Though they may pass away, the divine precepts shall endure. 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.' Luke 16:17. The system of types that pointed to Jesus as the lamb of God was to be abolished at His death; the but precepts of the Decalogue are as immutable as the throne of God. Since 'the law of the Lord is perfect,' every variation from it must be evil. Those who disobey the commandments of God, and teach others to do so, are condemned by Christ. The Saviour's life of obedience maintained the claims of the law: it proved that the law could be kept in humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is 'holy, and just, and good.' Romans 7:12. On the other hand, all who break God's commandments are sustaining Satan's claim that the law is unjust, and cannot be obeyed. Thus they second the deceptions of the great adversary, and cast dishonor upon God. They are the children of the wicked one, who was the first rebel against God's law. To admit them into heaven would again bring in the elements of discord and rebellion, and imperil the well-being of the universe. No man who willfully disregards one principle of the law shall enter the kingdom of heaven."

Revelation 12:11 gives us the type of people who are victors with Christ in this war. It says, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

Why do you think the Bible talks so much about the blood of the Lamb? Leviticus 17:11 says that "the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." Today, we think of blood as carrying the DNA, the individuality of each person or animal.

According to News Medical & Life Sciences, Dec. 10, 2019, prior to and for four years after his stem cell transplant from an unrelated donor, a forensics lab tested a colleague, Chris Long, and found that by four months after transplant, only the DNA in his chest and head was still Long's own. At four years, "Chris was no longer present at all." Even his seman was the donor's DNA.

When Christ refers to his blood, he is referring to the complete transformation that will happen to us when we allow Him to give us His blood, His rightness, to replace our terminal condition, our wrongness. His goal is to restore us to what we would have been if we had not been marred by sin. I love to see old dilapidated Victorian homes be restored to their original beauty. How glorious! Restoration of all that has been taken from us by living in this prisoner-of-war camp.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

FRIDAY

Further Thoughts

E.G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 34, 35,

> "So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies."

Imagine life without fear. The war is over. Jesus wins! Satan loses! We are no longer trapped on this earth with a roaring lion. We are restored. We have access to the wisdom, knowledge and beauty of the universe's eternity. We are free. Heaven can't come soon enough!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 2
A Moment of Destiny

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson states in the second paragraph:

> In these last days of human history, He has sent a special message to the world and to His people, designed to meet the need of the hour. He pictures this message as being carried by three angels flying in midheaven with their urgent, end-time message to all the world. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.14)

What is that message?

How would you describe it to people who have not heard it?

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following in the book *Christ's Object Lessons,* do you agree with it? And if so, do you see this message in the message of the three angels of Revelation 14?

> It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth…**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love**. Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

When you read the message of the 3 angels do you read a message that magnifies God's character of goodness, mercy, truth, and love?

Or do you hear a message that frightens you, a message of a threatening god who will use divine power to torture those who refuse to love him?

If you are not familiar with our magazine, The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels I encourage you to read it. You can read it online at our website. If you have a US postal address and would like a printed copy we will send one at no cost. And we have them to ship to US addresses for you to share in your church. This quarter would be a great time to introduce these magazines to your friends around the circle.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph:

> Revelation 14 is Jesus' final message of mercy to a fallen and rebellious world, one that has, for about six thousand years, been steeped in sin and evil. There will come a day when every human being on planet Earth will make a final, irrevocable decision, either for or against Jesus. Revelation's message of Christ's righteousness delivering us from the condemnation of sin, as well as the grip of sin in our lives, will echo and reecho throughout the earth. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.15)

Do you agree that every single person will make a decision for or against Jesus?

How do you think this will happen?

Is this talking about every person making a personal choice to accept or reject Jesus as their personal Savior?

Do we think that every person will be presented with the Bible story and come to understand the truth of the historic Jesus?

Do we think that it will be based on an issue, say some religious laws and every person will be faced with deciding whether they will obey those religious laws or not?

Or will it be in principle, by method, motive, and conduction in how we treat others?

Jesus said, in Matthew 25, that after He separates the sheep and the goats, He will say:

> I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, **you did for me**… whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, **you did not do for me** (Matthew 25:40 & 45 NIV84)

So is it that everyone decides for or against Jesus not in a religious ceremony, or in an attestation of affirmative faith, or by response to some religious law, but in how they treat others?

And if this is so, then it means we decide for or against Jesus by the methods and principles we practice in how we treat others. It means that in how we treat others we are choosing which law is written upon our own hearts—are we surrendered in faith to Jesus and choosing to love God and others more than self so that the law of truth, love, liberty is being lived out in how we treat others, or are we choosing the law of fear, of selfishness, of survival, of protecting self and are willing to sacrifice, harm, exploit, deceive, manipulate, denigrate, and vilify others in order to protect self? Or perhaps we use all these same ungodly methods and claim we are only lying, manipulating, coercing, abusing others to protect the church, or the property of the church, or to save lives.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

During COVID various individuals, governments, and organizations revealed the god they worship and the methods they prefer. It is not too late for those who chose to use coercion on their fellow humans to repent and seek God's methods moving forward in living out God's principles in how they treat others.

Read second paragraph:

> Jesus' promise that " 'this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world' " (NKJV), given in Matthew 24:14, finds its final fulfillment in Christ's last-day message, in Revelation 14:6, which says that the gospel is proclaimed to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (NKJV). (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.15)

What is the gospel that is to go to all the world? How would you describe it?

Why do you think the three angels' messages starts with the eternal gospel?

If we get the gospel wrong we miss the entire meaning of the 3 angels' messages.

If the good news is not the truth about God, but rather is presented as a legal payment made to a punishing god so that that god won't inflict punishment upon us, not only do we take a false gospel to the world, but the message of the 3 angels is presented in a false light that keeps people trapped in the fear-based false systems of this world. We are to take the *eternal* gospel to the world, the good news that is eternally true, true in eternity past and future, true before sin ever existed, it is the good news about God, that God is not the kind of being Satan has misrepresented Him to be. And this requires that we leave behind the penal/legal imposed law system of Babylon, it requires we return to worship the Creator who made the heaven, earth, sea, and fountains of water, which means we recognize God's laws as design laws not imposed rules like humans make.

The lesson asks at the bottom:

> How does God shape our characters?
> - Truth and Love via the working of the Holy Spirit
> - Life events/experiences in which we must choose to apply God's truth, love, methods, principles in how we live, act, respond, and treat others
>
> What means does He use for us to grow in grace?
> - That we develop with each day in godly ways
> - Deeper love, experience, appreciate for, and knowledge of God—which means we spend time with God, studying His Word, talking with Him, sharing Him with others
> - Greater wisdom into the things of God, which means greater discernment
> - More godly habits in how we react and think, the fruits of the Spirit-- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

What can we do to more fully allow the Holy Spirit to transform us to be more like Jesus? (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.15)

- Surrender to Him
- Be willing to listen and be corrected by the Spirit of truth
- Spend regular time with God
- Share God and His truths and methods with others
- Apply God's methods in our daily lives
- Eliminate known activities that are opposed to God's kingdom

MONDAY

Read second paragraph:

> Jesus used the term "Son of Man" to refer to Himself 82 times in the Gospels. It was one of His favorite titles. He used it as an expression of endearment to identify with us. He is a Savior who understands us, has experienced our temptations, and has passed through our trials. He is the "Son of Man" who is returning to take us home. The Jesus who comes for us is the same Jesus who lived among us. He is qualified to redeem us because He became One of us, and yet, as one of us, He met the full fury of Satan's temptations and, yes, was victorious. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.16)

What do you think of this term Son of Man?

Why do you think Jesus used it so frequently? What does Jesus want us to know?

- That He "understands us, has experienced our temptations, and has passed through our trials"?
- Does Jesus understand and sympathize with us more than the Father?
- Or does Jesus' life reveal to us, in a persuasive way, how closely the Godhead does know us, sympathize with us, love and value us?

Could the term Son of Man be a great controversy statement?

I am going to share a series of statements with you from EG White, the most influential founder of the SDA church. And the contribution to Christian thought that I believe she provided is the Great Controversy perspective—the view of the sin problem extending beyond just human beings, but also including the heavenly realm where 1/3 of the angels fell, and that Christ's mission to Earth included more than just saving human beings, but also eliminating sin from the universe and securing the unfallen beings in their loyalty so that sin will never arise again.

There are Bible texts to support this. Jesus speaking of His pending crucifixion said up:

> But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* to myself. (John 12:32 NIV84)

The word "men" is not in the Greek, it is inserted by the translators.

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84).

We of course find the threads of the Great Controversy throughout Scripture:

- The serpent in Eden
- The first chapter of Job
- Zechariah chapter 3
- The temptations of Christ in the wilderness
- The demoniacs that Jesus healed
- Revelation chapter 12

But EGW put this together in an incredible way helping us see this greater universal landscape of the war, which centers on the character of God.

So, back to my question—is Jesus' use of the term Son of Man a Great Controversy statement?

Consider these quotes:

> **Before the fall of Satan, the Father consulted his Son in regard to the formation of man.** They purposed to make this world, and create beasts and living things upon it, and **to make man in the image of God**, **to reign as a ruling monarch over every living thing which God should create**. When Satan learned the purpose of God, he was envious at Christ, and jealous because the Father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man. Satan was of the highest order of angels; but Christ was above all. He was the commander of all Heaven. He imparted to the angelic family the high commands of his Father. The envy and jealousy of Satan increased. Until his rebellion all Heaven was in harmony, and perfect subjection to the government of God. Satan commenced to insinuate his dissatisfied feelings to other angels, and a number agreed to aid him in his rebellion. Satan was dissatisfied with his position. Although very exalted, he aspires to be equal with God; and unless the Lord gratifies his ambition, determines to rebel, and refuse submission. He desires, yet dare not at once venture to make known his envious, hateful feelings. But he contents himself with gaining all he can to sympathize with him, as though deeply wronged. He relates to them his thoughts of warring against Jehovah. Spiritual Gifts Vol. 3 p. 36.
>
> After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out **their purpose**, **which was designed before the fall of Satan**, to **make man in their own image**. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. And now God said to His Son, "**Let us make man in our image**." As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator he was of noble height and of beautiful symmetry…Story of Redemption 20.

God, in His foreknowledge and eternal wisdom, had a purpose for the species human *before* Satan rebelled in heaven. What was that purpose?

> When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. "God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27), and **it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image**—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the visible universe—the "wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16)—invited man's study. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was his high privilege. **Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever**. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. **More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the Creator's glory**. Education 15.

What was God's purpose in creating human beings? What would have been the result of Adam and Eve staying loyal and governing the planet like God governs the universe? How would they have treated each other? How would they have treated their children in a sinless world? Would this have revealed anything about how God governs?

Do you think Satan wanted this purpose in humanity's creation to occur?

> As soon as the Lord through Jesus Christ created our world and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, **Satan announced his purpose to conform to his own nature the father and mother of all humanity**, and to unite them with his own ranks of rebellion. **He was determined to efface the image of God from the human posterity, and to trace his own image upon the soul in the place of the divine image**.... Christ Triumphant 10.

God had a purpose for humanity to be the repositories of His living law of love. God's law cannot be understood on stone, for love requires life, and human beings were created in the image of God to live out God's law of love in governance of themselves and in how they treat others and govern the planet.

Satan is the father of lies, fear, and selfishness. His goal is to erase fidelity, love, truth, integrity, honesty, loyalty from the living temple where God placed His image and instead have living human beings carry around his law of survival of the fittest, of me-first, of power, control, coercion, force, abuse, murder, and death.

Jesus came as the second Adam to overthrow the infection of fear, selfishness and sin that Satan introduced into the heart and mind of Adam and Eve and to restore God's image in us.

> In assuming human nature, that he might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery and lift man up, Christ has shown what estimate he places upon the human race. In this work

> everything was at stake. Satan claimed to be the lawful owner of the fallen race; and with what persistent effort did he seek to overthrow Christ through his subtilty! It was only by the most desperate conflict with the powers of Satan that **Christ could accomplish his purpose of restoring the almost obliterated image of God in man, and place his own signature upon his forehead.** It was a desperate battle; for Satan had so long worked in league with human intelligences as to almost completely intercept every ray of light shining from the throne of God upon the human mind. **The cross of Calvary alone could destroy the works of the devil**. In that wondrous sacrifice all eyes were called to 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' The love of Christ kindles in the heart of all who continue to behold him. General Conference Daily Bulletin March 2, 1897, par. 17

Is it possible that Jesus uses the term *Son of Man* because He is not just redeeming individual humans that He loves, but is redeeming the mission and purpose for which humanity was created?

And by doing this, Christ not only reveals the truth of God's character of love, His design laws of life, but also reveals that Adam's sin was not because of a manufacturer's defect! By His victory, in weakened humanity, Jesus proves that the sin of Adam was not because of some flaw in his design, or creation, or lack of a resource.

Read the last paragraph:

> Notice some elements in these passages: (1) Jesus, the Son of Man, is coming in glory with His angels. (2) He will divide the sheep from the goats (basically a judgment). (3) The destiny of the nations and all humanity will be decided for eternity. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.16)

What does this mean? What law lens do you view these things through?

If we use human law what does judgment mean? In a human law system, it is the ruling of the judge (or jury) that determines whether a person is found guilty or is acquitted. But that is NOT how judgment works in God's kingdom, for God's law does not function like human law. God's law is not made-up rules, but the design protocols reality is built upon.

So if any person of authority, including God, separates sheep from goats, what is the basis of that judgment? Is it not the reality that sheep are sheep and goats are goats—i.e. it is the inherent nature of the two living beings. The judgment of God does not make a sheep a sheep or a goat a goat.

So too in the final judgment God's judgment merely confirms who is a sheep and who is a goat. **God's judgment does NOT determine one's eternal destiny**, God's judgment sustains, affirms, confirms the choice that every single person has made in forming their own character, in solidifying themselves in love and trust to God or hardening themselves in rebelling against Him.

Thus we read in Revelation, the close of probation closes when every heart seals itself either into loyalty to God or loyalty to sin.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:11-12 NIV84).

TUESDAY

Then what about the title of this day's lesson: The Heavenly Judgment—what is that?

What comes to mind when you think of the heavenly judgment?

In our magazine, The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels

we address the question of judgment and identify four judgments.

In the 3 angels' message, what judgment is being referred to?

The hour of God's judgment has come—what does this mean? Is it the hour in which God has a tribunal, or the hour in human history in which we are finally able to judge Him correctly in the true light that Jesus revealed?

The lesson takes the position that the judgment is a judicial process in which records are open and a heavenly tribunal sits. They use Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 as a basis for this. Let's read those verses and see what you think:

> As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened… In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 NIV84).

A court was set—what type of court? If one views the Bible through the human imposed law lens, then this is a judicial court, a court of law, to examine records, determine guilt or innocence and just punishments.

But if we recognize God's law as design law, and God's government governs the operations of reality itself, then we see what is actually described in the text, what is transpiring, what is really happening,

what is the reality of the event recorded in this Scripture. We realize that this is not a judicial court being convened, but it is God's royal court in which Jesus comes and receives the kingdom from His Father that is rightly His, and that He objectively proved, through His self-sacrificial death, to be worthy of receiving. And all the intelligences in heaven attend and affirm Him as worthy, worthy, worthy the Lamb who was slain!

This is the same event as recorded in Revelation chapter five, let's read it in Revelation 5 and please take note of the similarities. Because Revelation confirms for us that this is not a judicial court and the book being opened in this court is not the book of our recorded sins:

> Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. [this is the book referenced in Daniel chapter seven that is being opened] And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."
>
> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders... He came and **took the scroll** from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:
>
> "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."
>
> Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:
>
> "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"
>
> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:
>
> "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

> The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:1-14 NIV84)

Do you see the same event here as in Daniel chapter 7?

- God is on His throne
- The heavenly intelligences are gathered around
- Jesus comes to His Father and is found worthy and receives His kingdom
- And Jesus opens the book
- And the heavenly beings rejoice

So what is in this book that is sealed with seven seals?

This is from the Remedy:

> Then I looked, and I saw that he who sits on the throne had written out the history of the world before the world began, and sealed it up. It was symbolized by a book in his right hand, with writing within, and sealed with seven seals. **2**And I watched as a mighty angel asked in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the book of God's foreknowledge, and intervene in human history?" **3**But there was no created being in heaven, or living on earth, or amongst the dead, who could open the scroll or even look at its contents. **4**My heart broke with sadness because there was no one found who could open the book or look inside. **5**Then one of the elders said to me, "Don't be sad! See, Jesus–the Lion from Judah, the descendant of David–has overcome and is now able to open the book of God's foreknowledge, sealed by seven seals."
>
> **6**Then I saw a Lamb, appearing as if it had been slain–symbolizing Jesus who sacrificed himself to eradicate sin–standing at the command center of the universe, surrounded by his staff and agents symbolized by the four living creatures and the elders. He had all heavenly power and all wisdom at his disposal — symbolized by seven horns and seven eyes, which represented God’s Spirit — and he was directing every heavenly agency to rescue, heal and restore his children living on earth. **7**He came and took the book from God's right hand. **8**When he took the book, his staff–symbolized by the four living creatures and twenty-four elders–were so relieved that they fell down in joy and awe before him. They were processing requests from God's children on earth–symbolized by the golden bowls of incense they each held. They also had renewed hearts that were like musical instruments making a beautiful melody, **9**and they sang a new song stemming from their admiration for Jesus:
>
> "You are able to take the book and reveal the sealed contents because you were killed, and by your death you revealed the truth and achieved the Remedy to free humans from sin and restore people from every race, language, tribe and nation to God. **10**You have healed their minds, making them a kingdom of priests ministering the Remedy of our God, and they will administer God's methods on earth."

> [11]Then I heard many voices, so I looked, and I saw millions of angels–so many that it was beyond my ability to count. They surrounded the throne and the living creatures, and the elders. [12]In rich booming voices, they sang:
>
> "Worthy is Jesus the Lamb to possess all power, resources and ability, and receive all honor, glory and praise, because he was slain, proving that he will never abuse such mighty power!"
>
> [13]Then I heard every living being in the universe singing in unison:
> "To him who sits on the throne and to Jesus the Lamb be praise and honor, glory and power, for ever and ever, without end!"
>
> [14]The four living creatures said, "Absolutely right!" and the elders fell down in adoration and awe.

Do you recognize that the events in Daniel 7 are not judicial, they are the description of Jesus receiving His kingdom, His power, and authority and taking command of all heavenly resources for the purpose of healing and saving us.

The book with seven seals is the book of God's foreknowledge that He recorded before He began creating. Then, after recording His foreknowledge of events in the book sealed with seven seals, God created and at some point established recording angels to record history as it unfolded. And when Jesus unseals the seven seals the book of God's foreknowledge is compared with history as it happened and all see that God does in fact have perfect foreknowledge, but never uses that foreknowledge to restrict our liberty, take away our freedom of choice, or manipulate for selfish purposes. In other words, God's character and government are vindicated.

Fear God and give Him glory for the hour of HIS judgment has come!

Some might argue that I am taking only a portion of Daniel 7 out of context and not including later verses that they claim establish this court as judicial, specifically Daniel 7:21-22 which read from the NIV:

> As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and **pronounced judgment in favor of the saints** of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. (Daniel 7:21-22 NIV84).

Those who view the Bible through human imposed law lenses will read this verse and say, "see God is pronouncing judgment. This is a tribunal, it is a legal court." However, the translation "pronounced judgment in favor of the saints" is an interpretation based on the preconceived ideas of the translators, namely that God's law functions like human law and thus this is a legal process, so they translate it as such.

It is a legitimate translation, so I don't allege anything nefarious against the translators, but it is not the only legitimate translation. Here is another from the KJV:

> I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints of the most High**; and the time came that hithe saints possessed the kingdom. (Daniel 7:21-22 KJV).

When we understand design law, we understand that the war between Christ and Satan is a war for our hearts and minds, who we believe and who we are loyal to.

Satan is the father of lies and those lies are primarily about God. Thus Paul said in this warfare that we have divine weapons to demolish every argument and pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

This prophecy in Daniel is about the war, about the little horn power that misrepresents God in a way that sets up a false version of God in the spirit temple that people believe. That false version is the idea that God is a dictator, a being who makes up rules like we do and then uses His power to punish rulebreakers. This is the imperial Roman idea of law that the Roman church accepted and promulgated, and which lead to the Dark Ages and the many abuses that the church perpetrated upon humanity, such as the Crusades, Inquisition, burning people at the stake etc.

God is telling us in these prophecies that the little horn power will war against the saints and be winning until the saints are given judgement or discernment to tell the difference between the false imperial Roman god and the true Creator God. Thus the message of the 3 angels we are called to receive the eternal gospel, the eternal good news that God is not like a Roman Caesar, to reject the imperial dictator view of God, to receive the ability to make a right judgment and to judge God to be exactly like Jesus revealed and His government to operate upon design laws. To worship Him who made the heavens, earth, seas and fountains of water. Then the little horn power will be defeated.

And when does this happen—at the end of the 2300 years, when enough truth is recovered from the Bible being translated into the language of the people that our minds can be freed from the lies about God.

WEDNESDAY

Read third and fourth paragraphs:

> The angel comes from the presence of God in the glory of the temple and says, “It’s time. The harvest is fully ripe.” Go and get Your children and bring them home.
>
> Jesus uses illustrations from agriculture repeatedly in the New Testament. On more than one occasion, He uses the symbolism of a ripening harvest to illustrate the growth of the seed of the gospel in the lives of His people. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.18)

What do you understand is happening, what is being described?

What laws are involved in what is described? What kind of law is involved in agriculture?

If we get congress to pass a law that crops in America are legally allowed to grow without water, what happens?

If congress passes a law that says plants that receive sunshine and rain are not allowed to grow—what happens?

If congress passes a law that says anyone who plants thornbushes in their fields will harvest figs, what happens?

So what determines whether one is among the wheat or the tares?

What determines when the harvest is ready?

In the fifth paragraph, which is a quote from *Christ's Object Lessons* it states that "Sanctification is the work of a lifetime."

What does this mean? Does it mean we don't experience sanctification until the end of our life? Does it mean that the antediluvians who lived 900 years had an advantage over us in becoming sanctified?

How do you understand this statement: "Eating is the work of a lifetime"?

Sanctification is growing in godliness and if we have chosen Jesus as our Savior then every day we are to be growing in godliness, every day internalizing more truth, living out His methods and principles, gaining increasing insights, greater wisdom, maturing with more fruits of the spirit.

Sanctification is not a point it time, it is a way of living, we live sanctified lives!

THURSDAY

Read the second paragraph:

> "Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire" (Rev. 14:18, NKJV). Here is the angel who commands the fires of God's final judgment. The harvest is ripe. Sin has reached its limits. Rebellion has crossed the line of God's mercy. As evil and bad as things have been, it's going to get even worse before it's all over. A loving God has done everything He can do for us, which included offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for our sin. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, NKJV; see also Gal. 3:13). (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.19)

I found it interesting how the lesson clipped Revelation 14:18 right in the middle of the sentence in order to advance the idea that the fire is the fire of God's judgment.

Let's read the entire sentence and also what the angel in charge of the fire does, which is verse 19:

> Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe" (Revelation 14:18-19 NIV84).

Does the angel use fire to inflict some punishment? Is fire used at all? If we allow the text to influence our conclusion about this fire, what fire would you say this is? Where is the angel coming from? The altar of God, and the angel is in charge of the fire, would it be the fire that burns in the altar of God? Would that idea be foreign to the text or a reasonable conclusion?

And is it likely that these images of fire and altars are literal or are they symbolic here in the book of Revelation?

The Bible tells us the meaning:

> I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. [Where is this? And is the angel in Revelation 14 coming from? The altar, which is where? The heavenly temple] Round him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. [What kind of fire is this? Is it combustion or something else?] Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. They were calling out to each other:
>
> "Holy, holy, holy!
> The LORD Almighty is holy!
> His glory fills the world."
>
> The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself was filled with smoke.
>
> I said, "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes, I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!"
>
> Then one of the creatures flew down to me, **carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar** with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, "This has touched your lips, and **now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven.**" (Isaiah 6:1-7 GNT)

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So this angel in Revelation is in charge of the fire—and what does the fire of God do? It cleanses us from sin!

So this angel comes and tells the others to harvest—why? Because there are no more people who are willing to be cleansed by the fires of truth and love that flow from the throne of God. Every person has become settled, sealed, solidified either into loyal love to God or sinful selfishness to Satan.

The lesson asks the following question at the bottom of the page:

> How well can you discern the contrast between good and evil? Why is it important that we do? (See Heb. 5:14.)

Just consider the events around COVID, the lockdowns, the mandates, the coercion, pressure, the willingness to close churches, businesses, the forceful blockade of families from visiting their loved ones in hospitals, nursing homes, hospice care, the refusal to stand with individuals whose consciences did not want to comply in injecting experimental substances into their bodies, the willingness to accuse those who had questions of not loving their fellow man, of being the cause of deaths.

It became very clear to me that the majority of people don't have good discernment skills, in my direct experience with people it we clear the vast majority of the people in my community, neighborhoods, and professional organizations could not discern—sadly many in the church also failed to discern good from evil during this time.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 Q2 Three Cosmic Messages: Lesson 3
The Everlasting Gospel

by Mark Cox

SABBATH

MEMORY TEXT: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" Revelation 14:6

X MARKS THE SPOT

Revelation is written like a **Treasure Map** where **X Marks the Spot**. Right in the middle of Revelations is the **Three Angels Message** - Revelation 14: 6-12. I submit to you, the most important idea, **"The Everlasting Gospel"**, is where X marks the spot. [Don't go by the chapter and verse numbers. They were added later]

Revelation is written in a literary poetic form called **Chiasm**, after the Greek letter **Chi**. Which looks like the English letter **X**.

The **First Half of Revelation** is **Historical** and the **Last Half of Revelation** is **Eschatological / End Time Events**

The subject matter of the first half **Reflects** or **Mirrors** the second half. There are **key words** and **phrases** in the first half that **Compare** and **Contrast** ideas in the second half.

While many believe Revelation cannot be understood, the **poetic style** and **structure** tells us quite the opposite. Not only is Revelation written to be understood, it is written in **precise order** with **specific thoughts** to be **mastered by the reader** and **not forgotten**.

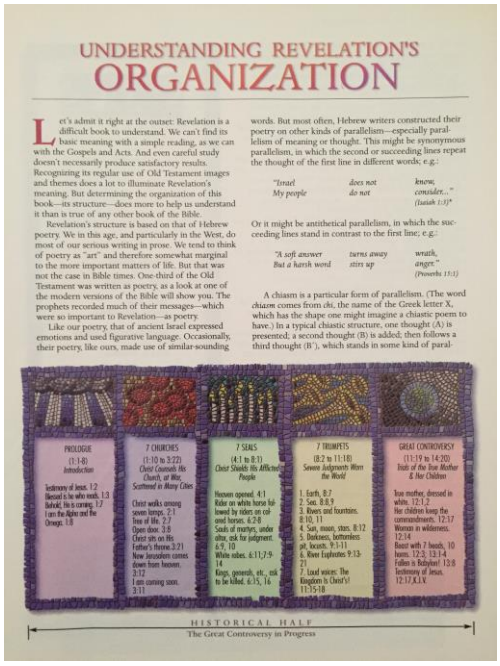
It is not written for the casual reader, it is written for the **seeker**. Like a **puzzle** it's ideas are organized for the delight of **discovery**. Once fully realized the picture is complete and all the parts and pieces make a whole. Contemplating the meaning of the message is the time and challenge.

Far from being the ramblings of an old lonely prophet cast away on the isle of Patmos, Revelation is a **master piece** of **inspiration** and **symmetry**, with specific **order** and **organization** of thoughts and ideas.

Signs of the Times Special Edition - Revelation Chiasm

For your reference I have attempted to share with you a couple of pages from an old special edition of "Signs of the Times" that make my point for me. I apologies, I don't have the exact date and issue.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com



UNDERSTANDING REVELATION'S
ORGANIZATION

Let's admit it right at the outset: Revelation is a difficult book to understand. We can't find its basic meaning with a simple reading, as we can with the Gospels and Acts. And even careful study doesn't necessarily produce satisfactory results. Recognizing its regular use of Old Testament images and themes does a lot to illuminate Revelation's meaning. But determining the organization of this book—its structure—does more to help us understand it than is true of any other book of the Bible.

Revelation's structure is based on that of Hebrew poetry. We in this age, and particularly in the West, do most of our serious writing in prose. We tend to think of poetry as "art" and therefore somewhat marginal to the more important matters of life. But that was not the case in Bible times. One-third of the Old Testament was written as poetry, as a look at one of the modern versions of the Bible will show you. The prophets recorded much of their messages—which were so important to Revelation—as poetry.

Like our poetry, that of ancient Israel expressed emotions and used figurative language. Occasionally, their poetry, like ours, made use of similar-sounding words. But most often, Hebrew writers constructed their poetry on other kinds of parallelism—especially parallelism of meaning or thought. This might be synonymous parallelism, in which the second or succeeding lines repeat the thought of the first line in different words; e.g.:

"Israel	does not	know,
My people	do not	consider..."
		(Isaiah 1:3)*

Or it might be antithetical parallelism, in which the succeeding lines stand in contrast to the first line; e.g.:

"A soft answer	turns away	wrath,
But a harsh word	stirs up	anger."
		(Proverbs 15:1)

A chiasm is a particular form of parallelism. (The word *chiasm* comes from *chi*, the name of the Greek letter X, which has the shape one might imagine a chiastic poem to have.) In a typical chiastic structure, one thought (A) is presented; a second thought (B) is added; then follows a third thought (B'), which stands in some kind of parallelism—e.g., synonymous or antithetic—to the second thought; and finally, a fourth thought (A'), parallel in some way to the first thought, completes the structure. The following example shows a three-element chiasm:

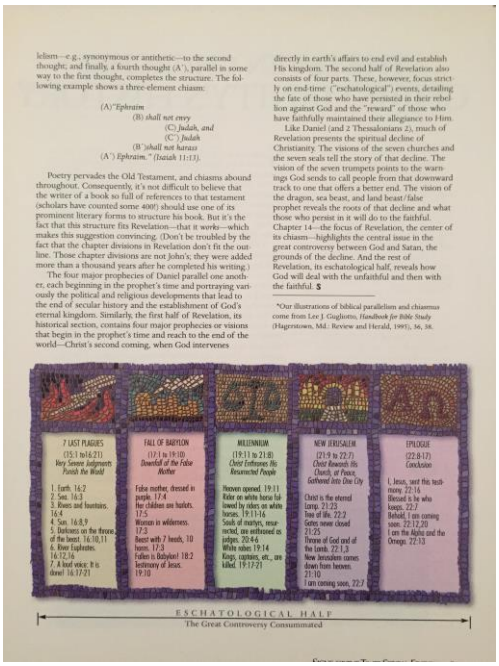
(A) "Ephraim
(B) shall not envy
(C) Judah, and
(C') Judah
(B') shall not harass
(A') Ephraim." (Isaiah 11:13).

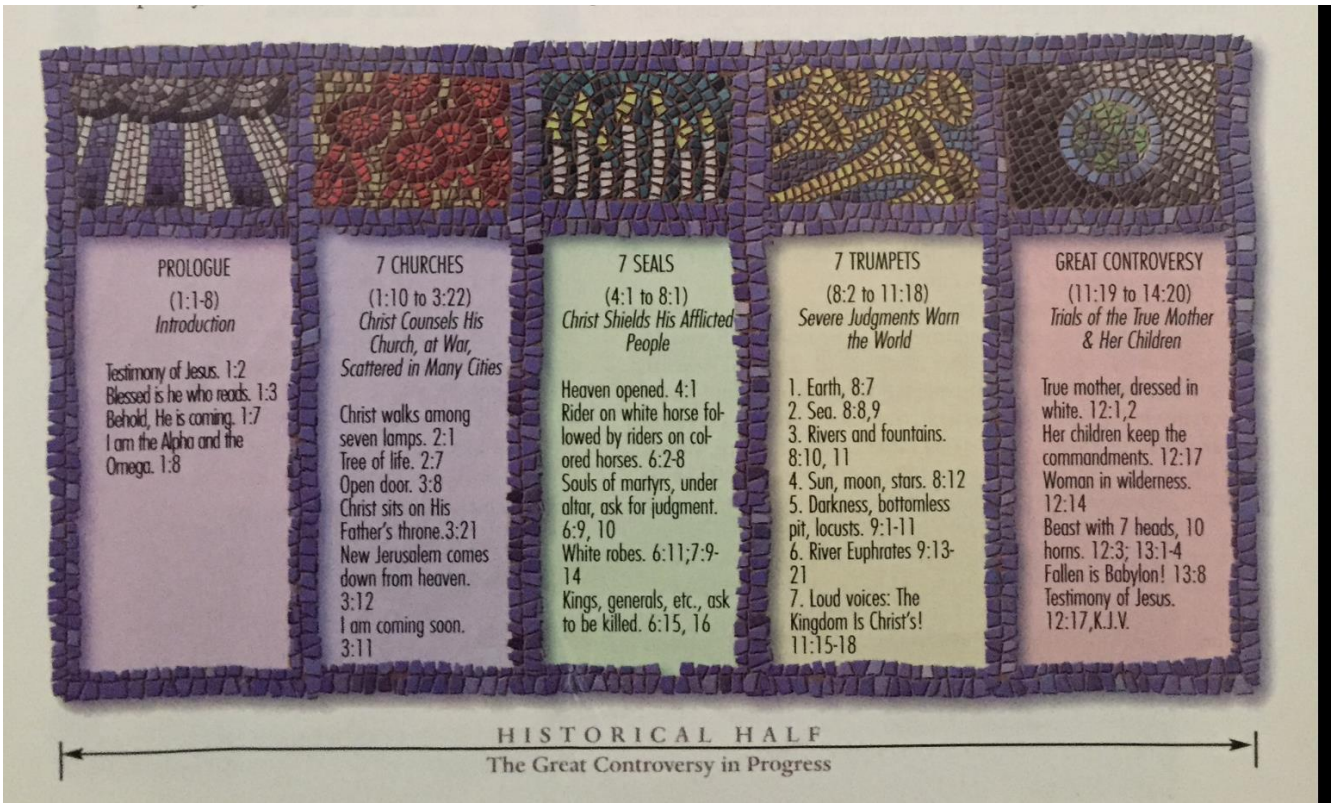
Poetry pervades the Old Testament, and chiasms abound throughout. Consequently, it's not difficult to believe that the writer of a book so full of references to that testament (scholars have counted some 400!) should use one of its prominent literary forms to structure his book. But it's the fact that this structure fits Revelation—that it works—which makes this suggestion convincing. (Don't be troubled by the fact that the chapter divisions in Revelation don't fit the outline. Those chapter divisions are not John's; they were added more than a thousand years after he completed his writing.)

The four major prophecies of Daniel parallel one another, each beginning in the prophet's time and portraying variously the political and religious developments that lead to the end of secular history and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. Similarly, the first half of Revelation, its historical section, contains four major prophecies or visions that begin in the prophet's time and reach to the end of the world—Christ's second coming, when God intervenes directly in earth's affairs to end evil and establish His kingdom. The second half of Revelation also consists of four parts. These, however, focus strictly on end-time ("eschatological") events, detailing the fate of those who have persisted in their rebellion against God and the "reward" of those who have faithfully maintained their allegiance to Him.

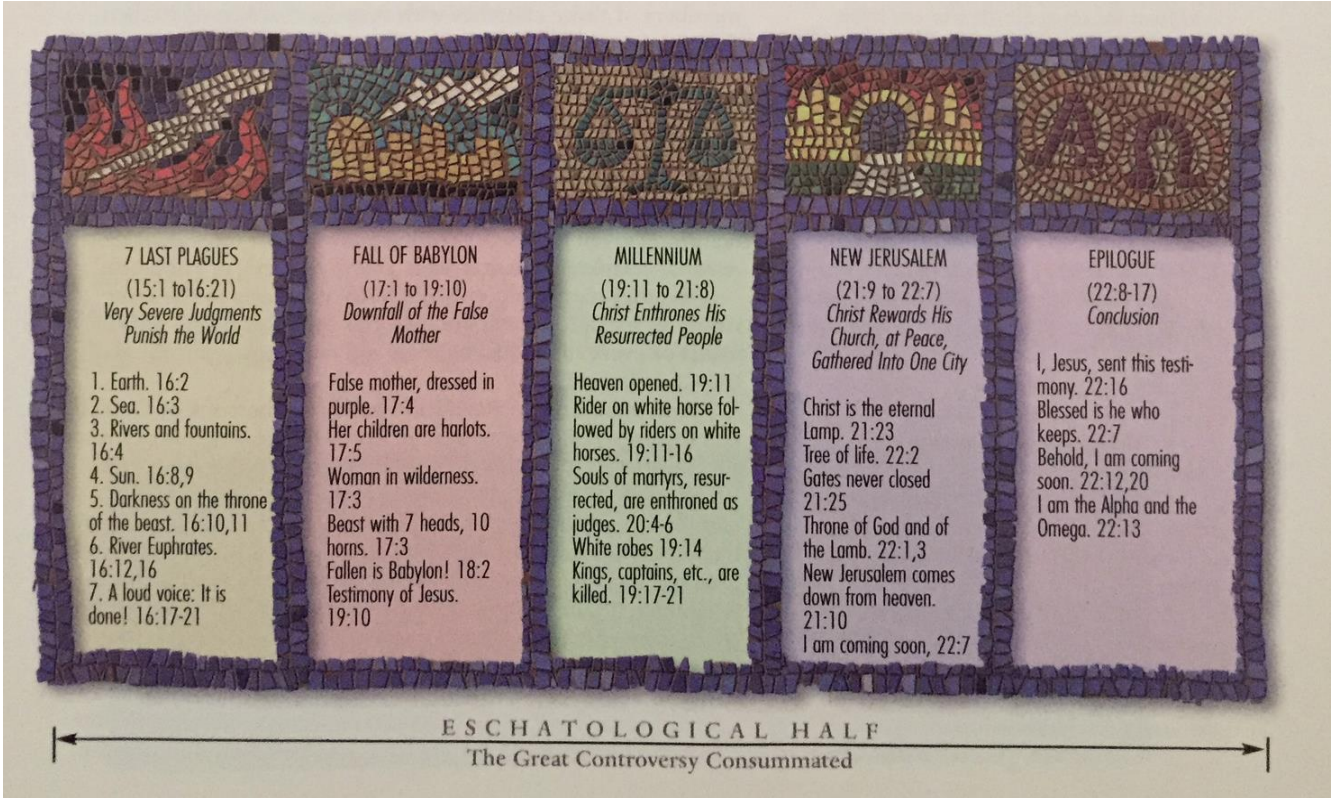
Like Daniel (and 2 Thessalonians 2), much of Revelation presents the spiritual decline of Christianity. The visions of the seven churches and the seven seals tell the story of that decline. The vision of the seven trumpets points to the warnings God sends to call people from that downward track to one that offers a better end. The vision of the dragon, sea beast, and land beast/false prophet reveals the roots of that decline and what those who persist in it will do to the faithful. Chapter 14—the focus of Revelation, the center of its chiasm—highlights the central issue in the great controversy between God and Satan, the grounds of the decline. And the rest of Revelation, its eschatological half, reveals how God will deal with the unfaithful and then with the faithful. $

*Our illustrations of biblical parallelism and chiasmus come from Lee J. Gugliotta, *Handbook for Bible Study* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1995), 36, 38.





PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com



The Chi in the Great Controversy
Our readers and listeners may find it interesting that the book "**The Great Controversy**" appears to be written in a similar **Chiastic Structure**. The first half is **Historical** while the last half is **Eschatological**.

I like to think of the **Great Controversy** as a **commentary** for the ideas in the book of Revelation. It amplifies and sharpens the issues of the **Cosmic Conflict.**

Seventh-day Adventist have come to identify with the "Three Angels Message" in our **origin**, **purpose** and **principles** preparing the world for **Jesus soon coming** and the **Final Conflict**. Over the years our **message and mission** has developed into a **corporate man made organization**, with a financial and legal structure that governs our operations. While the work of God should be orderly and organized for effective ministry, it is important to recognize God's church of the last day believers will be defined by the **Character of a people** not by a building or a corporate organization. There will be a time when all man made structures and organization will **fail**, but the **origin**, **purpose** and **principles** of Gods Kingdom will endure until the end, and reach around the world, and be represented by a multitude that no man can number. People who have the **faith of Jesus and keep the commandments of God**. This is a church built up by the hand of God.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

A Grace-Filled Book of Hope

THE REVELATION OF JESUS

> "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—**things which must shortly take place**. And He sent and **signified it by His angel** to His servant John, who bore **witness to the word of God**, and to the **testimony of Jesus Christ**, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who **reads** and those who **hear** the **words of this prophecy**, and **keep** those things which are written in it; for the **time is near**." Rev. 1-3 NKJV

THE SIFTING

> **These truths**, as presented in Revelation 14 in connection with "**the everlasting gospel**," **will distinguish the church of Christ at the time of His appearing**. For as the result of the threefold message it is announced: "**Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.**" And this **message** is the **last to be given** before the coming of the Lord. **Immediately following** its proclamation the Son of man is seen by the prophet, coming in glory to **reap the harvest of the earth**. – {GC 453.3}
>
> Those who received the light concerning the **sanctuary** and the **immutability of the law of God** were filled with joy and wonder as they saw **the beauty and harmony of the system of truth** that opened to their understanding. They desired that **the light** which **appeared to them so precious** might be **imparted to all Christians;** and they **could not but believe that it would be joyfully accepted.** But **truths that would place them at variance with the world were not welcome to many who claimed to be followers of Christ. Obedience to the fourth commandment required a sacrifice from which the majority drew back.** – {GC 454.1}

THE WORLD DIVIDED.

Did you notice how the current events have effectively **polarized the world** and **sifted out people** from every back ground and organization. It didn't matter what country or state, business or church, race or creed, the world was divided into two classes of people because some believed in the vaccine and others did not. Even in the **Adventist Church** we were divided. What causes such a **devision even among fellow believers**. Our **Faith Tested**! Our **Truth Tested**! Our **Character Tested**!

THE THREE HEBREW WORTHIES WONT BEND THE KNEE TO SATAN.

It takes a particular kind of mind and heart to stand for truth against authoritarianism.

THE DECEPTION - God's Law operates the same as Man's Law is a lie.

> That **the law** which was spoken by God's own voice is faulty, that some specification has been set aside, **is the claim** which Satan now puts forward. **It is the last great deception that he will bring upon the world.** He needs not to assail the whole law; if he can lead men to disregard one precept, his purpose is gained. For "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10. By consenting to break one precept, men are brought under Satan's power. **By substituting HUMAN LAW for GOD'S LAW, Satan**

> **will seek to control the world**. This work is foretold in prophecy. Of the great apostate power which is the representative of Satan, it is declared, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand." Daniel 7:25. – {DA 763.1}
>
> **Men** will surely **set up their laws** to **counter work** the **laws of God**. They will seek **to compel the consciences of others**, and in their **zeal to enforce** these laws they will **oppress their fellow men**. – {DA 763.2}
>
> **The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time**. **Every man** will be **tested**. **Obedience or disobedience** is the **question** to be **decided** by the **whole world**. All will be called to choose between the **law of God** and the **laws of men**. **Here the dividing line will be drawn**. There will be but **TWO CLASSES.** Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of **loyalty** or that of **rebellion**. – {DA 763.3}

Then the end will come.

TWO LAWS - Law of God and the Laws of Men.
Before we understand the deception we must understand the difference between the **Law of God** and **Laws of Man**. We must recognize how God's law and mans law **operate** differently.

HOW GOD'S LAW OPERATES
I believe the simplest way to understand how Gods law operates is to understand **the idea of Wisdom introduced in scripture**.

OLD TESTAMENT CHI
Just as in **Revelation** where we see **one author's** use of the **Chiastic structure** in the poetic form of **one book**, in the whole collection of **OT books**, we see the **Chiastic structure** in the **order** and **organization** of the **many authors** and **many books**. Another **X Marks the Spot** in the Old Testament - the Chiasm of the OT puts the book of **Proverbs** right in the middle of the Old Testament. From Genesis to Malachi there **39 books** and **Proverbs** is the center book, **number 20**.

> **17 Historical books** - Genesis to Esther
> **5 Inner Experiences Books** - Job, Psalms, **Proverbs**, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
> **17 Prophetic Books** - Isaiah to Malachi

CHOKHMAH
The **Hebrew word** for **Wisdom** is - "**CHOKHMAH**" - it describes an **invisible, creative force** that guides people in how they should live. **You can't see it**, like you **can't see gravity**, but it is **there**, it is **everywhere** and it **affects everything** we do. The **Idea of Wisdom,** I would submit to you, is an understanding of "**Design Law**" or Natural Law. How God created **Reality to Operate** - God's **Protocol for Life.**

Even more important, this **creative invisible power** is **not an impersonal force**. It is a **living attribute of God** that we can **experience**. It is a very **real, living, personal power** of God, that God used to **create** the **Universe.** God **wove** it into the **fabric** of **everything thing** and **how everything works**. Everything is **designed** to **exist** in **harmony** with **CHOKHMAH - Wisdom**

> "The **fear** of the **Lord** is the **beginning** of **wisdom**, and **knowledge** of the **Holy One** is **understanding**." Proverbs 9:10

To **know wisdom** is more than an **intellectual pursuit**. To **know wisdom** is to **know God** and to **be fully known by God**.

When we **live in harmony with Wisdom** there is **life** and when we **live out of harmony with Wisdom** there is **death**. There is an **inherent consequence** that **blesses** or **curses** our existence.

When we think of the **laws of God** we don't usually think of things like gravity, the **laws of physics** and **thermal dynamics**; the **laws of relationships** like truth and unselfishness love, forgiveness and trust; the **laws of Character development** such as our principles and habits; the **laws of health** such as our diet and exercise etc.. but these are all the **laws of God**, that **God designed into his creation,** that govern **Heaven and Earth**.

SCIENCE & RELIGION
The world promotes Science against Religion, but in **CHOKHMAH - Wisdom** they cannot be divided. They are the same. They are in synch with God's design or not.

LIVING OUT OF HARMONY WITH GOD
John tells us in 1 John 3:4 "Whosoever committeth Sin transgresseth also the law: for Sin is the **transgression of the law**." **Transgression** is a **Violation of Trust** in our **relationships** with God, our **relationships** with one another and ourself. Yes we can break trust with ourself by not being honest with ourself.

John is referring to God's **Law of Love** (**Relationships**) not God's **Ten Commandments** (**Behaviors**). Thus the Command to **Love God and others as our self.**

In the book Steps to Christ, Ellen White makes that clear.

> "**God made man perfectly holy and happy**; and the fair earth, as it came from the **Creator's hand**, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. **It is TRANSGRESSION of God's law—the LAW OF LOVE—that has brought woe and death**. Yet even amid the suffering that **results from sin**, God's love is revealed. It is written that God cursed the ground for man's sake. Genesis 3:17. …"– {SC 9.3}

NOTICE how she describes **Gods law of love** in the **context of Creation**. "**God is Love**" **His Law is love,** a personal attribute of God. I would submit to you this is an understanding of **CHOKHMAH - Wisdom,** that God has **woven into Faith, Character and our Relationships**.

Psalms 1: ....But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; **Psalms 19**: .....The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul..... **Psalms 119**: .....97 O how I love thy law!

Rom. 13:10 love does no harm to its neighbor. **Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law** Gal. 5:14 **The entire Law summed up in a single command:** "Love your neighbor as yourself." James 2:8 **The Royal Law** "Love your neighbor as yourself " Mat. 22:37-40 / Lev. 19:18 / Deut. 6:5 "Love the Lord Your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it:** Love your neighbor as yourself. **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments**." 1 Corin. 13:5 - "Love is .... **not self seeking.**

> "**God is love**." 1 John 4:16. His **nature**, His **law**, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," whose "ways are everlasting," **changeth not**. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Isaiah 57:15; Habakkuk 3:6; James 1:17. – {PP 33.1}
>
> **For God is love, and love is life**....{COL 258.3}
>
> "It will be seen that **the glory shining in the face of Jesus** is **the glory of self-sacrificing love**. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that **the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven;** that the love which "seeketh not her own" **has its source in the heart of God**; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the **character of Him** who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto...." – {RC 15.4}

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
Most of us, when we speak of Gods law, go straight to God's Ten Commandments/ the Decalogue. But **God's law** is much more than just the Ten Commandments. **The Ten Commandments themselves were given in Love.**

> **Jesus says:** "If you **love** Me, **keep** My **commandments** … He who has My **commandments** and **keeps** them, it is he who **loves** Me … If anyone **loves** Me, he will **keep** My **word**; and My Father will **love** him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him**." John 14:15-24."

Love is inherent in **God's Creation and Design**, while the scriptures tell us the **Ten Commandments** were **added because of Sin**.

Read **Paul's** words in **Galatians 3:19** - The **Ceremonial Laws** and the **Moral Law** were **added after sin.** What does that mean?

> "Wherefore then serveth the law? **It was added because of transgressions**, till the **seed** should come **to whom the promise was made**; and it was **ordained by angels** in the **hand of a mediator**." Galatians 3:19

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "I am asked concerning the **law in Galatians**. **What law is the schoolmaster** to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the **ceremonial** and the **moral code of ten commandments…** "The law was our schoolmaster **to bring us unto Christ**, that we might be **justified by faith**" (Gal. 3:24). In this **scripture**, the **Holy Spirit** through the **apostle** is speaking especially of the **moral law**." {1SM 233, 234}

Behavior sins (Moral Failures) are indicators of **Relational Sin** (Trust Violations)

This is essentially what is being said. John says **Sin is transgressing the Law of Love**. and Paul is saying **the Ten Commandments were added because you violated the Law of love**.

Or I might summarize it this way: Sin (with a Capital "S") is Transgression / **Violating a Trust Relationship**. Living with broken trust with God we tend to sin (with a little "s") / **Moral Failures** so God gave us the Ten Commandments to **protect** us from **destructive behaviors**.

The Law of Love and the Ten Commandments are God's Laws

The law of Love is the **foundation of Gods Creation** and the Ten Commandments were **given in Love** to **protect us from destructive behaviors.**

The **Ten Commandments cannot save**, but we would not have **known sin / destructive behaviors** if the Ten Commandments did not **point it out**.

Obedience to the Ten can **protect** or **"Quarantine"** in order to be saved.

The **Right Relationship with God transforms our lives**. The **relationship** is **Transforming** and **saving**. To **know God** and **be fully known by God**. **Faith in Jesus** makes us **right with God - Thus - Salvation is by Faith.**

WHAT?! THERE IS A LAW?!

> **In heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality**. **When Satan in heaven rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something they had not thought of.** Love for God and for the Commander in high heaven, had been without one drawback. In their ministry the angels did not work as servants, they were not doing the will of God for wages, or to secure position; not to increase their importance or minister to their own pleasure; but their will was identical with the will of God. There was a perfect unity of taste and inclination between the angels and their Creator. Obedience was no drudgery to them. It was a delight.—Letter 4, 1892, p. 15. (To Sister A. G. Daniells, September 19, 1892.) – {9MR 210.2}

THE DECALOGUE

The law for the **depraved**, **degraded** and the **demoralized** / the **morally immature**. Those in the **bondage of sinfulness**. The Ten Commandments were given to the **Israelites during the Exodus**, a time when they were **morally degraded by captivity**.

> **"**Knowing this, that the **law is not made for a righteous man**, but for the **lawless** and **disobedient**, for the **ungodly** and for sinners, for **unholy** and **profane**, for **murderers** of fathers and murderers of mothers, for **manslayers**, For **whoremongers**, for them that **defile themselves** with mankind, for **menstealers**, for **liars**, for **perjured persons,** and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." 1Timothy 1:9-11

PERSPECTIVE ON CHARACTER

Moral - Take responsibility for Character and Relationships - Purpose Principles and Habit
Amoral - Neglect responsibility for Character and Relationships - Purpose, Principles and Habits
Immoral - Ones Character does not fit the Purpose Principles and Habits of a Society
Demoralized - Robbed of Higher Reasoning and Will Power to determine Purpose, Principles and Habits. Bondage to others Purpose Principles and Habits. **A Slave**.

Seven Levels of Moral Decision Making / Moral Maturity

Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg 6 levels adapted by Dr. Tim Jennings in his book "God Shaped Heart".

1. Reward and Punishment
2. Market Place Exchange
3. Social Conformity
4. Law and Order
5. Lover for Others
6. Principle-based Living
7. **Understanding Friendship with God**

SIMPLE OBEDIENCE

To escape the bondage of Sin and sinfulness **Simple Trust and Obedience is required**.

> "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.... But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law **[CHOKHMAH / Wisdom / Design Law / Natural Law]** doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 1:1-3. **It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people.** "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the

good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16. – {GC 478.3}

It is God's **design** that **His name shall be honored before the heavenly universe**. The **whole earth** is to show forth **His infinite glory**. He is gathering from this earth a people for Himself. **His will is the law of the universe.** He calls upon every human being to **cooperate** with Him. But He **forces** no one. **He has placed man's destiny in His own hands, telling him that his future welfare depends on his choice.** To be saved, he must **cooperate with God in His work of restoration**. – {18MR 271.1}

The **religion of self** makes **easy conversions**. **Scripture is perverted**, **God dethroned**, and **self deified**. The **operation of the Holy Spirit on hearts is denied**. This is the new, broad way, **substituted** as an improvement on the strait gate and the narrow way. When self becomes thus prominent, God is lost sight of and the work cannot prosper. The Lord is misrepresented and misjudged. **The importance of the truth is lost to view while human opinions rise to vast importance**. Thus the **experience is cheapened**. **Zeal for self** takes the place of the higher aims which should mold the life. Egotism develops and strengthens. **Religion is used as a means for carrying out selfish purposes.** The solemn claims of God are treated as a farce, spoken of with levity and irreverence. A man with such an experience has lost his anchorage, and is drifting without guide or compass. – {18MR 271.2}

In seeking to cast contempt upon the divine statutes, **Satan** has **perverted** the **doctrines of the Bible**, and **errors** have thus become **incorporated** into **the faith of thousands who profess to believe the Scriptures**. The **last great conflict** between **truth and error** is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the **law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle between the **laws of men** and the **precepts of Jehovah**, between the **religion of the Bible** and the **religion of fable and tradition**. – { Darkness Before Dawn, 28.2}

THE SUBTLETY OF THE DECEPTION

Two Truths

1. Jesus, the Son of God, Died on the Cross, & paid a great price, for my Sin/sins & therefore Salvation.
2. God the Father Loves, Accepts and Forgives you and me unconditionally.

Man's Law - Operates Contractually - Legal issue. The problem with looking at God's law Contractually is that it makes one of our two truths false.

For Example:

1. If Jesus the Son of God died on the Cross and paid a great price for my sin - Then God the Father did not forgive me for anything. **The Contract was fulfilled**.

2. If God the Father, Loves, Accepts and Forgives me unconditionally than why did Jesus have to die? **The offense has been dismissed**.

If we see our problem with God as a legal contractual problem it takes away our role in the solution. We are just waiting around for the Judgement. We have no part. What happened to **"Work our your Salvation with fear and trembling"**. It takes us away from **cooperation with God.**

JESUS CAME AS A REVELATION OF TRUTH AND LOVE
"Truth sets you Free" "Love Casts out all Fear"

The Truth about **God** - Is Wisdom - **Love Life and Liberty**
The Truth about **Satan** - The Disease - **A Liar, Thief and a Murderer**
The Truth about **Man** - Fatal Condition - **Of Sin Suffering and Death**
The Truth about **Jesus** - The Remedy -**The Way the Truth and the Life.**

> **Christ came to represent the character of his Father, to win man back to his allegiance to God, to reconcile man to God. He proposed to meet the foe and unmask his arts, that man might be able to make choice of whom he would serve**. Satan had been Lucifer, the light-bearer, the sharer of God's glory in heaven, and second to Jesus in power and majesty. In the words of inspiration he is described as the one who "sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." But Lucifer had perverted the beauty and power with which he was endowed by the Creator, and his light had become darkness. When through his rebellion he was cast out of heaven, he determined to make **man his victim**, and the **earth his kingdom**. He cast the **blame of his rebellion upon Christ**, and in **determined hatred of God**, sought to **wound Him through the fall of man**. In the happiness and peace of Eden, he beheld a vision of the bliss that he had forever lost, and he determined to excite in the hearts of God's creatures the same bitterness that he himself felt, so that their songs of praise and thanksgiving might be turned to reproach against their Maker. – {BEcho November 1, 1892 Par. 3}

GOVERNED BY THE LAW OF GOD

The **Sabbath as sign** of those who understand Gods law - **CHOKHMAH / Wisdom / Design Law / Natural Law**. The law of God written on the heart.

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Corinthians 3:3

The Sabbath Message - The celebration of the relationship between the creature and his creator. Celebration of Creation

> "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth— to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying

with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who **made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.**'" Revelation 14:6-7

MONDAY

The "Everlasting" Gospel

WHAT IS THE "EVERLASTING" GOSPEL / GOOD NEWS?

THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

> But the **plan of redemption** had a yet **broader and deeper purpose** than the **salvation of man**. **It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth**; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; **but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe**. To this **result of His great sacrifice**—its influence upon the **intelligences of other worlds,** as well as upon **man**—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. **The act of Christ in dying** for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would **justify God and His Son** in their dealing with the **rebellion of Satan**. It would establish the **perpetuity of the law of God** and would reveal the **nature and the results of sin**. – {PP 68.2}

Thinking that Jesus came to this world just to save mankind misses the scope and magnitude of the work of redemption. If Christ failed to vindicate the Character of God the entire universe would be lost..

In my humble opinion, if we think the **plan of redemption** is only about **saving man** I believe the **motivation to be a Christian** becomes **self serving**. We all want eternal life, not eternal non-existence, right?

However, if we see **the salvation of man as secondary,** and the **glory of God's Character of love as primary**, then we share in the **ministry of Christ** to **vindicate God before the heavenly universe**. This understanding empowers the believer in Christ to live with purpose and meaning and the courage to die for the Gospel - The Glory of the Father!

> 14-18 (Hebrews 1:3; John 1:1-3, 14; Philippians 2:5-8; see EGW comment on Mark 16:6; Luke 22:44; Romans 5:12-19; Hebrews 3:1-3). **God Reached Humanity Through Humanity**—**Christ alone was able to represent the Deity**. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, **He who was the express image of the invisible God,** was alone sufficient to accomplish this work. No verbal description could reveal God to the world. Through a life of purity, a life of perfect trust and submission to the will of God, a life of humiliation such as

even the highest seraph in heaven would have shrunk from, **God Himself must be revealed to humanity**. In order to do this, our Saviour clothed His divinity with humanity. He employed the human faculties, for only by adopting these could He be comprehended by humanity. **Only humanity could reach humanity**. He lived out the character of God through the human body which God had prepared for Him. He blessed the world by living out in human flesh the life of God, thus showing that He had the power to unite humanity to divinity (The Review and Herald, June 25, 1895). – {7BC 924.6}

SATAN AND EVIL WICKED MEN

By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in heaven, causing Him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, **Satan induced man to sin**. He declared that God's unjust restrictions had led to man's fall, as they had led to his own rebellion. – {HF 309.3}

In the banishment of Satan from heaven, God declared His justice and honor. But when man sinned, God gave evidence of His love by yielding up His Son to die for the fallen race. **In the atonement the character of God is revealed.** The mighty argument of the cross demonstrates that sin was in no wise chargeable upon the government of God. During the Saviour's earthly ministry, **the great deceiver was unmasked**. The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ pay him homage, the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love and to cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!"—all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe. **The prince of evil exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus**. Satan employed men as his agents to fill the Saviour's life with suffering and sorrow. The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God. – {HF 309.4}

Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character. Satan's lying charges against the divine character appeared in their true light. **He had accused God** of seeking the exaltation of Himself in requiring obedience from His creatures and had declared that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. Now it was seen that the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make, for "**God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself**." 2 Corinthians 5:19. **In order to destroy sin Christ had humbled Himself and become obedient unto death**. – {HF 310.1}

THE ATONEMENT

Story on Atonement Models

Moral influence Theory - good theory - the idea that Jesus is our **example** - all preachers use it - It is just incomplete.

There is a word in the Bible that puzzled me for a long time. I had not seen it in the right context. The word is **Propitiation**. We often replace it with the word **Atonement**. It shows up three times in the New Testament. It's basic meaning is to **Win Favor** or **Appease Anger**.

> 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
> 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; Romans 3:24-25
>
> And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:
> 2 And he is the **propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2
>
> 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins. 1 John 4:9 & 10
>
> But this great sacrifice was **not** made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, **not** to make Him willing to save. No, no! "God so loved the world, that **He gave** His only-begotten **Son**." **John 3:16**. The Father loves us, not because of the great **propitiation**, but **He provided the propitiation** because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." **2 Corinthians 5:19**. God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption.– **Steps To Christ 13.2**

God through Jesus seeks to **win our favor** and **appease our anger**. (Man's anger caused by his own believing lies, violating trust and moral failures) We fail the relationship and God redeems it. **Atonement! Relationships** and **Character** restored.

Unlike Satan & Pagan worship that **compels** man to seek Satan's favor and appease Satan's anger. Satan perverts character and relationships and ultimate destroys.

> **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds**. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. – {DA 758.3}
>
> **It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God.** Of Lucifer the Lord says, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." Ezekiel 28:12. Lucifer had been the covering cherub. He had stood in the light of God's presence. **He had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe.** After he had sinned, **his power to deceive was the more deceptive**, and the

unveiling of his character was the more difficult, because of the exalted position he had held with the Father. – {DA 758.4}

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force**. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. **The Lord's principles are not of this order**. His authority rests upon **goodness, mercy, and love**; and the **presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. – {DA 759.1}

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. **Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe**. – {DA 759.2}

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, 2 Corinthians 5:19

TUESDAY

A Story of Grace

FORETHOUGHT

> "The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the **mystery** which hath been kept in **silence** [Secret] through times eternal. 'Romans 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne."—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 22.

When my wife and I had Children - we determined we would love, accept and forgive our children before they were ever born.

THIS EARTH WAS GODS ANSWER TO THE WAR IN HEAVEN.
When was the world created? Before or after sin entered heaven?

Gods plan of redemption was in place before we were created. I would suggest we were created as the answer to the Conflict in Heaven.

I would suggest that war had already begun. Which means - at one point in time - **Sin only existed in Heaven**.

Sin is not just an earthly problem but a universal problem. How God resolves it will effectively save, not just your soul or my soul, not just the planet, but the entire universe of heavenly angels and Unfallen worlds.

COSMIC CONFLICT
War in Heaven threatens to destroy the universe - Promise of a New Heaven

WORLD CONFLICT
Human Strife threatens to destroy all life on earth - Promise to make a New Earth

SOUL CONFLICT
Human Struggle threatens to destroy our own existence - Promise of a New Bodies - Recreated.

Paul's struggle doing the things he didn't want to do and not doing the things he knew he should. Deliver me from this body of death.

Paul Loved God, but struggle with memories, thoughts, emotional triggers from years of living against God. We are a products of what we are born with, what happens to us and our response. **Conversion** is changing direction but **transformation** can take a lifetime.

Conflict Rightly Met Develops Steadfastness

> Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness.—Christ's Object Lessons, 61 (1900).

Waging a War

> It is not mimic battles in which we are engaged. We are waging a warfare upon which hang eternal results. We have unseen enemies to meet. Evil angels are striving for the dominion of every human being.—The Ministry of Healing, 128 (1905).

Conflicts Not Created by Christ
We are living in a solemn time. An important work is to be done for our own souls and for the souls of others, or we shall meet with an infinite loss. We must be transformed by the grace of God, or we shall fail of heaven, and through our influence others will fail with us.

> "**Let me assure you that the struggles and conflicts which must be endured in the discharge of duty, the self-denials and sacrifices which must be made if we are faithful to Christ, are not created by Him**. They are not imposed by arbitrary or unnecessary command; they do not come from the severity of the life which He requires us to lead in His service. Trials would exist in greater power and number were we to refuse **obedience to Christ** and become the **servants of Satan and the slaves of sin.**"—Testimonies for the Church 4:557, 558 (1881).

Life Is a Conflict

> This life is a conflict, and we have a foe who never sleeps, who is watching constantly to destroy our minds and lure us away from our precious Saviour, who has given His life for us.—Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 291 (1915).

Prepare the Soul for Peace

The Lord permits conflicts to prepare the soul for peace.—The Great Controversy, 663 (1888).

Ephesians 6: **The Full Armor of God**

Religious Experience Gained Only Through Conflict

With energy and fidelity our youth should meet the demands upon them, and this will be a guarantee of success. Young men who have never made a success in the temporal duties of life will be equally unprepared to engage in the higher duties. **A religious experience is gained only through conflict, through disappointment, through severe discipline of self, through earnest prayer**. The steps to heaven must be taken one at a time, and every advance step gives strength for the next.—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 100 (1913). . 2MCP 555-2MCP 556.3

WEDNESDAY

Into the World

SATANS POWER

The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist. "The Usual Suspects" 1995

DANGER CLOSE

None are in greater danger from the influence of evil spirits than those who, notwithstanding the direct and ample testimony of the Scriptures, **deny the existence and agency of the devil and his angels**. So long as we are ignorant of their wiles, they have almost **inconceivable advantage**; many give heed to their suggestions while they suppose themselves to be following the dictates of their own wisdom. This is why, **as we approach the close of time**, when Satan is to work with greatest power to deceive and destroy, **he spreads everywhere the belief that he does not exist**. It is his policy to conceal himself and his manner of working. – {GC 516.2}

There is nothing that **the great deceiver fears** so much as that **we shall become acquainted with his devices**. The better to disguise his real character and purposes, he has caused himself to be so represented as to excite no stronger emotion than ridicule or contempt. He is well pleased to be painted as a ludicrous or loathsome object, misshapen, half animal and half human. He is pleased to hear his name used in sport and mockery by those who think themselves intelligent and well informed. – {GC 516.3}

It is because he has masked himself with consummate skill that the question is so widely asked: "**Does such a being really exist?**" It is an evidence of his success that theories giving the lie to the plainest testimony of the Scriptures are so generally received in the religious

world. And it is because **Satan can most readily control the minds of those who are unconscious of his influence**, that the word of God gives us so many examples of his malignant work, **unveiling before us his secret forces**, and thus placing us on our guard against his assaults. – {GC 517.1}

The power and malice of Satan and his host might justly alarm us were it not that we may find shelter and deliverance in the superior power of our Redeemer. We carefully secure our houses with bolts and locks to protect our property and our lives from evil men; but **we seldom think of the evil angels who are constantly seeking access to us**, and **against whose attacks we have, in our own strength, no method of defense**. If permitted, **they can distract our minds, disorder and torment our bodies, destroy our possessions and our lives**. Their only delight is in misery and destruction. Fearful is the condition of those who resist the divine claims and yield to Satan's temptations, **until God gives them up to the control of evil spirits**. But those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watchcare. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people. – {GC 517.2}

THURSDAY

A Mission Movement

Me and my PURPOSE - Reason we Existence - Our Presence Matters & becomes the Message.
My Life and my MISSION - The Causes of our Endeavors - Our Work
Living with INTENTION - What we Think, Say or Do - Actions affecting the world.

Let your **Purpose** be lived out in your **Mission** with **Intention**.

AMERICA WAS A CAUSE

"The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested."
Thomas Paine - *Common Sense*

Liberty of Conscience / Inviolability of Conscience.

"The framers of the Constitution recognized **the eternal principle that man's relation with his God is above human legislation**, and his rights of conscience inalienable. **Reasoning was not necessary to establish this truth; we are conscious of it in our own bosoms**. It is this consciousness which, in defiance of human laws, has sustained so many martyrs in tortures and flames. They felt that their duty to God was superior to human enactments, and that man could exercise no authority over their consciences. It is an inborn principle which nothing can

eradicate."—**Congressional Documents (U.S.A.), serial No. 200, document No. 271** – {GC 295.3}

"In that grand old document which our forefathers set forth as their bill of rights—the **Declaration of Independence**—they declared: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' And the **Constitution** guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the **inviolability of conscience**: 'No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.' '**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof**." – {GC 295.2}

How Reality Works. Confronted with tyranny, our forefathers' declaration of war was the Declaration of Independence. Here the writers declare that there are "**powers of the earth**," "**laws of nature**" subject to "**nature's God**," "**truth**" that is "**self-evident**," that men are "**created equal**," "**endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights**" of "**life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**." These are declarations of universal laws, protocols for life, designed into our existence, that cannot be ignored without inherent consequence. These laws of cause to affect have no exemptions, exceptions or exclusions. Three are superior.

1. **The Law of Love: Disinterested Benevolence**. The "**pursuit of happiness**" is no trivial pursuit of self-gratification, rather the right and responsibility to become "**a good soul**", to produce good without ulterior motives and when necessary resist or restrain evil at one's own risk, peril or sacrifice.

2. **The Law of Life: Reciprocal Service**. When love is reciprocal, "**life"** is created and sustained. All creation is designed on the great commandment, "**Love your neighbor as yourself**." Love unreciprocated is death.

3. **The Law of Liberty: "Inviolability of Conscience."** Compelling power, Coercion and Manipulation, cannot elevate man to the image designed by his maker. This law cannot be broken. To violate this law is to cause inherent damage to the Soul, the Body and the Spirit, creating a defiant rebel or a captive in bondage. **Religious Liberty, Individual Autonomy, Freedom of Choice,** are the powers of man for self-determination, self-governance and self-reliance. Our Constitution and was written to protect these principles for which life, safety and security are worthy sacrifices.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 4
Fear God and Give Glory to Him

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph:

> The purpose of the book of Revelation for our generation is to prepare a people to be ready for Jesus' soon return and to unite with Him in giving His last-day message to the world. Revelation reveals the plans of God and unmasks the plans of Satan. It presents God's final appeal, His urgent, eternal, universal message for all humanity. (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 31).

What is the last-day message to go to the world?

If we read the message of the 3 angels right from the Bible on every website, TV and radio station, and phone system in the entire world so that every single person hears the word-for-word reading of the 3 angels messages, would that fulfill God's plan? Would that result in the gospel going to all the world and would it result in Jesus coming? Why or why not?

What would be missing from the message if we merely read it to everyone?

Is it possible to take the message of the 3 angels to the world in such a way that we advance Satan's kingdom rather than God's? How?

Is the message of the 3 angels the eternal gospel?

- Is there a false gospel presented in Christianity that misrepresents God? And could people take that false view of God to the world under the umbrella of claiming they are presenting the message of the 3 angels and actually be doing harm?

Are the 3 angels' messages the righteousness by faith message? How do you explain righteousness by faith?

- If we present the idea that righteousness by faith is the legal declaration that we are accounted righteous by God because of the blood payment of Jesus applied to our heavenly record so that the Father declares us to be legally righteous even though we remain unrighteous, is that the righteousness by faith message? Does that message advance the eternal gospel or does it advance Satan's counterfeit gospel?
- What is the righteousness by faith message then?
    - "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84)

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So the message that is to go to all the world is the eternal gospel, it is the righteousness by faith message—is that message the message of God's character of love?

Where do you find that in the message of the 3 angels?

When you have gone to various Revelation seminars, or had Daniel and Revelation in school, what were you taught was the message of the 3 angels?

Have you ever heard anything legal in the message? Have you ever heard the message presented in a way that suggests there is a tribunal or judgment and heavenly beings are going over legal records of sin and seeking to determine if every sin has been confessed and had the proper legal payment of Jesus' blood to erase it from the record book, and if there is one sin left not properly accounted for in God's legal system then God must use power to inflict punishment upon people for unpaid for and unrepented of sin?

If an organization, say a denominational church, takes such a legal message with a punishing god to the world will it be advancing the kingdom of God or that of God's enemy? Why and how?

Read second paragraph,

> The Greek New Testament word for "fear" in Revelation 14:7 is phobeo. It is used here not in the sense of being afraid of God but in the sense of reverence, awe, and respect. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God and full surrender to His will. It is an attitude of mind that is God-centered rather than self-centered. It is the opposite of Lucifer's attitude in Isaiah 14:13, 14, when he says in his heart, " 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High' " (NKJV). (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 31).

This is well said, the lesson does a good job here of emphasizing that the meaning of *fear* here is not terror, dread, or anxiety, but reverence, awe, admiration, respect.

But, do you see this same emphasis in the first question from Friday's lesson?

> Think about the incredible power of God, the One who created and sustains the entire cosmos. We can barely grasp the idea of the cosmos. How then could we even begin to grasp the Creator of it? Think about how much greater and vaster and more powerful He is than we are. And this God will one day judge us? How do these facts help us understand the idea of the "fear of God" and what it means? (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 36).

Does this series of questions emphasize awe, respect, and admiration or does it instead lead toward intimidation, dread, and terror?

What ideas are imbedded in this series of questions that causes the questions to be framed this way and which incite the wrong kind of fear?

It is the assumption that God's law functions like human law and that God's power is used judicially, to determine guilt and innocence and then to inflict punishment upon the wrongdoer. Therefore, we must be afraid of God and what He will do to us for our unpaid for sins. This is a satanic idea.

But if we return to design law and rephrase this with design law understanding, it would read like this:

> Think about the incredible power of God, the One who created and sustains the entire cosmos—His laws are the protocols reality is built upon. We can barely grasp the idea of the cosmos. How then could we even begin to grasp the Creator of it—the One who sustains it all and holds it all together in love? Think about how much greater and vaster and more powerful He is than we are. Think about how this all-powerful God has been using His power to hold at bay the ultimate destructiveness of sin and to bring healing to His creation. Think about how this Creator God will one day examine us and diagnose accurately everything that is wrong and will use all His power to cleanse, heal, recreate and restore all who trust Him to His perfect design. But, for those who refuse to allow Him to heal them, rather than using power to torment them, He sadly lets them go to reap what they have chosen—separation from Him the source of life and therefore eternal non-existence. How do these facts help us understand the idea of the "fear of God" and what it means?

Do you see how the wrong law concept contaminates the Bible and perverts the meaning so that people can take the 3 angels' messages and present them to support Satan's view of God?

Do we get a message that to fear God means to revere and awe and not be afraid or in terror from the question at the bottom of the page in Monday's lesson?

> How do Jesus' words here—" 'And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' " (Matt. 10:28, NKJV)—help us understand what it means to fear God? (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 32).

Note that the authors use a translation that capitalizes "Him" to fear "Him" who is able to destroy both body and soul, thus implying that it is God who will destroy body and soul in hell. The text does not say this, Jesus simply said, be afraid of the one who can destroy the body and soul in hell. Jesus did not say it was God who would do this, but because the world has almost completely bought the lie that God's law functions like human law, and therefore believes without question that justice requires the ruling authority to use power to inflict punishment, then the translators automatically conclude that the only one it could be is God Himself. But that is not true, when we understand design law, we realize the one who destroys the soul is the sinner themselves, as Galatians say, the one who sows the carnal nature *from that nature reaps destruction*—not from God, from their own sinful selves.

This is how I rendered it in *The Remedy*:

> Don't be afraid of those who can destroy the body: they cannot touch your psyche, your mind, your individuality. Rather, be afraid of unremedied sin, which destroys both body and mind and results in eternal destruction. (Matthew 10:28 REM).

Read the fourth paragraph,

> The essence of the great controversy revolves around submission to God. Lucifer was self-centered. He refused to submit to any authority except his own. Rather than submit to the One upon the throne, Lucifer desired to rule from the throne. Put simply, to fear God is to place Him first in our thinking. It is to renounce our self-centeredness and pride and to live a life wholly for Him. (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 31).

Is this right? Do you agree? Or is something off about this?

Is the essence of the GC about submission to God, or the *type of submission?*

Does God have the power to force every being to submit? What happens if God uses power in this way?

Does Christianity present God in this light? Is it stated that God will use power to punish sinners? Is it stated that Jesus came to take our punishment?

In fact, this past week, I was listening to a Christian radio station when a passionate young lady came on and gave a plea for everyone to trust Jesus because, He came "to take our punishment away."

Is this what the Bible says? Well, the Bible almost seems to:

> They offer sacrifices given to me and they eat the meat, but the LORD is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins… (Hosea 8:13 NIV84).

> The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. (1 Thessalonians 4:6–8 NIV84).

Is there punishment for sin? Yes—does the Bible use language that says God will punish people for sin? Yes—so the question is simply how, by what means, system, or method? Is God's means, method, or system of governing, through which He brings about justice and therefore through which His punishment is brought, the same type of system that sinful humans have, a system of imposed rules, with imposed laws, requiring the infliction of imposed penalties?

In other words, the way we understand God's punishment is through the type of law we believe God uses. Is God's law like human law, or is God's law design law?

If we already believe God's law functions like human law, then we read texts like this and say, *See God will use His power to punish*. The people who read these texts never take the time to let the Bible describe and reveal what God actually does. They never stop to see *how* God punishes, which is explained, described, and demonstrated over and again in Scripture. And how does God punish, what is His method?

God does bring the punishment when He lets people go to reap what they have insisted upon. **God brings the punishment when He ceases His merciful interventions and the use of divine power**, not by the infliction of divine power.

Sin damages and destroys, God has been using divine power to interfere with what sin does, to hold at bay the destruction that sin naturally brings and through Christ to reconcile all to Himself. But if people insist on rebellion against God, and refuse His grace, God eventually sets them free to reap what they have chosen and they experience the full weight of unremedied sin and they are tormented by what sin does to them and then they die.

This method is described in many places in the Bible such as Romans 1:18-31 God's wrath being poured out on those who refuse the knowledge of God, and who insist on worshiping things they make with their own hands and three times, Paul tells us this results in God giving them up or letting them go to reap the destruction that sin causes.

> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32).
>
> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves.
>
> In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. (Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996 p. 543)

And Paul uses the exact same expression when describing what God did to Jesus who became sin though He knew no sin, in Romans 4:25—God gave Him up, but the various translations translate it

differently with words like delivered over, or handed over, rather than given up. But the Greek is exactly the same. And what did Jesus testify that God did to Him on the cross? God let Him go, forsook Him, abandoned Him. And what happened to Jesus—He died.

One of the founders of the SDA church understood it this way, EG White, and wrote the following:

> **We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself**. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, **men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death**. Selected Messages Volume one, p. 235. [this is Romans 1, God's wrath, design law, God ceasing the use of power to hold at bay the destructiveness of sin]
>
> **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but he leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown**. [Galatians 6:8…] Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown, which yields its unfailing harvest. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner**, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. The Great Controversy p. 36.

This is the reality—but Satan gets the world to misconstrue it all when people accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, then they falsely teach that God is required by law to use His power to inflict harm, punishment, and death, rather than the truth that God's power is always used to restrain, overcome, and heal the destruction, harm, and death that sin brings.

So, what type of submission does imposed law with a punishing god result in? The submission of slaves, of those who don't trust, of fear, and this type of submission only stifles rebellion under a veneer of behavioral conformity.

This is not what God wants! God wants our love, our trust, our loyalty, devotion, and submission of understanding friends. And this type of submission can never be achieved by threat, intimidation, the use of might and power. Thus Scripture says, not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord, Zechariah 4:6. And the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love. It is by the presentation of truth in love that the heart is won and we submit freely, as understanding friends.

With all of this in mind, consider these historic Adventist quotes, what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, and take note how much of the material we read from the church today has rejected this view and instead is teaching a message that is the opposite of this:

> The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be

> broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** He desires only the service of love; and **love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority**. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Sata**n. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. The Desire of Ages p. 22.
>
> God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force**. **Compelling power is found only under Satan's government.** The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. The Desire of Ages p. 759.

Do we need to be afraid of God? No! But the lie of imposed law, the penal-legal lie, the lie that God's law functions like human law, has resulted in the vast majority of Christians being more afraid of God who is trying to save them than the sin in their life which is killing them.

Is there a punishment for sin? Yes, what is that punishment? Eternal death—and how does it come about? **By God ceasing His interventions** that keep that death at bay and letting people reap what they have chosen. Thus death does not come out from God as an infliction, it is the unavoidable result of persistent rebellion and reaping the full freedom from God, the source of life, that the sinners insist upon and the death that unremedied sin causes.

And does the Bible teach that Jesus came to take away our punishment? No! It teaches that Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29).

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

> These passages reveal a linkage between fearing God and keeping His commandments. Fearing God is an attitude of reverential respect that leads us to obedience. Heaven's urgent appeal is for those saved by grace to be obedient to God's commands (Eph. 2:8–10). Grace does not free us from obeying the commands of God. The gospel sets us free from the law's condemnation, not from our responsibility to obey it. (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 32).

What does it mean that the gospel sets us free from the law's condemnation, but not the responsibility to obey it?

What law lens do you understand this idea through? What does this mean through imposed human law? That our past sins make us legally guilty and deserving of death, but if we accept Jesus as our

Savior His blood is the legal payment applied to our account and all our past sins are legally paid for and moving forward we must obey the law that we previously broke, but we really can't obey the law, and any new sins must be repented of and have the legal blood payment made to be sure they are erased from the books, so that we can be declared righteous even though we are not.

Does this even make sense? What is the truth, the design law understanding? Why doesn't the law condemn the saved?

> Therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are **in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death**. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, **in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit**. (Romans 8:1-4 NIV84).

Why is there no condemnation for the saved? Because of legal adjustment in books somewhere off in the distant cosmos? No! Because through Jesus the living law of God is reproduced in us, we become the righteousness of God, we have God's law written on our hearts and minds, we are transformed, healed, renewed, regenerated, we have the mind of Christ, we are partakers of the divine nature, because our old sinful selves have died and it is Christ that lives in us. We are not condemned because we are no longer in rebellion against God but have been reborn with new hearts and right spirits that are at-one with God again! Thus, just like Abraham, we are recognized by God as being right with Him or being justified or righteous.

This is how I rendered these verses in The Remedy:

> Therefore, those who trust in Christ Jesus are no longer destined to die, because through Christ Jesus the law of love has cleansed and healed them from the law of selfishness and death. The written law was powerless to restore trust, as it could merely diagnose the infection of distrust and selfishness pervading us all. God accomplished this restoration of his character of love in humans by sending his own Son in human flesh to eradicate selfishness from humanity, reveal the truth about God, expose the lies of Satan, and reveal what happens when the infection of sin is not cured. And so he condemned the infection of selfishness as the destroying element in sinful humanity in order that the law of love–the principle upon which life is based–might be fully restored in us, who no longer live according to selfish desires, but in harmony with the Spirit of love and truth. (Romans 8:1-4 REM)

What is the relationship to be between fearing God and keeping His commandments?

What law lens do we understand this through?

Does God want the obedience of fear?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

In 1888 GC in Minneapolis, the delegates split over the question of what law was added in Galatians—one side said it was only ceremonial the other side said it was only the moral law of the Ten Commandments—what do you think, what law was added and why?

And how was Satan able to derail that conference and sidetrack the entire Advent movement since that conference?

When EGW finally gave her input on what law was added, what was her answer and what does her answer reveal about the strategy the devil used to derail the church?

> I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments**…
>
> "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). **In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law**. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 1SM 233-234.

What law was added—both the ceremonial and moral code of the 10 Commandments.

What trick did Satan use to derail the mission of the church? He got the delegates divided over a view in which both sides were wrong to some degree, in which both sides were arguing a portion of the truth, or an incomplete understanding. The sides then were tricked into defending a partial truth instead of advancing in the truth. This has prevented the church from completing its mission ever since as the church continues to defend partial truths instead of advancing into fuller and more complete understanding of the truth.

And the biggest truth that church needs to embrace is that God's law is design law, that He is Creator of all reality and His laws are the protocols reality is built upon, physical and moral. It was only after sin that God had to codify and give laws because of transgression, because of rebellion, because of how sin blinded sinners to reality. The law was given as a diagnostic tool, teaching tool, and protection while we were children and ignorant until we grow up and then it is restored into our hearts. **We never do away with the law**, but have the living law of God restored to God's original place for it to exist, our hearts! God's living law of love is to be the operating code/system for every intelligent living being.

So, EGW wrote the following—do you agree?

> **But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality**. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, **the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Mount of Blessing p. 109.

What kind of law can be in operation and people are obedient to it, yet they have never been informed or told about it? The only kind of law that works this way is design law. We cannot expect beings to obey made up rules such as "don't walk on the grass, don't drive over 35 mph, don't spit on the sidewalk," if we have never been informed them of such rules.

But if the law is design law, it is lived out without ever realizing it is a law, it is just how things work.

Consider Isaac Newton telling all his friends he just discovered the law of gravity—can you imagine his friends going—law? A law? Hmmm, I have never even thought about the fact there was a law of gravity, it is unthought of; it is just how things have always worked.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

> The central issue in earth's final conflict is a battle for the mind. It really is one of allegiance, authority, and commitment to God's will. (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 33).

What is the central issue in the final conflict? The cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan is certainly a battle for hearts and minds—but what is it over? Is the the issue who we trust, who we admire, who we worship, who we choose to align ourselves with and become like?

So, isn't the issue fought on the battlefield of minds and heart but it is over God's trustworthiness, God's character, methods, and principles? Did the battle for the mind become an issue only at the end of time or has it always been a battle for hearts and minds, even in the opening of the Great Controversy?

I love this quote from *The Desire of Ages* what do you think?

> **In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed**, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and **if God should remit the punishment of sin**, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. Desire of Ages p. 761

What is the issue that is being waged here? Will intelligent beings have to decide, based on Satan's allegations, who they believe, who they trust, and ultimately what kind of law God runs His government upon? What is Satan's version of God's law? That God is required to use power to punish

sin—why does Satan say this? Because Satan's lie is that God makes up rules like created beings do and denies that God's laws are design protocols that life itself is built upon.

Satan teaches that God's law is imposed rules (like human law) that require inflicted punishment, because this teaching makes God to be functionally no different than any other created being. **In this legal model, any of us, if we are in a position of authority where we can impose rules over others and enforce those rules with inflicted punishment, can be "like god." This is Satan's goal: to be like God.** And since Satan, as a created being, cannot actually create reality and cannot sustain the laws upon which reality exists, **he instead promulgates the lie that God's law is the kind of law that created beings can make up; Satan then assumes the mantle of this law-enforcing god and garners our worship.**

Read third paragraph,

> The final battle in the great controversy is between good and evil for control of our thoughts. The apostle Paul gives us this admonition: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5, NKJV). The mind is the citadel of our being. It is the wellspring of our actions. The word "let" means to allow or to choose. It speaks of a volitional act of the will. The choice to have the mind of Christ is the choice to allow Jesus to shape our thinking by filling our minds with the things of eternity. Our actions reveal where our thinking process is. To fear God is to make Him first in our lives. (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 33).

What do you think of this idea of "control of our thoughts"?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 tell us we are to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ—what does that mean?

Does God want to do our thinking for us? If so then why does the Bible say that every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind?

Does God want to do our choosing for us? If so why does the Bible instruct us to choose this day who we will serve?

Does God want to do our loving for us? If so then why does the Bible tell us we are to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength?

Does God want us to be puppets or robots that He controls?

Do our minds ever become controlled by God in the sense that God does our thinking, feeling, loving, and choosing for us?

Who would like to take control of our minds and direct our thoughts, feelings, and actions?

Can you get love from a robot, a puppet, or a programmed cult member?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

God wants our love and loyalty which can only be freely given. Consider this quote:

> In the work of redemption there is **no compulsion**. **No external force is employed.** Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, **there is the highest sense of freedom.** The Desire of Ages p. 466.

WEDNESDAY

The title for the day is Giving Glory to God—what does this mean to you? How are we to glorify God?

What is the context in the 3 Angels' messages?

The eternal gospel is being proclaimed—which is what?

And what does the eternal gospel do? Does the eternal gospel, which is the eternal good news about God—His character of love and His design law methods of governing, contrast with another idea, belief, or viewpoint commonly held by human beings?

And does the eternal good news about God cause those who accept it and return to trust in our Creator God of love to be transformed by the renewing of their minds? And is God's law written upon their hearts? And do they live new lives and develop characters like Jesus? And does that bring glory to God?

And why is this important? What is it the eternal gospel that wins people to trust and transforms then so that their lives glorify God important? Because it is the time in human history for people to make a right judgment about God, to reject the penal legal rule-enforcing God and come back to worship the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountain of water. And when we do this we leave fallen and corrupt system of human like imposed laws with imposed penalties that is represented by Babylon, the first nation with a legal code.

We are to be God's witnesses living out the beauty of God's character and methods of love in how we govern ourselves and treat each other.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

Read the first paragraph,

> "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). This is the depiction of God's faithful people in the last days. Yet, the only way anyone can keep the commandments of God, then or now, is through the faith of Jesus. Notice our text does not say, "faith in Jesus," although that is extremely important, but this expression, "the faith of Jesus," is something more. It is the quality of faith that enabled Christ to be victorious over Satan's fiercest temptations. Faith is a gift given to each believer. When we exercise the faith that the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts, that faith grows. We overcome, not by our willpower, but by the power of the living Christ working through us. We overcome not because of who we are but because of who He is. (SDA Adult Bible Study Guide 2Q 2023, p. 35).

They seem to make a lot out of a very small preposition which the Greek allows to be interpreted a variety of different ways.

They quote the NKJV which reads "faith of Jesus." But here are some other translations:

- This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain **faithful to Jesus**. (NIV84).

- This calls for endurance on the part of God's people, those who obey God's commandments and are **faithful to Jesus**. (GNT)

- This means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently, obeying his commands and maintaining their **faith in Jesus**. (NLT)

- Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their **faith in Jesus**. (ESV)

- This means God's holy people must be patient. They must obey God's commands and keep their **faith in Jesus**. (NCV)

- This requires patient endurance on the part of the healed, who live God's methods of love and remain **true to Jesus**. (REM)

- This requires the steadfast endurance of the saints—those who obey God's commandments and hold to their **faith in Jesus**. (NET)
    - Footnote in NET: "faith of Jesus." The construction may mean either "faith in Jesus" or "faithful to Jesus." Either translation implies that Ἰησοῦ (Iēsou) is to be taken as an objective genitive; the difference is more lexical than grammatical because πίστις (pistis) can mean either "faith" or "faithfulness." (Biblical Studies Press. (2005). The

NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible. Biblical Studies Press.)

So, if the saved in the end have faith in Jesus will that be less than the faith that Jesus had? And if they have the faith of Jesus will it be less than having faith in Jesus?

It seems it is a lot to do about not much—we need to have living faith, trust, in Jesus and that is also the same quality or type of faith that Jesus exercised in His Father.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Billboard Resource: In response to requests from our listeners, we have developed some billboards, and will be developing and releasing new ones periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Find them in our website's RESOURCE MENU > BILLBOARDS. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 Q2 The Three Cosmic Messages: Lesson 5
The Good News of the Judgment

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

"Saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water' " (Revelation 14:7, NKJV).

From the Lesson:

> "If the Bible was ever clear about anything, it's clear that God is a God of judgment, and that sooner or later, in one way or another, judgment—the judgment so lacking here and now—is going to come and be administered by God Himself, "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. 18:25; see also Ps. 58:11, Ps. 94:2, Ps. 98:9). Or, as Paul himself had written: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).
> Scary thought, isn't it? Having to give an account of ourselves before God, the God who knows the deepest things, the God who will "bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccles. 12:14, NKJV)?
> Yet, ultimately the judgment reveals the goodness and the grace of God and that He is both just and merciful in how He deals with the saved, and even with the lost.
> This week we will explore the deeper themes of the judgment in relation to the great controversy raging in the universe, and we will look especially at what happens when God's faithful people themselves face the inevitable "judgment to come" (Acts 24:25).

What can we "judge" about the author's / editor's Law construct?

Does he think God's Law functions as the design for life or does it function like human laws?

Going back to our Power of Love seminar in Dallas in Jan, 2020 Tim did a piece on "Judgments", and it's also covered in greater detail in our magazine "The Final Message of Mercy."
https://comeandreason.com/the-three-angels/

Here's a summary:

First Judgment — We [humans] JUDGE God. Is God trustworthy [like Jesus revealed] or is he like Satan alleges?? See Romans 3:4, and Revelation 14: 6,7 [our memory text].

Second Judgment — The judgement of a perfect physician [correctly diagnosing a condition and developing/delivering a remedy]. See Malachi 3:1-5.

Third Judgment — We judge angels and those who are not in Heaven during the 1,000 years before the 3rd Coming so there can be no doubt as to why they are missing. See Revelation 20: 4-6 and 1 Cor. 6: 3.

Fourth Judgment — The White Throne Judgement. The Holy City is on Earth and the doors remain open, however, no-one comes in. The wicked are constrained to admit that God is correct in His judgement of their characters, but attack the City anyway. The Saved "judge" that there was nothing more God could have done to save them. See Revelation 20: 11, 12.

SUNDAY

The Significance of the Judgment Hour.

The lesson asks "Why is it significant that right after we are told about the "everlasting gospel", the first angel's message mentions God's judgment? What does the "everlasting gospel" have to do with God's judgment?"

Why indeed?
Whom is being judged?
Who is doing the judging?
Does it matter which Law construct you see this from?

Does the "everlasting gospel" of God's character of Love make a difference on how / if we judge Him to be trustworthy? Does His character of Love / Goodness / Kindness / Forgiveness lead us somewhere? See Romans 2:4.

With respect to the author of the lesson, I don't think the 1st Angels message is about the "White Throne" **Fourth judgment** in Revelation 20. I think it's the **First judgment** listed above — where we judge God Himself. He opens Himself to our judgment and give us evidence [not proof] of His trustworthiness. The author, however, is correct in saying, "Were it not for the 'everlasting gospel,' we would have no hope in the judgment."

We would have no hope in accurately judging God's trustworthiness or in the White throne judgments. Were it not for the everlasting gospel of God's character of Love, humanity would have no hope whatsoever.

Also from the lesson:

> **Heaven's infinite, minute, exact, detailed records** will be opened (see Dan. 7:10). We are so precious to God that the entire universe pauses to consider the choices we have made in light of the wooing of the Holy Spirit and the redemption so freely provided by Christ on Calvary's cross. **Emphasis mine.**

The penal substitution adherents LOVE the record keeping.

MONDAY

God's Mercy and Judgment.

From the Lesson:

> "The cross and judgment both reveal that God is just and merciful. The broken law demands the death of the sinner. Justice declares, "The wages of sin is death." Mercy responds, "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV). If God's law could be changed or abolished, it would be totally unnecessary for Jesus to die. Christ's death establishes the eternal nature of the law, and the law is the basis of judgment."

How does the cross and judgment reveal that God is just and merciful?
How does the broken law demand the death of the sinner?
Does "justice" declare that "the wages of sin is death"?
How does Christ's death establish the "eternal nature of the law", and the law's basis of judgment?
Does the EGW quote from the lesson give us any insights?

> The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own. -- Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

TUESDAY

A Magnificent Scene.

The lesson references Daniel 7 as its source for Tuesday's lesson so let's look at it. Specifically vs. 21, 22 from a variety of translations.

> I was seeing, and this horn is making war with the saints, and hath prevailed over them, till that the Ancient of Days hath come, and judgment is given to the saints of the Most High, and the time hath come, and the saints have strengthened the kingdom.
>
> Young's Literal Translation 1898

> I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.
>
> KJV

> I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.
>
> NKJV

> I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.
>
> American Standard Version

> While I was looking, that horn made war on God's people and conquered them. Then the one who had been living forever came and pronounced judgment in favor of the people of the Supreme God. The time had arrived for God's people to receive royal power.
>
> Good News Translation

> As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.
>
> New International Version [NIV]

Which of these translations harmonizes best with Design Law AND our understanding of prophetic history??

The "horn" in v. 21 refers to the Papacy, and it was waging / winning the war against "the saints" for most of 1260 years [time, times, and dividing of time]. Historically, the Papacy opposed Scripture being read to/by anyone except their leadership. They promoted ideas like eternal burning hell, and purgatory/indulgences/inquisitions/torture/etc. They persecuted Protestants, Jews, Muslims, etc in the name of saving their souls from hell. Above, and beyond all of that, however, they thought "to change times and Laws" [see v. 25].

If you seek to change God's Laws, what is already settled in your mind? **That His Law[s] function like human laws [imposed] and can be changed.** If you understand that God's Laws are Design Laws and cannot be changed, you wouldn't waste any time trying to change them. It cannot be done.

Many of the above translations show a pre-existing bias in the translators minds with the imposed law translations giving us a "courtroom" version [God pronounced judgment in favor of the Saints], while the Design Law translations give us a "gracious" version [Judgment was given to the Saints].

It wasn't until the late 1700's that enough Truth and light had been uncovered, so that the "saints" were adequately/accurately able to discern [aka Judge] truth from error.

From the lesson: The destiny of all humanity is decided in heaven's courtroom. Right prevails. Truth triumphs. Justice reigns. This is one of the most amazing, most marvelous, most spectacular scenes in all of Scripture. And the good news is that it ends very well for God's faithful people, those clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Which Law construct does the author prefer?? Was the destiny of all humanity decided at that time in history??

WEDNESDAY

A Glimpse of Heaven

Have you ever wished you could get a vision of Heaven? I have. I think God, in his mercy, has withheld this from me for now.

The lesson focuses on "heaven's celestial court" and a "throne-room scene". What's a word to describe a king's immediate surroundings and people within it?? His COURT. The word "court" doesn't necessarily mean judicial place. Which court do you think the author is referring to??

Does the "thunder and lightning" symbolize God's judgments?? Serious question.

The lesson asks what similarities are found in Rev. 4 and Daniel 7 descriptions of Heaven.

Rev. 4.
One on the throne with the appearance of jasper and sardine [carnelian] stone. Of note: The sardine [carnelian] stone was the first on Israel's High Priest breastplate [top right] symbolizing the tribe of Ruben [first born], and the jasper stone was last on the breastplate [bottom left] symbolizing Benjamin. This ties in nicely with future chapters in Revelation where Jesus says "I am the alpha [first] and the omega [last]. 24 elders surround the throne [I think the lesson is on point with these being humans — first fruits or otherwise], clothed in White. The White symbolized purity OF CHARACTER, not simply being covered with a magic garment that keeps God from seeing us as sinners. He sees us a HEALED.

Daniel 7. "The Ancient of Days" is on the throne. His appearance is White [as snow / wool]. His throne and wheels [beneath the throne] were "as fire". A river of fire came out from the throne, and **billions stood in the fire** ministering for Him. The White, of course, symbolizes purity, grace, & Truth, but what does the fire represent??

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

THURSDAY

Jesus is Worthy.

In Revelation 5 John sees a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. No one in Heaven or Earth can open the scroll, save Jesus [sacrificed Lamb]. Any thoughts as to what's on the scroll, and why Jesus is the only One worthy to open it??

Tim and I discussed this a length on one of our trips and he thinks on the scroll is written the entire history of Heaven and Earth from Lucifer's creation until the end of sin. Jesus was the One Lucifer alleged equality with and Jesus is the only Being who could see and document the future accurately. I think this may be both literal and symbolic. I suspect the scroll was opened after Calvary as further evidence for the unfallen beings and eventually evidence for the saved humanity.

From the lesson:

"Jesus, the Lamb of God who has sacrificed His life for the salvation of all humanity, takes the scroll of judgment and opens it. All of heaven bursts forth in rapturous praise. His victory over Satan's temptations, His death on Calvary's cross, His resurrection, His high priestly minis- try, provides salvation for all who choose by faith to respond to His grace. The judgment is incredibly good news for the people of God. It speaks of the end of the reign of sin and the deliverance of God's people.

> Can anything be more encouraging? Jesus stands for us in the judgment. His perfect, righteous life covers us. His righteousness works within us to make us new. His grace pardons us, transforms us, and empowers us to live godly lives.
>
> We need not fear. Jesus stands for us in the judgment, and the powers of evil are defeated. Judgment is passed in "favor" of the people of God (Dan. 7:22). The purpose of the judgment is not to find out how bad we are but to reveal how good God is."

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 6
The Hour of His Judgment

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read last paragraph,

> The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him, at Calvary, and all who are in Christ are safe forever beneath His wings. At the cross, Christ was judged as a condemned sinner so that we could be judged as righteous citizens of the heavenly kingdom. He was judged as a criminal so that we could be set free from the destructive fires of eternal loss, both figuratively and, yes, literally, as well. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p. 46)

What do you hear in this paragraph? Is this paragraph exactly true as it reads? Does this paragraph present things in clear ways? Given the fact we are all finite, and that we will grow for all eternity in our knowledge of God and our insights into the atonement will deepen through all eternity, we should ask, does this paragraph lead us to greater light, insight, truth, understanding or does it darken the mind?

Does this paragraph present things more closely to the way God would have them presented or closer to Satan's counterfeit?

Let's examine what is being taught in light of what God has revealed and see whether this is taking a position that is built on inspired truth or not.

The first sentence states the fire of God's judgment burned themselves out on Christ at Calvary. I thought, perhaps this is just metaphor, flowery speech, symbolism—except for the closing sentence when they connect the destructive fires as being both figurative and literal. And they say Christ took our place and was judged and condemned as a sinner, so it seems they are suggesting Jesus literally took our punishment, including the fire of God's judgment.

So functionally, the lesson is saying that at the cross God used His power to reign judgment fire down on Jesus to punish Jesus for our sins, and if we don't claim the legal payment made by Jesus then God in the end will use His divine power to reign judgment fire down on us.

Do you think I am misunderstanding what they are saying?

I want you to see this clearly—this paragraph denies Scripture, the testimony of Jesus Himself, and the truth about God's law and how it functions.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

We have recorded in Scripture the inspired account of what happened to Jesus on the cross, what His Father actually did to Jesus for the very purpose of revealing the truth that is supposed to prevent people from drawing conclusions just like this. What does the Bible say that God did to His Son on the cross? Did God reign fire down from heaven to torture and kill Jesus?

What did the Father do? He abandoned, let go, forsook Him. Did the Father exercise divine power to bring pain, suffering, torment, and death, or did the Father step back and STOP using divine power and allow the results of separation from Him to reap its painful and destructive results?

What caused Jesus the most torment, the physical torture He was experiencing at the hands of sinners, or the break up in the unity with His Father?

In Gethsemane, Jesus took the bitter cup of our sin-position—i.e. began to experience in full the separation that sin causes and what did Jesus experience?

> Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." (Matthew 26:36–38 NIV84).
>
> Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:39–44 NIV84).

Now I am going to read commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages* which comments on these passages from Scripture regarding Jesus' experience in Gethsemane. What do you think? This is written by one of the founders of the SDA church, does this describe the same type of process and event that the lesson described? And if not, we need to understand why?

> The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul. **The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world**. [Wasn't the moment at Calvary? Or did that moment, the time to decide the destiny of the world happen in Gethsemane, and Calvary was the final result of what was decided in Gethsemane?] The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. **Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man.** It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save

the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." The Desire of Ages p. 690.

Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. **He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish**. [Why must they perish? Must they perish as an infliction of punishment? Is it that transgressors are actually quite healthy and possess eternal life and without Jesus' sacrifice then the Father's rage and anger will explode out of control and destroy them? Or is it that humanity is suffering from a terminal sin condition and without Jesus' sacrifice there is no cure, no remedy, no power to free us and restore us to unity with God and eternal life?] **He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin.** [We are helpless to overcome what? Is the contrast here—Jesus sees the helplessness of man and the power of God to punish sin? No, it is the power of sin, the power of fear and selfishness that is infecting our being. After Adam sinned, only Jesus, as a human, using human abilities, could confront and overcome the power of fear and selfishness and eradicate it and restore God's perfect love and righteousness into humanity.] The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And He will not turn from His mission. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin. His prayer now breathes only submission: "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." The Desire of Ages 690.

Having made the decision, He fell dying to the ground from which He had partially risen. [The decision to complete the mission, was made here. The rest of crucifixion weekend is the outworking of His choice here. And this author, commenting on what inspiration describes, says He fell down dying here—an angel had to come and strengthen Him or else he would have died in Gethsemane. Has God used any power to harm Jesus? What is causing Jesus to be in such agony, to suffer such torment of mind and soul and to fall down dying? It is the breaking up of His unity with His Father that is the result of taking our position as a sinner. Sin severs the connection with the source of life and the only result is ruin and death.] Where now were His disciples, to place their hands tenderly beneath the head of their fainting Master, and bathe that brow, marred indeed more than the sons of men? The Saviour trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. The Desire of Ages 693.

But God suffered with His Son. [Parents would you suffer to watch one of your children dying in agony all alone and you could not comfort them? Don't think for a minute that the Father wasn't suffering right along with Jesus. They were in this together. This is a joint rescue operation, a joint plan of salvation, the entire Godhead is unified in completing it. And they each have their role to play. God must separate from His Son, because God is the source of life and Jesus cannot complete His mission to destroy the death causing principle from humanity, restore in the law of life, and reveal the truth about God if He does not die. And He cannot die as long as He is connected to His Father, who is the source of life.] Angels beheld the Saviour's

agony. **They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread**. [Whose power was being used to seek to cause the suffering of Jesus?] There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched **the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son**, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin. The Desire of Ages 693. [Was the Father using power to hurt Jesus? Do we have a description of the Father reigning fire down from heaven? Why was the Father separating from Jesus? Was the Father angry with Jesus? What about later at the cross, do we have an inspired description of God reigning fire down on Jesus there? Or does Scripture say that the Father let Jesus go—we find that description also in Romans 4:25, the exact same Greek as Romans 1:24,26,28 where God "gave them up" Paul says that God gave Jesus up at the cross.]

The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest as the conflict drew to its close. [And they are seeing God in action. They are observing God step back and NOT use power. They are seeing Satan use power to harm, not God. Yet our lesson places God in the role of using power to harm.] Satan and his confederacy of evil, the legions of apostasy, watched intently this great crisis in the work of redemption. The powers of good and evil waited to see what answer would come to Christ's thrice-repeated prayer. **Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine sufferer, but this might not be**. **No way of escape was found for the Son of God.** [Why? Why was there no escape? Because of reality, because of God's law, because of the actual condition of humanity. In order to save humanity the condition that is causing our death must be eliminated and the species must be restored to unity and oneness with God, which requires God's living law of love be fully restored into the species. Jesus, as a human, did this for us!] In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, [Is this where God uses power from heaven to punish Jesus, to reign fire down on Him? No! Listen to what is described] and **the mighty angel who stands in God's presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. The angel came not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant**. [This did not reduce His suffering, but in fact, prolonged His suffering. Without this intervention Jesus would have died right there in Gethsemane, but there was more that was needed to be done to complete the plan of salvation and thus Jesus' humanity which was failing and collapsing into death had to be physically strengthened to endure more of what sin, evil, and rebellious angels and humans would do to Him. And note that the angel reassured Jesus of the Father's love. God was not angry at His Son. God was not using power to hurt Jesus. Even when Jesus takes the cup of our iniquities and becomes our substitutionary Savior and stands in the sinner's place God does not use power to punish Jesus.] He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved. The Desire of

> Ages 693. [Notice the angel focused Jesus' mind away from the injustice, the abuse, the pain, the suffering, the torment—away from self and to God and others and the higher purpose of what He was accomplishing. This is a lesson for us. When we are being assailed by evil forces we also will find strength by focusing upon God, upon His love, purposes, plans and upon others and how we are fulfilling some aspect of a higher purpose. Satan wants to get us to focus on the evil, the sin, the injustice, the unfairness and on self which only inflames our fears and insecurities and undermines our faith.]
>
> **Christ's agony did not cease**, but His depression and discouragement left Him. **The storm had in nowise abated**, but He who was its object was strengthened to meet its fury. He came forth calm and serene. A heavenly peace rested upon His bloodstained face. **He had borne that which no human being could ever bear; for He had tasted the sufferings of death for every man.** The Desire of Ages 694. [When did Jesus taste death for every man? In Gethsemane—and what did the Father do to Jesus?]

Why has the lesson come to a different conclusion and description of events than the most important founder of the SDA church? Because the lesson is written by people who hold to a different law that the author of *The Desire of Ages.* They hold to imposed law, and imposed law requires infliction of imposed penalties.

From the same founder of the SDA church, we read the following, see if this gives insight into why the lesson takes the exact opposite position to what God actually did to Jesus?

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (The Great Controversy 582)
>
> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be** holy, just, and good, complete in itself. It cannot be repealed or changed. To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (Prophets and Kings 625)
>
> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the *last great conflict* of the controversy between truth and error**. **Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle <u>not between rival churches</u> contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition.** (Prophets and Kings 625.)

What is the final issue over? A question over God's law—it is a question over whether we believe God is Creator and His law is design law or whether it functions like human law.

When Lucifer rebelled in heaven, the Sabbath did not exist, the question over law was not a question over the Sabbath. The Sabbath, according to Scripture is a sign, it is a gift, a flag, a pennant, a tool made for humanity, to be a blessing and benefit to us in the middle of this war. But the war and

conflict go far beyond what day of worship, it goes to the character of God, His eternal law, the protocols upon which life is built, and how He governs. And the Sabbath is a sign that God is Creator, whose laws are design laws has given us, to remind us. God gave evidence of His power and Creatorship days 1-6 of creation week, and then God rested, God stopped using power and left His intelligent creatures free to think and decide for themselves. Thus we are to Remember the Sabbath—we are to embrace the truth that the Sabbath reveals—how God governs and practice those methods in our lives all seven days of the week, lovers of truth who present the truth in love and leave others free.

The answer to the question of how we understand God's law directly alters how we see God. Another way to say it, the answer to the question of how we understand God's law determines which God we are worshipping.

Are we worshiping the Creator God of love who is the source of life and health, or are we worshiping an imperial dictator who is the source of strife and death.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

> As we have already seen, there must be a judgment before Christ comes. The angel announces in a loud voice that " 'the hour of His judgment has come' " (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). The book of Daniel gives us the time when this judgment begins. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p. 47)

What law lens do you hear this through? If we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law then what does judgment mean?

If we accept the truth that God's law is design law then what does judgment mean?

And in the case of the 3 angels—what is the judgment that has come?

Is this not the judgment Paul was referring to in Romans 3:4:

> You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried (Romans 3:4 GNT).
>
> so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged (Romans 3:4 NET).
>
> That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged. (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

What is the war over?

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

The war started in heaven over a question of God's character, methods, trustworthiness, it spread to Earth over whether God can be trusted, and it ends over the same issue.

Satan has assaulted the character of God by alleging God abuses power by making up rules that He enforces with inflicted punishments, thus making God out to be a dictator, the source of pain, suffering, and death—the one from whom we need protection.

Thus Revelation prophesies that a time in human history comes when enough truth has been revealed and recovered that people are enabled to make a right judgment about God. The eternal gospel, the eternal good news about God as Creator goes to the world, and the hour has come for people to make a right judgment about God, to come out of Babylon and stop worshiping the satanic dictator god and worship our Creator.

For the rest of the lesson it is about Daniel 8:14, how it is understood, calculated and how we get to 1844 and its implications.

Please refer to our seminar The Sanctuary and the Feast Days lecture 2 The Day of Atonement and the Feast Days where I cover this material in detail. You can watch the video, or if you prefer download the power point slides and get the information from the slides.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW MAGAZINE: Critical Race Theory: Exposing the Lies While Advancing the Gospel, is now available

As of April 21, 2023 Dr Jennings is no longer affiliated with Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine LUCOM. I have nothing but the highest regard for the faculty and staff at LUCOM. They brought me onboard to lead in the build out of a psychiatric residency a vision I wholeheartedly support and pray for their future success. However, while they believed they would be able to obtain the necessary infrastructure for such a program (an inpatient psychiatric unit either by building one or contracting with one), various obstacles outside the University's control prevented this. When this became clear, that it would be years if not decades before the infrastructure could be obtained, it was realized by all parties that I was not able to do the tasks I was hired to do and we parted on sad but friendly terms.

In the immediate future I will be teaching in person again. But for the next chapter in my career, we are praying for God's guidance in this. Is it time for me to take a more active role in ministry, creating more programming, traveling and speaking more, organizing more regional events? Do I look to reopen a private practice, or look to another hospital based system etc. No decision has been made, but we are prayerfully asking for God's leadership in this, and we appreciate your prayers for God's will and guidance in the next steps in our lives—Tim and Christie.

New Billboard Resource: In response to requests from our listeners, we have developed some billboards, and will be developing and releasing new ones periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community.

Podcasts: We have a weekly podcast about 13 minutes long that is available to be delivered to your device if you sign up for it.

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT

- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 Now Available in South Africa!

The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum is now available to members.
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.
- **New Music** Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 Q2 Three Cosmic Messages: Lesson 7
Worshipping the Creator

by Eve Knight

SABBATH

Before we get into the lesson today, I think it's important that we look at the whole context.

We're still looking at the verses regarding the first angel's message, found in Revelation 14:6-7:

> Then I saw another angel flying overhead, with the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. And he said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the One who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and the springs of waters."

Based on what we talked about in previous lessons, we know that the "eternal gospel," the eternal "good news" is what? –the truth about God's character. This is really important, because this truth is the context of the first angel's message. If we don't keep the context in mind, we can misinterpret the message. The context is, essentially, a measuring stick we can hold up next to the message to help us understand it.

So, let's look at the message, piece by piece, remembering the context.

"Fear God"

What two ways could this be translated?

- to be afraid of God. The root word, phobos *could* be translated terrified of, be afraid of, to be seized with alarm.
- The same word can also mean "to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience, to regard with great respect."

So, let's look at these two options using the measuring stick – the context of the good news about God's character. Does the first option of being terrified of God fit with the context? Is it good news? Definitely not!

What about the second option? When we measure it against our context, does it fit? Yes! If we understand God's character of love, it makes sense that we would react to Him with reverence and admiration.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

"and give Him glory"

What does it mean to give God glory? What is glory, and how do we give it to God? Let's look at a few texts to see if we can understand this more clearly.

There are a number of references to glory that are similar, all referring to the second coming. One example of this is Matthew 24:30:

> At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

What can we learn about glory from this passage? That God's glory is NOT His power! If it was, it wouldn't be listed separately, would it? Let's look at another verse:

> Luke 2:9-10a: An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid."

What can we learn about glory here? That it's bright, it can cause a fearful reaction, but according to the angel, we don't have to be afraid! Let's look at another passage:

> Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory"
> Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV) The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there,
> and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and
> proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands,[a] forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

So what did Moses want to see? God's glory. And what did God show him? His character!

So if God's glory is His character, how do we "give Him glory" as it says in the angel's message? What does that mean?

- It could mean give God praise…if that's the case, what would we be praising Him for?
- It could also mean give God character…If so, how would we give God character?

> 2 Cor. 3:18 (GNT) All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.

Perhaps the reflection of His character in our healed & restored hearts?

With this understanding, how then, could we translate the phrase, "give Him glory"?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

"recognize and praise God for His true character, and let Him recreate it in us."

"for the hour of His judgment has come."

Again, there are two ways to understand this phrase. What are those two ways?

- the hour has come for God to come and judge US.
- the hour has come for us to judge Him correctly.

Which of these two options fits our measuring stick, the context of good news about God's character?

So, if we were to re-write the first part of the angel's message, with our understanding of the context, it could say, "Revere God and understand, praise, reflect, and share His true character, for it is time for us to judge Him correctly, understanding His true character of love."

"Worship him"

Why does God want us to worship Him? What reasons could we come up with (good and bad) that He would want us to worship Him? One option could be because He's selfish and wants all that worship to make Him feel important. Does that fit our measuring stick, the truth about His character, the eternal good news?

So how does our context, our measuring stick, change how we view this part? It helps us to understand that because of His character, there has to be a reason that's good for US when we worship Him. What would that reason be? The law of worship! He loves us, and He knows that we become like who or what we worship. If we worship Him, we have the possibility of infinite growth ahead of us.

What happens if we worship something else? We become warped in our thinking, seared in our consciences and characters, until we are no longer open to God.

"who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

What is important about worshiping Him as the one who created? If we didn't understand the context of this message, how might we interpret it? Is it possible that we would think God was pointing us to creation so we would remember the Sabbath, and turn that into an arbitrary test of obedience to Him? If that is what we believed, then what would that make us think about God? Perhaps that His law is just like ours? Imposed rules that require punishment if they are broken? Perhaps that we just need to keep the rules without understanding them? Perhaps even that our behavior is more important than our hearts?

How does our measuring stick, the context about the eternal good news change how we look at this passage? What do we learn about God when we look at creation with our context in place? What does the context tell us that we are looking for? The truth about God's character, as revealed by creation…so why specifically the list provided: the heavens (in this context, most likely the sky), the earth, the sea, and the springs of water. Do those things specifically tell us something about God? What does the movement of water tell us about the One who designed that process? That everything that He made, is designed to operate on the principle of love, others-centered giving, and God is love. We see His character when we look at the cycle of giving as the sea evaporates, gives its water to the air, which then falls to the earth, fills the springs, streams, and rivers, and flows back into the sea. It's a never-ending cycle of giving. God's design, which flows out of His character, and everything that was made is designed to live in harmony with that design.

Does this idea remind you of any other passages that talk about God, His character, and creation?

> Romans 1:20 – For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

So what can we learn from "what has been made"? – we learn about God's power, and His nature. What are some of the things we learn about God's nature from the world He created? We learn how design laws work: law of giving, law of exertion, etc.

Isn't it interesting that God clearly *wants* us to examine the world around us, learn from it, and learn about Him through it? Does this sound like a God who just wants people who hear and obey? No! He wants people to come and reason with Him.

So now we know that God wants us to know His true character, and to worship Him as the designer, that His laws are design laws, not like ours. There's one more question stemming from the passage that we need to answer: What does it mean to worship?

What does the world say about worship?
According to vocabulary.com, "To worship is to show a lot of love and adoration for something. Religious believers worship gods, and people can worship other people and things too. Worship is an extreme form of love — it's a type of unquestioning devotion. If you worship God, then you love God so much that you don't question him at all."

Does that sound right to you? Definitely not! So, let's take a moment to practice discerning truth and using our reasoning powers… Let's work on figuring out what's wrong with this definition? And how do we explain why it's wrong? (Can you tell what law lens the writer was thinking through?)

First, there's the claim that "worship is to show a lot of love and adoration for something." Do you love your family? Do you love your children, your spouse, your parents, siblings? Does that mean you worship them? No. At least not if you love them in a healthy way. Does God love us? In fact, does

God love us with what we might consider an "extreme form of love"? Does that mean that God worships us? Of course not.

Now, is there an aspect of love in worship? Sure, but it's a piece of the definition, not the whole thing.

There's also the claim that it's "a type of unquestioning devotion. If you worship God, then you love God so much that you don't question him at all." Really? Is that what God wants? No! If it was, God would never have invited us to come and reason with Him. What's described in this definition is the kind of "worship" that turns off the brain, stunts the ability to grow, and warps the character.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines worship as this:

1) Reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; also: an act of expressing such reverence
2) A form of religious practice with its creed and ritual
3) Extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem

What do you think about that definition? Do you think that's closer to true? Does it seem to you as if many ignore the first and third options, and stick to the second one? So for them, worship is something they do once a week. But true worship…shouldn't it be more than that?

What does it mean to offer God reverence?

Could it mean putting God first in our affections? Could it mean putting Him first in everything?

What would you say are the "acts of expressing such reverence?" What would that look like?

What does the Bible say about worship? Do any verses come to mind?

When Jesus was in the wilderness, how did He respond when Satan suggested that Jesus bow down to him in worship? "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Matt 4:10)

This tells us of course, who should be our object of worship: God alone. It also reveals one of the tactics of the enemy: to substitute something else to worship in place of God. What kinds of things are we often tempted to put in place of God? Is it possible to worship something (or someone) other than God and not even realize it? Have you ever experienced what it's like when you put something else (or someone else) above God? What was that like? Can you look back and see how that affected your mind?

What else does the Bible say about worship?

> Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
> Worship the Lord with gladness;
> come before him with joyful songs.
> Know that the Lord is God.

> It is he who made us, and we are his;
> we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
> Enter his gates with thanksgiving
> and his courts with praise;
> give thanks to him and praise his name.
> For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
> his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100)

So one way to worship is to praise God, to sing…or for some…to "make a joyful noise." Why do you think we are told to do this? What happens when we praise God, when we express gratitude to Him?

According to Dr. Arlene Taylor, of the four core emotions, Joy, Anger, Fear, and Sadness, only one emotion can be on stage at the same time. So when fear steps in, whether it's for a real fear, or an imagined one, your emotion that was previously in charge is pushed "off the stage" so that you can collect the information that fear is trying to give you, and respond appropriately. Unfortunately, often, the fears are imagined, not real, and so we have to learn to manage or overcome those fears in order to get what we want to be our primary emotion, joy, back on the stage. Do you know the best thing to do to get rid of fear? Gratitude. Dr. Taylor says, the antidote to fear is gratitude, which is one of the aspects or features of the core emotion, joy. (see her presentation on Managing Fear for Success at https://www.arlenetaylor.org/selected-videos/9086-managing-fear-for-success)

Have you ever had a time when you were experiencing fear, and gratitude knocked it back off the stage? I have. I remember one day when I was outside unloading groceries from my car, and I noticed that there was a car with two men in it, passing slowly past my house. They then turned around just past where I live, and came back, stopped in front of my neighbor's house, and sat there watching me. I looked directly at the car, so they'd know I had noticed them, and went inside to watch through my front windows. When I did that, they went past my driveway, then parked across the street where they were a little bit behind some trees, but they backed in so they could still watch my house. Well, this triggered the start of a panic attack. I happened to be on the phone with my mom, which was good, because fear doesn't help you think well, and she realized what was happening. She, being the wise woman she is, told me to hang up the phone, go to my piano and start playing. She knows that the book I usually play from has a lot of praise and worship songs in it. So I did. I started out pretty shaky, but I played. I couldn't sing at first, but after about 5 minutes, I had gotten a lot calmer, and I was able to start singing. Five more minutes into that, I was totally immersed in praising God through my favorite songs, and the panic attack was completely gone. Now, I don't know if you have ever experienced a panic attack, but to go from the start of one to back to normal in 10 minutes, is astonishing. Gratitude is an antidote to fear.

Do you think God knew what He was doing when He urged us to "give glory to Him" and to "worship the Lord with all gladness"? He designed us. He knows how our brains work. So He provides us with an antidote to one of our biggest problems: fear. And of course, we know that fear leads to selfishness, self-preservation, me-first thinking.

Of course, there's also appropriate fear, where there is a legitimate danger that requires a response. But for that, it's meant to be a helper in that moment. It' not an emotion we want to have controlling us, right? What happens when we live with fear constantly "on the stage"? It's a terrible thing to live in a constant state of fear, and it's not where God wants us to be. When we are afraid, we can't think well, we make poorer decisions, and our relationship with God and others suffers. All of this is just another of the reasons God urges us to worship Him.

So let's look at another Bible verse on worship, when Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman at the well:

> "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

What does it mean to worship God in spirit? –note the context: she was asking which was the more appropriate place of worship, their mountain in Samaria, or the one in Jerusalem. Jesus pointed her to the larger reality, that location doesn't matter. We can worship God anywhere, because God is everywhere.

What does it mean to worship God in truth?

The word translated truth here, means truth, but not merely truth as spoken; truth of idea, reality, sincerity, truth in the moral spere, divine truth revealed to man, straightforwardness.

If we worship God in truth, we're worshiping the reality. And again, why does God want those who worship Him in truth? Because if we let go of the reality, the truth, the only thing left is a lie. There are only ever two camps. In Revelation 13:8, we find that "All the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." So there are only two choices, worship the beast, or worship God.

So what other verses come to mind when you think about why we should worship in truth?

> John 14:6 – Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

When we understand that the character of the Father is the same as Jesus' character, our ability to worship Him increases. Love brings forth love.

> John 3:21 – But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

The truth shines its light on us, and God uses that to heal our hearts and minds back in harmony with

His design, we show His character.

> John 8:31-32 – To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

How does the truth set us free? How does worshiping in truth set us free?

So we know more about what worship is, but practically speaking, what does it mean to live it out? Are there any Bible texts that offer some suggestions?

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of Gods' mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:1-2a)

Notice, that we offer ourselves to God as an act of worship, we let go of the patterns of this world, and let God transform and renew us. Does this tie back into the idea of "giving God glory?" Based on the text, how often are we to offer this sacrifice? In other words, how much of our lives is this supposed to affect?

> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

We are to offer our worship to God in everything! Doing everything in the name/character of Jesus. And we come back to why God wants this for us.

As we worship God, as we grow and mature in His ways, our characters become more and more like His. We therefore, bring God glory, as we show in our own lives and hearts how He has healed and restored us. This is what ties the whole passage together. We learn who God is, we revere Him, understand His character, see His design, praise Him, and live a life of worship, putting Him first in everything, reflecting His glory back to Him as well as to those around us.

Here's how Ellen White describes a worshiper in Acts of the Apostles pages 132-133:

> Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was a man of wealth and noble birth, and his position was one of trust and honor. A heathen by birth, training, and education, through contact with the Jews he had gained a knowledge of God, and he worshiped Him with a true heart, showing the sincerity of his faith by compassion to the poor. He was known far and near for his beneficence, and his righteous life made him of good repute among both Jews and Gentiles. His influence was a blessing to all with whom he came in contact. The inspired record describes him as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always."

> Believing in God as the Creator of heaven and earth, Cornelius revered Him, acknowledged His authority, and sought His counsel in all the affairs of life. He was faithful to Jehovah in his home life and in his official duties. He had erected the altar of God in his home, for he dared not attempt to carry out his plans or to bear his responsibilities without the help of God.

What do you think about that description? Does that sound like the result that God is pointing us toward from the angel's message?

SUNDAY

A Companion in Tribulation

How does worshiping God the way we've discussed change how we approach the trials and difficulties of life? Remember what Jesus said,

> I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Why does Jesus tell us that "in this world you will have trouble"? What is it that causes that trouble?

Because we don't live the way the world does. We value the principles of God's kingdom, that are not the principles of the world. When we live out His principles in our lives, we shine light in a dark world, and often the darkness does not react well to light.

When Jesus says he has overcome the world, what did He mean? –that he conquered using the methods of God, providing the remedy for us, so that we can do the same.

So should we be afraid of potential trouble? No! What gets us through it? The power of God at work in us. When trouble comes, we can look at it differently, because we understand what is happening. When we live in harmony with God's design, by His power, we can love even those who are attempting to hurt us.

TUESDAY

A God Who Is Close

Can you think of any verses that talk about how closely God knows us, how attentive He is to us?

> John 15:4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Matthew 10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care (knowledge). And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Psalm 139:15-17
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
All the days ordained for me were written in your book
Before one of them came to be.

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:27-28a)

How does knowing how close God wants to be to us affect how we worship Him?

THURSDAY

The Creator on the Cross

From Thursday's lesson, next to last paragraph:

> The first angel's message to worship the Creator came after the Cross, after it had become known to the onlooking universe and to Christ's followers that the One who "made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" is the same One who, though being God, took "the form of a bondservant, and [came] in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" *(Phil. 2:7, 8, NKJV)*.

How does knowing the lengths that God would go to heal and restore us affect how we worship Him? What do His actions before, during, and after the cross reveal to us about His character?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

FRIDAY

Further Thoughts

> The worship of God is central in the Scriptures and has always been a bone of contention for humans and for God's people. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets reprimanded the people of God for worshiping other gods or for worshiping the Lord using the worship practices of the pagan world. The conflict between worshiping God and worshiping other gods belongs at the very center of the cosmic conflict and comes accompanied by conflict over disregard for the law of God.

Notice that the same tactic Satan used in the Old Testament, he still uses today. Mixing pagan ideas into the theories and doctrines of those who claim to be God's people.

What are some of the other ways that Satan uses to move us away from worshiping God?

> "Worship addresses the most fundamental aspect of human existence in that it has to do with what humans as living creatures should do when confronted by the presence of the Creator. Only those who are alive can worship the Lord; the dead cannot praise and worship Him. The One who created us invites us to surrender our lives in the act of worship in order to receive them back from Him enriched, to be used for the benefit of others. Worship has to do with the very nature and purpose of our existence and with the need for having a center outside of ourselves that frees us from selfishness. Not to worship God is to lose our reason for existence; it is to exist in a state of disorientation and therefore to be dying, heading to total extinction because we are disconnected from the very source of life."—Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels' Messages," unpublished manuscript, p. 42.

VERY well said!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 8
The Sabbath and The End

SABBATH

What do you think of the title—The Sabbath and The End?

Have you ever heard presentations regarding the Sabbath and end-time events?

What have you heard?

Is the final issue in the war between Christ and Satan a test over which day one attends weekly worship services?

- Is the issue in our salvation, in our preparation to meet Jesus, in our being ready to be translated into heaven without seeing death as simple as which day of the week a person goes to church?
- If a person absolutely insists on worshipping on the Bible Sabbath does that guarantee that they won't get the mark of the beast?
- Those who crucified Christ 2000 years ago wanted Him off the Cross by sunset why? So they could keep the Bible Sabbath – does that mean they had the seal of God?
- Does Satan care if a group of people worships on Sabbath as long as they worship him?
    - Who did Jesus Himself say was the Father of the Jewish leadership, those Sabbath keepers who crucified Him?

      "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44 NIV84).

    - So we have people keeping the Bible Sabbath who are, according to Jesus, children of Satan.
    - Doesn't that mean, to the degree the Sabbath is involved in end-time events, or any events in human history, it must be more than simply the day of the week one avoids work or attends worship services?
- Do these questions mean that the Sabbath is not important, or has no divine value? No—it means that any gift of God can be misused and misapplied to cause harm.
    - God has given us food to eat and water to drink, can people misuse food to cause sickness, and misuse water to drown others?
    - God has given us the gift of marriage—can people abuse the marriage relationship to cause harm?
    - This is not a question about what day of the week is the Sabbath, every serious Bible student knows that the Bible Sabbath is Saturday. The questions before us, are:
        - What is the purpose of the Sabbath?

- How are we to understand and experience it?
- What impact does the Sabbath have upon who we understand God to be and our relationship with Him?
- What role does the Sabbath have for human beings today?
- Is there a Great Controversy function for the Sabbath—is it important as we approach the second coming of Christ?

Our lesson is focusing our attention upon the importance of the Sabbath as we approach the second coming of Christ. What is the first question that I like to ask when we study any Bible truth? **What law lens do we understand things through?**

What is the traditional way, the historic way, both in Judaism and in Adventism, that the Sabbath has most often been presented? As an imposed rule given to test our obedience:

Consider this quotation, in a book entitled *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, published by the Review and Herald:

> **In an arbitrary manner God appointed** that on the seventh day we should come to rest with His creation in a particular way. He filled this day with a content that is "uncontaminated" by anything related to the cyclical changes of nature or the movements of the heavenly bodies. That content is the idea of the **absolute sovereignty of God**, a sovereignty unqualified even by an indirect cognizance of the natural movements of time and rhythms of life. As the Christian takes heed of the Sabbath day and keeps it holy, **he does so purely in answer to God's command**, and simply because God is his Creator. Thus, the Sabbath command comes nearer to being a true measure of spirituality than any other of the commandments, and, as in the days of Israel of old, **it is often more of a test of loyalty to God than is any of the others**... (Raoul Dederen, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 1982; from the chapter is titled, "Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath").

If the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience, then what type of law would it be? It would be an imposed law that would require God to enforce it with inflicted punishment—a law like we sinners make. What kind of a god is that? An arbitrary god who makes up arbitrary rules and uses his power arbitrarily to inflict punishment and who cannot forgive rule-breaking or there is no justice. This is Satan's fantasy, delusion, false narrative, and lie about God.

Consider these historical quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church, one who valued the Bible Sabbath, put these two quotes together and discern what the author is saying about how Satan wages war, what Satan says about God's law, government, methods, and justice and then consider how the Sabbath is presented in the quote we just read:

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

> and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. **God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner**. (Desire of Ages 761).
>
> **From the beginning** it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to **misrepresent the character of God**, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as **clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,--**that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would **put God out of their knowledge**. Then he would **obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul;** he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 5 p. 738).

What is Satan method of attacking God as described here? He attacks God's law by describing it as imposed and requiring God to inflict punishments. Thus God becomes the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death as punishment for sin, and the one being in the universe from whom we need to be protected. God then is presented as arbitrary, the Sabbath as arbitrary, made up, and God is presented as severe, unforgiving—He requires a legal payment of human blood, He cannot forgive outright, and this is exactly how the church has presented God and the Sabbath. And this misrepresents God and God's justice and obstructs our ability to trust God.

Satan declared that "God could not be just and yet show mercy to the sinner."

It is impossible to be both just and merciful to the sinner <u>with imposed law!</u>

It is not just to arbitrarily inflict punishment on an innocent person and then declare the guilty person innocent because the punishment required by the law has been applied to the innocent. This is irrational, nonsense, and makes God out to be untrustworthy. Thus, those who believe this must dethrone their God-given reasoning abilities and believe such nonsense without understanding, believe based on rules, authority, or "blind faith" because the priest, pope, pastor, parent, told them that God, the Bible, or the red leather books said so.

If God's law functions like human law, then Satan's position is true. As long as the church presents God's law as functioning like human law, then they are misrepresenting God and obstructing the plan of salvation. Worse, they are contributing to the rebellion against God and leading people to reject God altogether.

But when we return to worshiping God as Creator and see things through design law, it becomes perfectly clear how justice and mercy meet.

Can anyone explain how, via design law, God can be just and yet show mercy to the sinner?

By God always doing what is right and just—what is in harmony with His nature, character, and law of love—and what does the justice of love require of the righteous individual when they see another person dying from a condition that can be cured?

If your child disobeys your rule to never touch the medicine in the medicine cabinet, and under the temptation of friends, has one of those pill parties where they dump all the medications into a bowl and take handfuls of pills with alcohol, and you come home to find your child seizing and foaming at the mouth as a direct result of their disobedience of your rule—what would the justice of love require of you?

- Would you get out your belt and beat them to punish them for their sin?
- Would you throw gasoline upon them and light them on fire to give them proper torment before executing them for their sin?
- Would you take one of your other healthy children, ask if they would be willing to take their dying brother's punishment, and assuming one of them, in love, said yes, would you shove a bunch of pills down their throat and then burn them to death to make sure a legal death penalty payment was made to assuage your anger and wrath and ensure justice was done so you don't have to kill your other child who is already dying from a toxic overdose and then would you turn and declare you dying child is perfectly health while they remain terminal?
- Would you immediately intervene to provide remedy to your dying child in order to save and heal them?
- And, if necessary, would you put them on artificial life support while the remedy is being applied?
    - That is the history of this planet. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God intervened (intercession) and put the entire planet in a protective bubble of grace, suspending for a time the full results of sin—allowing for an artificial state to occur, what we call the first death, the sleep death, which is not the wages of sin death. As Paul says in Romans, God left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—God used His grace to hold at bay the full results of what sin does in order to provide Jesus, our Remedy, and give us time to partake of all that Jesus has provided to heal and restore us.

      "God sent him to die in our place **to take away our sins**. We receive forgiveness through faith in the blood of Jesus' death. This showed that **God always does what is right and fair**, as in the past when he was patient and **did not punish people for their sins**. And God gave Jesus to show today that **he does what is right**. God did this so he could judge rightly and **so he could make right any person who has faith in Jesus**." (Romans 3:25-26 NCV).

- And if your child's actions caused them to experience renal failure and they needed a kidney transplant to survive, what would the justice of love lead you to do for your child? Would you donate your kidney? And would this donation be required by law? Yes, the laws of health require functioning kidneys to live? And in providing the new kidney, you are restoring your

> child to harmony with the law through sacrifice of yourself. Are you doing away with the law? Or does your sacrifice show that the law cannot be changed to meet your dying child in their terminal condition?

So as we discuss the Sabbath question, it will come down to whether we understand it through imposed or design law. If we understand it through imposed law, then we take this gift God has given us and use it to advance Satan's warfare against God, just as the Jews did 2000 years ago when the Lord of the Sabbath stood before them and they acted to kill Him, for Sabbath-breaking among other things.

As we continue our exploration of the Sabbath, consider these historical quotes from the most influential founder of the SDA church:

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the **law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (The Great Controversy 582).
>
> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be** holy, just, and good, complete in itself. **It cannot be repealed or changed.** To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (Prophets and Kings 625).
>
> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the *last great conflict* of the controversy between truth and error**. **Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle not between rival churches contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition.** (Prophets and Kings 625).

If you agree with these quotations, then it raises serious questions about the role of the Sabbath in the final issues. Such as, when Satan began his war in heaven, was there a Sabbath?

Jesus said,

> The Sabbath was **made** for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27,28)

Consider the truths this short text contains:

- The Sabbath was made—just like the Earth was made, the sun and moon were made, the plants and animals were made, and Adam and Eve were made!
- Therefore, the Sabbath has a beginning, an origination point, and that point was at the end of creation week of this planet, which was after Satan's rebellion started. Thus, the war in heaven, which began over God's law did not include the Sabbath day.

- Further, Jesus' statement tells us the Sabbath was made for human beings, not for angels; this indicates that the Sabbath was not a question of obedience in heaven when the rebellion started, but is somehow valuable or beneficial to humans in the middle of this war.

Next important point to note is that the Sabbath was created **after** sin entered the universe but was given as a gift to humans **before** Adam and Eve sinned. This indicates it was not a rule to be obeyed, but for another purpose.

What was the purpose or intention of God in creating the Sabbath and giving it as a gift for human beings?

Consider the origins of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.

- Which day of the week is the Sabbath? The seventh.
- Which day of existence was that first Sabbath for Adam and Eve? It was not their seventh day; it was their second day. If humans are to observe a worship day based on *their* seventh day, then humans should be worshiping on Thursday.
- Was the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden so that Adam and Eve could physically rest and recover from a hard work week?
- What was the condition of the world when the Sabbath was made?
- Consider the type of activities that Adam and Eve did during the six work days while in Eden:
    - Went for walks in nature
    - Studied nature
    - Interacted with the animals
    - Walked with God in the cool of the day
    - Appreciated God and all He had done in the creation of the world
    - Talked with angels
    - Did they have to pull weeds?
    - Was there any planting to do?
    - Any harvesting and storing in barns to do?
    - Any fertilizing, irrigating, or pesticides to spread?
    - Were there houses to build?
    - Was there laundry, vacuuming to do, or dishes to wash?
    - Was there anything for them to do that we call work?
- What was the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden?
- Did the Sabbath in Eden have any purpose in the Great Controversy? What?

In other words, were Adam and Eve's non-Sabbath activities very similar to the activities we find valuable to do on Sabbath?

Did Adam and Eve do any of the following on Sabbath in Eden?

- Attend church services?
- Have communion ceremony?
- Go to confession?
- Do penance?
- Pay tithe or bring offerings?
- Would they still walk in nature, pick fruit from the trees to eat, interact with the animals, converse with God and angels?
- So what was different for Adam and Eve about the Sabbath than any other day of the week?
- Was the difference primarily in their behavior or something else?

Could the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden be in what the day itself revealed? Could it be in what the day itself represented? And could the Sabbath day reveal something about God that God wants every human to understand, to know both intellectually but also experientially about Him? **Could the Sabbath be different from the other six days of the week not because of what Adam and Eve did differently, but because of what God did differently on the seventh day of creation week**?

Could it be that the purpose for which the Sabbath was created was to be a reminder, a sign, a signal, an indicator, a testament, an evidence, a memorial, a flag, pennant, signet, a revelation of God's character, methods, principles, law, and form of government?

The Sabbath was made by God and it was made holy, blessed, sanctified, set apart, how? Was the Sabbath made holy by legislation? Was it made holy by declaration, or was it made holy by both design and action, by deed, by how it came to be, by what God tied to that day in its origin? In other words, the Sabbath was set apart at and by creation and the actions of God in its origin.

What did God do on days one through six of Creation week? God expended divine power and energy to create. What did God do on day seven of Creation week? God rested! God **ceased** using creative power—what is significant about this, especially in the context of the war?

What was happening in the rest of the universe when the Sabbath was made? War over God's right to rule. Satan was alleging God is selfish, that God makes up rules and inflicts punishment, that angels are not truly free.

What does it reveal about God that in the context of this rebellion, instead of using power to force every knee to bow, God instead creates new intelligent life—gives these new beings pro-creative power to make beings in their image, and gives them dominion over a planet to govern as they so choose, and then God rests, God steps back, God stops using power—God leaves all His intelligent creatures **free**! God creates a day, a time, an opportunity, an experience where He rests.

Does this fact, this action by God in establishing the Sabbath as a day set apart from all the other days by His choice to not use power, to rest, to create a time in which intelligent beings are left free to think and consider for themselves without coercion, have any use, utility, purpose, value, worth, function in

the war between Christ and Satan? Is there some divine power attached to and contained within the Sabbath, some power we need in the controversy?

Paul wrote in Romans:

> I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

What is the power that Paul is referring to that is found in the gospel? What type of power is this? Is this the power of physical might? No! it is the power of truth and love, the truth and love of God's character, methods, principles and design law.

Is this same good news power contained in the Sabbath? What kind of power is gospel power?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds**. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

What kind of war is this? What kind of power is in the divine weapons we use?

Do you think the war in heaven was fought with different weapons? Do you think the angels were using light sabers and photon torpedoes?

> And there was **war in heaven**. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. (Revelation 12:7-8 NIV84).

The Greek translated "war" in Revelation 12:7 is **πόλεμος** [*polemos* /**pol**·em·os/], from which we get polemic—it is a war of words, a war of words, of ideas. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).

Just as EGW wrote:

> **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning **the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (The Great Controversy 582)

We are in a war between two ways of thinking, two ways of understanding, two ways of believing, functioning, and acting—one is reality-based, one is fable or fantasy based; one is truth-based the

other is founded on lies; and another way to describe fantasy is falsehood, artificial, not real, simulated—as in simulated realities, or virtual worlds.

Satan is the father of lies, he wants people to believe that whatever we decide, think, desire, believe is the way things work, that our so-called truth defines truth, that we can create our own reality, we can create artificial worlds, virtual worlds, and be anything we choose. That in this satanic, delusional, false, fable world when we say that there is no male or female then there is no male and female; and if we say that there is no good or evil then it is so. In this satanic delusion there is only me, myself, and I, what I want, a world divorced from eternal reality, divorced from the laws our Creator build reality to operate upon, a world where every person can be their own god.

Does the Sabbath have any power to refute this? Does the Sabbath declare every week that there is a Creator God who built reality and His laws are the laws reality function upon and no human invention, fantasy, imagination, declaration, proclamation, legislation can ever change the laws of God because God's laws are the protocols reality itself function upon? **Including the 7-day weekly cycle built by God into time itself.** And the Sabbath reminds us of reality, that our fantasies don't change reality. We may believe there is no male or female, that a person can simply choose their gender—but the Bible says that leaving objective reality and making up one's own beliefs is delusional (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

Consider what is happening in the world today as we read Psalm 2, from *The Remedy*:

> Why are the nations of this selfish world angry at God's character of love?
> Why do their people plot in vain against God's design?
>
> 2 World leaders take their stand
> and the rulers unite together
> against the Creator and his design for life
> and against the One anointed to be our remedy.
>
> 3 They say, "Let us break free from God's design
> and reject God's protocols for life and health."
>
> 4 The Creator, who from heaven sustains reality, hates their foolishness;
> the Lord knows their words don't change reality — they're just meaningless noise.
>
> 5 He fiercely corrects their misunderstanding
> and persistently assails their false perspectives, instructing them,
>
> 6 "I have chosen who will reign in Zion,
> my King will rule in sinless perfection."
>
> 7 The king will make God's healing plan known:
> God said to me, "You are my Son;

today my Fatherhood to you has become known.

8 Ask me,
and I will give you all the nations,
the entire world will be yours.

9 You will govern them with an unbreakable shepherd's rod of truth and love;
you will destroy selfishness and crush their ability to coerce and deceive
like iron crushes pottery."

10 Therefore, worldly rulers, wise up!
You, who govern the earth, have been warned as to how reality works.

11 So, with humble admiration, live in harmony with God and his designs,
celebrate him with fervor.

12 Accept the Son with a loving heart lest he let you go
to die from your terminal condition,
for he may release you to your choice at any moment.
Happy and healthy are they who abide in him.

God is the creator of reality. His laws are the protocols reality function upon. Fantasy, make-believe, imagination do not change reality.

And the Sabbath is part of our reality, but how does the Sabbath fit in? The war is over ideas, attitudes, beliefs, love, and trust. God created the Sabbath in the middle of the war and it was created as a gift for humans. It is designed by God to us to help us cooperate with God in winning the war over sin in our own lives, how?

When Lucifer rebelled in heaven, he did not allege God was powerless—it was an allegation or attack on how God wields power, it was an attack on God's trustworthiness, is God worthy of our trust, love, devotion, and worship.

Satan's allegations were against how God governs or uses His power. And thus, Satan's attacks were against God's law. Satan suggested that God makes up rules and enforces those rules with inflicted punishment and that such a state of things restricts freedom and reveals God is not love, is not good, and is not trustworthy. Lucifer alleged that he had a better way and that way was to do away with God's law so that angels could have freedom to do anything they wanted—and Satan's principles are being advanced in this world today—do you see them?

But freedom from the laws that govern reality only results in chaos, disorder, pain, suffering, fear, guilt, shame, selfishness, and death.

And this man of lawlessness is being revealed, we see it in the world today as we approach the second coming of Christ. Paul wrote:

> Concerning **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, **for that day will not come until** the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thessalonians 4:1-4 NIV84).

Do you see this in the arbitrary laws humans are making up? Do you see that as people reject God as Creator, and build their own virtual, fantasy, artificial worlds, and pass laws (note I am focusing upon what governments and lawmakers are doing. This is not a discussion of the poor souls who are struggling with physical and mental health problems and are confused about their gender) to arbitrarily declare a man can be woman and compete in women's sports, and use women's bathrooms, that the image of Satan is being produced in people? We are seeing more division, more hostility, more debasing of the noble qualities of character. Satan is setting himself up in God's spirit temple to be the one adored, admired and worshiped.

Do you see the fulfillment of Revelation 18:3:

> "For all the nations have drunk the **maddening wine** of her adulteries. The kings of the earth **committed adultery** with her, and **the merchants of the earth grew rich** from her excessive luxuries." (Revelation 18:3 NIV84).

Do you see all the nations embracing the godless theories, all the nations advancing a fantasy view of reality that promotes selfishness, do you see the merchants of the world working with media and governments to advance policies and practices that punish godly values and seek to get rich through these corrupt practices?

The only outcome to rejecting God and His design laws for life is pain, suffering, guilt, shame, and eventual death.

We need healing, we need to be restored to God's design for life and health.

So, where does the Sabbath fit in? What role does it play in God healing us as we approach the second coming of Christ?

> Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy (or sanctifies you). (Exodus 31:12,13)

The Sabbath, and our recognition and observance of it, is a sign that God makes us holy. Does that mean Sabbath-keeping makes us holy and saves us?

Circumcision was a sign for Abraham and his descendants—did circumcision actually do anything to make him or his descendants holy or righteous? Or was circumcision a sign that Abraham had already been set right or made righteous?

Which came first, Abraham's heart being set right with God or the sign of circumcision? Paul makes this very point in Romans 4:9-12.

Can people be circumcised physically without ever having their hearts set right with God?

So, how does the Sabbath and our observance fit into God making us holy if it is not a rule we keep and our works or behaviors do not make us holy?

Consider this historical quote:

> **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter**. **We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the **Sabbath as a sign** between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent <u>the principles of His government</u>**. **They will bring into <u>daily practice</u> the laws of His kingdom**. **<u>Daily</u> it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day** they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. **Every day** their light will shine forth to others in good works. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 6 p. 353).

What is described here? Is this describing a one day in seven experience or a daily experience?

The commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

- If we commit terrible sins on the Sabbath day, have we made the Sabbath less holy?
- If we live perfectly holy and righteously on the Sabbath day, have we made the Sabbath more holy?
- Can we do anything to make or keep the Sabbath day holy or take away holiness from the Sabbath day? So, when the commandment says that we are to keep the Sabbath day holy, is it talking about the day, or is it talking about ourselves—that we are to keep ourselves holy?
- And can a person be a holy and righteous member of God's family and kingdom one day in seven?

So, the quote from EGW above makes perfect sense, the Sabbath is somehow a gift from God that is to be employed by us as a spiritual weapon in our cooperation with God to be a holy priesthood all week long.

How is the Sabbath useful in our holiness?

How does the Lord make us holy?

- Does God do this with divine power alone, or is there a part that we have to play in that process of our being made holy?
- Do we have choices to make?
- Do our choices have any impact in our salvation and our being made holy by God's divine power?
- Can God make someone holy while they actively choose to rebel against Him?
- Can a person make themselves holy by anything they can do apart from God?
- Is there some type of choosing that we must make that is involved in God's plan to transform and save us? What? And how is the Sabbath involved?

Is salvation about making sure we have the right set of doctrinal beliefs? That we have a correct understanding of which day is the Sabbath, how to perform biblical baptism, belief in a literal 7-day creation week, accurate understanding and practice of tithing and offerings, correct understanding of marriage, right beliefs about the state of the dead, accurate interpretation of Bible prophecy?

Does correctly and rightly understanding all these truths mean one has salvation?

Did the Jews who crucified Christ do so because Jesus:

- Used a different Bible?
- Kept a different Sabbath?
- Worshiped at a different Temple?
- Didn't believe in seven days of creation or that God was Creator?
- Ate a different diet?
- Had a different list of animals to be used in their ceremonies?
- Had a different list of feast days to be observed?

Understand, salvation is not found in believing the right list—salvation is found in trusting the right God.

And if one has the right list, but understands that list, including the Sabbath, through imposed law, then they have the wrong god.

It is only by returning to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws that we can understand Bible truths in their right setting, and that setting removes the lies of Satan and results in our trusting God and when we trust God we open our hearts to Him and He pours His Spirit into our hearts and there is a divine, supernatural transformation of desires and motives, and then we choose to act out, live out, put into practice the methods and principles of God. All of which are embodied in and represented by the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a gift that is filled with meaning, truth, and power created by God to be used by God in our sanctification. And we are to be sanctified in spirit, soul, and body:

> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 NIV84).

The Sabbath is a sign that God sanctifies us or makes us holy, and God is going to sanctify or make us holy in spirit, soul, and body. How is the Sabbath involved in this?

First the Sabbath is evidence of God's character, methods, and principles. Truth, presented in love, while leaving His intelligent creatures free. Its very existence proves Satan lied about how God governs. If God were an arbitrary rule-maker who inflicted arbitrary punishments for rule-breaking, God would have simply punished Lucifer and ordered the rest of the angels back into line. He would never have created the Sabbath as a day where God rested, a day where the angels and humans are left free to think and decide for themselves.

And thus, the Sabbath refutes the fantasy that we can make up our own reality, our own simulation, our own virtual world. The Sabbath is evidence of a Creator God whose laws govern reality and we either harmonize ourselves with those protocols for life, or we die from the result of breaking them. Thus, the idea that God's law can be changed and the Sabbath can be replaced by man's declaration is fantasy, it is no different than saying a man can declare himself to be a woman.

So the Sabbath is a gift to sanctify our souls—our psyches—our minds with the truth of God as Creator, as Savior, whose laws are design laws and the One who is altogether trustworthy.

Second, when we are won back to trust through the evidence of God's character of love and the truths that the Sabbath is a sign of, we open the heart and God pours His Spirit into our hearts and we are healed spiritually as we choose to trust Him and rest in His grace. His love casts out our fear, our shame and guilt are washed away by His goodness, mercy, forgiveness, and grace. Our ugly, sin-ridden identity is replaced with a new identity Christ-like, we become truly *Christian*. We experience spiritual healing in which we have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control manifest in our characters and we grow to become ever more like Jesus.

And in this new life we choose to honor God with our bodies—free from guilt, shame, the workaholic practices of the fear-driven world—we choose to rest each Sabbath trusting God with our lives, our fortunes, our businesses, and our bodies experience greater health and wellness.

- We must choose to study His word and decide, do we believe God is Creator and His laws are design laws, or do we believe the lies that God is arbitrary and makes up rules that require Him to inflict punishment?
- We must choose, based on the truth that Jesus has revealed, to trust God, to value what He values, say yes to what God reveals, say no to what is opposed to God's kingdom, and to apply

God's design law to our practices in how we live and treat others—we present truth, in love, and leave others free.

- We must choose to rest in God, to trust God with our everything, fortunes, families, and futures and we demonstrate that trust by choosing to wave the flag of God's design law kingdom by resting from pursuing our own business on the Sabbath.
- Why must we choose all of this?

Because God doesn't want robots programmed by Him or slaves who mindlessly obey rules out of fear of punishment. He wants free intelligent beings operating in harmony with Him, and ***the only way to heal us and retain our individuality is with our freewill cooperation.***

So, does the Sabbath provide evidence of God's character of love, freedom, truth?

Does the Sabbath also provide us opportunity to choose to stop promoting self, to rest from all aspects of self-indulgence, whether seeking wealth (work for gain), whether pleasure seeking, or trying to save self by working hard to keep the rules, including the Sabbath? That we rest trusting in God?

Do you see why Satan hates the Sabbath?

Now, since the lesson focuses on the Sabbath and the end-time, let's consider some historical ways the SDA church has presented this issue and see if we can advance and improve our understanding—we will be contrasting imposed law versus design law:

There are longer versions of this idea, but the following quote gets the point across:

- The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . . The mark of the beast is the opposite of this--the observance of the first day of the week. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 8, p. 117).

Any concerns or questions about this statement?

Statements like this are often misunderstood and misused because they are viewed through the imposed law model.

If viewed through the imposed law lens, what does this statement lead to?

So, what is the design law way of understanding this statement?

What is a mark or sign?

A symbol that stands for or signifies something else: So these two days of worship stand as signs or symbols for something else, what? **Two types of governments or two ways of governing!**

How did the Sabbath become a day set apart from the other days? By creation, by design, thus the Sabbath is a sign of God's government or kingdom which operates upon design law.

How did Sunday get set apart as a day of worship from the other days? By legislation, by man-made rules. Thus Sunday becomes a mark or sign of imposed law and represents governments that are made by sinful beings—because created beings cannot build reality, we can only make up rules and enforce those rules with inflicted punishments. So these two days are symbolic, or signs, of two types of laws, which result in two types of governments, which have two different gods.

Consider the days as flags of two different governments or seals of two different governments. Are the flags of the government the government, or only signs, marks, or symbols of the government?

The flag of the USA has historically stood for liberty and equality of all persons, the land of opportunity. Those who oppose these historic principles over the last decade have worked hard to attack the flag, to devalue it, to kneel rather than stand with hand over the heart when the national anthem is played, to work to assign false values of exploitation, enslavement, and abuse to the flag. Why? Are such attacks actually attacks on the flag, or attacks against the government that the flag represents?

Likewise, the various attacks against and actions to replace the Bible Sabbath are not primarily attacks against the Sabbath day. They are attacks intended to undermine and replace God's design law government with Satan's imposed law government—replacing God's kingdom of love, with Satan's fear-based kingdom of survival of the fittest, and dethroning Jesus and enthroning Satan into our hearts and minds as the one we admire and worship.

Could a person wear the flag of one country, which marks them as being a member of that country, but actually be a traitor and fighting for the other side?

Think about that when you consider who is on God's side and who is on Satan's side by merely what day a person attends church.

So, what is the mark of the beast? Is it attending church on a day other than Sabbath? Consider this quote:

> The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands**. **To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** (Review and Herald, July 13, 1897 par. 5).

What decision did the beast make and what ideas did it advocate that are in direct opposition to the word of God? Is it not the idea that God's law is imposed and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin? And justice requires the sovereign to use power to inflict external punishment on rule-breakers? And the church, having changed the day of worship from

Sabbath to Sunday in their legislative counsels give evidence or a mark that they do not consider God's law to be design law, but believe God's law is like human law, imposed rules that can be changed.

Thus the issue in the end, of which the two days stand as signs, is the issue of God's law of love, versus Satan's imposed law construct; God's rule of love versus Satan's rule of fear and selfishness; God's design law versus worldly imposed laws. It comes down to the methods one practices and **the two days are symbolic of two systems**.

And what does the beastly systems of the earth do? They coerce, they force, they inflict punishment for disobedience. Consider this quote:

> But when the decree shall go forth **enforcing** the counterfeit sabbath, **and** the loud cry of the third angel **shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image**, the line will be clearly drawn **between the false and the true**. **Then** those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast. (Evangelism 234, 235).

Is the mark about the day upon which one attends church, or is it about the law one believes God governs by and therefore the methods employed, and ultimately the character one forms as they become like the god they worship?

The mark is about the methods one employs in how they treat others, which law people embrace into their hearts in how they live and treat others. Do they practice, truth, love, and freedom, or do they employ lies, fear/selfishness, and coercion?

Thus, any time we use power to coerce the conscience of others we are acting beastly and marking ourselves as loyal to the beast and not loyal to the kingdom of God.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 9
A City Called Confusion

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first three paragraphs:

> The great controversy theme is summarized in Revelation with the symbolism of two women: one clothed with the sun, in Revelation 12, and one dressed in scarlet, in Revelation 17.
>
> The striking symbol of the woman clothed with the sun, in the dazzling glory of Christ, is found in Revelation 12. She is faithful to her true Lover, Jesus. She is not defiled with the corruption of false doctrines. Throughout the Bible, a pure woman symbolizes the bride of Jesus, or the true church. In Jeremiah 6:2, the prophet says, " 'I have likened the daughter of Zion to a lovely and delicate woman' " (NKJV). The prophet uses the expression "daughter of Zion" or a faithful woman to describe God's people. (See also Eph. 5:25–32 and Hos. 2:20.)
>
> In contrast, the Bible likens apostasy to harlotry or adultery (James 4:4). Speaking of Israel's rebellion and unfaithfulness, Ezekiel laments, " 'You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband' " (Ezek. 16:32, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.72)

Why if the lesson is entitled a City Called Confusion do we start out talking about two women?

Because the Bible has many ways of describing, revealing, and symbolizing the war between Christ and His followers, and Satan and his followers. The two women are descriptions of the two sides; we will explore this in detail in a moment, but before we do, can you think of other ways the Bible describes or symbolizes the two sides in this war?

- Two cities—Babylon and Jerusalem
- Two nations—Egypt and Israel
- Wheat and weeds
- Fruitful vine/tree and withered vine/tree
- Saved and lost
- Faithful and wicked
- Righteous and unrighteous
- Good and evil
- Light and darkness
- Life and death or living and dead
- Healthy and diseased
- Lamps with oil and lamps without oil

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- Wise and foolish
- Two types of rulers—one who rises over and One who sacrifices self
- Two laws—design or imposed
- Two temples
- Two spirits—the Holy Spirit and false spirits
- Two paths
- Two gates

Why does the Bible use a city, Babylon, whose name means confusion, as a symbol for Satan's rebellious system?

> Make every effort to keep the **unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is **one body** and **one Spirit**— just as you were called to **one hope** when you were called—**one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all,** who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:3-6 NIV84).

God is the Creator and there is only One God, who built the universe to operate in harmony with His one eternal design law of love, and all creation is connected to Him and is sustained through and by Him:

> For by him [Jesus] **all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him** and for him. He is before all things, and in him **all things hold together**… For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things**, **whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:16-17 & 19-20 NIV84).
>
> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things by his powerful word** (Hebrews 1:3 NIV84).

In light of these Bible verses, consider this Bible commentary by one of the founders of the SDA church. Do you agree with these insights? Do you believe they are in harmony with Scripture?

> Upon **all created things** is seen the impress of the Deity. Nature testifies of God. The susceptible mind, brought in contact with the miracle and mystery of the universe, cannot but recognize the working of infinite power. **Not by its own inherent energy** does the earth produce its bounties, and year by year continue its motion around the sun. An **unseen hand** guides the planets in their circuit of the heavens. A **mysterious life pervades all nature—a life that sustains the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity**, that lives in the insect atom which floats in the summer breeze, that wings the flight of the swallow and feeds the young ravens which cry, that brings the bud to blossom and the flower to fruit. (Homeward Bound 182).

> **The same power** that upholds nature, is working also in us. **The same great laws** that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. **The laws that govern the heart's action**, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, **are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul**. **From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him** can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—**a life sustained by receiving the life of God**, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. **To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin.** (Homeward Bound 182).

There is One God who created all things and through Him all things hold together. There is one design law that emanates from God and holds together or sustains all things—it is the law of love. All God's distinct and various physical laws are manifestations of His law of love.

God dispenses, disperses, diffuses His own eternal energy to create and then sustain all reality. Only by being united with God, having His Spirit dwell within us, being conformed to harmony with Him do we have life. There is no life disconnected from God who is the source of life.

Sin is lawlessness, it is breaking the bonds of love and trust, severing the link with God who is the source of life, deviating from the design protocols that life is constructed to operate upon.

There are only two paths—

- Life and death
- Harmony with God or disharmony
- Unity or disunity
- Oneness or fragmentation

Once a person leaves the path of truth, of life, of oneness with God, and enters the path of satanic delusion, the path of lies, how many different lies, delusions, falsehoods, idols, errors are there? An infinite amount and that is why Satan's system is Babylon, the city of confusion, because lies always confuse, disconnect from reality, and result in ever increasing fragmentation and division.

Do you see as the truth about God has been pushed further and further out of the hearts and minds of people that the world is becoming more divided, the human condition is becoming more debased, and the level of fantasy, delusion, and crazy thinking has increased?

From our Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 Magazine:

> "BABYLON THE GREAT" refers to the imposed-law system, the false system of methods that all earthly governments wield and that all false religions teach about God. Of all the nations in the Bible that Satan used to war against Israel, it was Babylon that created the first codified legal system (the code of Hammurabi). By embracing the lie of imposed law, the church teaches that God is like Satan in character and practices the beastly methods of coercion, resulting in Satan's character being reproduced in their hearts and minds. Thus, this

> system is an abomination—as it destroys the image of God in people and places a beastly character where God's should be.

And that is why Christianity is currently divided into over 41,000 different groups arguing among themselves—because they have accepted the wine of Babylon, which is the idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, and that lie results in massive confusion and division as people argue over the meaning of this or that.

Further, that lie led Dark Ages Christianity to become a beastly—it made up its own rules, then used the power of the state to fine, imprison, torture, and kill, those who refused to obey its edicts. It prosecuted crusades, it promoted all kinds of propaganda, it obstructed truth, locked the Bibles away from people, persecuted honest of heart people who had questions and were seeking truth, such as Galileo, Tyndale, Luther.

And the evolutionists have accepted the wine of Babylon, they believe the lie that the God of the Bible is this evil, satanic, abusive, coercive beast who is unworthy of our love, trust, and worship and therefore they have rejected the Bible and the true God and advanced their own false theories. And Satan has two false sides fighting back and forth, those claiming they believe in the God of the Bible, but present Him as a dictator who uses power to kill the disobedient, and the godless who claim all life originated on its own.

When we return to design law, it always leads to unity. People of different religions, or no religion at all, never argue over whether they will fall or float if they jump off a building, whether they will live or die if they tie a plastic bag over their head. They argue when they think of God's law as imposed—

- What is the legal (authorized, right) way to be baptized
- Who has the legal authority to baptize? A priest, ordained pastor, men women?
- Who has the legal right to conduct a communion ceremony or offer the Eucharist, only individuals ordained to the pastorate or priesthood by a denominational church system?
- What is the legal day to attend church?
- What is the right way to observe Sabbath?
- Or in the world today all the human laws passed and repealed by this group or that group all claiming that they are merely pursuing justice.

And on and on it goes…

So understand to the degree any religion, church, or organization teaches that God's law functions like human law, they are advancing Babylon and obstructing the unity that is inherent in our faith.

And that leads us to a sentence right in the middle of our quote from the lesson, the true people of God, the pure woman, the true church the lesson says "is not defiled with the corruption of false doctrines."

Certainly the wine of Babylon contains falsehoods, but is having the pure wine simply about having the right doctrinal list? Or is the pure wine symbolic of the pure life of Christ and thus the pure wine includes pure hearts and right spirits, godly motives and methods and principles in our practices, with unwavering loyalty to God in all we do?

The Jews who killed Christ had the right doctrinal list, but they were not pure in heart.

Salvation is not found in cognitive correctness of Bible facts or doctrines, it is found in purity of motive, principle, practice—purity of heart.

Lies believed break the circle of love and trust, so to the degree we believe lies about God then our ability to trust Him is undermined and fear and selfishness is inflamed. So, we must know the truth and the truth will set us free, but understand, it is the truth about God, not the truth about the Sabbath—people can have the right Bible Sabbath but the wrong god and murder the Lord of the Sabbath.

SUNDAY

Two Contrasting Systems—what do you understand these two systems to be?

> And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and **have the testimony of Jesus Christ**. (Revelation 12:17 NKJV).

Who are these faithful people, the end-time children of the faithful woman, God's true people at the end of time?

They have two defining characteristics—they obey God's commandments and have the testimony of Jesus. What does this mean? Is it describing a denomination, so that one becomes a part of this end-time people simply by officially joining the right denomination? Or is it describing a group of people who have some qualities the set them apart from the enemies of God regardless of denomination?

What is the testimony of Jesus?

> For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10 NKJV).

What does that mean? Some in the SDA church have argued it means that the end-time true church will be identified by having a prophet, someone who has the Biblical gift of prophecy. These same faithful and well-meaning Adventists then identify EG White as fitting that role. So they argue that the SDA church fits the description of these end-time faithful people, because the organized church teaches people to keep all ten commandment and EGW had the gift of prophecy.

What do you think? Is this what Revelation means?

Hmmm…a couple of questions—what about the Seventh-day Baptists, who keep all ten commandments and believe in the Bible? Is the Bible the gift of prophecy? Why or why not? For those who believe that EG White had the gift of prophecy, today all they have are her writings, which would mean they have the writings of a dead prophet. Isn't that what the Bible is, the writings of dead prophets?

So, is that what Revelation is speaking about, a denomination of people who keep all ten commandments and have the writings of a dead prophet? Or is Revelation speaking about something more than this?

Consider Revelation 19:10 from some other versions:

- For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10 NKJV).
- For the testimony about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10 NET)
- For the truth that Jesus revealed is what inspires the prophets. (Revelation 19:10 GNT)
- Because the message about Jesus is the spirit that gives all prophecy. (Revelation 19:10 NCV).

What is the meaning of the phrase "the testimony of Jesus"? It is simple and straightforward—What testimony did Jesus give when He was here on Earth?

- "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9 NIV84).
- "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." (John 8:19 NIV84).
- "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do… I have revealed you." (John 17: 4, 6 NIV84).

What is the testimony of Jesus? The truth about the Father, the truth about God! And that truth is the truth with which the Holy Spirit inspires all the prophets? The truth about God!

So my paraphrase of Revelation 19:10:

> For the testimony Jesus gave about his Father is the same as that which inspired the prophets. (Revelation 19:10 REM).

Thus, the identifier of the end-time people of God is that they will give the same testimony about God that Jesus gave, that:

- God is the Creator
- His laws are design laws
- God is for us
- God is not the cause of pain, suffering, and death.
- God is not legally required to inflict punishment for sin
- God does not need a legal payment of a human sacrifice to propitiate His wrath
- God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish

- God is for us and not against us!

The true people of God will have the truth about God and give the testimony about God that Jesus gave, and that truth is what inspires all the prophets, or spokespersons for God.

Understand this clearly, **God does not send His Holy Spirit to empower people to lie about Him.** Thus, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and the primary truth is the truth about God and God's end-time people give the same testimony about God that Jesus gave.

Ask,

- Does your denominational church present the Father in the same light that Jesus did? Or has your denominational church been infected with a pagan view of God, a Babylonian view, that presents God as a being who makes up rules and then uses external power to inflict punishment upon rule-breakers just like Nebuchadnezzar did when he threw Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego into the furnace?
- Does your denominational church teach that God is the source of torment and death as just punishment for sin?
- Does your church teach that God needs an intercessor a mediator to plead with Him in order to prevent Him from lashing out with divine wrath to punish sinners?
- If your denomination teaches any of these ideas then it reveals that it is infected with the wine of Babylon. And taking that view of God to the world does not constitute the end-time remnant people or message of God.

So other versions of Revelation 12:17 read:

- Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and **hold to the testimony of Jesus**. (Revelation 12:17 NIV84).
- The dragon was furious with the woman and went off to fight against the rest of her descendants, all those who obey God's commandments and are **faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus**. (Revelation 12:17 GNT)
- So the dragon became enraged at the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep God's commandments and **hold to the testimony about Jesus**. (Revelation 12:17 NET)

What about keeping the commandments, this is the second indicator of who are the end-time people of God? What does that mean?

Last week we explored at length the question of the Sabbath, does this mean that the people of God are identified by their observance of the Bible Sabbath of the fourth commandment, along with the other nine?

Or does keeping the commandments of God mean more than weekly rest from employment and faithfully attending church?

Some have interpreted this is a very legal way, a rules-oriented way, a way that is through the lens of Babylon, that God's law functions like human law, and thus make a legal religion that has the right rules and if you do the right rules then you are a member of God's end-time people. Is that what it means?

I believe it is very simple and straightforward. The true people of God, know God the Father and Son for themselves, personally and intimately, and thus give the same testimony about God Jesus gave, and because they know and trust God, God's design law principles of truth, love, and freedom are written upon their hearts and they live out God's law of love in how they treat others.

MONDAY

Read the third paragraph,

> Revelation 17:2 continues its dramatic portrayal: " 'And the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication' " (NKJV). The symbolism of the pure juice of the grape is used throughout the New Testament to represent the untainted, pure blood of Christ poured out for our salvation on the cross (Matt. 26:27–29). In Luke 22:20, Jesus says, " 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood' " (NKJV). When the pure, new wine of the gospel is distorted, and the teachings of the Word of God are replaced with the teachings of human religious leaders, it becomes the "wine of Babylon." (See Matt. 15:9.) (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.74)

The idea here is correct, the wine of Babylon represents corruption of the pure by an element that degrades it into something that confuses the mind and intoxicates the soul.

But it is not talking about ethanol; Wine is a symbol—the pure wine as a symbol in the NT replaces the OT symbol of blood. Remember, Jesus said,

> I tell you the truth, unless you eat the **flesh** of the Son of Man and drink his **blood**, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. **For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.** (John 6:52-55 NIV84)

And at the last supper Jesus replaced the sacrificial symbols of the flesh of the lamb and blood of the sacrifice, with bread and wine. What do these symbols mean in reality?

Jesus is the Word, the truth of God, made flesh (John 1:1, 14). And just as flesh and bread become building blocks of our physical bodies, so also the truth that Jesus brings becomes the building blocks of our beliefs, ideas, thoughts, which form our values, perspectives, worldview, ultimately leading us back to the knowledge of and trust in God.

Then when we trust God we open the heart and He pours His life giving presence of love into our hearts (Romans 5:5), and the Bible says that the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11) which is symbolically found in the pure wine.

Thus, the symbolism is teaching we must return to the truth and love of God, the flesh/blood, bread/wine.

But the false system has a false set of values, beliefs, and life-blood. Instead of the truth of God's character of love and design law principles, it is driven by the intoxicating lies and inspiring motives of fear, selfishness, power, and control manifest in imposed law and coercive enforcement. Zealots on missions for their god using the power of the state to enforce their way.

This corrupt, pagan, imposed law system, is the system the entire world has embraced and used to advance its way and what it calls justice. The entire world is drunk on the belief that if they can just get their people into political power then they can usher in a new age of prosperity and health by passing more laws and forcing more people to do what the state says. **It is delusional…it can never happen and in fact the more government enforcement the more division, conflict, and ultimately the more destruction of the image of God in people.**

The lesson points out that the false church is called a harlot or prostitute who commits adultery. What are your thoughts on this?

I will explore a little of this from some of the material in our magazine Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation:

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph,

> Christ is the solid foundation His church is built upon. His church is based on the teachings of His Word and guided by His Spirit. On the contrary, Babylon, as we have seen, is rooted in human-made teachings and traditions. Any religious leader who substitutes human opinions or traditions in the place of, or above, the revealed will of God in the Scriptures is simply fostering Babylonian confusion. (Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages p.76)

This is well said, the false system is a system based upon human law rather than God's. The problem is that most of the religious world argues over which law is God's and which is human tradition, rather than the type of law itself.

Many SDA's fail to realize that one can have the right form of baptism, the right Sabbath day, the right Bible, but if one presents those truths through human imposed law, then despite having the right

doctrine, one still has the wrong law, and the wrong god, and advances Satan's kingdom—just like those who kept the right Sabbath 2000 years ago but crucified the Lord of the Sabbath.

This leads us to Thursday's lesson which is about idolatry,

THURSDAY

What is idolatry? Is it merely worshiping idols made of wood and stone? Or is Idolatry any form of false worship?

Can one worship a being they call Jesus Christ and be an idol worshiper?

Can a person worship a being they call something other than Jesus Christ and be faithful to the true God?

For instance, could a person worship a being they call El-Shaddai rather than Jesus Christ, or perhaps Joshua the Messiah, or Adonai, or Michael, or Bright and Morning Star?

Is it the word one uses when worshiping God that matters, or is who one understands God to be that matters?

When Jesus said in John 17:3 that life eternal is knowing God and the Son, does that mean knowing the right words to call them by, or does it mean knowing them?

For instance, think of your spouse, perhaps you have a nickname for your spouse—if a stranger overhears you using that nickname and learns it, and then calls your spouse by that nickname—does that mean they know your spouse or your spouse knows them?

This is what Jesus was trying to get people to understand when He said,

> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not **prophesy in your name, and in your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you**. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22-23 NIV84).

They know the words "Jesus Christ" but they do not know Him personally, they don't know His character, methods, or principles. They use the name Jesus to advance a system of religion that functions like this world, that operates upon Satan's principles of coercive enforcement, despite the fact that they set up schools, orphanages, hospitals, and carry out exorcisms.

These people, doing things in the name of Jesus Christ, are idolaters.

God prophesied through Malachi that,

> "Before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, I will send you the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

Elijah was sent to confront Baal worship in ancient Israel, and Malachi prophesies that the Elijah message will be needed again before the second coming of Christ.

Who was Baal that Israel worshiped and Elijah confronted?

- Baal was the son of El (i.e., El-ohim or El-Shaddai).
- He was the god of weather and was often called "Almighty" and "Lord of the Earth."
- Baal was the god who brought rain, thunder, lightning, who fertilized the earth, controlled the sun, and brought the harvest.
- Baal fought the great serpent leviathan
- Baal battled against Mot, the god of death.
- And most amazing of all, it was taught that Baal died in his battle with Mot and was resurrected to bring life to earth.

So what was the problem with worshiping a god who was the "husband and protector of Israel," the son of El, who controlled the weather, who brought rain, sunshine, and fertility, who blessed with a full harvest, who warred against the great serpent and death, who died and was resurrected to bring life to the earth? What was wrong with this god? What was Elijah opposing? What made Baal worship false?

One commentary states:

> "Determined to keep the people in deception, the priests of Baal continue to offer sacrifices to their gods and to call upon them night and day to refresh the earth. **With costly offerings the priests attempt to appease the anger of their gods** …" (Prophets and Kings, p. 124)

The Bible confirms this:

> "So the prophets prayed louder and cut themselves with knives and daggers, **according to their custom, until blood flowed**" (1 Kings 18:28).

Baal became:

- Zeus to the Greeks
- Jupiter to the Romans
- Thor to the Norse people
- Jesus Christ to those Christians who worship a punishing god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice to appease his anger to prevent him from using his power to destroy us.

This pagan, penal/legal system of theology, is modern day Baal worship and the message for this time, the message ordained by God is to call people out of this penal/legal pagan system back to worshiping

the Creator whose laws are design laws and who sacrificed Himself to provide the remedy to cure us from our terminal sin condition.

Consider this historical quote:

> Thousands have a **false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal**. Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. (Faith I Live By 59).

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Administrative Director for Come and Reason Ministries:

Francesca Brewster has served as our Administrative Director since 2016. And we have all been blessed by her loving and faithful work for us over the years. God has blessed Fran and Sam with two beautiful children and she has decided, that she needs to be at home with her children. Therefore, Fran is leaving her position as our Administrative Director to be a full-time mother. We will miss Fran, and I know many of you will also. One month from now, at our June potluck, we will have a special farewell thank you for Fran. So, if you have a note, a card, or would like to express your appreciation to Fran in person, please join us Sabbath June 10.

Today, I want to introduce you to our new Administrative Director, Dessya Palit.

Dessya is well qualified to take on this position. She has a Bachelors in Business Administration Marketing & Finance, with a Minor in Accounting from Southwestern Adventist University. She has experience in marketing, management, purchasing, and accounting, and has worked for other not for profit organizations in the past.

Dessya will start this Tuesday May 16, 2023.

Please join me in welcoming Dessya to our team.

NEW MAGAZINE: Critical Race Theory: Exposing the Lies While Advancing the Gospel, is now available**!**

New Billboard Resource:

In response to requests from our listeners, we have developed some billboards, and will be developing and releasing new ones periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community.

Podcasts:

We have a weekly podcast about 13 minutes long that is available to be delivered to your device if you sign up for it.

Remedy app:

The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Materials in Australia:

Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa:

Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 Now Available in South Africa!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 10
Satan's Final Deceptions

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 10
Satan's Final Deceptions

Last week the question was raised as to whether the SDA church has been infected with the Roman imperial law idea, that God's law functions like human law and therefore teaches that justice requires God to use His power to inflict pain, suffering, and death upon sinners to punish sin, and also upon Christ as our substitute.

In other words, has the idea that God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death, the one from whom we need to be protected become part of the teachings found with SDA church and its publications? And if so, do we recognize that this is part of the wine of Babylon and to the degree we teach such things about God we fail to fulfill the purpose of the SDA movement, we fail to take the 3 Angels' Messages to the world.

Here are a few quotes documenting that this imperial Roman idea of imposed law, which makes God out to be the source of pain, suffering, and death is commonly taught within the institutional SDA church, and this idea stands in conflict with the message given to the church by EGW.

- For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became 'a moral and legal necessity.' God's 'justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute judgment** on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will**. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111

- Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightening, or a lethal injection? Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007. http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html

- One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice. (emphasis mine) Rodriguez, A., *Adventist World Review*, December 2007; p. 40.

- The Hebrew wording in both Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 was the same: 'and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed.' (9:24, NKJV). Consumed what? In the first case, the offering; in the other, the sinners. What a powerful representation of the plan of salvation. **At the Cross, the 'fire from God,' the wrath of God, 'consumed' the offering, and that was Jesus. (**Goldstein, C., *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, 3 Quarter 2011, Pacific Press, p. 40).

- **The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him [Jesus],** at Calvary, and all who are in Christ are safe forever beneath His wings. At the cross, Christ was judged as a condemned sinner so that we could be judged as righteous citizens of the heavenly kingdom. He was judged as a criminal so that we could be set free from the destructive fires of eternal loss, both figuratively and, yes, literally, as well. (Goldstein, C., *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, Pacific Press, p. 46)

Who do these quotations say is the source of inflicted death upon Jesus, who took the sinner's place?

What does the Bible say?

> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet **we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted**. (Isaiah 53:4)

> Jesus speaking to those who would later crucify Him said, "You belong to your **father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your **father's desire. He was a murderer** from the beginning…" (John 8:44)

And what was the message that the SDA church was supposed to teach about this? This is a historical reference from one of the founders of the SDA church, found in *The Desire of Ages:*

> **Satan** saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings**. White, E.G., *Desire of Ages,* p. 761.

George Fifield, an SDA theologian presented the following in 1897 at a General Conference:

> **We said, God is doing all this; God is killing him, punishing him, to satisfy his wrath, in order to let us off. That is the pagan conception of sacrifice**. The Christian idea of sacrifice is this. Let us note the contrast. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That is the Christian idea. Yes, sir. Indifference keeps, hatred keeps, selfishness keeps… But love, and love only, sacrifices, gives freely, gives itself, gives without counting the cost; gives because it

> is love. That is sacrifice, whether it is the sacrifice of bulls and goats, or of him who is the Lamb of God. It is the sacrifice that is revealed throughout the entire Bible. **But the pagan idea of sacrifice is just the opposite. It is that some god is always offended, always angry, and his wrath must be propitiated in some way**. (1897 General Conference Daily Bulletin Sermon Series number 1).

These eternal truths about God are not restricted to the Adventist people or movement, non-SDA Christians have also understood this:

Oswald Chambers wrote:

> **The Bible does not say that God punished the human race for one man's sin**, but that the nature of sin, namely, my claim to my right to myself, entered into the human race through one man. But it also says that another **Man took upon Himself the sin of the human race and put it away** — an infinitely more profound revelation…
>
> > **Sin is something I am born with** and cannot touch— only God touches sin through redemption. It is through the Cross of Christ that God redeemed the entire human race from the possibility of damnation through the heredity of sin. **God nowhere holds a person responsible for having the heredity of sin, and does not condemn anyone because of it**. Condemnation comes when I realize that Jesus Christ came to deliver me from this heredity of sin, and **yet I refuse to let Him do so**. From that moment I begin to get the seal of damnation. **"This is the condemnation [and the critical moment], that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light . . . " (John 3:19)** (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, http://utmost.org).

And this is the quote from EGW that Linda was referring to last week:

> While God has desired to teach men that from **His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction**. Thus the sacrifices and the ordinances **designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God**. (E.G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1917, p. 685).

Questions or comments about this?

With all of this in mind, let us turn to our lesson, which is entitled Satan's Final Deceptions—do you think Satan's final deceptions have anything to do with how people understand God's law, and therefore God's character?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SABBATH

Read second paragraph,

> As we have seen, Revelation warns us that the "inhabitants of the earth" will drink a deadly potion called the "wine of Babylon." There are false doctrines and teachings that, in the end, will lead only to death. However, the world is not left without the antidote, the protection, against this spiritual poison: the three angels' messages. (SDA Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, p. 80)

No question the saved will embrace the truth and the lost reject the truth and believe falsehoods—but is this speaking only about facts or is this speaking of living truth, truth about functional reality?

For instance, can someone be saved if they believe that the Earth is flat, or that there was not a worldwide Flood as described in Genesis but only a local flood?

My point is that the saved will love the truth and the lost will not, but does that mean the saved know all truth on all subjects and don't believe anything incorrectly?

Then the truth essential for salvation must have a specific focus, must be a particular type of truth—and what is that truth?

> Now this is **eternal life**: that they may **know you, the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3 NIV84).

> For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are **not** the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds**. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

What is the truth we must know in order to be saved? The truth about God—but what kind of truth is this? Is it facts—knowing that God created the Earth and humans, knowing that there was a Flood, knowing that Jesus died as our Savior, knowing that the seventh day is the Sabbath of God. Or is it a type of knowledge that goes beyond facts? Doesn't Satan know all those facts?

> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not **prophesy in your name, and in your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you**. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22-23 NIV84).

Who did these people claim to be worshiping and ministering in the name of? Jesus—they knew about Jesus, but they did not know Jesus.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

So, the truth we must know is not merely factual knowledge, it is experiential knowledge, we must know God personally, for ourselves.

The lesson focuses our attention upon two doctrines, that we must know the truth about the doctrines in order not to be deceived, and those two doctrines are spiritualism and Sunday sacredness.

What are your thoughts about this?

Can a person know the truth about both these doctrines and many others and still not know God? Will a person be saved by knowing true doctrines if they don't know God? Can a person be saved if they know God but believe something wrong about some doctrine?

What is the importance of doctrine then? Doctrines are only valuable to the degree the enlighten us about God and help restore our trust in God. Another way to say this is that the primary purpose of doctrinal truth is to reveal God to us.

The right way to understand every doctrine is to ask, What does this doctrine reveal about God? All our doctrines should be conceptualized like spokes on a wheel, God is the central hub from which all truth originate and following all truth lead back to God.

But sadly, in much of Christianity, including the SDA church, various teachings have been set up as stand-alone doctrines established with proof texts and to be believed on their own separated from what they tell us about God.

Such a way of pursuing truth leads to spiritual narcissism and egotism, we have the truth, our doctrines are right and yours are wrong. It also leads to division rather than unity, people argue and fight over this meaning or that text. And it leads to fear and anxiety rather than peace and joy—fear that we might be missing some important truth, or fact, or idea because when our doctrines are separated from the truth about God then our security is found in having the right doctrines, creeds, fundamental beliefs, not in having a trust relationship with the right God.

But, the lesson is not wrong in that Satan's end-time deception will include spiritualism and what Sunday sacredness represents, but if we don't identify the underlying root—i.e. connect our doctrines back to the truth about God, we very well may have the right factual truth, like the state of the dead or the weekly Sabbath, but crucify the Lord of the Sabbath like the Jews did 2000 years ago.

So consider what spiritualism and Sunday sacredness, if true, would say about God, i.e. what kind of God would God be if they were true?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The lesson title for the day is taken from Proverbs 14:12:

> There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12 NIV84).

Can you think of a some doctrine, method, belief, or practice that seems right to almost every human being and has greater acceptance, but actually leads to death, than the belief in "law and order" imposed laws with imposed punishments?

Consider Isaiah 55:6-9:

> Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will **freely pardon**. "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways**," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:6-9 NIV84).

Is it the way of human law to freely pardon? Or does human law require punishment be inflicted in order for justice to be satisfied?

And do most Christians teach that God freely pardons or that God requires a legal payment, someone to die to pay for their sins?

This is how the world will be deceived by the beast of Revelation—it will come with coercive power to do justice, to enforce its laws while people may disagree on what are the right laws to enforce, they all agree that justice requires law-breaking to be punished.

Read third paragraph,

> People are often told to follow their own conscience in order to determine for themselves what is right or wrong, good or evil, and then live accordingly. But the Scripture says that we are all sinners, all corrupted (Jer. 17:9, Rom. 3:9–18), and so to trust our own sentiments is almost a guaranteed way to, sooner or later, get it wrong and even to do wrong. A lot of evil has been perpetrated through the ages by people utterly convinced of the rightness of their cause. That is, they followed the "way that seems right" to them. (SDA Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, p. 81)

What do you think of this? Is something not quite right in this paragraph?

Do you understand that conscience and sentiments are the same?

In Romans 14 Paul is discussing disagreement about various religious observations, foods to eat, days of worship etc. and Paul says,

> One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5 NIV84).

Paul then goes on to conclude his argument with the following, and consider this in light of following our conscience:

> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:22-23 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Are our conscience and our sentiments the same?

No, our conscience is a mental faculty that is sensitive to the movements of the Spirit of God. And the Spirit of God works upon the conscience to convict of sin, to instill a desire for the things of God, a longing for truth, love, joy, peace. The Holy Spirit works upon the conscience not only to convict of sin, but to also convict of duties of various kinds.

Jesus, spoke of the conscience as our spiritual eye, the part of our minds that is sensitive to the light of truth, when He said,

> "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23 NIV84).

But just like our physical eyes, our consciences can become diseased or even blind.

Thus, God never intends for us to make decisions with conscience alone. God has provided another faculty to work in conjunction with our conscience and that is our reason.

God says,

> "Come now, let us reason together. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).

The lesson is correct if we allow our consciences to lead us disconnected from our reasoning ability, disconnected from Scriptural truth, then we can be lead astray. However, if we reason without a conscience we are likewise in danger of being led astray into narcissism, pride, arrogance, and all

types of sinful self-justification—even under the guise of religion. Just consider those religious leaders who crucified Christ.

MONDAY

Monday focuses on immortality of the soul.

The basic question is this: When God created human beings in Eden, did God create them with some aspect of their being that can never die, that is immortal, or did God create them mortal and eternal life is only possible by receiving the life of God and staying connected with our Creator?

The belief that some part of human individuality, whether the soul or spirit, is immortal and can never die, is the root of spiritualism.

Of course, we could take the approach of arguing the evidences from the Bible that prove the doctrine one way or the other, like:

- God said that if they eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil they would die
- Satan said they would not die (Genesis 3:4-5)
- "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24 NIV84).
- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NIV84).
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

And there are so many more texts, so we could approach it this way. But if we do, we have created a stand-alone doctrine about the mortality of the soul.

How do we connect this doctrine to the truth about God? Having cited the Biblical evidence for the mortality of the soul, and that immortality is a gift from God to the righteous, we need to consider the more important question. What do these two views mean for the kind of person God is?

If God did create Adam and Eve in Eden, with some aspect of their personhood that can never die, what would that mean about God?

Remember the current facts of humanity that most of Christianity teaches—

- they teach that we are born in sin
- yet we are born with immortal souls

- and that some people are born in situations in which they are abused as children, never have the gospel presented to them, and die never having come to Christ
- But despite living only briefly with a sin condition they did not choose, and having never had the gospel presented to them, God still sends their immortal souls to hell to be eternally tortured.

What does this belief say about God if true?

- Does God have foreknowledge or not?
- If God does have foreknowledge and foresaw human sin and all humans, after Adam's sin, would be born sinners and that billions would die without accepting salvation, and yet He created them with immorality knowing they would suffer for all eternity for a condition they didn't choose to have themselves and never being offered the remedy—what kind of god would that be?
- If God does not have foreknowledge and gave them immortality because He didn't see or anticipate the sin problem, what would that say about God? He is naïve or foolish or unwise.
- Either way, if we accept the idea that God created human beings with immortality in Eden, it not only contradicts the evidence of Scripture, but makes God out to be completely untrustworthy, either because God is abusive and vindictive foreknowing what would happen and created it to be this way anyway, or He is untrustworthy because He is powerful but foolish and makes bad choices.

So the primary issue of the end-time lie about immortality of the soul is one about God, who God is. Is He trustworthy or not. That is the primary issue. Secondary issues are such things as spiritualism.

If what I am saying is true, then how do we understand passages from Scripture like:

> Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be **absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord** (2 Corinthians 5:6–8 KJV).

If you haven't read our magazine The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming I encourage you to do so. We answer this question in great detail in that magazine.

But let's review that answer now.

Human beings are made of three parts, body, soul, spirit. And to be functional, operational, or actively living, all three components must be present.

A computer makes a great example for us, because to be **operational a computer** also needs three parts all together: **hardware, software,** and an **energy source.** Having only one or two of these three will result in a computer that will not operate. All three are required for actual functioning.

In a similar way, to have an **operational** (functioning) **human being,** it requires all three components—**body, soul,** and **spirit**:

- The Greek word for **body** is σῶμα [*soma*] and is analogous to a computer's **hardware, including the CPU**—the physical machine, including our brain.
- The Greek word for **soul** is ψυχή [*psuche*], from which we get psyche, as in *psych*iatry and *psych*ology, and it means our individuality—our heart, unique personhood, character, identity. It is analogous to a computer's **software** (including database/datasets/data).
- And the Greek word for **spirit** is πνεῦμα [*pneuma*], from which we get pneumonia or pneumatic, and it means wind, air, or breath—as in the breath of life. This is our **energy source**—the life-energy originating from God.

When a computer runs out of power, what state does it go into? It "sleeps." This is exactly how the Bible describes those who die the first death: they "sleep," awaiting the resurrection (Psalm 7:5, 13:3; Matthew 9:24; John 11:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13).

At the first death:

- The body returns to dust (Genesis 3:19, Psalm 44:25, Ecclesiastes 3:20);
- The spirit—life energy—returns to God who gave the breath of life (Ecclesiastes 12:7);
- But what about the soul (*psuche*/psyche)—the individuality, the software? Where does that go?

Paul said is goes to God—but what does that mean?

If someone stole your laptop and was threatening to destroy it but you had a perfect copy of the data backed up on a cloud server, then you might say, "I'm not afraid of the one who can destroy my laptop (hardware/body/soma) but cannot destroy the software [soul/*psuche*]." This is like what Jesus described in Matthew 10:28 when He spoke about those who might kill us for our faith in Him.

Why is it that the killing of the body cannot destroy the soul? Because the soul is our individuality, our unique personhood, and it is distinct from the body. And Paul says our individuality goes to God, stored on the heavenly servers, known as the Lamb's book of life, until the resurrection, when God brings those individualities who are asleep with Him and downloads them into new bodies (hardware) and they live again.

Paul brilliantly describes this very process:

> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep,** or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 NIV84).

Did you notice that the very same righteous dead who arise out of the ground are also coming down out of heaven with Christ—and that they are described as coming from heaven in a state of sleep? How can this be? Because their souls/individualities/software, which are stored on the heavenly "servers," are coming down with Christ to be downloaded into their new immortal bodies during the resurrection at the second coming! Jesus, the Builder of our tripartite beings, understood this, proclaiming:

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die (John 11; 25, 26 NIV84).

The righteous may *sleep*, but they never *die*. Their individualities are safe with Christ in heaven!

So, now let's talk about the end-time deception. Have you ever heard that one of Satan's end time deceptions will be through getting people to communicate with the dead and we can be protected from this deception if we know that the dead are asleep waiting resurrection?

So, our safety is knowing the right doctrine, in this case the truth about the state of the dead. Hmmm…while I agree it is wise to know the truth about human nature as we have outlined today, I want to give some examples of how people can still be deceived by demons masquerading as the dead even though they know the truth about human mortality. How might that happen? Here are a couple of ways:

- A fallen angel manifests in real physical form that you can touch but appears as a human being—angels can appear in the form of a human (Genesis 18-19). This fallen angel claims to be the prophet Isaiah who has a special end time message. A person who believes the truth about the state of the dead objects, and states, "You are dead, sleeping in the grave until the resurrection." But the demon smiles and kindly says, "You know your Bible. I was sleeping in death until Jesus' resurrection. I am one of the first fruits raised from the dead and taken to heaven when Jesus arose. And am described as one of the 24 elders sitting on thrones in Revelation. And now He has sent me to warn you…"

- You see some being claiming to be your deceased love one. They have the same mannerisms, turn of the head, smile, and knowledge of previous interactions with them. But knowing your Bible you say, "The dead sleep in the grave so you can't be my departed loved one, be gone!" But they gently say, "Sweetheart, you are right, the dead sleep in the grave. I am not from your present time. Jesus controls time, and He has opened a portal in time and asked me to send a message to you today. Do you remember that day on our 32 anniversary when I seemed strange. That was the day Jesus came to me and asked me to have this conversation with you. I am alive, in my body, but it is 1986 and Jesus wanted me to tell you that in 2023 next week, you are going to face this…."

- You see a non-corporeal, non-physical entity speaking and claiming to be Jeremiah sent from God with and end-time message. You object that the Bible teaches the dead sleep in the grave until the resurrection, so this disembodied entity must be a demon. But the being smiles gently and says, "Well done for knowing your Bible and the truth about the state of human mortality. I was dead and was sleeping in the grave, but I was resurrected in my body when Jesus arose and am one of the first fruits taken to heaven. I am speaking to you know from heaven and am in my physical body. What you are seeing is a quantum projection. So you are quite right that I am not there physically, I am here physically, but am projecting myself across the quantum network and links that God has built His universe upon. You are a Seventh-day Adventist aren't you? These links I am using were described by EG White you can find it in her book Evangelism page 93, she wrote:

> "The striking feature of divine operations is the accomplishment of the greatest work that can be done in our world by very simple means. It is God's plan that every part of His government shall depend on every other part, the whole as a wheel within a wheel, working with entire harmony. He moves upon human forces, causing His Spirit to touch invisible chords, and the vibration rings to the extremity of the universe. (Evangelism 93).

Why am I describing these types of events to you? Because knowing the true doctrine about the state of the dead is not enough to protect people from being deceived by demons impersonating the dead, what is necessary to be protected? To know the truth about God, both intellectually and spiritually—to know God for ourselves, not to trust in the facts of a doctrine, but to know God and understand His character, His design laws, His methods, what sin is that it is a break in God's design laws for life, and how God heals that break, and why death comes. We must know reality for ourselves and when we do then we are protected from deception. Then even if Satan appears as an angel of light we will not be duped because we know reality, the truth about God and how His kingdom functions for ourselves.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the historical facts of how Sunday became a day of Christian veneration, documenting that such a change is not found in Scripture, but in the history of Rome. Constantine passed a law recognizing the veneration of Sunday, and later when the Roman church did the same.

It is a well-established historical fact that there is no Biblical basis for this change in the day. If you are a Christian from a non-SDA denomination, go to any theological scholar from your denomination and ask them. They all know that the Bible does not teach Sunday sacredness, that it is a tradition of the church, established by Rome. The argument is that it honors the resurrection of Christ, but that is tradition, it is not Scriptural. Jesus gave the communion ceremony as a way to honor His resurrection until He returns.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The Roman church doesn't deny it, in fact it publishes this fact:

> "The church after changing the day of rest form the Jewish Sabbath or seventh-day of the week to the first, made the third commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord's day." Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, p. 153.

Daniel 7 prophesied that a power would arise and seek to change God's law—but God's law cannot be changed because God's law is the design law that reality is built upon.

The Roman church not only changed the fourth commandment, but also deleted the second about images and split the 10th to keep the number at 10.

But all of this is a diversion, a distraction that keeps people from seeing the real corruption, the true change made in how people understand and believe about God's law. And that is the idea of the law itself is imposed law, this is the change that Rome brought to the world and almost all Christians accept.

What church committee ever voted that its members don't have to breathe on bad pollution days? Why not? Because they know they cannot change such laws.

So what does it mean in regard to how church leaders understand the type of law that God's law is, if they think it can be changed? The fact that the church leaders voted to change God's law reveals that they first accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law, like Roman law, imposed rules which are subject to change.

While the SDA church has rejected the change to the commandment and returned to the Bible Sabbath, it has not fully thrown off the lie that that says God's law is imposed rules requiring God to impose punishments.

Thus, the Sunday issue at the end of time is not primarily about the day itself, but what the day represents. Sunday sacredness represents the idea that God's law and government work like human law and government and can be changed.

And when we connect that idea of law to what it says about God, it means that such a being is an arbitrary deity who makes up rules and that justice is the the infliction of pain, suffering, and death.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson title for the day is A Call to Faithfulness—what does that mean?

Does that mean:

- Faithful to the Sabbath?
- Faithful to the SDA church or some other denomination?
- Or faithful to Jesus?

Does faithfulness to Jesus mean that we all have the exact same beliefs?

Does it mean we have the same methods of truth, love, and liberty in how we live and treat others?

The lesson states the demons work their miracles to deceive—yes they do, for what goal? The goal of Satan and his demonic agents is to destroy the image of God in humans and put Satan's image where God's should be.

In other words, the goal of Satan is for us to be like him in our character attitudes, practices, methods, and principles.

Why would Satan's agents use miracles to deceive? Because they don't have truth, so Satan uses whatever tactic he can to get people to stop pursuing truth. The truth always leads back to God.

What tactics turn minds away from truth?

- Lies that are believed
- Emotions/desires/lusts
- Miracles that turn the mind away from investigating truth
- Spiritualism in all its forms—pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or use of reason (Fortune tellers, crystal balls, seances, palm reading, or any other type)
- Faith without evidence—believe because someone said so
- Authority, believing because of the position, office, charisma, or power of the one who said it
- Entertainment that distracts
- Overwork and responsibilities that distract
- Mind altering substances that injure the brain
- Others?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

> As we already have seen (but worth repeating), many of God's people are in religious organizations that have compromised biblical teachings. They do not understand the truths of Scripture. God's loving appeal is straightforward: " 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues' " (Rev. 18:4, NKJV). (SDA Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, p. 85)

Could this include people in every single Christian denomination?

Have I demonstrated at the beginning of class today that within the SDA church are teachings that compromise biblical truth?

When Jesus was here 2000 years ago, were there things being taught in the Judaism of His day that were unbiblical and wrong? Did that mean that the Jewish nation and system was not called by God and not blessed by God?

No, it means that Satan was actively working to undermine the truths of God within the organization where God is working. The same happens in the church today. Wherever God is working Satan is actively working to corrupt and undermine.

So, just because we can document within Christianity as a whole and the SDA church specifically, that there are errors that have entered, that does NOT mean the organization is not called by God to fulfill a mission for God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Administrative Director for Come and Reason Ministries:

Francesca Brewster has served as our Administrative Director since 2016. And we have all been blessed by her loving and faithful work for us over the years. God has blessed Fran and Sam with two beautiful children and she has decided, that she needs to be at home with her children. Therefore, Fran is leaving her position as our Administrative Director to be a full-time mother. We will miss Fran, and I know many of you will also. One month from now, at our June potluck, we will have a special farewell thank you for Fran. So, if you have a note, a card, or would like to express your appreciation to Fran in person, please join us Sabbath June 10.

Today, I want to introduce you to our new Administrative Director, Dessya Palit.

Dessya is well qualified to take on this position. She has a Bachelors in Business Administration Marketing & Finance, with a Minor in Accounting from Southwestern Adventist University. She has experience in marketing, management, purchasing, and accounting, and has worked for other not for profit organizations in the past.

Dessya will start this Tuesday May 16, 2023.

Please join me in welcoming Dessya to our team.

NEW MAGAZINE: Critical Race Theory: Exposing the Lies While Advancing the Gospel, is now available**!**

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 2Q Three Cosmic Messages—Lesson 13
Ablaze with God's Glory

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

> "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory." (Revelation 18:1 NKJV).

What does this text mean?

What is God's glory?

Turn to **WEDNESDAY's** lesson and read the fourth and fifth paragraphs:

> God's glory is His character. The earth will be filled with the glory of God when we are filled with the love of God and our characters are changed by redeeming love.
>
> Revealing His love in our personal lives reveals His glory, His character, to the world. The last message to be proclaimed to a world engulfed in spiritual darkness carried by three angels in the midst of heaven is " 'Fear God and give glory to Him' " (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). (SDA Adult SS Guide Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, p. 108)

This is well said. How would you describe how we reveal His glory, His love to the world when the world is doing evil?

When did Jesus bring the greatest glory to the Father?

What did Jesus mean when He prayed this to His Father right before the events of crucifixion weekend:

> "Father, the time has come. **Glorify your Son**, that your Son may **glorify you**. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now **this is eternal life: that they may know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do**. And now, Father, **glorify me** in your presence with the **glory** I had with you before the world began. **I have revealed you** to those whom you gave me out of the world." (John 17:1-6 NIV84).

If God's glory is His character, what does this text mean? How was Jesus going to be glorified by the Father? Is this speaking of the display of heavenly light at the transfiguration?

It doesn't seem likely that it means the transfiguration, as John's narrative does not allow for that possibility. In John's narrative, it says:

> **When he had finished praying**, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. **Now Judas, who betrayed him**, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So **Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers** and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. (John 18:1-3 NIV84).

So when Jesus prayed that the time had come for the Father to glorify the Son so that the Son could glorify the Father—what happened, what are the very next events that happened and what does it mean for our understanding of God's glory?

Jesus is treated unjustly by the religious and political powers of the world.

- His own people reject Him
- His closest friends abandon Him
- His church turns on Him
- He is lied about
- The judicial system is perverted and perjury is perpetrated against Him
- The Jewish officials break their own laws conducting a court hearing illegally at night, the High Priest rends his garments and acts the role of accuser instead of defender
- The religious leaders had Him beaten and mocked
- They solicited the pagan authorities to reject, convict, and crucify Him
- He was publicly stripped, humiliated, tortured, and repeatedly tempted to use His power to prove His authority

But what did Jesus do? John 13 tells us that Jesus had been given all power. Jesus told Peter He could call 12 legions of angels to rescue Him—Jesus was not powerless, but what did Jesus do with the power at His disposal?

Is there any glory being revealed by these actions? What is the glory that Jesus asked the Father to bring to Him so that Jesus could glorify the Father with the glory He had before the world began?

What did Jesus do after His prayer? He fully, completely, totally, lived out God's love. He chose self-sacrificial love instead of so-called human "justice" of using power to punish sin, evil, and injustice. He refused to defend Himself. He refused to use power to protect self. He chose to do what was best for others.

- He says speaks words of encouragement, hope, and promise to a dying thief

- He ensures His mother is cared for
- He forgives those who are abusing and crucifying Him

He administered God's justice of love and refused to use power to administer the justice of imposed law. God is love and He loves His enemies, prays for those who persecute Him, blesses those who assault Him. He reveals a glory, a beauty, a righteousness, a truth that is beyond human imagining, it is the reality of who our Creator God is—God is love.

And when is such love most fully, clearly, powerfully, perfectly revealed—when all things are going well, when everyone is doing right, when one is receiving all praise, or in the face of opposition, false accusation, injustice, and abuse?

And we are called, as the world decays into chaos, into satanic delusion and control, into the worst forms of corruption, perversion, and injustice all under the guise of pursuing justice, to give glory to God. How do we do this?

By living out God's character of love in how we treat others. We are to be truth bearers by being living embodiments of God's love and design law methods.

- We will bless those who curse us.
- We will forgive those who wrong us.
- We will love our enemies so that we may be sons and daughters of our Father in heaven
- We will be filled with the Spirit of God so that the character of God will be manifest in contrast to the most vile, corrupt, destructive, evil the world has seen.

As Paul wrote to the Philippians:

> If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.
>
> **Your attitude** should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
> Who, being in very nature God,
> did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
> but made himself nothing,
> taking the very nature of a servant,
> being made in human likeness.
> And being found in appearance as a man,
> he humbled himself
> and became obedient to death—
> even death on a cross!
> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1–11 NIV84).

What does it mean to be in awe of God and give Him glory?

The lesson links the glory of God's character to the third angel's message. Let's read that message and consider, do you find God's character of love in this message? How do you share this message in a way that uplifts Jesus' self-sacrifice without inciting fear?

> A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. (Revelation 14:9-12 NIV84)

If you haven't read our Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels magazine yet, I encourage you to do so, because we explain these messages in great detail showing that they do in fact reveal God's character of love.

But a shortened review of this magazine is:

Step One: Remember this is a three step or three stage/step message. It is a message that builds with each subsequent message. I just read the third message of the series of three. It cannot be properly understood until the two preceding messages are properly understood. So step one is start with the first angel's message, understand it, and the go to the second, understand it, and then to the third.

Step Two: Determine, before attempting to decipher the messages, what law lens one understands the Bible through. If one assumes and believes God's law and government work like human law and government, imposed rules requiring imposed penalties, then all of Scripture is twisted out of its true light into a mockery of heaven, into a perverted satanic delusional alternate fantasy that is not real. In order to properly understand any of Scripture one must reject the human law model and return to worshiping God as Creator and understanding His laws are the laws that reality exists and operates upon. Design law.

Step Three: Determine your rules for interpretation, the Bible interprets itself, God's character is love and no interpretations will be permitted that place God in a character other than love, as Jesus revealed Him to be. And God's law is the design law of love and no interpretations will be allowed that violate God's design law of love.

Step Four: Humbly ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind to truth, and acknowledge your finiteness and admit your eagerness to be corrected by the Spirit of Truth and led into all truth.

Then start with the first angel's message and study it, comparing its message with the rest of what Scripture has already revealed. It is okay to read commentaries, it is recommended to study with other humble people who are interested in growing in the truth, but then compare the various parts, work on decoding the symbols, ensure the conclusions always conform to the truth and principles of God's character as revealed by Jesus and His revealed design law methods.

The first angel's message:

> Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Revelation 14:6-7 NIV84).

The Message of the Three Angels starts with what? The Eternal Gospel!

What is the Eternal Gospel? The eternal good news?

The common answer is that Jesus died for our salvation. And let us be clear. It is absolutely true that Jesus died for our salvation, that Jesus is the only way or means of salvation, that no human can be saved without Jesus, and that this news is certainly incredibly good news. There is no doubt about this. But the question is, is this truth, is this good news about what Jesus has done for us, the *eternal* gospel, or is this good news the result of and outworking of the eternal gospel?

Well, let's ask a few questions and see if the answers to our questions help clarify and bring to light the eternal gospel.

- What is the Good News that has been true, *eternally true;* true in eternity past and future?
    - Is the good news that Jesus died as our Savior eternally good news, i.e. did the angels in heaven, when Lucifer began his rebellion have the good news of Jesus' incarnation, sinless human life, self-sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension to help them?
    - But is there eternal good news that was available to them in eternity past back when Lucifer rebelled that had they clung to it would have protected them from being deceived?
- What is the news that the universe has doubted but is foundational to life, health, and happiness?
    - When Lucifer rebelled did his lies cause some truth to be doubted and some reality to be set aside for an alternate view that Satan was advancing? And Satan's alternate view resulted in all the pain and suffering that sin brings, thus was some there good news that Satan's view was wrong?

- What is the news that dispels the lies of Satan and wins us back to trust in God, and also would have protected the angels in eternity past?
    - Was that good news that Jesus died as our Savior—or again, was Jesus' death the outworking of that eternal good news?
- What is the central target of Satan's lies, upon which his rebellion has been built, and thus, the eternal good news is that Satan is wrong?
    - Was the central target of Satan's lies about humans or about God?
- What is the central news that Jesus said He came to complete and had accomplished?
    - What was it Jesus prayed right before His crucifixion that we read already this morning? That He finished the work God gave Him to do He had revealed the truth about the Father.

Paul wrote:

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage **war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84)

The Eternal Good News is the truth about God's character of love!

- "God is love" 1John 4:8
- God is *not* the person Satan alleges
- The eternal good news is what Jesus revealed "Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father" John 14:9
- Life eternal is knowing God John 17:3

If we don't understand the good news about God, His character and methods of love, how reality works as God built it work, then we will misunderstand everything else!

And what idea directly impacts and determines how we conceive of and understand God's character? How we understand His law!

If we understand and believe that God's law is imposed rules like created beings make up, then we automatically, and without any ability to stop it, conclude that God, in order to be just, must use His power to punish rule breakers. Justice is viewed as inflicted punishment and God is viewed the source of inflicted pain, torment, and death rather than the source of life and salvation. In other words, people believe something needs to be done to God to protect us from God, rather than something be done to us to heal and cleanse us from sin and restore us to rightness with God.

The imposed law legal/penal view creates a grotesque mischaracterization of God that makes God out to be like Satan has alleged. And the final message of mercy to the world, the message of the three angels exposes this lie and calls people to advance the eternal gospel of God's character of love and His design law of love by worshiping Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water.

But doesn't the message say that we are to be in fear because the hour of God's judgment has come? The hour in which God sits and passes judgment upon sinners?

The message does NOT say that hour of God's judicial legal passing of judgments has come. It says we that are to be in awe of Him, to admire revere, and respect Him for His amazing character and methods of love and to live those same methods in how we treat others and thereby give Him glory on Earth, because the hour in human history has come when God is being judged. The hour of HIS judgment has come. The time in history for people to make their final decision about who God is and whether they will trust Him or reject Him. It is the final message which settles people into loyal love or if they reject it, hardens them beyond healing.

As Paul confirmed in Romans 3:4:

> Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged." (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

Remember the war—it started in heaven when Satan lied about God. The central issue in the war is the knowledge of God. God is the one lied about. When lies are believed they break the circle of love and trust and result in fear and selfishness. Fear and selfishness cause sinful actions, including using power over others to make oneself feel safe.

The plan of salvation starts with the truth about God which is the eternal good news. And this eternal good news about God displaces the lies and wins us to trust. In trust we open our hearts and the Holy Spirit enters and takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us and we are reborn, changed, transformed, renewed, recreated to be like Jesus. We are reconciled or brought back to at-one-ment with God through all that Jesus has done. We love as God loves and therefore do not seek to control others, but give of ourselves to uplift others and thereby bring glory to God by revealing His character.

Thus the final message that goes to the world is that God's people glorify Him in revealing His true character of love because the time in human history has come for God to be rightly judged. For people to stop worshiping the imperial dictator god who acts like a Roman Caesar using his power to inflict punishment, and to start worshiping the Creator who uses His power to heal and save people from sin.

When we understand these truths, the eternal good news about God, that He is Creator and His laws are the design law protocols that life and health and happiness operate upon and choose, through His power, to live His methods in our lives, then we are ready for the second message.

> A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." (Revelation 14:8 NIV84).

Babylon is the symbolic system of religious imperialism, the system that uses governmental power to enforce religious dogma. As soon as Nebuchadnezzar believed in Daniel's God, he passed a law that anyone who speaks evil about Daniel's God was to be executed. Of the various nations in the Bible

story arc that interacted with Israel in the Old Testament, Babylon was the first to make a legal code, the code of Hammurabi.

The system of Babylon, of imposed law requiring imposed punishments, became the system of Roman Christianity with its various cannon laws and teachings that God's law is like human law, breaks require punishment, and thus the inquisition and inflicted punishment. Further, it advanced the belief that God's law, just like human law, can be changed by the church and that is why the church changed the commandments. And while Protestants have protested some of the various changes, they have never fully rejected the lie that God's law functions like human law and essentially all Protestant groups still teach the imposed law view in some way.

The message of the second angel is that that system of imposed law is fallen, corrupt, doesn't work, that one cannot be made righteous through law, through legal means, that God's government does not work this way, and therefore we are to leave such legal systems behind.

This angel calls for people to leave Babylon, to get out. And it is this portion of the message that the angel in Revelation 18 is specifically empowered to repeat, which is our memory verse for this week, note the message of the angel of Revelation 18:

> After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted:
>
> "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!
> She has become a home for demons
> and a haunt for every evil spirit,
> a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.
> For all the nations have drunk
> the maddening wine of her adulteries.
> The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
> and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."
>
> Then I heard another voice from heaven say:
>
> "Come out of her, my people,
> so that you will not share in her sins,
> so that you will not receive any of her plagues. (Revelation 18:1-4 NIV84).

Notice, this message is to be repeated but with even greater authority than when it was first given. We must leave the various systems of this world, including the religious organizations that continue to teach that God's law functions like human law and therefore that God is the source of inflicted torment and death for sin, and God is the one from whom we need protection and Jesus is in heaven pleading with His Father to calm down His Father's anger control problems and save us from the punishment God would inflict on us if Jesus wasn't pleading to Him.

Such theology is conditioning the minds and hearts of people to accept a god who will use his power to torture and kill in the name of justice. It is the exact opposite of what Jesus revealed when He was glorified by His Father so that He could glorify His Father. And it is the exact opposite of what God's saints are to do. We are to give God glory by living out His methods and give the true message about God's character of love to the world, for the hour has come for people to make a right judgment about God. And in order to do that they need to have the truth about God presented to them.

Then, with all of this in mind, that God is love, that His laws are design laws, that the imposed law Babylonian penal legal religious concepts that the entire world accepts is a lie, then we can go on to understand the message of the third angel.

And the message of the third angel is the message of reality, of God's design laws coming to bear upon those who refuse to let God heal them, upon those who insist on living out their reimagined view of the world, which is fantasy.

> A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone **worships** the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand… (Revelation 14:9 NIV84)

The first reality that comes to bear is the law of worship!

- By beholding we are changed. 2Corinthians 3:18
- Romans 1:18-31 the exchanged the truth of God for a lie and preferred images made with their own hands and their minds became darkened, depraved, and futile.
- They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2:5

This is why we are to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." Hebrews 12:2

> "We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1John 3:2

This is what the first angel called us to do, to reject the lies about God, to return to worship the Creator God as Jesus revealed Him to be. But if we do not accept the eternal gospel, the eternal good news about God, if we do not leave Babylon, the system of imposed law with its dictator god, then via the law of worship we will become like that dictator god and will internalize into our minds, hearts, characters, and practices the methods and principles of God's enemy and thereby mark ourselves to be like the beast.

> he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. (Revelation 14:10)

And all those reject the eternal gospel and mark themselves in character to be beastly receive God's wrath poured out full strength, no more mercy, no more diluting it. What does this mean?

God's wrath is God letting people go to reap what they have chosen.

This is God's law of liberty. Love only exists and functions in an atmosphere of freedom. If people reject the message of the first angel, the eternal good news about God and His design law of love, and if they reject the message of the second angel and refuse to leave that imposed law system of Babylon and continue to embrace the lie that God's law functions like human law and they worship and prefer a god who will use power to torture and kill. Then they not only mark themselves as beastly in character and conduct, they harden their hearts and sear their consciences, destroying within themselves the faculties that are sensitive to the Spirit of truth and love, and no more truth or love will have any healing impact upon them. Therefore, God sets them free to reap what they have chosen. He stops interfering, intervening, with what they have chosen and lets them go into the care of the false-god they have chosen and that is called God's wrath.

In Romans 1:18-31 Paul specifically says that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all those who reject the truth, and Paul says three times exactly what God's wrath is, in verses 24,26, and 28 that God gave them up; He let them go and surrendered them to their own choice.

From Intervarsity Press, the book *Hard Sayings of the Bible* we read the following explanation about God's wrath as described by Paul in Romans 1:

> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32).
>
> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves.
>
> In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. (Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996, p. 543).

This was taught more than 100 years ago to the SDA church as recorded in this historical quote from the book 1 Selected Messages:

> We are **not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin**. The **sinner brings the punishment upon himself**. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure

> result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God**, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. (1Selected Messages 235)

The message of the third angel continues:

> He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb… (Revelation 14:10)

We have seen that the third angel's message is the message of reality. It is the outworking of the law of worship, if we worship a false imperial dictator god we become like that god and mark ourselves in character and conduct to be beastly. When this happens and people harden themselves beyond healing we see the outworking of the law of liberty, when God sets them free and stops using His power to protect them from their own choices. God lets the permanently hardened go to reap what they have chosen.

And then the text says they are tormented with burning sulfur, what law of God is involved here?

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah describes this eternal fire:

> "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: 'Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?'" (Isaiah 33:14).

Who can live in this fire? Who will spend eternity in the flames? And the prophet gives a shocking answer:

> "He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil!" (v. 15).

It is the righteous who will live forever in this fire—and not the wicked!

- When God spoke to Moses from within the bush, the bush burned but did not get consumed (Exodus 3:2–4, Acts 7:30–36).
- When God came to Mt. Sinai, His presence was described as a "consuming fire," but the elements did not melt (Exodus 24:17).
- When Solomon's Temple was dedicated, the priests couldn't enter because the brightness of God's fiery glory was too great, but the temple did not burn down (2 Chronicles 5:14, 7:1–3).
- Before his fall, Lucifer walked among the "fiery stones" of God's presence (Ezekiel 28:14, 16).
- God takes His throne and "rivers of fire" come out from Him, yet billions stand in this fire without any harm (Daniel 7:9, 10).

- Prior to his crucifixion, in a body still subject to death, Jesus was bathed in heavenly fire, yet no harm came to Him. His clothes didn't even get scorched (Matthew 17:2).
- Hebrews plainly tells us that "our God is a consuming fire" (12:29). The
- Song of Solomon states: "Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away" (8:6, 7).

The lie that Satan has foisted upon us is this: The place you don't want to go, the place you don't want to be, is the place of eternal burning and consuming fire. But, as amazing as it may seem, that place is God's very presence! The righteous will spend eternity bathed in the flames of God's fiery presence. But the wicked will be consumed in that same eternal fire.

When Christ returns, He doesn't come veiling His glory but in the full splendor of His holy, loving, righteous self—brighter than the sun! Rivers of blazing love surging out from Him, the earth will be bathed in His glory (Isaiah 6:3). The righteous will be transformed by the life-giving fires of His love, just as Moses was transformed after being in God's presence. Remember, he came down off the mountain with his face radiating heavenly fire. But Moses wasn't in pain. He didn't have third-degree burns. His whiskers weren't even singed!

But when the children of Israel—unrepentant, still filled with sin and selfishness—saw Moses' face, they shrank back and begged him to wear a veil. They couldn't stand the heavenly light (Exodus 34:33–35).

This is the fire of love and truth that glorifies God's people while it cleanses the earth of sin.

A fire that consumes sin? What is that? It is not the fire of combustion, which burns material substances—things made out of molecules, like our homes, furniture, and books—for sin is not made of physical matter. Sin is made of ideas, thoughts, concepts, attitudes, beliefs. At its core, sin is composed of two elements: lies (Satan is the "father of lies," John 8:44) and selfishness. Fires of combustion don't destroy ideas. Fires that burn material substances don't consume lies and selfishness.

So, what does consume a lie? The truth! And what does consume selfishness? Love! And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both truth and love. Amazingly, when the Spirit fell at Pentecost, they all witnessed two streams of fire over each person (Acts 2:3), yet no one got burned. The building didn't burn down. Their clothes didn't ignite. It was their hearts and minds that were cleansed by that fire—the fire of love and truth. Distortions about God were removed from their minds; envy, strife, and selfishness were burned out of their hearts. Love blazed in them again! Just as was promised, they were baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire—the fire of love and truth (Matthew 3:11).

But if the fires are the fires of truth and love, why do the wicked suffer and die when these fires burn freely? "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

What happens in the mind of those who reject truth and cling to falsehood when the truth of God comes shining through? They suffer torment of mind, anguish of heart, and suffering of psyche. And

what happens to those whose hearts are filled with selfishness when the pure, undiluted love of God comes blazing through? "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink [love him]. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head" (Proverbs 25:21, 22; Romans 12:20). What happens in the mind of the unhealed when they meet pure love and truth face to face? The terrible suffering that unremedied sin causes.

We can never avoid the truth. We can only delay the day we deal with it. We can deal with the truth about ourselves, our histories, our characters, our mistakes here and now, under God's grace, and experience forgiveness, healing, restoration, regeneration, and ultimately eternal life. Or we can delay dealing with the truth—put it off, deny, externalize, project, blame, and scapegoat others. But if we don't deal with the truth now, one day when Christ returns, such people will come face to face with ultimate truth.

Yes, there will be terrible suffering in the flames of God's love, but it will not be inflicted as an external penalty. That suffering will not be the torture of melting flesh but the unavoidable torture of the soul that unremedied sin inflicts.

Just as Moses came out from God's presence with love and favor in his heart, yet the people shrank back seeking to hide from his face, so too, when Christ arrives, He returns with love and favor, but those solidified in the lies about God cannot stand the light of love and truth, so they run to hide from His face (Revelation 6:15, 16).

> Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. … Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." So they came and carried them, **still in their tunics**, outside the camp, as Moses ordered (Leviticus 10:1–5, emphasis mine).

The fire of the Lord "consumed" them—yet their bodies weren't charred and their tunics were still intact.

This is what happens to the wicked in the end. They are

> "tormented with burning sulfur **in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb**" (Revelation 14:10).

Notice, it is in Jesus' presence where they suffer. What about the term "burning sulfur"? It comes from the Greek thion and means the divine fire—or the fire of God's presence.

But Revelation also tells us:

> And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever (14:11).

Smoke is what is left after something is burned. This "smoke" symbolizes the memory, the lessons learned of what unremedied sin does to sinners—it torments and destroys. This lesson will never be forgotten by the universe. The righteous will remember for all eternity that the wicked suffered and died, not at God's hand, but because of their condition and because they refused to allow God to heal them. The righteous will remember for all eternity that every person who is eternally lost is lost only because they prefer non-existence to living in a universe of love and truth.

So the message of the third angel is the message of reality, of God's design laws:

- If you reject the eternal good news about God and His design laws of love, truth, liberty, and choose to worship a dictator counterfeit instead of our Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water
- If you refuse to leave Babylon with its imposed law and imperial dictator god and its penal legal theologies
- Then through the law of worship you will become like that false god and mark yourself beastly
- Through the law of liberty God will set you free to reap what you have chosen
- Through the law of truth and love you will suffer the full torment of what unremedied sin does to the sinner and you will die from the sin condition that you have chosen
- And the history of the great controversy, the truth about God and what Jesus accomplished along with the choice of the lost will be remembered by the saved for all eternity so that sin never arises again.

This is the final message, the truth about God's character and design law methods of love that is to go with power to the world.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Address: Come and Reason Ministries is closing our PO Box Address. Please update your records to our building address for all future mail and shipping. Our street address is:

> **Come and Reason Ministries**
> 4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100
> OOLTEWAH, TN 37363

NEW MAGAZINE: Critical Race Theory: Exposing the Lies While Advancing the Gospel, is now available**!**

Podcasts: We have a weekly podcast about 13 minutes long that is available to be delivered to your device if you sign up for it.

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 Now Available in South Africa!

The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 1
Paul and the Ephesians

by Tim Jennings

TUESDAY

Tuesday's lesson tells us that this letter from Paul was intended to be read out loud, in its entirety, to the Ephesians believers. The lesson suggests that we do the same, have someone read the entire letter to us.

I have asked Linda Ojala to read this letter from Paul to the Ephesians to us from *The Remedy* version.

Let's sit and listen, but as you are listening, consider that Paul is writing to you and me—because through God's providence and Holy Spirit the message from Paul to the Ephesians is a message to all Christians. And as you are listening, take note of what elements speak to you, because after Linda finishes reading, I am going to open it up for discussion of what is the message from God through Paul both to the Ephesians, but more importantly for us today.

What did you hear as the key points in this letter?

What aspects of this letter to the Ephesians did you find relevant for us today?

- The letter opens with praise to God and describes God as good, as for us, the One on our side who pours out all the resources of heaven through Jesus for our salvation.
- Paul notes that God foreknew and predetermined that He would save us through Jesus and restore us to children of God—God was not taken by surprise
- It is through the victorious life and self-sacrificial death of Jesus that we are won back to trust and experience the forgiveness that God freely offers
- The letter opens with a cosmic perspective, that we are blessed with spiritual blessings, that through Christ all things in heaven and earth are united. Paul is telling us that the conflict is bigger than just earth, it is a cosmic war and we are at the center and Jesus is God's champion who wins the war.
- Paul emphasizes that Jesus is God's agent to overcome sin, to restore unity, to heal from sin, to win the war
- But Paul also said that we are to somehow bring glory to God—how? (1:12)
    - By being healed, and revealing God's character in how we live holy and righteous lives.
    - How does that bring God glory? Example of a physician who cures someone of cancer—who gets the glory, the one cured or the one doing the curing?

- Even though Christ was not physically present with them, according to Paul God marks the believers with a seal as an evidence and guarantee of the future full fulfillment—what is that seal? (1:13,14).
    - The Holy Spirit who transforms our characters, settling us into the truth about God and His methods, both in understanding/comprehension but also in method/motive/attitude/heart/practice.
    - Is this seal the same seal or a different seal that the saint in Revelation are described as having placed on their foreheads?
- God's power was described being used to accomplish what in chapter one?
    - Raise Christ from the dead—what kind of power is this? It is healing, saving, transforming, creation and recreation power—it is not the power of death—the Bible says in Hebrews 2:14 that, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).
    - Satan is the murderer from the beginning. It is sin that causes death when we believe the lies about God and break away from Him who is the source of life the only outcome is death. Yet, how much of Christianity teaches God, in order to be just, must use His power to inflict death? Paul presents the Good News about God that God's power is the power of life, not the power of death.
- And all power, authority, rulership is given to Jesus. In Revelation the heavenly scene has the angels and saints repeatedly saying of Jesus, worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb who was slain—He is worthy to wield all power because He has proven that He is safe with all power, that He NEVER uses power selfishly, to inflict harm, to cause death. That is Satan and Satan's government.
- In Chapter Two (2:1-5) Paul confirms that we are dead in sin, dying of the terminal sin-condition.
    - How is it that every one of us became sinners? We are all born in sin and conceived in iniquity—is it our fault we are born this way?
    - Did we have a choice about this?
    - And what is the unavoidable result of this condition—what does this condition cause every person born with it to do? To sin, to choose behaviors and actions that are in violation of God's design laws for life.
    - Can any sinful human cure or remedy or overcome this condition? No! Understand, we never had a choice in being born sinful, and on our own we can only live sinful lives. It is only through Jesus that we can receive a new life, a new heart and right spirit, a new set of motives and attitudes, and be reborn into God's family and live victorious lives.
    - Understand, the choice in salvation is not whether we are sinners or not—we are all born infected with fear and selfishness. The choice we have is whether we accept the Remedy of Jesus Christ to cure us of this condition, to recreate us in righteousness, to purge the fear and selfishness, to write His law in our hearts and minds and recreate us to be like Jesus in how we live.
    - What this means operationally is that we can stop feeling guilty for being sinners, we never had a choice in that. We can feel guilty for purposely choosing to reject Jesus, for working against Him, for reject the truth, for choosing to say yes to sin rather than

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

turning to Jesus for victory. But we don't need to feel guilty for have the sin condition—that isn't our fault—that is the fault of Adam and Eve.

- Eph 2:6,7: God through Jesus redeemed the human species. Jesus became a real human, partaking of the humanity that was damaged by Adam, but overcame all the obstacles, incumbrances, weaknesses and restored humanity to perfection. In the humanity of Jesus, the human species became what God intended for it to become in Adam—and even more.
- Eph. 2:8-10: It is God's grace, God's power, God's purpose, God's intention that humanity be a showcase of His law—which is the living law of love. Love does not function written upon stone. Love requires living beings. Human beings were created in the image of God to showcase God's glorious character of love.
    - As the Father, Son, and Spirit come together in love and create, human beings were created with the ability to come together in the blessing of marital love and give of themselves to create beings in their image. Humanity was given dominion to subdue and govern the earth—and it was God's intention that they would govern the earth in perfect love, as God governs the universe. All of this was subverted by Satan when Adam and Eve infected themselves with sin, and all nature groans under the weight of sin. In Jesus God's living law is fully and perfectly restored into humanity and humanity again becomes God's showcase to reveal His character, law, methods perfectly.
- Eph. 2:14-18: In Jesus divinity merged with humanity and as a human Jesus destroyed the infecting death-causing principle and restored God's life-causing principle and became the head of a purified and new humanity. He became the second Adam, and all who unite with Him, experience, via the Spirit, fear and selfishness replaced with love and trust in God. The divisions in human society become meaningless and we are united as one loving body in Christ.
    - What of this metaphor of a temple or sanctuary that Paul uses? We are God's temple, built together with Christ as the chief cornerstone and the apostles as foundations stones—and all of us together become a living temple where God dwells by His Spirit.
    - Have you ever heard of a heavenly sanctuary? Have you ever heard the idea of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary? Is what Paul is describing here something new, separate, and distinct from the Old Testament sanctuary service, or is Paul drawing from the imagery of the Old Testament sanctuary to teach an eternal truth, the reality of what God is accomplishing through Christ?
    - Is the cleansing of the sanctuary that God accomplishes through the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest the cleansing of non-living matter, silver, gold, boards, vellum, paper, books, records—or is it the cleansing of hearts, minds, characters of sinners so that we are purified people free from sin?
- Eph. 3:1: Paul connects sharing the gospel, the good news, the message of salvation with his imprisonment—what is he telling us?
    - Is this only true for Paul, or is it true that throughout all human history, those who are actively advancing the kingdom of God will come under attack by Satan and evil forces?
    - What does that look like today?

- Eph. 3:7-13: Paul describes a mystery that was hidden and even the Old Testament prophets didn't fully understand—what is that mystery?
    - That all humans are included in the promises given to Abraham, that the plan of salvation is for every human being. It is quite simple, God made one human species in Adam—Eve was taken from Adam's side, and every other human being is a descendant of Adam and Eve, we are all one species. Adam and Eve infected themselves with sin and thus we are all born with the same terminal condition we inherited from Adam. We are all dying of the same condition and we all need the same healing solution—which is Jesus Christ. Thus, the promise given in Genesis 3:15 is for the entire human race.
    - Is God the one who made this plan a mystery? Did He hide it? No, He repeatedly revealed that all nations will be blessed by Abraham's Seed—the Messiah. Then how did this truth get obscured? Satan's methods and principles of lies, fear, and selfishness cause division, confusion, hostility, and prejudice.
    - Satan led the Jews to believe that the their calling to be the physical avenue through whom Messiah would be born, and their blessing with the prophets, the Scriptures, and the theater of the sanctuary service was a calling for exclusive salvation rather than a calling to be ambassadors of Jesus to the world. Thus rather than reaching out, they became exclusive and began to teach a restrictive religion rather than the freedom we have in Christ. They came to believe that one had to convert to Judaism to be saved. Was that true?
    - What about today, have any of these same ideas entered Christianity? Do any Christians believe that salvation is found in denominational affiliation? Do we miss that denominations can be called for mission, like the Jewish nation was called, but the mission is to evangelize the world with the truth about Jesus, to convert people to Christ, not institutional affiliation?
    - What does God want His true church to look like? How are we as His people to function?
    - We are to be united upon the methods, principles, and practices of God—truth, love, freedom!
- Eph 3:14-21: What is the power that Paul wants us to experience that surpasses all understanding—the love of God.
- Eph 4:1: Paul wants us to live lives that reveal the benefits of God's way of living, what would you say those benefits are?
    - Peace, love, joy, kindness, the fruits of the spirit, maturity, wisdom, freedom from being dominated and controlled by fear and selfishness, freedom from guilt and shame etc.
- Eph. 4:4-6: Paul says there is only one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.
    - If there is only one, then why are there so many denominations that disagree?
    - What about one baptism, what does that mean?
- Eph. 4:9-10: What is the significance of Christ's ascension?
    - Isn't it true that before Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reigned over the universe?

    - So what is significant about Jesus going back to heaven to resume His governance over all God's universal creation?
    - Does Jesus now being fully human have any significance? Is Paul pointing our attention to this?
- Eph. 4:11: What is the significance of Christ choosing some people for different roles?
    - Is this the philosophy of the world today that some are better suited for some positions than others? Or is the philosophy of the world, what is known as equity, is that gifting, talent, ability, and calling are irrelevant to who we put in a position? What is the result? Do things work best in any organization if people are advanced based on something other than ability, achievement, talent, qualifications?
- Eph. 4:12-15: What is the goal or purpose of the body of Christ and the work we are to do? Advance the kingdom of God in developing godly character in people so that we are united in love and trust with God and each other. And to individually mature so that we develop the ability to think and discern for ourselves and stop being children tossed about by all the various tricks and deceits put out by the schemers.
    - What is required of each of us to experience this? We must reason together, think for ourselves, be fully persuaded in our own minds, establish beliefs based on the evidences God has given, understand His design law and how reality functions. We must refuse to believe based on authority of office, declaration, proclamation, charisma, emotion, signs, wonders—we must believe because we know, understand, and love the truth because it is true.
- Eph. 4:17-19: In Paul's day he warned about believing things that don't make sense which darkens the mind. This happens because they reject the truth about God and His kingdom. And this results in corruption of character, the loss of kindness, love, and moral virtue.
    - What law is involved here? The law of worship, by beholding we are changed.
    - Are we seeing this happening in the world today?
- Eph. 4:20-24: But those who are Christian were called out of such wickedness into Christ who recreates new hearts and right spirits, replacing fear and selfishness with love, transforming our characters to be like Christ.
- Eph. 4:25-32: Paul describes how the new heart with new desires and motives that we receive from Jesus empowers us to choose to say no to the old ways and yes to God's way of living. Christianity is not about legal adjustment, but about heart, mind, soul recreation.
- Eph 5:1-2: Paul calls us to imitate Christ in living self-sacrificial lives of love.
- Eph 5:3-6: What does Paul mean that there cannot be even a trace of immorality or any impurity?
    - Does this mean we won't struggle with temptation, or won't have moments of weakness and slip? No, think of it just like recovery from any illness—when a person with an infection begins treatment they have left the path of death and entered the path of life. This is conversion to Christ. But at that moment are all symptoms resolved? No, there is a process of healing and improvement as the remedy works in the person. And the goal is complete eradication of all the infection. So, too, when we come to Christ we are reborn with a new heart and right spirit that now desires, longs for, wants holiness—however we have habits, conditioned responses, addictions, neural pathways

established when we lived in violation of God's design i.e. in sin. And those old habits, conditioned responses, and pathways are not in harmony with our new hearts and spirits and thus there is a journey, a struggle, and healing process. Our new hearts/spirits must be freed from the infection of fear, distrust, selfishness, but we will still struggle with old habits that were established before we were reborn. Thus, we grieve in our spirits that we are not fully perfected and glorified, but in our hearts we do not cling to rebellion and sin. So we have no trace of the old ways left in our hearts that we cling to and prefer.

- Eph. 5:8-14: In Christ, while we still struggle with temptation, we live new lives that purposely seek to uplift Christ and advance God's kingdom and methods and our lives of light and truth expose the lies and false ways of the enemy.
- Eph. 5:15-21: We are to live in harmony with God's design laws for health, and live lives that actively grow and develop in the things of God and live God's love in how we treat others.
- Eph. 5:22-23: How are Christian husbands and wives to relate?
    - What is the big lesson from marriage that Paul wants us to learn in regard to Christ and the church?
    - What is the lesson from Christ and the church that Paul wants husbands and wives to learn in how they relate to each other?
    - What does it mean wives are to submit to their husbands?
- Eph. 6:1-4: What is the relationship that children are supposed to have to their parents? And parents to their children?
    - Are children to obey their parents in all things?
    - Is there an age when children need to stop obeying their parents?
    - What does it mean to honor one's parents?
    - Why is there blessing of long life for those who honor their parents? Is this an arbitrary use of God's power to perform a miracle to keep alive people who honor their parents or is this some outworking of one of God's design laws?
- Eph. 6:5-9: Does Paul's instruction to slaves and slave-masters mean Paul or God supports and promotes slavery?
- Eph. 6:10-18: What do you understand the armor of God to be?

What do you think of this letter? Does it have application to us today?
What would society be like if every person lived out these principles?

SABBATH

Read second paragraph,

> "Paul has a profound purpose that motivates his letter. Partly because of his imprisonment (Eph. 3:13, Eph. 6:20), and partly because of ongoing persecution and temptations, the Ephesians are tempted to lose heart. Paul reminds them of what happened when they were converted, accepting Christ as their Savior and becoming part of the church. They have

> become Christ's body (Eph. 1:19-23), Eph. 4:1-16), the building materials in the temple (Eph. 2:19-22), the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:21-33), and a well-equipped army (Eph. 6:10-20). They play a strategic role in fulfilling God's grand plan, to unite everything in Christ (Eph. 1:9, 10). Paul write to awaken the believers in Ephesus to their full identity and privileges as followers of Christ." (Adult SS Guide Third Quarter 2023, Ephesians p. 6).

When we are converted we become part of the church, the body of Christ, the bride etc., What does this mean? Is this a denomination?

How can one tell of they are a part of the true church of Christ?

Jesus said,

> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35 NIV84).

How is this a new command? Is it because they had been raised to believe God's commandments are imposed rules, that God's kingdom is a legal kingdom and Jesus revealed that God's law is design law and His kingdom is reality built upon love? Thus for the disciples this was a new idea, a new way of conceiving of God's kingdom, law, and methods?

So how do we recognize if we are part of God's church, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ?

John also wrote:

> Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. **He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous**. [What determines what is right or wrong? This is all about the moral decision making, the seven levels. If we have a legal view, an imposed law view, then right and wrong is about behavioral conformity—rule keeping. We will refuse to heal on Sabbath because it is breaking the rules and if we see someone doing it, even the Son of God, then we, in order to be just, need to lead the people to stone him. This is Pharisaism, in which rule keeping and law enforcement is used as a measure of righteousness, rather than living out God's living law of truth, love, and freedom in how we treat others.] He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. [And what is sinful? Transgression of the law, what law? A list of rules, or deviating from the design laws that God built reality to operate upon? And what are those, love, truth, freedom—which results, when followed in trust, loyalty, devotion, reliability. Thus, sin would be breaking trust with God, and that is what Paul says in Romans 14:23, whatever is not of faith or trust is sin. Lucifer in heaven didn't start his rebellion by breaking a rule; he started his rebellion by betraying his faith and breaking trust with God.] The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. [What has the devil been working to accomplish? He has been working to destroy the image of God in humanity and make human beings become the image bearers of Satan. Look at what is happening in the world. Can you see Satan's image being

manifest in more and more people and in society? Lies, propaganda, control, coercion, manipulation, exploitation, abuse, hate, perversion of all kinds, and much of it promoted under the banner of love for others, of tolerance, of compassion.] No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; [What does this mean? If we are part of God's church we will not continue to sin, not go on sinning? Are you comfortable with this idea or does it cause you anxiety? It is quite simple. Paul wrote that whatever is not of faith, or trust is sin (Romans 14:23). Remember, lies believed break the circle of love and trust and result in fear and selfishness, which results in acts of sin—the acts are the symptoms that result from the heart no longer operating upon love and trust. John is telling us that when we have been restored to trust then we stop living rebelliously, we stop living to gratify self, we stop living distrustfully…we do what we do out of faith or trust in God. It doesn't mean we don't make mistakes, we are finite, we can make errors, our driving to the supermarket can still result in an accident in which someone is hurt—but we don't seek to cause harm, we don't seek to break away from God and our healing or soul remains in His hands. So we don't go on living in selfish independence from God.] he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. [We simply don't want to live outside of our love relationship with God any more. We run to Him with every care, concern, mistake, and also victory and celebration.] This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. [How do we know who is a child of God and/or the devil? By whether they live in harmony with God's design laws of love, truth, and freedom in how they govern themselves and treat others or not. Those who claim a faith in God and perhaps promote the same doctrinal beliefs as you, but do so through imposed law, and therefore are willing to use power to coerce consciences and punish others on matters of conscience, are of the devil, just like those Jews who belonged to the right organized religious system and claimed to be children of God but crucified Christ.]

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. [There are two antagonistic powers at war—God's principle of love, truth, freedom versus Satan's principle of fear-driven survival of the fittest selfishness, lies, and coercive control. God's people love others to the point of self-sacrifice, Satan's people force others to do what they want and will even kill others to advance themselves. And Satan's people hate the light, the truth, and those who live the truth because the light itself, the truth itself, condemns them and they want to destroy the light and all light bearers. This is why certain groups in our society today are so aggressive in their intolerance of those who hold to Christian values and are always seeking to force their perverse lifestyles onto others—all under the name of being tolerant. Understand there is a difference between a person choosing what they do in governance of their life, and using force to make other people live and act in ways that praise, validate, and support what they believe is wrong. If a person wants to change their pronouns that is up to them, but the evil in this world cannot live with that, instead they want to use governmental coercive power to force other people to act and speak in ways that affirm them—in other words they want to coerce in order to promote their delusional worldview. And those who do not, they want to destroy and remove from society. Why? Because the truth is authoritative and regardless of the lies they tell themselves, the truth

still condemns them and rather than repenting and pursing objective truth, they want to silence their own conscience and thus all sources of truth to which their conscience is sensitive.] We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. [What does this mean? How is it that we pass from death to life if we love others? What does it mean that if we don't love we *remain* in death? Does this mean we were terminal, already dying, rather than we were healthy and alive and that death must be inflicted as a legal penalty?]

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (1John 3:7-16 NIV84) [Does it make sense that we get life by dying, by laying down our life? Aren't we supposed to kill others to protect our life? Do you see the two antagonistic principles here?]

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:1-5 NIV84).

What does it mean to obey God's commands? Is it rule-keeping, or do the commandments mean something else?

What law lens do you understand it through?

To live in harmony with His commands means to live in harmony with His design for life, to be truthful and love the truth, to love God and others and live out other-centered giving, and to leave people free.

When we love God we:

- Do not place anything before Him in our hearts or priorities
- Do not follow the ways of the world and worship things made by us
- Do not misrepresent God's character by claiming to be a Christian but then using Satan's methods in how we live and treat others—in other words we don't take God's name in vain
- We remember the Sabbath as God's gift to us and cherish all that it reveals about God and we keep ourselves holy by living out God's principles that the Sabbath is a sign of, and we trust God by not pursuing our own business on the Sabbath

If we love others:

- We honor our parents by treating them with respect and applying God's principles of truth, love, and freedom to our relationship with them

- We do not murder
- We do not cheat or betray our spouses
- We do not bear false witness against others
- We do not steal
- We do not covet what others have

And this is not burdensome because when the heart is reborn to love it actually hurts, causes pain, is distressing, upsetting, hard, a burden to do any of these selfish things. It is much easier and joyful to not do these things.

Here it is from The Remedy:

> Everyone who trusts Jesus–God's healing Remedy–is recreated in heart and mind and is a child of God. And everyone who loves the Creator loves those he created. This is how we know that we love the beings God created — by loving God and living in harmony with his methods and principles of self-sacrificing love. Those who genuinely love God will live lives that reveal him–lives that are in harmony with his commandments. And his commandments are not a burden placed upon us which we must perform, but the natural outgrowth of love–the victory over this selfish world that everyone who is healed by God experiences; and this victory over fear and selfishness is achieved when we trust God. Who is it that overcomes the survival-of-the-fittest principle of this world? Only those who recognize and accept that Jesus is God's Son. (1 John 5:1-5 REM).

So we can know that we are part of the church, the body of Christ, if we have been reborn to have hearts that love God and others and live that love in how we treat others. Do you agree? Can a person be part of the body of Christ, have a renewed heart and live out God's design law regardless of what denomination they belong?

Then what is the purpose of denominations or organized churches?

- Mission—denominations are important for mission to pool resources, organize people, and develop resources that can be used to advance the gospel.
- Join the denomination where God has called you to use your talents, abilities, and resources for the mission God has called you for.
- Paul was not called to stay in Jerusalem and worship with and minister to the Jews. Paul was called as a minister to the Gentiles. We each must go and advance the true kingdom of God in the field where God calls us.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Acts 19:13-20, but let's start with verse one and unpack it. This is from *The Remedy*

> While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul journeyed inland to Ephesus. There he found some of the Lord's interns and asked them, "When you accepted Jesus as Messiah, did you receive the Holy Spirit who applies into your hearts and minds what Jesus achieved?" They replied, "No, we didn't even know there is an inner working of the Holy Spirit." [What is this talking about? Can we be saved through Jesus' sacrifice without the inner working of the Holy Spirit? Is salvation the process of cognitive acceptance of the facts, the truth, that Jesus is God, that Jesus is our substitutionary sacrifice, that Jesus achieved all that is necessary for salvation? Can one be saved by cognitively accepting this and making a legal claim for the blood of Jesus to pay the price and erase from the record books in heaven the list of sins they have committed? Or does salvation require the inner working of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart from fear and selfishness to love and trust?

In the book *The Desire of Ages* it describes the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation this way—do you agree?

> In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead,** who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. **It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.
>
> Of the Spirit Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me." The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. **The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity.** The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people. (The Desire of Ages 671.3)

This is countering the work of Satan who wants to reproduce the satanic image in humanity, and we are called to give glory to God and we do that by having His character reproduced in us.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> "When He [the Spirit of truth] is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." **The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit**. This is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. **Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life**. One might be able to present the letter of the word of God, he might be familiar with all its commands and promises; **but unless the Holy Spirit sets home the truth, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken**. No amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light without the co-operation of the Spirit of God. The sowing of the gospel seed will not be a success unless the seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Before one book of the New Testament was written, before one gospel sermon had been preached after Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon the praying apostles. Then the testimony of their enemies was, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Acts 5:28. (The Desire of Ages 671.4)

We need the Holy Spirit in our hearts to renew, enlighten, enable, and empower us. It is not sufficient to proclaim belief in a list of doctrines, to go through ritual water baptism, to stop working on the Sabbath each week, to pay tithe, to join a denomination—all of this can be done from a heart driven by fear, the fear of death, and the desire to save self and to advance oneself above others—Pharisaism. Salvation is means to be healed, to be transformed, to be renewed, to become like Jesus in character having the law written upon the heart. This is not a legal process it is a reality process. And the penal legal theologies based on the human law construct obstruct the real healing that God freely offers all of us.

Continuing with Acts 19:

> So Paul asked, "What immersion in water did you participate in?" They answered, "The immersion by John."
>
> Paul explained, "John immersed people in water to symbolize repentance, which is the preparation of the heart to receive the Remedy. He told people to trust the One coming after him, the One with the Remedy–that is, Jesus." When they heard the truth about the Remedy of Jesus, they were immersed into the character of the Lord Jesus. Paul placed his hands on their heads, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began presenting the truth about God, and the Remedy of Jesus, in many languages. There were about twelve people in all. [We can only be effective in advancing God's kingdom to the degree we are submitted to God and transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.]
>
> For three months Paul went to the synagogue and spoke out powerfully. He persuasively presented the evidence revealing God's kingdom of love, but some of them hardened their hearts, dug in their heels, and refused to believe the truth. They publicly ridiculed the Remedy as the only way to be healed, so Paul left them. He took the interns with him and began instructing them daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. He continued teaching there for two years, so that all of the Jews and non-Jews living in the province of Asia heard about the Remedy of Jesus. [What happened here? Paul went to the Jews in Ephesus presenting them the

truth of God's kingdom of love and Jesus Christ our Savior. But they rejected it—and what happens when people reject the truth? Their hearts harden. Consider who the Jews were—were they people without the blessings of God, or were they part of a group especially called by God for a mission to evangelize the world and given the prophets and inspired Scripture to assist them in evangelizing the world?

Could the Jews rightly say that they as a people were called by God and blessed by God? Yet, when Paul presents the advancing truth, what happened? Do we see this happening anywhere today? A people who have been blessed by God with a mission to evangelize the world to prepare it for the second advent, who have the inspired writings of God yet who reject the advancing truth of God's design law and refuse to return to worshiping the Creator and insist on worshiping the imperial dictator who makes up rules and uses his power to torture and kill? And when we present the advancing truth to them how do many of them respond? By hardening their hearts and telling those with this design law message that they cannot present such a message in their church and even telling people to leave, or they have a devil.]

God's healing love flowed through Paul in amazing ways. Scarves, napkins, or other pieces of cloth that had touched Paul were taken to the sick, and when the fabric touched the sick, their illness was cured, and any evil influences departed. [What do you think of this? Is this magic? Is there anything here about the sick proclaiming a faith in Jesus? We can assume they were taking it to sick believers, but it doesn't say so. What was the purpose of these miracles? Are miracles reliable evidence to who has the truth? Can Satan also perform miracles?]

Some Jewish exorcists who went around driving out evil angels thought they could use the name of Jesus like a magic incantation to free those whose minds were dominated by demons. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to leave." Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, had seven sons who were doing this. One day, they were trying it when an evil angel mocked them: "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" Then the man whose mind was possessed by an evil angel attacked them, and overpowered them all. He beat them so badly that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. [What happened here? Why didn't the demon, the fallen evil angel, leave when Jesus' name was spoken out loud? Is it because they said Jesus and not Joshua or Yashua? Or is it because Jesus' name is not a magic incantation, to speak or pray in the name of Jesus means having a heart renewed to be like Jesus in character and that means one is filled with the Holy Spirit? Notice the evil angel spoke the name Jesus and it didn't harm it. This isn't magic, it isn't incantations, it isn't legal claims. One cannot claim the name or blood of Jesus in a legal mechanical or magical way to achieve some spiritual outcome. One must be renewed by the life of Jesus, which is symbolized by the blood of Jesus, so that they have the character of Jesus and then they will have the Holy Spirit and the power of God in their ministry.]

When news of this spread throughout Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews were overcome with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was given much more respect. Many people who believed the truth about Jesus confessed their evil deeds publicly. A large number of people who had practiced witchcraft, black magic and sorcery brought their books of magic and burned them

publicly in a large bonfire. When they calculated the value of the books burned, it totaled fifty thousand silver coins (and one coin was a day's wage). With events like this, the message of the Remedy of Jesus spread widely and kept growing. (Acts 19:1-20 REM). [What happened here? How was it that people repented because of the actions of an evil angel? Because God's kingdom is the kingdom of reality, of truth, and this event revealed truth, revealed reality, and the Holy Spirit convicted hearts.]

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Acts 19:21-20:1, we will start with verse 23:

> But before Paul left Ephesus, a great uproar arose about the Remedy. Demetrius, a silversmith who made a lot of money making silver shrines of Artemis, employed a large number of craftsmen. He called them together, along with others whose income depended on their business, and said: "Friends, you know what a good income we make from this business. And you have heard that this fellow Paul has come along teaching people that the gods we make with our own hands are not gods at all. He has convinced large numbers of people of this — here and all across the province of Asia. This is not only an attack on our livelihoods, but more so, it threatens to destroy the temple of the great goddess Artemis; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped all over the world, will be robbed of her glorious majesty." [What is happening here? What is the motive of Demetrius? Do you see selfishness interfering with the gospel? Do we see this today? Do we see people and organizations making decisions that coerce and violate consciences in order to not be sanctioned by the government, to keep their Medicare and Medicaid money flowing?]
>
> They became so agitated upon hearing this, that they began chanting, "Ephesus, the state of Artemis the Great! Ephesus, the state of Artemis the Great!" The uproar spread throughout the entire city. A mob seized Gaius and Aristarchus, two men traveling with Paul from Macedonia, and marched as a group into the amphitheater. Paul wanted to go and speak to the crowd, but the interns would not allow it. Even some of the city officials, who were friends of Paul, sent messages, warning him not to go to the amphitheater.
>
> The mob was frenzied. People were yelling many different things all at once, but most didn't even know why they were there. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some people in the crowd began shouting at him, telling him what to say. He held up his hands, trying to silence the crowd in order to present a defense. But when the mob realized he was a Jew, they began chanting, "Ephesus, the state of Artemis the Great! Ephesus, the state of Artemis the Great!" This went on for about two hours. [Have we seen this over and over again when voices of truth want to speak a mob of protesters will scream and shout and get violent seeking to silence the speaker? Anyone with eyes to see should recognize such activity is not the work of the Holy Spirit but of a satanic spirit and realize they should not be a part of such movements. Satan has no truth on his side, thus those who advance satanic positions must use every means to silence voices of truth for the truth exposes the lies and sets hearts and minds free. But those

with truth lose nothing by challenge, investigation, questioning all such honest inquiry only bring more truth to light. Do you think that today when such mobs arise and shout and protest like this there are many people who join in, and just like in Ephesus, most don't even know why they are yelling?]

Finally, the city clerk managed to quiet the mob, and said, "People of Ephesus, the entire world knows that Ephesus is the state of Artemis the Great, who came down from heaven, and that we guard her temple. Since these facts are irrefutable, you should quiet down and not do anything rash. Why have you brought these men here? They have done no wrong. They have not robbed temples nor spoken against our goddess. If Demetrius and his trade union have a complaint against anyone, then they should file charges in court and let the matter be settled there. If you have any other issues, they too need to be settled in a legal assembly, not by mob action. What you have done has put us in danger of being charged with rioting, and if we are charged, we won't have any defense, for there is no reason for this uproar you have incited." After saying this, he sent them home. Once the protests died down, Paul met with the interns, gave them some departing words of encouragement, and left for Macedonia. (Acts 19:23-20:1 REM) [In this case the government was not in charge of or supporting the rioters. Sadly, today, many of the government officials support the rioters and will not intervene to stop them.]

THURSDAY

The second paragraph says,

> "As Ephesians 1:9, 10 proclaims, the unity God has in mind is centered in Christ." (SDA Adult SS Guide Third Quarter 2023, Ephesians, p. 11)

Why do you think the Christian world is divided into over 41,000 groups if they all claim Jesus and that following Jesus leads to unity?

Could the law lens people believe about God and His kingdom have any bearing on the divisions?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 2
God's Grand, Christ-Centered Plan

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

> Paul praises God for the fact that He has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing" (Eph. 1:3, ESV). That the blessings are spiritual (Greek, pneumatikos) suggests that they come through the Spirit (pneuma), pointing to the closing of Paul's blessing, which celebrates the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (Eph. 1:13, 14). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 15).

What do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit to be?

Let's read Acts 19:1-6:

> While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"
> They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."
> So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"
> "John's baptism," they replied.
> Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in [other languages] and prophesied. (Acts 19:1–6 NIV84).

What is this talking about?

- Can we be saved through Jesus' sacrifice without the inner working of the Holy Spirit?
- Is salvation the process of cognitive acceptance of the facts, the truth, that Jesus is God, that Jesus is our substitutionary sacrifice, that Jesus achieved all that is necessary for salvation?
- Can one be saved by cognitively accepting a list of beliefs and believing those beliefs and then making a legal claim for the blood of Jesus to pay the price and erase from the record books in heaven the list of sins they have committed? Or does salvation require the inner working of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart from fear and selfishness to love and trust?

In the book *The Desire of Ages* it describes the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation this way, and I have concluded this is a very accurate description—do you agree?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead,** who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. **It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. (The Desire of Ages 671.2)

Of the Spirit Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me." The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. **The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity.** The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people. (The Desire of Ages 671.3) [this is countering the work of Satan who wants to reproduce the satanic image in humanity, and we are called to give glory to God and we do that by having His character reproduced in us.]

"When He [the Spirit of truth] is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." **The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit**. This is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. **Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life**. One might be able to present the letter of the word of God, he might be familiar with all its commands and promises; **but unless the Holy Spirit sets home the truth, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken**. No amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light without the co-operation of the Spirit of God. The sowing of the gospel seed will not be a success unless the seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Before one book of the New Testament was written, before one gospel sermon had been preached after Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon the praying apostles. Then the testimony of their enemies was, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Acts 5:28. (The Desire of Ages 671.4)

What is described by this author? Is this describing a legal adjustment in books outside of one's person? No! Salvation is and always has been healing, restoring, recreating, transforming sinners back to sinless perfection, righteousness.

We need the Holy Spirit in our hearts to renew, enlighten, enable, and empower us. It is not sufficient to proclaim belief in a list of doctrines, to go through ritual water baptism, to stop working on the Sabbath each week, to pay tithe, to join a denomination—all of this can be done from a heart driven by fear, the fear of death, and the desire to save self and to advance oneself above others—Pharisaism.

Salvation means to be healed, to be transformed, to be renewed, to become like Jesus in character having the law written upon the heart. This is not a legal process it is a reality process. And the penal legal theologies based on the human law construct obstruct the real healing that God freely offers all of us.

Jesus singly and alone procured the remedy to our sin problem, in doing so He in His person, because He became fully human saved the species human. The Holy Spirit administers the remedy that Jesus procured into the hearts and minds of all who give consent, all who surrender to Christ and say yes, and all who cooperate with God and comply with His treatment plan.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

> Sin had been a dark, dominating force in the lives of the members of Paul's audience. Paul can describe them in their prior existence as the walking dead—"dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1, NKJV) yet "walking" or living as Satan commanded them (Eph. 2:1–3). Enslaved to sin and Satan, they had no ability to free themselves. They needed rescue. God has done so through His gracious actions in Christ, and Paul celebrates two new blessings of God's grace in the lives of believers: redemption and forgiveness. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 16).

How is this paragraph describing sin? If a person is enslaved to sin, which is a terminal condition that will result in death, can that condition be resolved by legal means?

Can you think of a condition today that is destructive to those who are caught up in it and enslaves them at the same time? Addictions—can people be set free from addictions by legal means?

- If God or the nation passed laws against using drugs, does that free people from drug addiction?
- How about if we inflict external punishments on people for using illegal drugs, does that make them addiction free?
- What if we have an innocent substitute take the addict's place, and we inject the innocent person with some drug and then execute the substitute in the place of the addict, does that set the addict free from the enslavement of their addiction?
- What if we have the supreme court declare the addict innocent of any wrongdoing does that set them free from their addiction?
- What if we have the person who led them into drugs and their pusher arrested and punished does that set the addict free from their addiction?
- Is there anything legal that actually sets the addict free from all aspects of their addiction and restores them to perfect health, including freeing them from all desire to ever use again?

- What is necessary to free someone caught in addiction? Healing the brokenness and damage within that causes and reinforces the destructive addictive cycles and behaviors.

As the Bible teaches:

- "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified…for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:15, 16 & 21 NIV84).

This is why, through faith, we are, reborn, have circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, have the hard stony heart removed and a tender heart created within, receive a new heart and right spirit, have the living law of love written into our hearts and minds, become new creations, have the mind of Christ. Everything that the Bible teaches about salvation is about healing, recreation, renewal, restoration to God's original ideal that He created Adam and Eve to become. It is Jesus who became the second Adam and through our truth in Jesus we are transformed back into God's original plan, people recreated with hearts and minds that love God and others and love to live out God's methods. None of this is legal, it is all actual, reality based, transformational.

Read the third and fifth paragraphs,

> Our freedom comes at an extreme cost: "In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7, ESV). The idea of redemption also celebrates God's gracious generosity in paying the high price of our liberty. God gives us our freedom and dignity. We are no longer enslaved!..
>
> Note carefully that the idea that God pays the price of redemption to Satan is a medieval, not a biblical, one. God neither owes nor pays Satan anything. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 16).

The lesson is correct when it states the idea of God paying the devil a price is not biblical. So we can rule out the idea that the blood price was paid to Satan.

But the lesson doesn't tell us why Christ did have to pay a price—and the price is His blood. It doesn't explain what does this mean and it doesn't tell us to whom was it paid.

Have you ever heard that the blood price was paid to God or the law? Have you ever had ideas of Jesus in heaven presenting His blood to the Father to pay for our sins, or applying His blood to record books to erase our sins?

Is His blood a legal price that God's heavenly court or law required be paid to legally allow God to pronounce legal pardon and declare the unrighteous who claim the blood to be legally accounted as righteous?

No, we just established that sinners cannot be made righteous through legal means. All the legal descriptions are false and interfere with people experiencing the reality that God has provided in Jesus.

So if you ask the question: What is the price that Jesus paid? The answer will be, as the lesson states, the blood of Jesus.

In the book, *The Cross of Christ* by George Knight, which is a book held in high esteem by those who cling to the penal/legal view of salvation, he agrees with the lesson that "the ransom price was His [Christ's] blood." (p. 69).

He also agrees with the lesson that the idea that the price was paid to the devil is not biblical. But after demonstrating that the blood price was not paid to Satan, he then writes the following:

> …Word pictures such as ransom and redemption are metaphors that teach a lesson but (like Christ's parables) were not meant to be taken literally in all their details. **We do not, therefore, have to be concerned with whom the ransom payment went to**.
>
> Leon Morris writes "that in the New Testament **there is never any hint of a recipient of the ransom**. In other words[,] we must understand redemption as a useful metaphor which enables us to see some aspects of Christ's great saving work with clarity but which is not an exact description of the whole process of salvation. We must not press it beyond what the New Testament tells us about it. **To look for a recipient of the ransom is illegitimate.** We have no reason for pressing every detail. We must use the metaphor in the way the New Testament writers did or we fall into error. (Knight, G., *The Cross of Christ* p. 70).

Does this sound reasonable to you? Is it true the New Testament never gives any hint of a recipient of the ransom? Is it true that to look for a recipient is illegitimate?

Or is to whom the price is paid one of the most critical piece of information for us to understand in the plan of salvation? If someone held your child captive and a ransom was required to free them, don't you want to know who it went? Wouldn't knowing that be important information for your future ability to love and trust? What if the ransom went to one of your own siblings who kidnapped your child? And what would is say about God if the ransom price had to be paid to God?

There is a reason the penal legal models take the position cited above—they want to avoid the unreasonable, illogical, and destructive conclusion that God or the law are the ones being paid off by Jesus' blood, because they know such an idea prevents salvation and incites greater fear of God. It creates a divide among the Godhead with one member being for us but another member requiring something done to Him in order to be for us.

And is it truth that "in the New Testament **there is never any hint of a recipient of the ransom"?** Only if one believes Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law and salvation is a legal payment. If that is one's belief, then it is true that the Bible provides no hint ever of a recipient for a legal payment to set sinners legally free. This is quite right.

But if you return to worshiping God as Creator, and recognize His laws are the laws reality operates upon, then you will realize that the New Testament does teach exactly and specifically to the ransom is paid.

Both the lesson and *The Cross of Christ* agree that the ransom price is the blood of Jesus, which is still a metaphor, for it isn't the red corpuscles but as the Bible says, the life is in the blood. So it is the sinless life of Jesus that is the ransom price, but let's stick with the blood metaphor for a moment as the price, and we discover that Jesus Himself told exactly to who the ransom price is paid:

> "I tell you the truth, unless **you** eat the flesh of the Son of Man and **drink his blood**, **you have no life in you**. **Whoever** eats my flesh and **drinks my blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and **my blood is real drink. Whoever** eats my flesh and **drinks my blood remains in me**, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the **one who feeds on me will live because of me**. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58 NIV84).

Does Jesus tell us specifically who is to receive the ransom price of His blood? Jesus is clear, if we don't receive the ransom payment of His blood into us then we have no life, in other words we die from sin.

But blood is still a metaphor, He is not speaking cannibalism. So to understand the full meaning of the ransom price we must move beyond metaphor to reality.

What is the function of a ransom? It is the price necessary to free someone from bondage.

What holds us sinners in bondage?

- The lies of Satan that we believe that keep us from trusting Him
- Our own terminal, carnal, sin-condition

What do we need to be set free, to be ransomed from this terminal state?

- Truth to destroy the lies of Satan and win us back to trust in God
- A new nature

This is illustrated in the metaphor of flesh and blood. The flesh is the truth which destroys the lies of Satan. Jesus is the Word made flesh, to eat the flesh of Jesus means to ingest into our hearts and minds the truth about God that Jesus revealed which destroys Satan's lies about God and restores us to trust. Then we open the heart in trust and we receive a new life, new motives, new desires, are reborn by receiving the life of Christ which is illustrated by His blood, and that new life is the life of love which casts out all fear and we are no longer controlled by the carnal selfish survival of the fittest drives. Thus we have a new life and from that moment begin growing in godliness.

This is reality from our God who built reality—there is nothing penal or legal going on in the plan of redemption.

So what about the language of paying a price? To whom is the price paid? It is paid that reality required in order for human beings to be saved from this sin condition and, it was paid to you and me. We needed the truth and we needed a new heart and right spirit. God did not need truth presented to Him and God did not need a new sinless life with new motives and desires restored within.

Read the last paragraph,

> The benefits of Calvary also include "the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph. 1:7, ESV). On the cross, Christ takes upon Himself the price of our sin, both past and future, "canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands" (Col. 2:14, ESV). In doing this work of redemption and forgiveness through Christ, God is acting as our generous Father, with the "riches of his grace" being "lavished upon us" (Eph. 1:7, 8, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 16).

What does it mean that the benefits of Calvary also include the forgiveness of our trespasses?

- Are they saying God could not forgive without the death of Jesus?
- Are they saying that God's forgiveness is the same as salvation?
- Did Jesus forgive those who were crucifying Him?
- Did He have the right to forgive people of their sins?
- And did Jesus' forgiveness of them result in their salvation and cause them to become Jesus trustworthy friends or did they remain His enemies?

Be very clear, God's heart toward all sinners is that of forgiveness. But not all sinners receive that forgiveness into their hearts and therefore they are not convicted of the goodness of God and the destructiveness of sin and therefore they do not repent. They do not repent from distrust and rebellion. Thus, they remain hostile to God and in a state of unforgiveness, i.e. rebellion, even though God is forgiving to them.

The death of Christ was not in any means or aspect necessary to change God or get God to forgive. The self-sacrifice of God in His Son was absolutely required in order to save human sinners and it was provided by God as a free gift to us.

What do you think of their quotation of Jesus taking upon Himself all our sins and "canceling the record or our debt that stood against us with its legal demands," quoting Colossians 2:14 from ESV?

Other versions render it:

- having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, (Colossians 2:14 NIV84).

- having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. (Colossians 2:14 NKJV).

- he cancelled the unfavourable record of our debts with its binding rules and did away with it completely by nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:14 GNT)

How do you hear this? There is nothing about legal requirements in the text, that is read in and written in by the translators of the ESV. It is based on reading the Bible with the assumption that God's law works like human law and that sin is a legal problem. But when we return to design law, we realize it is so much more simple, reasonable, and beautiful—because it is how reality works. This is how I rendered it in The Remedy, we will start in verse 13.

> When your condition was terminal, when selfishness reigned unchecked in your minds, and when your hearts were tied to the destructive cravings and practices of the world, God intervened and brought you the life-giving Remedy–Jesus Christ. He reclaimed you from your terminal condition, nullifying the pathology report that certified you as dead in sin; he made it clear that the written code, with its regulations, was only a diagnostic instrument designed to expose our terminal state and teach us the need for a true cure, and he nailed it to the cross. Through his death, he revealed the truth about God and–in his humanity–eradicated selfishness, thus he completely destroyed Satan's weapons of lies and selfishness, and triumphed over Satan at the cross. (Colossians 3:13-15 REM)

Do you see how Jesus nullified the pathology report, the diagnosis of humanity's terminal state?

If you had cancer and had a treatment that destroyed the cancer and restored you to perfect health, then the diagnostic accuracy of the pathology report that condemned you to die from cancer is nullified.

In Jesus we who were dead in trespass and sin are reborn with new hearts and right spirits and receive eternal life. The pathology report that certified us as terminal is nullified when we are reborn in Christ.

Thoughts?

Does the Bible contradict itself? The quote in Colossians appears, in some versions, to say that through Christ the record of our debt is canceled, but in 1 Corinthians 13 it says:

> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, **it keeps no record of wrongs**. (1 Corinthians 13:4-6 NIV84 emphasis mine).

The Bible teaches that God is love, therefore God keeps no record of wrongs—is this a contradiction? What do we do with the records described in Revelation, the heavenly records if there is no record of wrongs?

> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (Revelation 20:12 NIV84).

What is going on here? Are there deeds being recorded into books when 1 Corinthians tells us that love keeps no record of wrongs?

The Bible tells us what is recorded in the books,

> And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose **names are in the Book of Life**. (Philippians 4:3 NKJV).

> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those **whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life**. (Revelation 21:27 NIV84).

What is recorded in the books? Names, and in Scripture what do names represent? Character—it is our individuality, our characters, that are recorded in the books of heaven. Those who have trusted Jesus and been reborn have Christlike characters operating upon the design law of God which has been reproduced in them. But those who have rejected Christ and clung to the methods of fear and selfishness, coercive control, and legal enforcement form characters like Satan. And thus their records accurately diagnose who they are in character.

Thus the best way to understand all Bible passages about heavenly records is that they are like medical records; they simply record what is happening in a person. If a person is sick with sin, then just like a medical record that records pathology, our heavenly records record that destructive process with all of its symptoms we call sins. But if a sick person takes a remedy then the medical records record the healing transformation that occurs when the symptoms resolve, the lungs clear up, the fevers stop, the cough resolves, the blood oxygen levels return to normal, the medical records document that. So, too our heavenly records merely record what is happening in us. If you want to have changes made in your heavenly records you MUST have changes made via the Holy Spirit in your heart and mind.

Here are two historical quotes from EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church who described it this way:

> Remember, **your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven**, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you **conforming your character** to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? (Letters and Manuscript Releases vol. 5 letter 51).

> Let parents and children remember that day by day they are each forming a character, and that **the features of this character are imprinted upon the books of heaven.** God is taking pictures of His people, just as surely as an artist takes pictures of men and women, transferring the features of the face to the polished plate. What kind of picture do you wish to produce?

> Parents, answer the question! What kind of picture will the great Master Artist make of you in the records of heaven? (Child Guidance 562).

So God doesn't keep score, count up wrong deeds, tally up how much each person must be punished. All such ideas are Satan's, they stem from accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law. God is the God of reality and God's records are simply the accurate recording of what actually is in every heart and mind. Have we surrendered to Jesus in repentance and been reborn with a new heart and right spirit and chosen to apply God's design laws to our lives in how we live, or do we reject the kingdom of heaven and instead embrace the kingdom of this world with its imposed rules and legal enforcement that is incapable of healing hearts and minds?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

> The term that Paul uses to describe the plan is a picturesque one (Greek, anakephalaiōsasthai), to "head up" or to "sum up" all things in Christ. In ancient accounting practice, you would "add up" a column of figures and place the total at the top. Jesus heads God's final, eschatological plan. This Christ-centered plan was crafted "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4) and is so broad that it encompasses all time ("the fullness of the times," NKJV) and space ("all things . . . things in heaven and things on earth," ESV). Paul announces unity in Christ as the grand, divine goal for the universe. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 17).

This is well said, Jesus is the sum total of God's goodness, truth, love, power, presence—as Scripture says

> For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9 NKJV).

> In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV84).

Yes, Jesus is the fullness of God. In Jesus we see God's character perfectly revealed.

What about the idea that this plan of salvation in Jesus was put in place before God created this world or human beings?

Is this true? Then what would that say about God's foreknowledge? God foreknew and was not caught off guard by sin. God is the Creator of all things, including time itself, and God lives outside of and above time and can access all points in time simultaneously. We are restricted to a linear existence in

time, but God is not, and the various theories that suggest God doesn't have foreknowledge are ideas that put limits or restrictions on God.

Read third paragraph,

> In discussing God's "plan for the fullness of time" (Eph. 1:10, ESV), Paul shares the theme that he will weave through the letter. God begins His plan to unify all things, rooted in the death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus (Eph. 1:15–2:10), by founding the church and unifying disparate elements of humankind, Jews and Gentiles, in it (Eph. 2:11–3:13). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 17).

How is it that the universe is brought to unity in Jesus? Can someone explain that process?

What causes division? Lies, fear, and selfishness. And lies primarily about whom?

Then what results in unity? Truth that destroys the lies about God and restores trust, and then having God's law restored into the hearts and minds of us sinners so that we live in harmony with God and unfallen angels, i.e. that we are trustworthy.

The one thing God will not compromise is freedom, because love only exists in freedom. And God will run His universe in such a way that all His intelligent creatures have real freedom. This means heaven will only be populated by people who are safe with freedom, people who are fully and perfectly restored to love, for only those kinds of people are safe to live in full freedom.

Does such freedom mean we are free from God's law or does the law give us freedom?

James says,

> But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25 NIV84).

How does God's law give freedom? Doesn't law restrict?
What kind of law? Imposed law restricts, design law sets free.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Ephesian 1:11-12; they use the NKJV:

> In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:11-12 NKJV)

What does this mean? What inheritance? What does it mean to be predestined?

What did we inherit from Adam? A terminal sin condition. We were all born in sin and conceived in iniquity. We did not have a choice in the state of our birth. Jesus became a human for the purpose of changing this state of things, for the purpose of destroying death and bring life and immortality to light. He did this by partaking of the terminal condition we all inherit from Adam, overcoming and destroying that condition and replacing that terminal life with His eternal and immortal life that He infused into humanity when He became incarnate. By His victory the species human was purified and saved from eternal death and now in the person of Jesus a human being stands at the command center of the universe directing all of God's agencies for the administration and application of what Jesus achieved into the hearts and minds of all who consent to His working in their hearts and minds.

Thus God predetermined to send Jesus to cure the condition and offer the Remedy Jesus procured to all who trust Him. This is how I rendered it in The Remedy:

> In the person of Jesus Christ, we experience restored unity with God–the culmination of the Father's plan, the result of what God predetermined to do–as he always works for the healing and restoration of his creation. This is in order that we–who were the first to recognize the significance of all that Christ is, and all he has done–might bring praise and glory to God by experiencing re-creation of Christlike character within. (Ephesians 1:1-2 REM)

Does this answer your questions about predestination? Then what do we do with texts like Romans 8:29-20:

> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Romans 8:29, 30 NIV84).

Does this text teach, as many Calvinists claim, that God chooses who is saved and who is lost? Does this text mean that individual salvation is only up to God to decide? Or do we, in our attempt to protect God's reputation, knowing that without freedom there is no love, reject the idea of God's foreknowledge altogether, as open theists do?

The key to understanding this passage, as with the rest of Scripture, is what law lens we are reading it through. If we read Scripture with the assumption that God's law functions like human law—imposed rules enforced by the rule-giver—then God is the all-powerful enforcer who makes things happen the way He wants them to happen. Under this imposed-law view, predestination is God deciding upon whom He will use His power to call, justify, and glorify.

But under design law, we understand God's laws are the protocols upon which reality functions. This means God governs, through the sustaining of the laws that He built reality upon, all aspects of creation, including time. Unlike us, God is not constrained to a linear existence; He lives outside the dimension of time. God doesn't serve at the whims of time; time serves God.

When the Bible says that those God "foreknew" He "predestined" to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, it isn't speaking of mere cognitive knowledge (awareness)—a list of names and social security numbers in a heavenly registry; rather, it is speaking of biblical knowledge, the fullest sense of "knowing" someone.

Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived (Genesis 4:1 ESV).

This "knowing" is intimate knowledge, not mere cognitive awareness. The unsaved do not have this knowledge of God; therefore, they are not known by God in this intimate, saving way. Jesus said it plainly:

> Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:21–23 NIV84).

Jesus surely knows who these people are, so this isn't about awareness. It is about intimacy, unity, oneness—a loving, mutual bond of trust. These people were never friends of Jesus. They never opened their hearts to allow Him in and, thus, they never knew Jesus even though they knew about Him and claimed to be His followers. And because they never chose to know Jesus, they were not in turn known by Jesus in the intimate bonds of fellowship and love. This intimate "knowing" is the key to every person's salvation:

> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3 NIV84).

Thus, those whom God foreknows He predetermined will be conformed to the likeness of His Son. It is God's purpose to heal and restore all who trust Him. It is a certainty that those who come to know God, open their heart to Him, and experience His indwelling presence are set right (justified). Those whom God foreknows are the very ones who have chosen to trust Him; that is how God knows them—because they have chosen to know Him.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

> In exploring the importance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, Paul uses two images, or metaphors, for the Spirit. He first pictures the Holy Spirit as a "seal," identifying a sealing presence of the Spirit that occurs from the time of conversion. In ancient times, seals were used for a wide variety of functions: to authenticate copies of laws and agreements, to validate the excellence or quantity of a container's contents (e.g., Ezek. 28:12), or to witness transactions (e.g., Jer. 32:10–14, 44), contracts, letters (e.g., 1 Kings 21:8), wills, and adoptions. Imprinted

> on an object, a seal announced both ownership and protection. The presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives marks believers as belonging to God and conveys God's promise to protect them (compare Eph. 4:30). They have been "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 17).

What does this mean? Is the seal a legal mark externally applied in some accounting system, or is it the mark the Holy Spirit makes in the heart, mind, and character restoring in use Christlikeness—we are marked or sealed with the qualities of God as lived out by Christ when we are renewed by the Holy Spirit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dennis Hilton has had a stroke and was briefly on a ventilator at Erlanger (Chattanooga, TN). Due to limited visitor times & persons allowed please no visitors at this time. Unable to move left side & can nod yes/no. Prayers appreciated for peace & Gods will. Cami Hilton

I received a copy of the book Did God Kill Jesus Instead of Killing Us? By Kevin J. Mullins and found it to be very well done. If any of you would like to read it, you can download a free digital copy at **lastmessageofmercy.com.**

Memorial Service for Pastor Ralph LaFave father of Christie Jennings will be held, July 8, 2023 at 2 p.m. after potluck at our Come and Reason Ministry building 4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100 OOLTEWAH, TN 37363. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Come and Reason Ministries.

New Address: Come and Reason Ministries is closing our PO Box Address. Please update your records to our building address for all future mail and shipping. Our street address is:

Come and Reason Ministries
4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100
OOLTEWAH, TN 37363

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 3
The Power of the Exalted Jesus

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> Through the Holy Spirit, believers may know "what is the exceeding greatness of His **power** toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty **power** which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19-20 NKJV)

What is this power? What kind of power is this? Is this the power of physical might, of thunder, lightning, flaming swords, fire falling from heaven to destroy rebellion, the power of cosmic winds and atomic forces, the nuclear power of suns?

Let us be clear, we believe God is Creator and He is omnipotent in physical power and creative power, and He governs the laws of nature, and through Him all things were made and through Him all things hold together and are sustained. So, we never want to suggest anything that diminishes the might and power of God—however, is the physical might and power of God what wins the war against Satan and what Paul is referring to here?

Could God have used physical might to destroy Satan at the very first moment Satan rebelled in heaven? Why didn't God do this?

Would rebellion against God, the breach of trust, the growth of fear and selfishness, which is sin, have been eliminated if God had used might and power to destroy Satan in the beginning?

What about at any time? If God ever uses might and power to inflict pain, suffering, and death as punishment to destroy His enemies what will that result in? Will it result in the removal from every single remaining heart and mind all doubt, all misunderstanding, all fear, or will it result in the seeds of distrust, rebellion, fear and selfishness remaining in hearts and minds?

Can you get love, devotion, loyalty, trust, friendship by using might and power to destroy anyone who refuses to love you and be loyal to you?

What is the war over?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

The war is over God's character, His trustworthiness. So imagine in heaven, Satan starts to lie about God, and God calls the heavenly beings together and says,

> "Satan has lied about me; he has said that I am not just. Well, I am not only just, I am also love. And you can know it is true because I have said so, and because Satan has spoken falsely about me. Justice requires that I now execute him." And God kills Satan, and then says, "Does anyone now doubt how just I am?"

Would such actions result in the resolution of fear? Would the lies that Satan had been telling be resolved if God used such methods? Could God leave His heavenly beings truly free and use such controlling methods?

How do such methods look in the church today? What about proving things with a key text, saying God is just because the Bible says God is just. And who inspired the Bible, it is God the Holy Spirit, so if the Bible says God is just, isn't that the same thing as God saying He is just. Are we supposed to believe because God says it, or does God want us to believe He is just because He has revealed by deed, evidence, and action that He is just and we actually understand what true justice is?

Now, the Bible does say God is just, but is that the reason we believe it? Or is a claim, a proclamation insufficient to win the war to restore trust? Is actual evidence of trustworthiness required as well as the evidence that Satan lied?

So God gave evidence to demonstrate His character of love, His righteousness, which is the same as His justice. Paul wrote:

> "God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this **in order to demonstrate that he is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to **demonstrate his righteousness**. In this way **God shows that he himself is righteous** and that he **puts right everyone** who believes in Jesus (Romans 3:35,36 GNT, emphasis mine).

Consider this quote from a book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, this quotation will give us insight into what the Seventh-day Adventist church was called into existence to teach. It will reveal what is necessary to with the war, and how imposed rules, legal declarations, use of external might and power, proclamations, proof texts, doctrinal statements—even true ones, are insufficient to win the war. That the SDA church was called to lead people out of a legal religion to a reality-based experience with God based on the truth of who God is, including design law. I want you to consider if the message we

read in the quarterlies consistently presents this perspective or has our church lost its way, just like God's church 2000 years ago, the Jewish nation lost its way and rejected God when He came to them in person?

> Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. [Why not? If God runs His universe on rules, and Satan broke the rules, why not call Satan before the heavenly tribunal, play the recordings of Satan's false statements against God. Then have God take the stand and say, "this is not true. I am just. Satan has lied, and all those who believe Satan are also now liars and will be found guilty. Since I am completely just, I am now going to execute Satan for His crime against me. Does anyone else here believe that I am not just?" Might one of the angels say, "God of course we know you are just. It is simply that this doesn't seem like the loving thing to do. We also thought that you were not only just, but were love. Were we wrong about that?" And God responds, "You were not wrong. I am love because I say I am love and who are you to question me on this? You wouldn't suggest that my actions in destroying Satan are not love would you?" Why didn't God destroy Satan? Because God is love and God's justice is the justice of love, and love cannot be compelled, it cannot be developed or experienced by force, by coercion, so if God were to act in these ways God would not be love and His actions would destroy love in the hearts of the loyal angels and Satan's rebellion spreads.] Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. [What kind of allegiance is this? Can such loyalty be obtained through imposed laws, rules enforced by threats of punishment? How can angels or humans know that God is just and benevolent? Can we know this through claims, through statements, through written words, because the Bible has a proof text that says God is love? Does the Bible text that says God is love prove God is love? How can God win us to eternal confidence and unshakable certainty that He is just and benevolent? Doesn't that have to be demonstrated by evidence? And that is the true purpose of Scripture, to record the history of God's actions in dealing with the sin problem, demonstrating God's character, methods, principles, ultimately in the life of Christ which is not a declaration or a claim, but reality, historical fact that God is love, and that God will never use His power to kill us, but would rather die that use His power to save Himself even from unjust execution. Notice what the author says next as to why God didn't destroy Satan.] The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. [Does this statement say God would be just in using His power to destroy Satan, or that if God had permitted Satan's destruction it would be just on God's part, but the heavenly intelligences would not have understood how and why it was just?] Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. [Why would some of the sinless angels have served God from fear rather than love, if God would have eliminated Satan in any way—certainly if God would have used power to artificially destroy Satan as an external execution we can understand how that would have resulted in fear. But what if God simply allowed Satan to reap what sin brings, separation from God who is the source of life and therefore Satan ceases to exist and die. What then? Since no death had ever occurred, and since Satan had lied about God's law and government, the cause of death would have been misunderstood. The idea that God kills, inflicts death as punishment would have persisted even

if Satan was gone and that idea would continue to spread into more hearts and minds and love and trust for God would be undermined and sin would continue.] The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. [Why? Because misunderstanding about what causes death would persist and beings would believe God is the source of death and will kill the disobedient. What does most of Christianity teach God must do for justice sake? Use His power to kill the wicked. This is part of Satan's lies from the beginning. Love and trust cannot be achieved through the external infliction of punishment, for it is a violation of God's law of love and liberty and always results in the destruction of love and the incitement of rebellion.] For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question. Patriarchs and Prophets 42.3 [For the good of the universe Satan's existence and rebellion must be allowed to grow—how is this good? Because it is the only way to eliminate the lies. When lies are believed they cannot be removed from hearts and minds by declarations of truth alone. Irrefutable, overwhelming, reliable, and reality-based evidence is required. The old saying, the proof is in the pudding. The outcome will reveal the truth. The only way to fully and permanently eliminate Satan's rebellion is through a revelation of truth—both God revealing the truth about Himself and His kingdom, which was accomplished through Jesus, and Satan revealing the truth about his character, methods, and kingdom—which is being revealed and will more fully be revealed right before Christ's return when God's protective hand is withdrawn as more people harden their hearts against God.]

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. [What does this mean? What law lens? Is this saying, see if you break the rules then God is the one who will use power to cause all kinds of pain and suffering and death as punishment for sin and that is really bad, so be good and obey the rules because God is just and loves you. Or is this saying, that breaking away from God and God's design laws results only in disorder, chaos, suffering, sickness and death and it will be evident to all that Satan's rebellion is the cause of all pain, suffering and death, not God.] It would testify that with the existence of God's government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. [How will this Great Controversy, this battle between good and evil waged throughout human history here on planet Earth testify that the well-being of all creatures is bound up in God's government? Because God's government is the government of reality, love, truth, freedom and His laws are the very basis for life and health and all will see that life and health are only possible in harmony with the laws upon which life is built.] Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty. Patriarchs and Prophets 42.4 [Suffering sin's penalty—what does this mean? Does this say suffering the legal penalty inflicted by the just demands of God's holy law, or suffering the penalty that sin itself causes?]

Now, we are talking about the power of God, has this review of what the Adventist church is supposed to be teaching had anything to do with the power of God that Paul is talking about in Ephesians? Is there power in putting down rebellion and securing the universe from all future rebellion?

But what kind of power? Does God with the war through the exercise of physical might and enforcing power? So what power wins the war?

It is the power that Paul refers to in Romans?

> I am not ashamed of the **gospel, because it is the power of God** for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the **gospel a righteousness from God is revealed**, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:16–17 NIV84).

Gospel power is the power of the truth about God and the love of God, truth that destroys lies and wins us back to faith or trust, and in that restored intimacy with God, we know Him and experiencing His healing and transforming presence, His love, in us and we are healed from fearful enemies to trusting friends.

SUNDAY

The lesson is about prayer, read the fourth paragraph,

> What does it really mean to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17)? It cannot mean that we are always kneeling before God in prayer. It does mean that, blessed by God's Spirit, we move through life with hearts open to the presence and power of God, seeking cues for thanksgiving to Him. It means a readiness to process the issues of life in the presence of God, to seek divine counsel as we experience the twists and turns that life brings. It means living not in estrangement from God but in engagement with Him, ever open to divine leading. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 23).

What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

What do you understand prayer to be?

What do you think of this description from the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, do you think this is an accurate description of what prayer is supposed to be or not?

> Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. [What does this mean? This is a metaphor, so interpret the symbols? What does the living bread represent? The word of God, the truth as revealed by Jesus, we are to partake of truth from God's word, from God's revelations in

> nature and life's experiences. All truth comes from and through Jesus to us. And these truths, some from revelation in Scripture, like the truth of Creation is six days followed by the Sabbath, some from experience, like God's forgiveness and grace which removes guilt and shame, and some from science and nature, the wonders of God's creation. As we internalize these truths what happens in us? This is to be our mindset as we daily journey through life, seeing the world around us through the mind of a person who knows and loves God and understands reality from heaven's perspective. Such a mindset impacts how we experience, understand, and relate to the events we are experiencing. And because God is infinite the truth that we are to experience is infinite, we have fresh revelations and insights daily. We never stop growing and advancing in our knowledge and experiences with God.] If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. [What does this mean? Allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise? Consider your relationship with your spouse. When you are apart and anything of significance happens, what do you want to do? If you see a beautiful sunset, don't you want to take a picture and show your spouse? If you spot a black bear in your yard, don't you want to call your spouse and let them know? If you see a horrible train derailment don't you want to tell your spouse? In other words, when you are in relationship with someone, don't you want to share life with them, talk with them? And of course, when you receive various blessings from your spouse don't you automatically express your love and thanks to them? But what about when hardships happen, when pain occurs, sickness, death—what then? Well in my experience it is during those hard times that I find myself most thankful for my loved ones, my spouse, family, friends. Likewise, it is during the most difficult times that it is so sweet to trust in Jesus and lean into His love and mercy. So, if we have this mindset with God, notice what this author says our prayer life becomes.] Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. [When you are going throughout your day, do you find yourself talking to God, commenting to Him your appreciation for the beautiful cardinal, thanking Him for the sounds of the flowing stream, the love of friends and family? Do you also tell him of your irritation with the traffic, or the frustration with the broken dishwasher, or leaking roof? Do you tell him of your fears when a loved one is sick, and cry out to your heavenly Friend when your heart grieves? Is this what prayer is for you? Then notice what this author says happens, when we talk with God as a friend.] He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. (Christ's Object Lessons 129).

This is what I believe prayer is supposed to be, conversation with God as with a friend, sharing our lives in ongoing and active communication with God.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the Holy Spirit, specifically on receiving wisdom from the Holy Spirit.

What do you understand wisdom to be?

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?

Knowledge is the awareness of facts, data, information—wisdom is the application of that knowledge in godly and healthy ways that conform to God's designs and principles for life.

Why is the wisdom of this world actually foolishness and the wisdom of God considered foolishness by the world?

Wisdom is knowing and living in harmony with reality—God's eternal reality, how life and health are designed by God to function.

Thus God's wisdom is based upon truth, love, and freedom. Genuine health and happiness, not momentary pleasure, is only possible in harmony with God and His design for life. Thus the more you give the more you receive. But this is the opposite of Satan's fantasy world, the false and artificial principles of this world, which is based upon lies, fear, selfishness, and coercion and says the more you take from others the more you have.

And what we are seeing in the world today is a world cycling downward into destruction as more and more of Satan's methods and principles are practiced and promoted as wisdom, but it is foolishness.

Consider the following out of the book *Education*, do you agree, and what does it mean?

> True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; **but above information it values power**; [What kind of power, coercive, external, force and might, or the power to think and to act, to exercise autonomy and choose?] **above power, goodness**; [what does power do when wielded by evil, so true education, education in God's kingdom must advance beyond facts and knowledge to the power to think and act, but that power must be governed by goodness and not evil] **above intellectual acquirements, character**. [And this is true education, to develop mature Christlike character] **The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character**. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle. Ed 225.1 [What is the steadfast principle that needs to be the controlling influence in us? Love, altruistic other-centered love for God and others, which is based upon truth and freedom.]
>
> "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright." Proverbs 4:7; 15:2. **True education imparts this wisdom. It teaches the best use not only of one but of all our powers and acquirements. Thus it covers the whole**

> **circle of obligation—to ourselves, to the world, and to God**. Ed 225.2 [What is this describing? Reality, how God built reality to work and true wisdom restores people back to harmony with God and God's designs for life in how we live and relate and fulfill our obligations to ourselves, others, and God.]

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us "How is God's power expressed in the resurrection of Jesus?"

Thoughts?

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV84).
>
> Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84).

Jesus said to John in Revelation,

> I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Revelation 1:18 NIV84).
>
> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. (Revelation 20:14 NIV84).

How does one destroy death? What kills, eliminated, erase, eradicates death? Life! So what do you think Christ's power is that destroys the power of death and what is the lake of fire? And how did Christ accomplish this at the cross?

In Jesus the principle of life, God's eternal, selfless love battled against fear and selfishness, the survival of the fittest principles that causes sinners to hurt, control, exploit and abuse others in order to protect self. Jesus, as our human substitute, had to decide, would He live out God's principle of love, giving His life freely, or would He choose to use power to protect self? Would He live out the justice of God, which is based on love, truth, and freedom—or would He use the methods of this world, the methods of force and external enforcement to put down the injustice and abuse that His enemies were doing to Him?

Jesus chose, in His own person, to say no to the desire to retaliate, to use power, to punish law-breakers, to protect Himself. Instead, He not only sacrificed Himself in love, He forgave those who were abusing Him. In the person of Jesus Christ the law of life, the law of love and truth and freedom destroyed the law of sin and death when Jesus refused to give in to all temptations to act in self-interest. Thus Jesus rose again in a humanity that He fixed, that He purged from all fear and

selfishness, a new purified and sinless humanity. And Jesus became the second Adam, the new head of humanity—and as Scripture says:

> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV84).

As a human being, Jesus had to grow, mature, develop, and learn. Jesus had to choose, in His humanity, what principles He would live out, what character He would develop. And once, He was made perfect—not before—He became the source of salvation.

But wasn't Jesus always perfect—He was always sinless—but in His sinless self, He was still subject to our weaknesses, subject to temptation, and was tempted in every way just like we are yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). And we are tempted by our own evil desires (James 1:14). Jesus became part of this humanity. Through Mary, Jesus took up humanity damaged and broken by Adam. And thus Jesus experienced the temptations of human emotions that tempt us to fear, and fear tempts us to act in self-interest. In Gethsemane Jesus felt these powerful emotional temptations to avoid the cross, to save self. But, because Jesus' Father was the Holy Spirit, He was capable of resisting that temptation and choosing with His human brain to love fully and perfectly. And thus in Jesus love destroyed fear and selfishness at the cross—life destroyed death at the cross and Jesus rose again as the predictable and inevitable outcome of living out perfectly God's living law of love.

This is how Jesus was able to tell His disciples over and over again that He was going to Jerusalem to be abused and killed by evil men, but that He would rise on the third day. Jesus knew what His mission was. He knew what was required to complete the mission of destroying the cause of death principle and restoring the life causing principle into humanity. His ability to predict His resurrection was based on His understanding of God's character and laws. It was not based upon a prophetic vision of seeing the future.

This is why in the book *The Desire of Ages* the author correctly writes,

> "Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb" (The Desire of Ages 753).

Jesus was not given a vision of the future like Daniel or John were given in their prophetic visions. Jesus knew what was going to happen because He knew what the sin problem was and how He was going to destroy it and in doing so He would rise again.

So what is the resurrection power? It is the power of truth and love, God's living law that originates in and emanates from God and is the basis upon which God has constructed life to exist and operate, and when we are restored to harmony with truth and love we are restored to harmony with God and God's life-giving presence dwells in us again in the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, who recreates us in Christlikeness of character.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

> Paul has celebrated the exaltation of Jesus, who now sits with the Father on the throne of the cosmos. Having defined the position of Christ in relationship to the Father ("seated . . . at his right hand in the heavenly places" [Eph. 1:20, ESV]), Paul turns to the relationship of Jesus to "the powers." As coregent with the Father, Jesus is "far above" them all (Eph. 1:21). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 26).

What do you think about this? When Jesus ascended to heaven, did He take His seat at the Father's right hand on the throne?

But I thought the SDA church teaches that He did not take up His ruling vestments, but His priestly robes and didn't sit on His throne but has been ministering as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

What do you think of this?

The description of Jesus going to heaven and taking the throne after His ascension has been used by some to suggest that the SDA sanctuary message is untrue, that Jesus did not go to heaven and begin any work in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest in heaven.

How do you address such concerns?

The word pictures of Scripture are designed to teach us truths about Christ's position in God's government, His authority, His rulership, and His activity in the plan of salvation—these Biblical descriptions are not designed or intended to reveal heavenly geography.

In other words, descriptions of Jesus on a throne or descriptions of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary are descriptions of ability, authority, and function, not geography.

Right understanding requires our ability to think abstractly, to not get caught into literalism. Don't fall for the trap of believing either/or, either He is on the throne or He is in the sanctuary—He can't be both. That is childlike thinking. Instead, think through what these two pictures reveal about Jesus' role in the plan of salvation and how He is fulfilling both simultaneously to complete His work of winning the war.

I see no contradiction in either of these two descriptions, Jesus as ruling Sovereign and Jesus has our heavenly High Priest. They both are true and simultaneously so.

Remember, Jesus was always and already Sovereign, ruler, Creator, fully and equally God. In other words, before Jesus' incarnation He already shared the throne. So the image of Jesus returning to

heaven and sharing the throne with the Father is not intended to describe Jesus receiving powers or authority that were new to Him.
These descriptions are intended to inform us that His mission to Earth, in His direct confrontation with Satan was successful and that He returned in humanity to take again His rightful place as ruler of the universe, and having won the victory here, having demonstrated the truth about God and God's design laws for life, having exposed Satan as a liar and fraud.

When Jesus returned to heaven as victor, as conqueror, He was recognized as such by the heavenly beings, and Jesus was enthroned in the position of victor and ruler and Sovereign in the hearts and minds of all heavenly beings. All of Satan's allegations against Jesus were gone, and the heavenly beings all recognize Him has worthy, worthy, worthy to have and wield all power because He has proven Himself eternally safe with all the power.

Jesus upon His ascension stepped into the command center of the universe for the purpose of directing all the agencies of heaven for the completion of the plan of salvation, which is the work metaphorically acted out in the sanctuary theater. Thus in Jesus He is both Sovereign Ruler and Ministering High Priest and fulfills both roles simultaneously.

Thus, these two descriptions have no tension in them at all but are in perfect accord with reality and what Christ is accomplishing in our behalf.

And in **FRIDAY's** lesson there is a quote from *Acts of the Apostles* that describes this very unity of function:

> When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people. (Acts of the Apostles 38).

This description describes both His coronation in heaven and simultaneously His ministry has High Priest directing the Holy Spirit to cleanse, heal, and empower His people.

The lesson talks about how in Ephesus there was a strong interest in magic, incantations, sorcery and such. The belief that through the proper incantations, words, recitation of verbal formulas, charms, and various rituals one could conjure and control spirits to achieve magical outcomes.

What do you think about this?

Are we seeing a resurgence in magic, sorcery, spiritualism in the world today?

What about in the church? Is magic and magical thinking intruding into Christianity? How?

What about the idea that our prayers are not valid, don't have power, won't be heard unless we end them with the proper incantation of reciting the powerful word "Jesus" "In the name of Jesus?" But, then we discover, Jesus never went by that name as that is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew Joshua, so we fear our prayers never were heard because we used the wrong incantation. So we with renewed confidence pray again but this time in the name of Joshua, but then we discover that is still not how the Hebrew is spelled or pronounced and thus our incantation is still incorrect, so we begin again, but now in the name of Yashua. What joy we now feel knowing we have the right incantation and God will finally hear our prayers.

Is, prayer, the conversation with God as with a friend, really about saying the some word at the end in the right way? Even the name of God? If your grandchildren, struggle to pronounce your name properly, perhaps have difficulty with a lisp, or just cant form the words, but with love and joy call out to you, do you get offended, do you refuse to hear?

Think what this idea about we must use the right words when we pray says about God.

I like how the book *The Desire of Ages* describes what it means to pray in the name of Jesus:

> **But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works**. (The Desire of Ages 668).

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

> Note carefully that having "put all things under his [Jesus'] feet," the Father "gave him as head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22, ESV; compare "gave Him to be head over all things to the church," NKJV). While "all things" is a universal, inclusive term, Paul still has in mind "the powers" mentioned in Ephesians 1:21. All things—the cosmic, supernatural, spiritual powers included—are under the feet of Christ, subservient to Him. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 27).

Was putting all things under Jesus' rule and authority a change? Was Jesus ever not in authority over all things? Was Jesus ever not the rightful ruler?

So, is this description about all things being placed under Jesus a description of a new position of authority with new responsibilities and abilities for Jesus, or is it a description of the recognition in the minds of all intelligences of the reality that was always true but had been hidden or obscured by Satan's lies and now that those lies were defeated then Jesus continuing on in His same position of authority is recognized as such by all heavenly beings?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Consider this description of the beginning of Lucifer's rebellion in heaven from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* I encourage you to read the entire chapter, this is one short paragraph after Lucifer's lies to the angels had caused confusion, God announced the true position of His Son, but consider this statement:

> **There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ**. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but **this had been the same from the beginning**. **Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions**. (Patriarchs and Prophets 38).

This is what lies do—they confuse and blind and thus the truth is needed, both to be proclaimed, but more powerfully revealed through evidence and action.

The lesson says, in the third paragraph, that "God has made Christ victorious over all evil powers."

What does this mean? How has God made Christ victorious? How was this victory over all evil powers achieved?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

I received a copy of the book Did God Kill Jesus Instead of Killing Us? By Kevin J. Mullins and found it to be very well done. If any of you would like to read it, you can download a free digital copy and **also request a physical copy of the book** at **lastmessageofmercy.com.**

Chip Liles has served as the treasurer of Come and Reason Ministries for the last 9 years. He has overseen significant growth in our ministry, the purchase and renovation of this building and has helped us efficiently keep up with all of our financial obligation. As of today, July 1, 2023 Chip will move from Treasurer to general board member. Stephanie Land who was our Treasurer for the first couple of years of our ministry has agreed to resume the role and as of today she has moved from general board member to be our Treasurer. I want to give thanks to both Stephanie and Chip, but especially thank Chip for all he has done for us the past 9 years.

The God Shaped Heart, has just been released in German in Germany, Herz voll Gott, published by the Adventist publishing house in Germany.

Our friend and class member, Dennis Hilton passed away June 28, 2023. **Celebration of Life** for Dennis Hilton will be July 9th, 2023 with visitation with family at 4:00pm & service starting at 4:30pm at Hamilton Community Church 7997 Shallowford Rd. Chattanooga, TN 37421. Meal will follow for family.

Memorial Service for Pastor Ralph LaFave father of Christie Jennings will be held, July 8, 2023 at 2 p.m. after potluck at our Come and Reason Ministry building 4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100 OOLTEWAH, TN 37363. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Come and Reason Ministries.

New Address: Come and Reason Ministries is closing our PO Box Address. Please update your records to our building address for all future mail and shipping. Our street address is:

Come and Reason Ministries
4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100
OOLTEWAH, TN 37363

NEW MAGAZINE: Critical Race Theory: Exposing the Lies While Advancing the Gospel, is now available**!**

New Billboard Resource: In response to requests from our listeners, we have developed some billboards, and will be developing and releasing new ones periodically. They will be released in sets that have the same slogan with different layouts and images. These are available for anyone who would like to download and use them in their community. Come and Reason Ministries is not, at this time, planning on purchasing billboard space, but we are making these available for those who want to put billboards up in their community.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 4
How God Rescues Us

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5 ESV).

The lesson starts by recalling the rescue of 18-month-old Jessica McClure back in 1987 who fell down an 8 inch well casing, and how the rescuers piped air down to her and work feverishly for two days and finally rescued her from that well.

Then the lesson goes on to say in the last paragraph,

> There's nothing quite as gripping as a good rescue story, and Paul, in Ephesians 2:1–10, gives us an up-close-and-personal view of the grandest, most sweeping rescue mission of all time—God's efforts to redeem humanity. The drama of the story is heightened by knowing that we are not mere spectators of someone else's rescue but witnesses of our own. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 30).

Do any questions come to your mind? Do you say, yes, this is true God is rescuing us—but wait a minute—from what?

Do you instantly think God is rescuing us from:

- Sin?
- Death?
- Satan?
- The carnal nature?

Do you ever think Jesus is rescuing us from the just punishment God must inflict upon sinners for sin? Have you ever thought that Jesus has paid our legal penalty in order to rescue us from legal condemnation and God's eternal punishment?

Understand, rescuing us from sin and rescuing us from inflicted punishment for sin are not the same. These two ideas may sound similar, but that are not.

Rescuing someone from metastatic cancer and rescuing someone from a doctor who will kill them because they have metastatic cancer are not the same.

Thirty years ago, my father unexpectedly died at age 57. His death brought home to me the sin-sickness in this world. I lost my satisfaction for this world. I became very motivated to see Jesus come again, because I realized that when Jesus returns we can be with our departed loved ones again.

I read texts in the Bible about how we can hasten the day of the Lord, and how when the gospel is preached as a witness to all nations then the end will come.

I wanted that to happen, and I wondered why hasn't Jesus already come, certainly the entire world has heard about Jesus. I rejected the theory that there was some hermit in some cave in some isolated part of the world that had never heard of Jesus and if we could find that hermit and tell him about Jesus then we could hasten the day.

Instead, I examined the history of Christianity since Jesus ascended and realized that something changed from how Jesus presented the gospel to how the church presents the gospel.

In my studies, I came to realize that the reason Jesus hasn't returned is that there is a counterfeit version of Christianity that dominates the world and the Christianity that Jesus taught must be presented.

And this week, as I have been preparing for Ralph's memorial, I was convicted again of the need to make plain the true gospel that is to lighten the world and when presented will hasten the day of our Lord's appearing. This is the true message of the true rescue mission of Jesus, to understand from what Jesus is rescuing us and how we can tell others this good news. So in our class today, that is what I am going to do.

Understand, my motivation is not to win an argument; it is not to prove one church right and another wrong; or to win a theological debate. My motivation is to hasten the coming of Jesus and to do that I believe we must advance the true gospel.

Consider what I present in this light and ask, is there merit in what I am presenting? Do you agree or not? It is okay to disagree, every person must be persuaded in their own mind. But if you disagree, please consider what evidence you have for your disagreement, and come show it to me. If you agree with me—then I would ask that you join with us at Come and Reason and begin sharing this healing message about God with those in your family, church, and community, and together we can hasten the day and meet Jesus face to face, and see our loved ones again.

So we must answer the question, from what Jesus rescuing us? Sin itself, or is Jesus' mission to rescue us from God's wrath, from the legal penalty that God in His righteous anger must inflict upon us?

Is any of the following commonly taught in Christianity—and if so, do you believe any of it?

- God is a righteous judge whose holiness requires that He accurately judge sinners and that in order to maintain His justice He must enforce His law
- Therefore, God, in justice, must inflict the penalty of death upon sinners, God must, for all who refuse His salvation, use His power to do His strange act of killing unrepentant sinners so that His law can be maintained and justice can be served
- But God loves us and rather than immediately punish sinners with the just death penalty that we deserve. God sent His Son, and even though His Son is totally innocent, God laid upon Jesus the sins of all human sinners and then punished Jesus by executing Him in our place in order to satisfy His demand for justice and to maintain the integrity of the law. Because of the sacrifice of innocent Jesus, God now proclaims that He can accept the legal payment of Jesus' blood to our heavenly account for all who claim it and He will declare them legally righteous, even though they, in reality, remain unrighteous.

Have you ever heard anything like this taught in Christianity? Have you ever believed anything like this?

If you are an SDA Christian—do you believe the SDA church was called into existence to take a special end-time message to the world that is intended to prepare the world for Christ's second coming?

What if I could demonstrate to you from both Scripture, and historical SDA documents, that as long as we present matters in the legal way I just read, we are failing to do that work and thus we are contributing to the delay rather than hastening the day of Jesus' return?

First though, let me be clear for any listeners who are not familiar with the SDA church. When I talk about the mission or calling of the SDA church, understand that its God-given mission is not one of sectarianism. It's special, God-blessed message is NOT—"you must join the SDA denomination because salvation is only found by membership in the SDA church." Such religious narcissism is what the Jews 2000 years ago fell into. The Israelites had also been given a special mission to prepare the world for the first advent of the Messiah, but they falsely concluded that they were blessed with exclusive salvation and only by being Jewish could people be saved (remember Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, the wise men from the East who worshiped baby Jesus?). If we have any idea that we hold an exclusive license to salvation and our mission is to get people to join the SDA denomination in order to be saved, we are off message and delaying the coming of Christ.

The message we have been given is found in the 3 angels and it is a message to call people to worship God as Creator, as the Builder of reality, and to stop worshiping the legal fictional dictator god that comes out of the Romanization of Christianity when Roman imperial law replaced God's design law in the church and which misrepresents God's government as functioning like human governments—imposed laws with a punishing ruler to is required to use his power to inflict punishments on rule-breakers.

The critical question that the entire war in heaven and earth centers upon, is how we understand God's law functions, because whatever we believe about God's law **determines** the character of the God we worship.

If we believe God's law functions like human law, made up rules that require oversight and enforcement, then we believe justice requires inflicted punishment, and God is thought of as the source of pain, suffering, and inflicted death—all in the name of justice of course. And salvation is the means whereby something is done to God to get God paid, appeased, satisfied, propitiated, to have something done to hide us and protect us from God for if we didn't have an intercessor pleading our case before this law-enforcing god then he would be required by his holiness, justice, and his hatred of sin to lash out and torture and kill us—but the torture will be only as much as we deserve.

But if we worship the Creator and realize that God's laws are the laws that reality is built and functions upon, and that life is only possible in harmony with these laws, then we realize that sin takes one out of harmony with God and life and results in death. As the Bible says, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23), "sin when full grown brings forth death" (James 1:15), "those who sow to the carnal nature from than nature reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8).

When we return to Creator worship, we realize that the only possible outcome from sin, without divine intervention, is ruin and death and that God is not the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death, but God is the source of life, of health, of our healing and salvation.

The question over God's character is determined by how we answer the question over God's law. And this is how Satan began his rebellion in heaven, and how it spread to earth, and how the rebellion has persisted in the church, and it is the issue upon which it will finally be concluded. And if we want to hasten the day of Christ's return then we must get this right.

I will use the writings of E.G. White (EGW) as historical documentation for the message that the Adventist church was supposed to take to the world. I will also support this from Scripture, and then contrast it with documentation from official Adventists publications to demonstrate that the message of God's design law and character of love has been replaced with human law and the penal legal dictator god that comes from accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law. This wrong idea about law distorts all of our doctrines (our correct and right doctrines) to such a degree that this single falsehood has prevented the church from fulfilling its mission to hasten the coming of the Lord.

In the introduction to the book *The Great Controversy*, EGW wrote:

> **Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages.** From time to time **I have been permitted to behold the working**, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are**

> **substituted for the law of God**, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator, may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator**, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love; **his endeavors to set aside the divine law**, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers. (The Great Controversy x.1)
>
> **The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—**a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah,** between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**.** (The Great Controversy 582).

What kinds of laws to humans make? God is Creator and He builds reality, space, time, energy, matter and life—His laws are the protocols reality operates upon.

Created beings cannot do this, so we make up rules and call them laws, but our rules require external policing and enforcement.

The final battle is between the belief in a god who functions no differently that a human dictator, a being who makes up rules and uses external power to enforce his rules—the justice of inflicted punishments for rule breaking versus the Creator God whose law is the very basis of life itself and who uses power not to punish, but to heal, save, and deliver.

In John 13, when Jesus was given all power—He immediately got up and washed 12 pairs of dirty feet. He acted out through this service the truth that God uses power to cleanse sinners from sin, to remove our guilt, shame, rebellion, fear, selfishness, to heal, to make us pure. Jesus did not use power to have a tribunal or to inflict punishment. That is Satan’s method based on imposed law.

Notice, the historical record the view the SDA church is supposed to teach regarding Satan’s position on God’s law from the very opening of the war in heaven:

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

The historical Adventist message was supposed to teach that it is Satan’s position that God’s law requires inflicted punishment. But instead the church has accepted Satan’s view as true, that God’s law does require God to punish sin. Accepting Satan’s lie results in God being presented as the source of death, the one from whom we must be protected. And our theologies take on a legal dimension with

Jesus working to appease, propitiate, and assuage the anger and wrath of the Father, to hide us from the Father so the Father won't kill us.

> "God could employ only such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not - flattery and deceit. He had sought to **falsify the word of God and had misrepresented His plan of government**, claiming that God was **not just in imposing laws** upon the angels; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. **It was therefore necessary to demonstrate** before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, **that God's government is just, His law perfect**. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper and his real object must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works." (Patriarchs and Prophets 42).

Some might argue that the statement "claiming that God was **not just in imposing laws** upon the angels" means that God is just to impose laws upon His creatures, and therefore God's laws are imposed just like human laws. But this is a double lie and demonstrates the sophistication and subtlety of Satan's deceptions.

Consider someone saying, "John is not just in beating his wife"—what is the lie? that John is not just and because we know John is just it therefore must be just for John to beat his wife; or is the real lie the imbedded accusation that John beats his wife at all? The lie here is that God imposes law but presenting it as an unjust thing, leads people who know that God is just to argue that no, God is not unjust, He is just, so they promote Satan's lie that God imposes law. It would be like saying, we know John is just so it is just for John to beat his wife.

We reject the lie that God is not just, He is just; and we also reject the imbedded lie that God imposes laws.

From the historical record what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, EGW, the same author who wrote the quote above, describes the laws of heaven before Satan's rebellion:

> **But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality**. **When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing 109).

What kind of law can be in operation and beings live in harmony with it, but they haven't even been informed about it or thought of it?

This is design law—as I have described before, consider Isaac Newton discovering (not creating) the law of gravity and then telling his friends, “Hey, I have discovered the law of gravity.” And he describes that law. Can’t you see them saying—gravity is a law—"wow, I never thought of that, it is just how things work.”

This is God’s law, how things work, the protocols of life, including the law of love.

Satan’s position is that God is arbitrary and His law is nothing more than made up rules and that God uses His power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. This view of God as a legal enforcer and punisher is what happens when we replace God’s design laws with Romanism, imposed human laws.

Here is the historical message that the SDA church is supposed to be presenting to the world:

> Many conceive of the **Christian's God as a being whose attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge**, a harsh, exacting creditor. The Creator has been **pictured as a being** who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, **that He may visit judgment upon them**. In the minds of thousands, love and sympathy and tenderness are associated with the character of Christ, while **God is regarded as the law-giver, inflexible, arbitrary, devoid of sympathy** for the beings He has made. (7LtMs, Ms 41, 1892, par. 1)
>
> **Never was there a greater error. Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love.** It is from Him that we receive every good gift. He is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy**. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature**. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love… (7LtMs, Ms 41, 1892, par. 2)
>
> Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth.** He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary**. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God**. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes**. That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 6)

Jesus, the Word made flesh, God in humanity, revealed the truth about God and He demonstrated in His life and all His parables and teachings that God’s kingdom is not of this world, that God’s

government is not of this world, that God's law is not of this world, and that God does not run His universe like a Roman dictator.

The Apostles accepted the truth as Jesus brought it and Saul, who prior to his conversion, used the imposed law methods, the power of the state, the idea that justice requires the use of power to coerce, to inflict punishment, but then He met Jesus on the Damascus road, and after his conversion, Paul wrote that "every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind" (Romans 14:5) and that we present truth in love and leave others free. Paul taught that it is from sin that we reap destruction, not from God.

The New Testament church practiced the principles of God's living law of love that transforms hearts and minds and they did not seek political power, to get new governors, or new senators in Rome, or to retaliate and punish those who were persecuting them. Instead, they lived out God's love and the gospel spread across the Roman Empire. So Satan changed his tactics from trying to destroy the believers in Jesus to infecting their understanding of what Jesus did and how God's kingdom works by returning to his original lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that requires God to inflict penalties for breaking.

Eusebius, the first church historian wrote:

> With the Roman Empire monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven." S.L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius* (London: SCM Press, 1954).

Here is another historical quote that presents what the Advent message is supposed to be:

> **The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God**, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. (The Great Controversy 22).

The SDA Church was specifically called into existence to call people back to worshiping God as Creator, this means we reject the Romanization of God's law and government, reject the imperial, imposed view of law and justice and return to understanding God's laws as design laws. This is documented in the historical record:

> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be**, holy, just, and good, complete in itself. **It cannot be repealed or changed.** To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (Prophets and Kings 625).

Human law can be repealed and changed but the laws upon which reality is built cannot.

The Roman church, in attempting to change God's law, reveals that it believes that God's law is imposed. What church ever voted to change the law of respiration or gravity? Why not? Because they

cannot! So what does it mean if a church does vote to change God's law? That they do not view God's law as design law, but as imposed rules. This is what Rome did, when they deleted the second commandment, split the tenth into two, and changed the fourth to the third and the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. These changes to the law are not the primary problem or concern, they are the evidence, the fruit, the proof and the result of believing the base lie that God's law functions like human law.

And all Protestant churches still accept this lie about God's law and still promote to some degree a false penal/legal system with God made out to be the source of inflicted torment and death as punishment for sin. Historical Adventism taught that the question over God's law and thus His character and government is the question that brings the controversy to its conclusion:

> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.** Upon this battle we are now entering--**a battle not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of **fable** and tradition…(Prophets and Kings 625).

EGW describes in great detail, in many places, that God's law is design law, again I am documenting what the Adventist church is supposed to be teaching and the message that we are supposed to be taking to the world:

> **The transgression of the physical law is the transgression of God's law.** Our Creator is Jesus Christ. He is the Author of our being. He has created the human structure. **He is the Author of physical laws as He is the Author of the moral law.** And the human being who is careless and reckless of the habits and practices that concern his physical life and health sins against God (Kress Collection 46.3).
>
> The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws** that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, **are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--**a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will.** To transgress His **law, physical, mental, or moral**, is to place one's self **out of harmony** with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. Education 99).

WEDNESDAY

In the lesson's last paragraph is the following quote:

> By coming to dwell with us, **Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels**… But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme

> into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. **Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings** will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of **Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love**. [The lesson stops the quote right here, but the next sentence is crucial] In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the **law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven** (The Desire of Ages 19).
>
> But turning from all lesser representations, **we behold God in Jesus**. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give… "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe**. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life**. (The Desire of Ages 21).

The mission of the SDA church is to evangelize the world for Christ's return by taking the special message of the three angels of Revelation 14 to the world. **This special message only becomes the final message of mercy when we present it through design law** calling people back to worship God as Creator and stop presenting it through Roman imposed law which presents Him as a dictator. EGW didn't use the term design law for this, she used the term natural law. Notice again the historical evidence for what I am saying, she wrote:

> **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God**. Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being**. **All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of **the laws that He has established**. And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. He **publishes His law** and the penalty that will follow the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it if they will… **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.** (Testimonies to the Church vol. 3, p. 161).

The special message of the third angel given to the SDA church requires that we present all our specific doctrinal truths in their right setting of God's design laws, the protocols that He built reality to operate upon and free them from the Roman imperial law lie.

When we do this, then we will finally present God is His true light. We will then give Him the glory He deserves and will be empowered to call people to make a right judgment about God so people stop

believing God is a dictator, the source of death, and worship Him as Jesus revealed Him to be our Creator, Healer, and Savior—the source of life.

But sadly, the SDA church has failed to do this and in 1888 at the GC when this message came forward, the church leadership instead of embracing it, rejected it and clung to the imposed law construct and has been teaching the Roman view of how God's law functions ever since. The church sadly, through its many publications teaches that God is the legal enforcer of imposed punishment for justice sake. After that tragic 1888 conference EGW wrote the following about the leadership of the SDA church who attended that meeting:

> **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ**. (1888 1478.2)

She went on to write:

> I tell you, God is testing us now, just now. **The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God**. **That light** is shining now, and how hard it has been for proud hearts to accept of Jesus as their personal Saviour; how hard to get out of **the rut of a legal religion**; how hard for them to **grasp** the rich, free gift of Christ. **Those who have not accepted this offering will not understand anything in regard to that light which fills the whole earth with its glory**. Let every heart now seek the Lord. Let self be crucified, for rich and glorious blessings are awaiting all who shall maintain contrition of soul. With them Jesus can abide; they will let nothing interpose between their souls and God. (Lt10-1892.25)

If we reject design law and cling to imposed Roman law, and continue to teach sin is a legal problem, we end up like the Jews 2000 years ago, religiously hardening our hearts against God, while we cling to correct doctrines.

I have documented from the historical record, the message of God's design law, the truth of His character of love, that we are to take to the world. I have contrasted it with Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law that makes God out to be a dictator and the source of inflicted pain and suffering.

Now, I will document from the record, what message the SDA church, in its official publications, has taken and is still taking to the world. Each one of us must decide, which version of God's law, character, and government do we believe is true?

> The original transgression created in the human mind a disposition of enmity against God (Col. 1:21). Consequently **we deserve the displeasure of God**, who is "a consuming fire" against sin (Heb. 12:29; cf. Hab. 1:13). The solemn truth is that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), all are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3; cf. 5:6) and subject to death "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Divine wrath is what Scripture calls God's reaction to sin and unrighteousness (Rom 1:18). Deliberate rejection of God's revealed will—His law—**provokes His righteous anger or wrath** (2 Kings 17:16-18; 2 Chron. 36:16). G. E. Ladd wrote, "Men are **ethically sinful**; and **when God counts their trespasses against them**, **he must view them as sinners, as enemies, as objects of divine wrath**; for it is an **ethical and religious necessity that the holiness of God manifests itself in wrath against** sin.".. (Seventh-day Adventists Believe 27, p. 109).

For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became '**a moral and legal necessity**.' God's 'justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute judgment** on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will**. The atonement was necessary because sinners stood under the righteous wrath of God. Herein lies the heart of the gospel of forgiveness of sin and the mystery of the cross of Christ: **Christ's perfect righteousness adequately satisfied divine justice, and God is willing to accept Christ's self-sacrifice in place of man's death**. [Remember Satan's lie from the beginning, "every sin must meet its punishment urged Satan. And if God should remit the punishment of sin He would not be a God of truth and justice"? Do you hear how this theology promotes Satan's lie?]

Persons unwilling to accept the atoning blood of Christ **receive no forgiveness of sin**, and are still subject to God's wrath… Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin**. Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself. (*Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111).

Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightening, or a lethal injection? (Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007. http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html)

One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice. (emphasis mine) (Rodriguez, A., *Adventist World Review*, December 2007; p. 40).

The Hebrew wording in both Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 was the same: 'and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed.' (9:24, NKJV). Consumed what? In the first case, the offering; in the other, the sinners. What a powerful representation of the plan of salvation. **At the Cross, the 'fire from God,' the wrath of God, 'consumed' the offering, and that was Jesus. (**Goldstein, C., *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, 3 Quarter 2011, Pacific Press, p. 40).

> **The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him [Jesus],** at Calvary, and all who are in Christ are safe forever beneath His wings. At the cross, Christ was judged as a condemned sinner so that we could be judged as righteous citizens of the heavenly kingdom. He was judged as a criminal so that we could be set free from the destructive fires of eternal loss, both figuratively and, yes, literally, as well. (Goldstein, C., *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, Pacific Press, p. 46)

Who do these quotations say is the source of inflicted death upon Jesus?

What is the barrier and problem, according to these quotes, that must be removed in order for sinners to be saved? God's anger and wrath!

But the Bible teaches that Jesus is,

> "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 NIV84).

Jesus did not come to take away the wrath of God, or the punishment of God for sin, He came to take away our sinfulness, so that we can *become* righteous. Paul wrote,

> "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

Here, from the historical record, is what the SDA church is supposed to teach:

> **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression**; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, **to reap that which they have sown**. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, **every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest**. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left **no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan**. (The Great Controversy 36).

God uses power to protect and heal, persistent sin results in the destruction of the faculties sensitive to God and God withdraws His power and the result is ruin and death. This is design law, but the church is teaching that God must use power to inflict punishment and become the executioner of the sentence. Which view do you believe is true? Which God will you choose to worship. These two views are not compatible.

God warned us through Isaiah that this very misunderstanding would occur:

> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet **we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted** (Isaiah 53:4 NIV84).

He took our terminal sin condition in order to overcome and cure it, but God foreknew that we would

misunderstand and teach that God was the One who struck Him, killed Him. That God is the One from whom death originates and that God inflicts death as punishment for sin. But Jesus said to those who would later crucify Him said,

> You belong to your **father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your **father's desire. He was a murderer** from the beginning… (John 8:44)

And Hebrews tells us,

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**— (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).

According to Jesus and Hebrews death originates and comes out from Satan. And death comes from breaking away from God and His design laws for life. Yet, when we accept Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, we teach God is the source of death—even that God killed His Son and we call that—the killing of an innocent to falsely declare the guilty to be innocent—justice.

Again, from the historical record, what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, note how this stands in stark contrast to the various SDA theologians and publications cited above:

> **Satan** saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings**. (White, E.G., *Desire of Ages,* p. 761).

The special message given to the SDA church is a call to leave behind the religions of this fallen world, to leave behind the methods of God's enemy, to reject the views of God that make Him out to be the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death, to return to worship God as Creator, the One who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water, and this requires that we reject the Romanization of God's law, we reject the lie that God's law function like human law and embrace the truth that God's laws are the very protocols and principles that reality is built by our Creator to operate upon—like the laws of health, gravity, and physics—and also the moral laws.

Consider what this quotation means in light of all we have said about God's law, and the message we are to take to the world:

> "You may have seen some in regard to the righteousness of Christ, but there is truth yet to be seen clearly that should be estimated by you as precious and rare jewel. **You will see the law of God and interpret it to the people in an entirely different light from what you have done in the past**. The law of God will be seen by you as revealing a God of mercy and righteousness. The **atonement made by the stupendous sacrifice will be seen by you in an all together different light**." (Signs of the Times 11-13-1893).

Human law imposes and inflicts punishments, God's government uses power to protect and heal and never uses external imposing power to compel. From the historical record:

> God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. (The Desire of Ages 759).

MONDAY

Read the third paragraph,

> The phrase "by nature children of wrath" points to another daunting reality, as well. While still bearers of the image of God, we have come to understand that there is something deeply awry in us. Living the Christian life, then, is not just a matter of conquering a bad habit or two or overcoming whatever "trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) are currently threatening. We do not just contend with sins but with sin. We are bent toward rebellion against God and toward self-destruction. Humans, by default, are caught in a pattern of self-destructive, sinful behavior, following the dictates of Satan (Eph. 2:2) and our own innate, sinful desires (Eph. 2:3). Believers once were "by nature the children of wrath." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 32).

What is the difference between "sin" and "sins"?

Are we in trouble for our sins? Or are our sins merely the symptoms of the sin condition?

When did you choose to become a sinner? Did you ever make that choice? Or were you, like king David, born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5)? And if you were born with this condition, is it your fault? We are not born guilty or legally condemned, we are born terminal, dead in trespass and sin. And this terminal condition we cannot cure and causes symptoms we call sins. And this is why we need remedy, we must be reborn with new hearts and right spirits to live new lives.

TUESDAY

Read Ephesians 2:4-6:

> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us

> up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6 NIV84).

What does it mean that we were made alive with Christ, raised up with Christ, and seated into rulership with Christ?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

> Unknown to them, they are in a far worse position than simply being without spiritual life or virtue. In company with all humankind, they are the enemies of the true God and are moving toward a day of destiny and divine judgment. They are "children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:3, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 32).

In light of all we have discussed today, how would you now explain this paragraph?

Is there a difference if we understand this through imposed and design law?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

For the last 9 years Chip Liles has served as the treasurer of Come and Reason Ministries. He has overseen significant growth in our ministry, the purchase and renovation of this building and has helped us efficiently keep up with all of our financial obligation. On July 1, 2023 Chip moved from Treasurer to general board member. Stephanie Land who was our Treasurer for the first couple of years of our ministry has agreed to resume the role and has moved from general board member to be our Treasurer. I want to give thanks to both Stephanie and Chip, but especially thank Chip for all he has done for us the past 9 years.

Our friend and class member, Dennis Hilton passed away June 28, 2023. **Celebration of Life** for Dennis Hilton will be July 9th, 2023 with visitation with family at 4:00pm & service starting at 4:30pm at Hamilton Community Church 7997 Shallowford Rd. Chattanooga, TN 37421. Meal will follow for family.

Dr. Jennings' New Job:

Dr. Jennings has taken the position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida.

- Honey Lake Clinic is an accredited holistic Christ-centered residential mental health treatment facility situation on a beautiful 5000-acre retreat with spring fed lakes. The program is staffed by licensed and board-certified mental health professionals and treats both male and female adults on one side of the campus and female adolescents on the other side. Patients typically stay for 30-60 days and the program includes individual and group therapies, equine therapy, hydro therapy, massage, spa treatments, exercise and fitness training, brain-healthy meals planned by a nutritionist—all Christ centered with regular worship services available in the on campus chapel.
- How you can help?
    - Continue your prayers and support of Come and Reason Ministries and share the vision
    - Our vision has been whole person healing through the true gospel of Jesus Christ
    - Working with Honey Lake allows for greater opportunity to take God's whole person healing truths to more people
- Thank you for all your prayers, support, and encouragement during this time of transition. And also thank you for your continued support of Come and Reason Ministries as we seek to share the healing message of God's love with others. We will return to our schedule of Dr. Jennings teaching remotely on most Sabbaths and teaching in person on the second Sabbath followed by potluck.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 5
Horizontal Atonement: The Cross and the Church

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read last paragraph,

> In Ephesians 2:11–22, Paul sees the cross of Christ as making a dramatic difference, destroying such barriers and walls. Vertically, the Cross dissolves alienation, reconciling humans with God. Horizontally, it reconciles people with each other. The Cross removes enmity and brings peace between Jews and Gentiles, making of them "one new humanity" (Eph. 2:15, NIV). Together they become a new temple, "a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 38).

Do you agree? Does the Cross remove enmity and bring peace between different groups of people?

I agree that it is *supposed* to, but I also observe that those who through history have claimed a belief in the Bible, in Jesus Christ as their Savior, who held up the Cross as the symbol of their faith:

- Went on the Crusades carrying the cross into war
- Burnt people at the stake for believing differently
- Held slaves
- Burned crosses in the yards of people of different backgrounds
- Burned down churches of black Americans

And today there are over 41,000 different Christian groups all claiming the Cross of Jesus Christ and within Christian homes that data shows that:

- Addiction rates are no different than non-Christian homes
- Pornography use no different than non-Christians
- Child and spouse abuse rates are no different than non-Christian homes

So, while I agree that the impact of accepting Jesus as our Savior is supposed to result in unity of people, the breaking down of hostilities, the resolution of enmity and division—that is not what history demonstrates has happened nor what we see happening in the Christian world today. So, the question is why?

If the Cross of Christ is supposed to bring unity, peace, the cessation of hostilities why do we not see that among the people who claim to believe in Jesus?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Because there is a false gospel, a false Christianity, a counterfeit belief system that has taken the place of true Christianity. It is so close to the genuine, just like an effective counterfeit dollar bill is close to the genuine, that most people don't recognize the counterfeit, but it is lacking a key ingredient that gives it the power to change lives.

Paul described that this would be the state of the church at the end of time:

> But mark this: There will be terrible times **in the last days**. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **having a form of godliness but denying its power**. Have nothing to do with them. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV84).

These people Paul is describing are not the godless, this is not the woke left, the atheist, the agnostic—they certainly don't have a form of godliness. Paul is describing people who have a form of godliness, a religion, a religious system, but they deny the power that transforms lives thus in their religion, in their claims to be believers in Jesus Christ their lives are just as divided, hostile, abusive, selfish as the rest of the world.

And what is the power they deny?

> I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, because it is t**he power of God for the salvation** of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the **gospel a righteousness** from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The **righteous will live by faith**." (Romans 1:16-17 NIV84)

There is genuine good news from God that has power in it that results in actual righteousness, a righteousness that we live out by faith. For Paul elsewhere says:

> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

It is through Jesus that we receive the true gospel and through Jesus that we become righteous and live victoriously. The true gospel causes something real to happen within us and we are changed, transformed, the enmity is taken away, we experience peace with God and unity with others who have also had this gospel transformation occur in their hearts.

But what is this gospel power and what is the counterfeit gospel that dominates the world and denies and obstructs this transforming power?

Last week I presented, from the historical record, the irreconcilable difference between the worshiping God as Creator, understanding His law as design law which causes us to recognize the truth that God

is our healer and Savior, versus the Romanization of Christianity with the imposed human law view of God, His government that causes people to worship Him as a dictator who is the source of inflicted punishment and death for sin.

It is the lie that God's law is imposed and functions like human law that perverts the gospel and how we understand God's character and government.

I am going to demonstrate that it is this same single lie, that God's law functions like human law, that results in a form of godliness that is devoid of the power of God to transform lives.

In fact, this lie about God's law makes God out to be an irrational being, a being who is contradictory and unjust, an untrustworthy being that causes us to suspend thinking, to believe without evidence, to believe things that don't make sense and to ultimately distrust God and make up theologies to protect us from Him.

The following is from a book entitle *The Cross of Christ.* Several years ago, when I was in discussions with church leaders who cling to the penal legal view, they used this book as the defense for their theology. And it was the basis of their rejection of our view.

> "In Romans 3 **justification does not mean 'to make righteous,' but rather 'to declare righteous.**'…The ground of justification is, as Paul points out, Christ's death (Rom. 5:9; 3:24, 25). The means by which it becomes effective for the individual is faith (Rom. 5:1; 3:25; Gal. 2:16, 20; Phil 3:9). Although **people do have a legal relationship to God**, it is also true that that relationship is much more than just a legal one. God's love for humanity impels Him to give people what they do not deserve (grace)." (Knight, G., *The Cross of Christ*, p. 71)…
>
> "Interestingly enough, **His [God's] legal practices are just the opposite of the instructions He gave for human judges,** who were to 'justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deut. 25:1, KJV). Anyone who 'justifies the wicked,' we read in Proverbs, and 'condemns the righteous' is 'an abomination to the Lord' (Prov. 17:15).
>
> "The issue that we must face at this point is **how God can break the rules that He set forth for human judges.** It is that type of problem, Morris claims, that troubles Paul in Romans 3. How can God be righteous if He forgives people who have no right to be forgiven? **One would expect a just God to punish those who deserved it. That is what justice means**. But in the past, Paul claims in verse 25, God did not invariably punish sin. Sinners went on living." [Under what type of law does justice mean punishing those who deserve it? And according to the historical quotation from the Desire of Ages page 761, whose position is it that God, in order to be just must punish sin?
>
> "In the opening of the great controversy, **Satan had declared** that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice." DA 761.
>
> The message that the SDA church is supposed to be teaching is that the view that God must punish sin is Satan's lie from the beginning of the controversy in heaven. Recognizing that

> God does not stand toward the sinner as the executioner of the sentence against sin, but instructs human governments to inflict punishment for sin, should cause people to step back and inquire—why? What is it different? They should remember that Paul wrote no one will but justified by the law. And in Romans Paul describes righteousness from God that is apart from the law (Romans 3:25). And of course, the obvious answer is that God's instruction to the people were for this sinful world and external behavioral control, to limit the damage of sinful living to both the sinner and the innocent and bring people to conviction, diagnosis and lead them back to God for healing.
>
> Jesus said that the kingdom of God is within you. God's law doesn't work like human law, it heals, transforms, renews, recreates. And it cannot be applied externally. But instead of remembering the Bible which says that God's ways are not like our ways, His ways are higher than ours. Those who cling to the lie that God's law functions like human law, instead corrupt the gospel by insisting that God must punish in order to be just. They then make up a contradictory irrational legal system to pretend that this makes God out to be just and trustworthy, but it doesn't and the impact, the outcome is the division and hostility we see in the church because they are promoting Satan's divisive kingdom rather than the unifying power of the true gospel of God.]
>
> "'Now,' Morris suggests, 'you can argue that this shows God to be merciful, or compassionate, or kind, or forbearing, or loving. **But you cannot argue that it shows him to be *just* [sic].'** Because God had not always punished sinners, some would be tempted to doubt His justice." (Knight, G., *The Cross of Christ,* p. 71-72).

Can you hear in this how the gospel is corrupted by Romanism, the imposed imperial law construct that perverts and distorts the truth in such a way that it denies the power of God unto salvation?

The reason they have problems is because they are trying to understand God's justice, God's righteousness, God's plan of salvation through the lie that God's law functions like human law. And this makes God out to be exactly the opposite of just, a being who punishes the innocent and declares the wicked to be righteous.

This was the problem that the Jews had and one of the reasons they rejected Christ, and when Christians accept the imposed law lie, they also reject the truth that Christ brought about His Father and the kingdom of heaven. Listen to this historical quote, what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, from the book *The Desire of Ages,* the context is Jesus healing the man born blind and the question was asked who sinned him or his parents that he was born blind. Notice what this author says about the root of why they would think this, and ask is this the view about God and the plan of salvation that is being taught in the church today, and if not why not?

> It was generally believed by the Jews **that sin is punished in this life**. Every affliction was regarded as **the penalty of some wrongdoing**, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. **It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, <u>but this truth had become perverted</u>**. [What does this mean? That all nature groans under the weight of sin. That if it wasn't for sin in the world there would be no sickness, pain, suffering of any kind. But not all suffering is a result of some individual act of sin, but from what sin does to God's creation.

A person who drinks water contaminated with some toxin or pollutant, does not sin, but that is still a violation of the laws of health and will cause suffering. In a perfect world, Eden, such a violation would not happen.] **Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and <u>death as proceeding from God</u>,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin**. [Our church has rejected only half of this lie. We reject the idea that disease is arbitrarily inflicted by God as punishment for sin, but we still teach that death is inflicted by God as punishment for sin. Why do some teach this? Because they believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, and therefore they believe that justice requires inflicted punishment. But when they worship a god who must inflict punishment they are worshiping a creature rather than the Creator. Creatures make up rules and enforce those rules by the infliction of punishment, the Creator builds reality and life itself and the breaking of His laws cause death and the Creator uses His power to heal the breach and restore us to righteousness. Death comes when the Creator stops acting, when He steps back and sets us free to reap what we have chosen, separation from Him the source of life. "Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction" Gal 6:8] Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. The Desire of Ages 471.1

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" **was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;"** and they hid their faces from Him. Isaiah 53:4, 3. The Desire of Ages 471.2 [And I gave multiple quotations last week where various leaders in our church teach that God was required to execute Jesus to pay the demands of justice. They teach that God struck His Son, or rained fired down upon Him etc.]

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ. The Desire of Ages 471.3

It is so simple once we realize God is Creator and His laws are the protocols reality are built to function upon. God is working through Christ to restore sinners to harmony with life, to heal, to recreate and restore, to write His living law into our hearts and minds.

In this sinful world, all human governments operate upon external rules that monitor and punish wrong behaviors. God's kingdom functions upon the heart. Thus, in this sinful world, God, like a loving parent, gave various rules to protect and diagnose, but these rules are not the way reality works, they are used because of the immaturity and corruption of sinful humans. In other words, the law was added as an emergency measure until we are restored to righteousness. Just as the Bible teaches in Galatians where Paul wrote that the law was added and this is all law, ceremonial and the moral code of the Ten Commandments.

As I pointed out last week, the SDA church had this message brought to at the 1888 General Conference but the leadership rejected it and chose to cling to imposed law. One of the major issues at that conference was this question of law. Jones and Waggoner, who were the proponents of the healing view, of the reality that we *become the* righteous of God by faith message, stated that Galatians

teaches that the added law was the Ten Commandments. The legalistic opposition rejected this. For them to suggest that the Ten Commandments are not eternal undermines the Sabbath Commandment and therefore they took the position that the law that was added was only the ceremonial law.

Here is what EGW wrote after that meeting, and which was supposed to be what the SDA church taught to enlighten the world, but which has been rejected and thus instead of hastening the day of our Lord's return, we delay it. I agree with this position:

> I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments**… "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). **In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law.** {Selected Messages vol. 1, p. 233, 234}

I will unpack the reasons for this addition of written law in just a moment, but first let's consider this sentence from the book *The Cross of Christ*, just quoted. It read,

> "In Romans 3 justification does not mean 'to make righteous,' but rather 'to declare righteous."

This is a classic penal/legal substitutionary statement, that righteousness does not mean what 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, that

> "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

Becoming righteous is healing, it is empowering, it results in victorious living, it results in unity of people regardless of ethnic backgrounds. People who have become righteous do not abuse their families, they give glory to God by living out His righteous character, and are lights to the world demonstrating the difference between God's kingdom which works on the heart and the earthly governments which punish behavior. Thus, the righteous, giving glory to God in how they live call people to make a right judgment about God and to stop worshiping the dictator God and to start worshiping the Creator.

But this truth is denied when people replace God's design law with human law and teach that justification is not actually putting people right with God, not making them righteous, it is declaring them to be righteous when they are still unrighteous.

Not only does this make God out to be a fraud, a trickster, a being who declares things to be different than they actually are—like saying someone is female when they are in actuality male. There is reality, and then there is fantasy, falsehood, make-believe. This penal substitutionary view has a god that lives in fantasy, claiming people are righteous when they are not righteous.

This is not what Scripture teaches. In Scripture, we are told that because of Adam's sin we are all born infected with the sin condition we did not choose (Ps 51:5) and the natural state of the sinful heart is

enmity toward God, distrusting of God, hostility toward God (Romans 8:7). But the Bible teaches us that Abraham trusted God and AFTER Abraham's heart was changed from the natural state of enmity and distrust to one of trust in God, THEN AND ONLY THEN did God declare, account, or reckon—recognize that Abraham was justified, set right, put right, righteous. Why? Because that which was wrong, Abraham's sinful heart that was filled with fear and selfishness and didn't trust God, was changed back to trust in God. This is justification. God NEVER declares someone to be righteous when they remain unrighteous. God is the God of reality, God sets people right with Him, He restores us to trust. He gives us new hearts and right spirits. He gives us a new life, the mind of Christ, writes His law upon our hearts and minds, He removes the dead stony heart and puts in a living tender heart. This is reality.

The penal legal view is a lie based on the lie that God's law functions like human law and it creates a form of godliness with no power.

Let me give you an example of the corruption, destruction, and perversion of this fictional legal theology that dominates Christianity.

But first you must understand the difference between God's design law, and how God in love has met immature, unconverted, sinful humans with the use of law.

God's design laws are the laws upon which reality operations, the various physical and moral laws that God built life to exist upon, the laws of health, physics, and the moral laws. Life and health are only possible in harmony with God and His design protocols for life. You cannot have health while violating the laws of health. The violation of the physical laws causes physical sickness and disease and eventual death. Likewise, the violation the moral laws causes spiritual sickness and disease—disease of heart and mind and relationships that also undermines physical health and eventually causes death. Life and health only exist in harmony with God and His design laws for life.

The plan of salvation is God's work, achieved through Jesus Christ, to eliminate the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle, God's perfect law, back into humanity. This was accomplished for humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. He became a real human being, took up humanity damaged and infected with death by Adam's sin, and purged the sickness, destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light—through the gospel—through the good news about God and God's design law principles that He lived out perfectly as a human (2 Timothy 1:10).

All human beings born since Adam have been born with a terminal sin condition that we did not choose. We are born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalms 51:5). This is not our fault and we are not legally guilty for this. We do not stand under legal condemnation. We are born terminal, like being born HIV positive. We have a condition that without remedy results in ruin and death. Jesus came and cured the condition and offers us His life, metaphorically His blood, a new heart and right spirit, so that we can die to living in fear and selfishness and live in love and trust. We are terminal, not legally guilty, and what brings us condemnation is not being born with the sin condition—but refusing the remedy that Jesus procured that will cure us and free us from this condition.

Notice how clearly Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, yet how the church has perverted this through legalism:

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did **not send his Son into the world to condemn the world**, but to save the world through him. **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son**. **This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light** because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:16-20 NIV84).

God loved us and sent Jesus to overcome and cure the sin condition, to provide all that is needed for salvation from sin. Jesus did not come to condemn. Whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned, but those who refuse to believe in Jesus **stand condemned already**—already why? Because they refused to trust. This is the verdict, light, truth, love has come into the world, but men loved darkness, lies and selfishness instead because they were evil, infected, terminal.

They are condemned, not for having the condition, but for rejecting the cure!

Because we have this terminal sin condition, which infects our hearts and minds, and results in all kinds of sinful and destructive actions (sins), God like a loving parent, has intervened to help protect us until we grew up enough to experience rebirth, a new heart, until we actually become the righteousness of God. He gave us various laws, lists of rules, designed to both protect us from adding damage to ourselves, and also to diagnose what is wrong with us.

Paul wrote,

> We know that the law is good **if one uses it properly**. We also know that **law is made not for the righteous** but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1 Timothy 1:8-11 NIV84).

The written law is like an MRI, designed by God to expose the sin-sickness in us, as Paul wrote elsewhere,

> "I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet'" (Romans 7:7 NIV84).

Paul, prior to Damascus, thought legally, that sin was bad deeds, and that righteousness was wanting to commit sin, but resisting and saying now. It was when he realized what the 10th commandment taught, that sin is an issue of the heart, that to be righteous means we don't even have the desire in the

heart to commit adultery, or murder, or steal, or bear false witness. We don't covet, we rejoice in the successes of others. Paul realized through the diagnostic efficacy of the law that all his legal behavioral religion was worthless because law-keeping cannot cure hearts and minds from selfishness. Saul of Tarsus, had a form of godliness, a legal religion, but without any power to overcome sin.

We can understand this diagnostic function of the law and why God gave it simply by paraphrasing what Paul wrote to Timothy about the law and replacing the "law" with "MRI":

> "We know that the MRI is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the MRI is made not for healthy people but for those who are sick and diseased, the suffering, the ill, and all those who are dying, and all activities that are contrary to the principles of healthy living that conform to the model of health that the blessed God has entrusted to me." (*Could It Be This Simple?* p. 102).

God like a loving parent has given us rules, to protect us and to lead us to accept our diagnosis, that we are terminal, dead in trespass and sin, so that we will go to Jesus, our heavenly physician for healing, to be made righteous, not to be declared righteous even though we are not.

So, let me give you this example of why the imposed law lie, with its fictional and false legal adjustment and declaration fantasy has no power to heal sinners and results in millions abandoning the faith.

Loving parents make up and impose rules for their small children that the children must brush their teeth regularly. This rule is not made up by parents in order to create a legal code of conduct that requires legal oversight and enforcement, but is made because of the design law of the 2nd law of thermodynamics that if you don't put energy into a system it decays. The design law is God's law, a constant of the universe—how things work. But a child is not mature enough to understand this and not mature enough to be self-disciplined to harmonize with it. Therefore, loving parents will make up a rule of behavior for the child until the child grows up enough to understand and be able too govern self to live in harmony and care for their teeth. The adult child is thankful for the rules their parents had when they were children, and as adults agree with the rules and gladly keep brushing their teeth, not because of a rule, but because of how reality works. They like being healthy.

But, what if a child was raised in a legalistic home in which there were appropriate rules, like brushing one's teeth, or honoring the Sabbath, but the child never ever came to understand the reasons the parents gave the rule to brush their teeth. The only reason the child ever knew was that if they didn't brush they would get into trouble with their parents and would get punished.

When the child finally moves out on their own, what is likely to happen in such a case? They say, "Yeah, free from all those rules. I no longer have to brush my teeth." So they don't. At first they may be anxious and look around in fear to see if some punishment occurs, but after several days of not brushing and no one punishing them, they say "I knew it, I knew those rules were ridiculous. I am glad to be free!" But 8-10 month later they find themselves suffering in terrible pain from tooth decay.

They call their parents in pain and confess,

- Mom, Dad, I am sorry. You raised me better, but I have stopped brushing my teeth. I should have listened, but I didn't, and now I am hurting every day and I don't know what to do."
- The parents respond by love and reassurance and instruct there is a expert at their church who knows how to help people who have gone off into wild living and are hurting.
- You visit with the pastor and he tells you that Jesus came to earth and brushed His teeth perfectly, and flossed too, and never had even the smallest decay. You are told that if you accept the legal tooth brushing of Jesus as your substitute, then in heaven Jesus will go to His Father and plead His perfection in your behalf.
- The pastor tells you that when God examines your heavenly dental records, because you have accepted Jesus, God will not be aware of your pain, suffering, failure to brush, dental decay. Instead, God will only see the perfect record of Jesus' teeth which has overwritten your record of decay.
- God, having heard the pleas from His Son, and having examined your record and found only the perfect dental record of His Son, will declare that your teeth are perfectly healthy, even though they are not. You are told you simply must believe that God has declared it to be so.
- You claim you believe it, but you leave in just as much pain, with just as much disease and decay as when you arrived and you continue to get worse.

This is penal/legal theology that claims we are declared righteous rather than made righteous.

Do you see the problem that we have when we replace God's design law with human imposed law? We have a form of godliness with no power and we remain divided, fractured, fighting among ourselves.

The final message of mercy to the world is the message of the truth about God's character of love, which is only understood when we reject the lie that God's law functions like human law and return to worshiping God as Creator whose law is design law.

Questions?

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

> - Also, in their past existence, Gentiles were caught up in a grand feud between themselves and the Jews. Paul gives a sense of this entrenched hatred by referring to one symptom of it, name-calling. Jews referred to Gentiles with derision as "the uncircumcision," and Gentiles referred to Jews with equal disdain as "the circumcision" (Eph. 2:11). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 39).

Do you see this problem being one of name-calling, or is name-calling a symptom of the true problem? What is the true problem?

The Jews were legalists. They viewed God's law as functioning like human law, and there were rules that needed to be imposed and enforced, and if you didn't keep the right rules then you were not righteous. The name calling of circumcised or uncircumcised was simply a way to call out those who agreed with and practiced their rules.

What are some examples of this exact same legal religion today? What type of name calling do we see today?

- Sabbath keeper or Sabbath breaker?
- Vegetarian or meat eater?
- Humble Christlike dresser with no makeup or jewelry or Jezebel?
- Tithe to the denominational church or to others presenting the gospel?

In Romans 14 Paul makes the case that the issue is not about legal conformity to rules, but about the purity of the heart. That our behavior doesn't really matter if our hearts are not fully persuaded to the godly reasons for the behavior. In other words, doing the right thing for the wrong reasons is harmful to the person—like keeping the right day of worship for the wrong reasons results in people rejecting and crucifying the Lord of the Sabbath.

So the issue isn't name calling, the issue is a legal religion that has a form of godliness but no power and results in greater divisions, rather than unity under one Head Jesus Christ.

MONDAY

Read last paragraph,

> "What does reconciliation look like? How does it feel to be reconciled? Imagine severe estrangement between a mother and daughter, one that has settled in over a period of years. Imagine this rancor being dissolved in a wave of grace and forgiveness and the ensuing reunion

> between the two. That is reconciliation. Reconciliation is experienced in the moment when one church member lays aside whatever issue divides from another and acknowledges the other church member as a beloved brother or sister who accepts what has been offered. Reconciliation is not a mechanical or legal term but an interpersonal one that celebrates the mending of broken relationships. Paul dares to imagine Christ's powerful work on the cross as impacting the relationships, between not just individuals but also people groups. He imagines it invading our lives and destroying our divisions, dissolving our quarrels, and renewing our fellowship with and understanding of each other." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 40).

Questions? Does this sound right to you or is something off?

What about this sentence:

> "Reconciliation is experienced in the moment when one church member lays aside whatever issue divides from another and acknowledges the other church member as a beloved brother or sister who accepts what has been offered."

If this is the definition of reconciliation, then wouldn't everyone be reconciled as soon as the offended party forgives and loves? Wouldn't Judas have been reconciled to Jesus because Jesus washed His feet, and forgave Him, and continued to love Him? But was Judas reconciled to Jesus?

This is not reconciliation. Reconciliation is when the two estranged parties are united again in **love AND trust**. This requires the offended party to forgive and certainly to love the offender, but it also requires the offender to repent, which means to address the elements in their heart/mind/character that caused them to offend so that they become trustworthy.

Reconciliation cannot happen from one side. And in the case of our salvation, reconciliation certainly could not happen if God was unforgiving. But God is always forgiving, so there is no barrier to reconciliation from God's side. No, the obstacle to our reconciliation with God is from us, our fear, our selfishness, guilt, shame, distrust of God, the lies we believe about God. We are the ones who need to be changed and put back in harmony with God so that we are again God's trustworthy and loyal friends operating in harmony with His living law of love.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21:

> "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [does this sound like declared to be righteous even though they are not? This is real transformation!] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NIV84). [Now according to Scripture, who is being reconciled to whom? Is God being reconciled to us,

> meaning does something have to change in God in order for the estrangement that sin has caused to be resolved? Or is the entire sin problem in human beings and in order to reconcile us we must be changed, not God?]

What happens if we interpret this through Roman imposed law and believe that God's law functions like human law? If we do that, would it change how we understand reconciliation? Would it blind us so much that despite admitting that the Bible teaches we are reconciled to God and God is not reconciled to us, that we would suggest the opposite? Would accepting the Roman view of law cause people to be so brazen as to suggest that the Bible is wrong and God still must be reconciled to us?

Here is another quote from the book *The Cross of Christ:*

> "Paul **always** speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He **never** refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side**." (Knight, George, The Cross of Christ, p. 74).

Do you see how the lie that God's law functions like human law contaminates the gospel creating a form of godliness with no power because it replaces the truth about God with a false god who is like Satan in character, a being who is the source of pain, suffering, and death, and who must be propitiated, appeased, paid by a blood sacrifice in order not to use his power to kill.

There is another way to describe reconciliation and that is when the offender becomes a friend. Consider the GNT of 2 Corinthians 5:17-20:

> "Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 GNT)

And can you turn enemies into friends by law, rules, external force, punishment, threats?

Thus Romans 2:4 says,

> "God's kindness leads you toward repentance" (Romans 2:4 NIV84).

TUESDAY

Read Ephesians 2:14-16:

> "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Ephesians 2:14-16 NIV84).

What is this talking about? What law is this that is abolished?

The lesson suggests the following in the last paragraph,

> "Instead, any use of the law to drive a wedge between Jews and Gentiles and especially to exclude Gentiles from full partnership among the people of God and access to worship, would be anathema to Paul and a misuse of the divine intention for the law. The "law" in Ephesians 2:14, 15 is either the ceremonial aspects of the law that divided Jew from Gentile, represented in Paul's complex phrase "the law of commandments expressed in ordinances" (ESV), or it is the whole Old Testament system of law as it had come to be interpreted, augmented, and misused as a wedge to distance Jews from Gentiles." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 41).

Do you agree with the lesson or have another view?

What about this view of Ephesians 2:14-16 from The Remedy?

> "For Christ himself is the Remedy that heals the species and brings peace. He has removed fear and selfishness that cause division, mistrust, prejudice, and hostility. He did this by partaking of our human condition, and–via the exercise of his human brain–he loved perfectly, thereby destroying in his flesh (in the humanity he partook) the selfish survival-of-the-fittest drive along with the lies of Satan. In this way, he destroyed the need for the law (with all its regulations) to expose Satan's lies and methods. His purpose was to be the template of a new humanity born out of the unification of the two–our selfish, infected condition merged with his sinless state–thereby purging selfishness from the human heart, and transforming, healing, renewing, regenerating and recreating humanity back to God's original ideal; and in this new being, to reconcile the human race–regardless of ethnic background–into loving unity with God and each other through the revelation of truth at the cross, by which he destroyed the lies of Satan, reestablished trust, and removed fear, selfishness, and hostility" (Ephesians 2:14-16 REM).

What does this version suggest Jesus took away and how did Jesus take it away?

What is the cause of all the division in the world? Sin, which is fear and selfishness, and Jesus destroyed the infection of sin at the cross and restored God's living law, God's perfection, God's sinlessness and character into humanity as our second Adam. And all who are united, reconciled, to God through Jesus Christ have this change worked in them, they receive a new heart and right spirit, have the law written on the heart and mind, have the mind of Christ so that it is no longer the selfish old person living, but Christ living within, and thus we are all brought into unity under one Head Jesus Christ. United in living out God's living law of love for God and others.

When that happens, then there is no longer any need for the written law, the diagnostic instrument to examine us and expose sin, because we are living in harmony with God and His law and His law lives in us.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the peace we have when we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

What do you understand this peace to be? What peace, what aspects does it contain?

- Peace with God
- Peace in our own hearts—peace from guilt, from shame, from fear
- Peace with every other individual who also has been restored to godliness

How do we understand receiving and experiencing God's peace in light of:

> "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'" (Matthew 10:34-36 NIV84)

What is this? How is it that we are to have peace when we accept Jesus, but Jesus Himself said that He did not come to bring peace but a sword and to turn families against each other?

This is Matthew 10:34-36 from The Remedy:

> "Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family." (Matthew 10:34-36 REM).

True peace can only occur by removing sin, fear, selfishness from hearts and minds. Jesus did not come to make peace with sin, but to destroy sin and that requires destroying fear and selfishness in the hearts and minds of people. Thus, the sword is the sword of truth that severs the ties to this world and wins us to love and trust in Jesus.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

> "Reviewing Ephesians 2, we recall that verses 1–10 teach that we live in solidarity with Jesus, while verses 11–22 teach that we live in solidarity with others as part of His church. Jesus' death has both vertical benefits in establishing our relationship with God (Eph. 2:1–10) and horizontal ones in cementing our relationships with others (Eph. 2:11–22). Through the Cross, Jesus demolishes all that divides Gentile believers from Jewish ones, including the misuse of the Law in order to widen the gulf (Eph. 2:11–18). Jesus also builds something—an amazing, new temple composed of believers. Gentiles, once excluded from worship in the sacred places of the temple, now join Jewish believers in becoming a new temple. We all become part of God's church, "a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:19–22, ESV) and are privileged to live in solidarity with Jesus and our brothers and sisters in Christ." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 43).

I think that this is an excellent description—and what is it describing?

Is it describing a temple made with human hands, by human might and power, or a temple made by God?

And would this temple made by God also be something that God needs to cleanse from sin because the various building blocks are sinners?

And would the Bible describe anywhere a cleansing of the temple as part of God's plan to of salvation?

It is described in a variety of places, including in the Old Testament feast of Atonement, or at-one-ment, or reconciliation. The feast in which God cleanses the sanctuary from the sins of the people. This is an object lesson of God cleansing His Bride, His true temple that He builds which Jesus as the Chief cornerstone.

We describe this beautiful work in our magazine The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming if you haven't read it you can read it online in our flipbook, you can download it in a pdf, or if you are in the US and want a paper copy to read or copies to share you can email us at requests@comeandreason.com and request free copies that will be shipped to you at no cost. You can also request copies on South Africa at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com and also in Australia at australia@comeandreason.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Jennings New Job:

Dr. Jennings has taken the position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida.

- Honey Lake Clinic is an accredited holistic Christ-centered residential mental health treatment facility situation on a beautiful 5000-acre retreat with spring fed lakes. The program is staffed by licensed and board-certified mental health professionals and treats both male and female adults on one side of the campus and female adolescents on the other side. Patients typically stay for 30-60 days and the program includes individual and group therapies, equine therapy, hydro therapy, massage, spa treatments, exercise and fitness training, brain-healthy meals planned by a nutritionist—all Christ centered with regular worship services available in the on campus chapel.
- How you can help?
    - Continue your prayers and support of Come and Reason Ministries and share the vision
    - Our vision has been whole person healing through the true gospel of Jesus Christ
    - Working with Honey Lake allows for greater opportunity to take God's whole person healing truths to more people
- Thank you for all your prayers, support, and encouragement during this time of transition. And also thank you for your continued support of Come and Reason Ministries as we seek to share the healing message of God's love with others. We will return to our schedule of Dr. Jennings teaching remotely on most Sabbaths and teaching in person on the second Sabbath followed by potluck.

The God Shaped Heart,
has just been released in German in Germany, *Herz voll Gott*, published by the Adventist publishing house in Germany.

New Address:
Come and Reason Ministries is closing our PO Box Address. Please update your records to our building address for all future mail and shipping. Our street address is:

Come and Reason Ministries
4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100
OOLTEWAH, TN 37363

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 6
The Mystery of the Gospel

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph,

> In Ephesians 3, Paul opens with a theme that he had already touched on earlier: "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6, NKJV). And though that might not be much of a surprise to the church today, composed mostly of Gentiles, it was something that seemed radically new to many of his readers at that time. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 46).

Why was the idea that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs something radical and new?

Was this idea something that had not been taught in the Old Testament Scriptures?

Was the message of God through His prophets in Old Testament times that salvation was found in being Jewish, that it was through their genetic descendance from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—or by converting and being legally adopted into a Jewish family and therefore the Jewish nation—that one became an heir?

Does the Old Testament teach salvation to only a certain select ethnic, national, or racial group?

- Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and **all nations on earth will be blessed through him**. (Genesis 18:18 NIV84).

- The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that… **through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed"** (Genesis 22:15–18 NIV84).

- The LORD appeared to Isaac and said… "**through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed**" (Genesis 262-4 NIV84).

- "Turn to me and be saved, **all you ends of the earth**; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22 NIV84).

- "**All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD**, and **all the families of the nations** will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations" (Psalm 22:27-28 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- "**All the nations you have made will come and worship before you**, O Lord; **they will bring glory to your name**" (Psalm 86:9 NIV84).

- "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; **all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him**. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14 NIV84).

- "It is **too small a thing** for you [Messiah] to be my servant **to restore the tribes of Jacob** and **bring back those of Israel** I have kept. **I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.**" (Isaiah 49:6 NIV84).

This is only a sampling, there are many other texts in the Old Testament that teach the same thing, that God's call to salvation is for all people.

Israel was not called to be exclusive heirs of the promises, but to be God's helpers is sharing the message of salvation with the world, and to be the human family through whom the Messiah would come.

When was the promise given that the Messiah would come? In Genesis 3:15, in Eden right after the fall, when it was clear there is only one human race descended from Adam and Eve and the plan of salvation is for the entire human species.

The Old Testament narrative is the record of God working out His plan to save humanity, from all corners of the globe, from every nation, tribe, kindred, and people from sin.

Are there examples in the Old Testament of people not descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and who did not convert to Judaism and did not start observing the Jewish feasts etc., yet who were saved?

- Every human before Abraham who was saved (Adam and Eve, Abel, Seth, Methuselah, Enoch, Noah)
- Jethro
- Melchizedek
- Lot
- Sarah
- Naaman
- Nebuchadnezzar
- The wise men from the East who worshipped baby Jesus

Where then did this belief come from that salvation was restricted to the Jews?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Here is one commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages* that nicely sums up the problem with the Jews in Old Testament times:

- The Jews had so **perverted the law that they made it a yoke of bondage**. Their **meaningless requirements** had become a byword among other nations. **Especially was the Sabbath hedged in by all manner of senseless restrictions**. It was **not to them a delight**, the holy of the Lord, and honorable. The scribes and Pharisees had made its observance an intolerable burden. A Jew was not allowed to kindle a fire nor even to light a candle on the Sabbath. As a consequence the people were dependent upon the Gentiles for many services which their rules forbade them to do for themselves. They did not reflect that if these acts were sinful, those who employed others to perform them were as guilty as if they had done the work themselves. **They thought that salvation was restricted to the Jews**, and that the condition of all others, being already hopeless, could be made no worse**. But God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed by all. His laws sanction no unreasonable or selfish restrictions.** (The Desire of Ages 204).

What was the root of the problem? A perversion of God's law into what? Into arbitrary rules, some are arbitrarily chosen by the sovereign, and some are not. He is the ruler, who are we to question. It was the same lie that Satan used in heaven, God makes up rules and made up rules discriminate against some, that's why Jesus gets to go into counsels of the Father that I Lucifer don't get to go into—God made up a rule and declared it so. Satan denies the inherent difference between himself—a created being, and Jesus a divine being—one fully equally with the Father. Satan alleges God runs His universe no differently that created beings do, no made up rules that require external enforcement.

Remember this quotation, written by one of the founders of the SDA church, documenting the way the SDA church is supposed to teach things:

- "The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation [and] **Satan**, the prince of evil, the author of sin, **the first transgressor of God's holy law.** Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law**, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which **human laws are substituted for the law of God, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator**, may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love**; **his endeavors to set aside the divine law,** leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers. GC x.1

If you worship a god who imposes law, who makes up law, whose law functions like human law that requires legal oversight and enforcement—you are worshiping a creature, not the Creator, even if you are worshiping on the Sabbath.

And notice what Paul says happens to the minds of people who do this:

- The **wrath of God** is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men **who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, [Paul goes on to describe in verses 24, 26, 28 that God's wrath is letting people go to reap what they have chosen. God's wrath is not using divine power to inflict harm, it is when people insist on rebelling and God STOPS using divine power to prevent the harm that their actions cause. And their wickedness suppresses the truth—notice the specific truth Paul says they suppress] since **what may be known about God** is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. [Why is it plain to them? Notice Paul's inspired reason] For **since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse**. [From the moment of Creation the truth about God has been revealed in what He has made. And what truth about God does nature reveal? What kind of law does all nature operate upon? It reveals the truth that God's laws are design protocols and not imposed rules arbitrarily enforced. Now notice what Paul says happens when they reject the truth about God as Creator, because they don't embrace the truth that nature reveals about how God runs/governs nature.] For although they knew God, **they neither glorified him as God** [Aren't we called at this time in history to give glory to God? But these people didn't why? Because they rejected the Creator God and worshiped the creature, and we do the same thing when we replace God's design with imposed law, if you worship a god who makes up rules and is required to legally enforce those rules with external punishments, then you are worshiping a creature, not the Creator. Notice what happens when we do this.] nor gave thanks to him, but **their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened**. Although **they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man** and birds and animals and reptiles. (Romans 1:18-23 NIV84). [Making a false image of God in the likeness of mortal man—that doesn't mean a statue—it means a being who functions like a mortal man, a being who governs like a mortal man, a being who makes up rules like a mortal man, a being who has to have a tribunal and make legal rulings and inflict external punishments like a mortal man. And if you worship such a god you are worshiping a creature and not the Creator and your mind is being darkened and even though you have a degree in theology and consider yourself wise, Paul says you will become a fool if you keep to this lie about God's law and keep worshiping a being who is in the image of a man.]

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Paul as a prisoner in Rome. The lesson points out the status of being a prisoner could undermine the esteem some would hold for Paul, some might consider him a criminal, unworthy of respect. So Paul turns this fact into a badge of honor by describing himself as a prisoner of Christ, or being imprisoned for Christ.

Have you ever considered what your attitude toward Paul's letter to the Ephesians might have been had you been a member of that congregation?

If you were receiving a letter today from someone in prison, does their being in prison impact how you read the letter?

What is the issue here that we should carefully consider?

Have you ever heard that if you can't destroy the message then destroy the messenger?

If the enemies of truth cannot refute the truth and they are still opposed to it and want to fight against it, then they often seek to bias the listeners by tainting the messenger of truth with some attribute that will cause the listeners to reject the truth, or not even listen to it.

This is one of Satan's classic attacks, to accuse and slander the voices of truth.

- "The Jews answered him, 'Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?'" (John 8:28 NIV84).

The religious leaders implied Jesus was morally corrupt because He spent time with tax collectors and prostitutes. They suggested Jesus was untrustworthy because He treated Samaritans and women with respect.

Rather than dealing with the facts, evidence, truth and exploring and discussing the principles and methods, they instead sought to destroy the one bringing the truth.

The devil has a well-practiced strategy to do this:

- Deception—try and get those who love the truth to believe a lie—satan tried this in the wilderness by misquoting Scripture and pretending to be an angel of light
- Bribes and educements to buy people to betray the truth—Satan tried this with Jesus in the wilderness by offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world
- Slander, accusation, Satan's agents did this with Jesus
- followed by rejection by the weak minded and various forms of mob violence and intimidation to try and silence the voice of truth—the religious leaders repeatedly stirred up the mobs against Jesus and the Apostles
- Then imprisonment, restriction of liberty, and eventual execution

Do we see this same script being run today and who is running it? Recognize those that run this script are not being led by the Holy Spirit, they are not working for God's cause, they are in fact being led by demons regardless of what cause they claim they are supporting, such as trying to save lives, or advance equity or fairness.

I experienced some of this. Of course, I have had to confront various lies, of course I have had opportunities to get some transient benefit if I would only stop speaking the truth on some subject. And over the last 13 years I have frequently been the subject of various false allegations designed to get people to never consider what I am teaching: "Jennings doesn't believe in substitutionary atonement." "Jennings teaches moral influence theory." Both of which are false statements, but I have heard from around the circle such allegations have caused others to not even examine what we are teaching.

And I have had various "mobs" work to cancel me. I have been invited and schedule to be a key speaker at various events and when certain SDA leaders have heard of this, they rallied some of their pastor friends and called various conference officials and had the invitation canceled.

This is what people do who do not have the truth. And we will see more and more of this right up until Jesus comes.

Did you see this evil method used when serious, loving, and concerned people had real and legitimate questions about the safety of a certain medicine being advanced under an emergency authorization, that they were accused of wanting to kill people, and they were censored, and they were threatened in various ways?

Have you seen when loving people object to the mutilation of children through various hormones and surgeries that they are attacked as transphobes? Why? Because the evidence is so overwhelming that such actions cause significantly more harm to the child than any benefit that is reaped. So, those promoting the attack on God's creation—remember Scripture says God made them male and female—cannot win their case by truth. They cannot sit down and have an honest investigation of the facts, science, evidence, because it all comes to the same conclusion, there is biological male and female. This is irrefutable. So they resort to accusation, intimidation, mobs, censoring, and any means of intimidation and threat.

What they are doing is attacking minds through the assault of almost all public sources of information in an attempt to get people to deny reality itself. This is critical to Satan's war against heaven. God is the God of reality. Satan's entire system is based on lies, falsehood, which is fantasy, myth, fable. Thus, the followers of Satan cannot have real debate that examines actual evidence, instead they accuse, misinform, intimidate, riot and scream and do everything to silence any source of truth.

MONDAY

Read Ephesians 3:1-6:

- For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this,

> then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:1-6 NIV84).

What does this mean? We already went through multiple texts from the Old Testament that document that God had been revealing over and over again that the plan of salvation is for all human beings, Jews and Gentiles alike. Then, why was this a mystery?

Paul says that it was also a mystery to him until it was revealed to him by divine revelation. Yet it was revealed by God to the prophets beforehand and written in the Scripture, so why was it a mystery to such a serious Bible student as Saul of Tarsus? Why didn't he see this before a special revelation revealed it to him?

Because the Jewish system in which Saul was raised and educated had become burdened with human law constructs and layers of rules, restrictions, traditions, and lies about God that perverted the meaning of what the illustrations were intended to teach.

Satan was actively working to corrupt the truths God had given to Israel and to replace the plan of God with his own false appeasement, legal payment plan.

Remember the Jews kept falling into Baal worship—and remember who Baal was? The son of El, the God of creation, weather, harvest, called the lord of the earth, the god who fought against the great serpent leviathan, and who fought against Mot the god of death, and in his battle with Mot died and rose again to bring life to the earth.

Does this sound familiar at all—that we worship the Son of God who is our Creator, the true Lord of the Earth, who fights against that ancient serpent the devil who holds the power of death, and in His battle in our behalf Jesus died in order to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light and rose again to bring us eternal life?

Why was Baal worship wrong? Because Baal required sacrifice be offered to him in order to obtain blessing. Baal was a god who would punish wrongdoing and would not bless without payment.

Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people and Jesus Christ to all those who worship a god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice be offered to him to pay our legal debt and get the blessing of his legal forgiveness.

That is why God prophesied through Malachi that before the second coming of Jesus the prophet Elijah must come again. Elijah confronted Baal worship, and God is calling for a people today to stand up and make it clear that God is the Creator whose laws are design laws.

And like Elijah we are to call people to decide—If god is like Baal, a being who makes up rules like creatures do, and uses power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking, then worship him; but if God is the Creator who builds reality, whose laws are the protocols life itself is built to operate upon, and who is healing, saving, delivering us from sin, then worship Him.

This is the message of the 3 angels, to call people out of worshiping the god of this world, the counterfeit imposter satanic version of God, and back to worship God in His true light as Jesus revealed Him, our Creator and this requires we reject imposed law with its penal/legal theories and accept design law and God's plan to heal and restore.

So, here is how I paraphrased Ephesians 3:1-6 in The Remedy:

- It is because I have brought the healing truth about Christ Jesus to you, Gentiles, that I, Paul, am now a prisoner. Surely you have heard how God graciously gave me the healing message of truth for you–that is, the truth previously not understood but made known to me by revelation, as I have already written to you. In reading this, you will be able to understand the insight I have into the truth about God and Christ — the truth previously hidden by Satan's lies and distortions. These insights were not understood by previous generations because the lies of Satan were so effective that only Christ himself could refute them and provide the truth sufficient to make plain what God's Spirit had previously revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. This is the truth previously hidden and not understood: God loves all humanity, and all humanity is included in God's plan to heal and restore, and–through the incredible good news of God as revealed in Christ–all humans are included in the promises given to Abraham, and are therefore heirs of the blessings of salvation which come through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:1-6 REM).

TUESDAY

Read the second and third paragraphs,

- There is an interesting progression in Paul's self-understanding that is discernible as we move through Paul's letters in the order they were written. Early on, he lays claim to his status as a divinely appointed apostle (Gal. 1:1). Later, though, he introduces himself as "the least of the apostles" and "not worthy to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15:9, NKJV). Here in Ephesians he sees himself as "the very least of all the saints" (Eph. 3:8, ESV). Finally, he describes himself as the "chief" (NKJV) or "worst" of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15, NIV).

  Perhaps this line of thinking here by Paul can help explain this famous quote by Ellen G. White: "The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature."—Steps to Christ, p. 64. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 49).

Have you experienced this? What is happening? Why is it that as we grow closer to Jesus and by beholding Him we become more like Him, we often experience ourselves as being even more unfit, having more imperfections?

Because we become ever more aware of reality, of how weak we are in our mortal state, how even with good intentions we can be overcome by fatigue, or make decisions with good motives but because of our finiteness, our inability to see all the permutations and the future, our decisions can sometimes have consequences we didn't anticipate or intend.

Sometimes we just have an irritable moment and regret not being more patient, or kind, or understanding.

What is the best approach to handling the truth that we are weak, wounded, and sick in sin?

To remember we are not responsible for procuring the remedy to our condition, nor are we responsible for perfecting or curing ourselves, we are responsible for trusting Jesus and staying connected with Him, following where He leads, choosing to do to the best of our ability what we know God would have us do.

He is the One who has procured the Remedy, and He, through His representative the Holy Spirit, is the One who applies that Remedy to our hearts. And thus when we see shortcomings, we say, "Thank you Jesus, I can see you are still working in my heart and mind. Keep up your healing work. Keep searching me and finding every defect in me and create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me!"

Read the last paragraph,

- Paul then continues. In Ephesians 3:10, he writes: "to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (NKJV). Who are the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (ESV) mentioned here? How does the church announce God's "manifold" or multifaceted wisdom to them? Though Ephesians 3:10 does not describe the nature of the powers, it seems best to take them as the evil ones described in more detail in Ephesians 6:11, 12. If so, the composition of the church, unifying Jews and Gentiles as once very divided parts of humankind, becomes a ringing announcement to these demonic "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" of God's plan for the future, "to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10, ESV). They are put on notice that God's plan is underway and their doom assured. The very nature of a unified church signals their ultimate defeat. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 49).

If the very nature of a unified church signals the ultimate defeat of the powers of darkness, does that mean that because today Christianity is fragmented into over 41,000 different groups, that the powers of darkness are winning?

Seriously, do we see anywhere in the world the unity in the church that Paul is describing here?

I have never seen this unity via religious organization or denomination.

I have seen this unity in people who have been reborn to have God's living law of love written upon their hearts.

So, I wonder, is this unity Paul is referring to found in denominationalism, organized churches, or is Paul referring to what some call the church invisible, the people who God sees and knows are members of His kingdom?

Consider this parable:

- Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.
  "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'
  " 'An enemy did this,' he replied.
  "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'
  " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' " (Matthew 13:24-30 NIV84).

What is Jesus telling us in this parable? Is this describing a church organization where all the people are united or a church where there is division?

I found this commentary in the book *Christ's Object Lessons,* what do you think?

- Christ's servants are grieved as they see **true and false believers mingled in the church.** They long to do something to cleanse the church. Like the servants of the householder, they are ready to uproot the tares. But Christ says to them, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." (Christ's Object Lessons 71, emphasis mine).

If true and false believers, wheat and weeds, are mixed together in the church then how is the manifold wisdom of God to be manifest in it?

Because God's manifold wisdom is found in His true church—which is the fellowship of believers, those who are reborn to the kingdom of God.

In the field mixed with wheat and weeds—all the wheat have a common ancestry, genetics, and produce a common fruit. All the wheat are united in what they are and what they produce. And it is apparent for all who have eyes to see that the fruit of the wheat and the product of the weeds are not the same regardless of the field in which they grow.

Thus, the manifold wisdom of God is manifested through His people, His church, in contrast to all the fakers, the religious zealots, the legalistic rule-making followers of a Roman dictator god who seem to run most churches and who take up space in the church but instead of producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness produce the fruits of control, coercion, fear, guilt, shame, and division.

WEDNESDAY

When you hear the term, "the family of God" what comes to mind?

There is a lot of confusion about what it means to be a member of the family of God.

Some will ask questions like, "In your family, are only the good children considered members of the family?" And this is designed to suggest that all of us, saved or lost, are considered children of God and part of God's family.

This idea is neither right or wrong in itself—it is incomplete and thus leads to false conclusions.

The truth is that there are two human family trees.

The first family tree descends from Adam, who was created by God and thus every human being born into the world is part of the human family descended from Adam and in that regard is a child of God. However, Adam corrupted himself with sin and severed his connection with heaven and aligned or united humanity with Satan. Without divine intervention all humans would die eternally. Adam's family tree should be understood as being cut off from the source of life and it is therefore wilting and dying.

There is a second family tree, with a new head and that is Jesus. We become members of His family when we accept Him as our Savior and are grafted into Him, the vine, and we receive the life of Christ flowing into our hearts by faith. All the reborn, who receive new hearts and minds, become the various branches of the new human family tree. That family tree is connected to God through Christs and receives the life giving power and presence of God flowing into our reborn hearts and thus we produce fruits of righteousness and are considered part of the family of heaven.

Just as there are two family trees, one of sin and death, and one of righteousness and life—there are two births one born into this world of sin and death, and one reborn with a new heart of righteousness from Christ.

Those who are born into the world, but are not reborn to Christ, do not become part of God's heavenly family, they instead are considered part of the human family severed from God and connected in heart, mind, spirit, attitude, character and function to be part of Satan's family, the family of rebellion, of sin, of unrighteousness.

The members of the heavenly family look like Jesus, they carry the image of God in their characters.

The members of Satan's family look like Satan and carry around the satanic character.

Jesus said of the Jews, who were trying to kill Him, and who were claiming both Abraham and God as their father:

- **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The apostle John tells us that,

- **"to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12, 13 NIV84, emphasis mine).

So the Bible uses this idea of family to describe those who have been reborn and who are like Jesus in character. We are not considered members of God's family simply because of our genetics, i.e. being human. This was the same lie that the Jews had, they believed simply because they were descended from Abraham that they were considered part of God's family. Jesus refutes this.

Here are a few of historical quotes demonstrating my view is not unique to me:

- **If you have renounced self and given yourself to Christ you are a member of the family of God,** and everything in the Father's house is for you." (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing 110, emphasis mine)

- Remember that the Lord loves you, and that **each one of you can become a member of the family of God.** If you are faithful here, when He shall come in the clouds of heaven, you will meet your father, and will be a united family. (Selected Messages vol. 2, p. 265, emphasis mine).

- The Lord has enjoined upon us to come out from among them and be separate, and to touch not the unclean thing, and He will receive us and will be a Father unto us, and we shall be His sons and daughters. **If we wish to be adopted into the family of God, to become children of the heavenly King, we must comply with His conditions**; we must come out from the world and

> stand as a peculiar people before the Lord, obeying His precepts and serving Him. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 4 p. 109, emphasis mine).

THURSDAY

Read Ephesians 3:20-21:

- Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

What kinds of things to you ask or imagine—because He can do more.

What is the power that is at work within us?

What kind of power is this?

Is it the power of fear, of intimidation, of rule-enforcement, of punishment, of legal declarations?

What kind of power changes hearts and minds?

- "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32 Niv84)

What kind of power is this?

- I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

What power is this? What is the gospel, the good news?

- "Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4 NIV84).

Is there power in the kindness of God? What kind of power is that?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

How does the Spirit work?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Jennings New Job:

Dr. Jennings has taken the position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida.

- Honey Lake Clinic is an accredited holistic Christ-centered residential mental health treatment facility situation on a beautiful 5000-acre retreat with spring fed lakes. The program is staffed by licensed and board-certified mental health professionals and treats both male and female adults on one side of the campus and female adolescents on the other side. Patients typically stay for 30-60 days and the program includes individual and group therapies, equine therapy, hydro therapy, massage, spa treatments, exercise and fitness training, brain-healthy meals planned by a nutritionist—all Christ centered with regular worship services available in the on campus chapel.
- How you can help?
    - Continue your prayers and support of Come and Reason Ministries and share the vision
    - Our vision has been whole person healing through the true gospel of Jesus Christ
    - Working with Honey Lake allows for greater opportunity to take God's whole person healing truths to more people
- Thank you for all your prayers, support, and encouragement during this time of transition. And also thank you for your continued support of Come and Reason Ministries as we seek to share the healing message of God's love with others. We will return to our schedule of Dr. Jennings teaching remotely on most Sabbaths and teaching in person on the second Sabbath followed by potluck.

The God Shaped Heart:

has just been released in German in Germany, *Herz voll Gott*, published by the Adventist publishing house in Germany.

New Address:

Come and Reason Ministries is closing our PO Box Address. Please update your records to our building address for all future mail and shipping. Our street address is:

Come and Reason Ministries
4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100
OOLTEWAH, TN 37363

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 7
The Unified Body of Christ

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you? Does it have a principle contained in it that should inform us as to how we are to think of ourselves and others?

Does it say anything in regard to how we fill various roles and positions? Is it suggesting that if some are equipped to be prophets or apostles it would not be wise to put them in the role of housekeeper or cook? In other words, is the Bible suggesting that God equips people with different skills, abilities, talents, and when they are consecrated to Him then the body of Christ will function best when people fulfill the roles that they are best equipped to accomplish?

What is the principle that this Scripture is teaching for deciding upon whom gets placed in various positions? Isn't it their qualifications, abilities, gifting, talents, experience? Does the Bible teach that we place people in position of leadership based on race, say the Jewish converts get affirmatively chosen over the Gentile converts because they are Jewish not because of their gifting? If the Bible chose people to positively affirm them to the positions based on racial profiling, what would that be called? Affirmative action—just an example of how God's government and principles work differently than those of this world.

Only when we advance God's principles do we find healing. The methods of the state cannot heal and restore.

What happens if people become dissatisfied with their skill set, their calling, and focus on someone else's skillset and abilities and compare themselves to them? What happens if they become envious jealous, and begin complaining?

Is this a function of love—or is love not self-seeking and love does not envy?

So anti-love would seek to make the comparison to others and focusing on non-pertinent differences to appear righteous. Anti-love, which is evil, would seek to inflame envy, jealousy, and dissatisfaction, a sense of unfairness by introduce arbitrary measures and artificial values.

Have we seen activities or practices in the world, which does not operate on the principles of God, that goes against this biblical guidance? Have we seen anything in the world that suggests people should be placed in position based on attributes other than their qualifications?

These politically motivated practices are designed and intended to cause division in the populous, to create various affinity groups to be exploited by the self-proclaimed champions of that group. It is not about helping the masses in any of the various groups, it is about keeping society divided so power can be concentrated in the hands of a few ruling elites so they can dominate and control the masses. This is how the kingdoms of this world function, because all the kingdoms of the world are Satan's and run on Satan's principles. And Satan seeks to rise above others to rule over others.

Jesus did not think equality with God was something to be held on to, but humbled Himself, in other words, surrendered power, in order to uplift the masses and break down dividing walls and bring us into genuine unity where we are all empowered by God to fulfill His calling in our lives. God's kingdom does not function like the kingdoms of this world.

And Satan constantly seeks to get Christians to exchange the kingdom of God for kingdoms of this world—but all the kingdoms of this world function on the same power over others, imposed law, coercive methods with a few elites exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites.

The methods of the world always results in abuse, dysfunction, inefficiency, and conflict in society.

So as Christians we cannot allow the lies, perversions, distortions, corruptions of the world into our minds, hearts, and practices. We cannot go along with falsehood because we fear what others think. We cannot accept any lie even if it is presented with the idea that it is compassionate, or loving, or fair.

The truth is, we are not all fit for every job or position. We all have equal value as human beings, and in a just worldly society all will have equal opportunity to pursue whatever job, role, or position they choose. But that doesn't mean we are all equal in ability, talent, experience, motivation, drive, commitment, qualifications—and therefore despite pursuing a position, if filling that position is determined by objective qualifications we do not all have the same likelihood of getting that position.

When we are surrendered to Jesus in faith, we trust Him with the outcomes, we know He sees a million variables we cannot see, and when we don't get some outcome we thought was right for us, we don't get hurt, or angry, or jealous, we say to Jesus, "Thank you, for while I cannot see the reason things have gone this way right now, I know that you are good, and I know that you have your hand over my life, and I know that you just protected me from something that I didn't even know. How good you are to me. Keep leading in my life Lord, and open my eyes to the next step you would have me take." Faith in Jesus and love for God and others destroys the envy and jealousy that Satan tries to infect our hearts with.

SUNDAY

The lesson goes on to say that when we are converted and become part of the body of Christ there is a unity that is experienced, we practice the virtues that result in unity. They list three virtues: humility, gentleness, and patience.

What do you understand humility to be?

Read the third paragraph,

> Paul elsewhere explains the term humility, in Ephesians 4:2 (ESV; "lowliness" in NKJV), by adding the idea to "count others more significant than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3, ESV). Humility, then, may be understood not as a negative virtue of self-deprecation (see Col. 2:18, 23) but as a positive one of appreciating and serving others. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 57).

The lesson suggests that humility is appreciating and serving others? Any thoughts about this?

My view is that humility is the result, the fruit, of God's design laws operating in the heart.

- Love: When we have the law of love operating in our hearts, we are not arrogant, rude, or prideful, we don't seek to rule over others, we respect the individuality of others, we have a desire in our hearts for their welfare, their development, their salvation.
- Truth: When we have the law of truth operating in our hearts, we realize that we are finite and no matter what we know, we only know in part, our understanding is limited. Thus, we don't judge others, we don't know their circumstances, motives, and struggles. We choose to give people the benefit of the doubt and not think the worst. And when we do see actions that are objectively wrong, harmful, destructive, we grieve for the other person because we know they are hardening their heart, searing their conscience, and ruining their soul. We remember the truth that they are suffering from the same sin condition that we were also born with, and as the saying goes "but for the grace of God there go I."
- Liberty: The law of liberty, we remember the Sabbath—the day God rested, the day God ceased using His power—the day God refused to force Lucifer into line; the day God refused to impose laws upon His creatures; the day God refused to inflict punishments for disobedience. And we live out God's law of love by living and speaking the truth while we leave others free. We don't take the arrogant position that we know what is best for another person's life. We would not presume to judge someone who eats meat because we don't know their physiology and genetics. We would not be so arrogant as to believe that we know what medicine is best for another mentally competent adult and we would never use our power, position, or authority to pressure or coerce people into taking an experimental medicine because we think we know what is best for them. We remain humble enough to recognize we cannot make that choice for another person.

MONDAY

Read Ephesians 4:4-6:

- There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6 NIV84).

The lesson points out that Paul lists seven "ones"

1. One body
2. One Spirit
3. One hope
4. One Lord
5. One faith
6. One baptism
7. One God and Father of all

What is this significance of this?

Seven is the number of spiritual completion—and thus choosing seven "ones" is a way of saying that we are spiritually complete in Christ, a complete restoration to the unity and oneness that God designed for His kingdom.

Let's go through them one at a time and discuss what they mean:

1. One body
    - What is the body? It is the church—is that a denomination?
    - Who is part of that one body, the church?
    - How does one become part of that body?
    - Are we part of the body of Christ simply by being born into the world, or does it require some change in us? What is that change?
    - Are there other Bible metaphors that describe the body of Christ?
        - The vine and branches—which is a way of describing a family tree. Only those who are grafted into Christ become part of the body, or part of vine
        - The family of God—the family tree of God or the vine with its many branches. We are born into the human family descended from Adam, but only by rebirth are we connected to Jesus and become part of the heavenly family tree.
        - The sanctuary/temple—we are building blocks or stones being built together into a house for the Lord, with Jesus as the chief cornerstone. And can any stone in the world become part of this temple? Yes—but can any stone in the world be part of God's temple as it is, when it is found and picked up by the Builder who is God, or does the stone, the person, have to be prepared, shaped, honed, fitted for the building? Any human can become part of the temple, the family of God,

the church—but that requires that we are changed, reborn, transformed, honed, fitted, that we have sin, selfishness, the corrupt desires, practices, habits replaced with Christlike ones.

2. One Spirit
    - What is the one Spirit? The Holy Spirit certainly, but
    - Can Paul mean more than just God the Holy Spirit?
    - What did Paul mean when he wrote to the Corinthians,
        - "Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit" (1 Corinthians 5:3 NIV84)?
    - What did David mean when he prayed,
        - "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10 KJV)?
    - Could the "one spirit" mean that when we are converted and have experienced the renewal of heart by the Holy Spirit, then we are reborn and have new hearts and right spirits, we have one spirit that is the spirit of love, honesty, integrity, loyalty to God and a spirit of faithfulness to Him and His design law and methods, that we are united in spirit by the Holy Spirit?
3. One hope
    - What is our one hope? Jesus Christ!
    - Why is there only one hope? Because Jesus is the only remedy to our terminal sin condition.
    - Are there other Bible metaphors to describe this?
        - Narrow path versus wide path
        - One gate into the sheep pen (John 10:1-42)
        - One mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5)
    - And what do we hope to receive through/from Jesus?
4. One Lord
    - Who is our one Lord? Jesus.
    - Isn't the Father and the Holy Spirit our Lord also? Or is Jesus our Lord in some way that the Father the Holy Spirit are not?
    - I am not suggesting any differences in the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but I wonder, is there a functional, objective, reality-based distinction in what Jesus has done, some action, achievement, or accomplishment that Jesus has taken upon Himself to complete, and has completed, that places Him in the position as our Lord in a distinctly different way than the Father and the Holy Spirit?
    - Does God's kingdom, the kingdom objective reality built by God, require human life to be in harmony with God and His design laws for life?
    - Did Jesus take on the role and responsibility of becoming a real human being and as a human being using His human abilities to confront and overcome Satan and sin and restore God's perfect law into humanity and thereby develop a perfect, sinless, human character?
    - Has Jesus become the second Adam, the new head of the human family?
    - Is Jesus, then, our Lord, our Liege, our Champion, our King who sits on David's throne and reclaims Earth and all its domain from Satan and **places Earth back under the**

sovereignty and governance of humanity—Jesus Christ King of kings and Lord of lords!

5. One faith
    - What does one faith mean?
    - Does the context suggest it goes beyond personal saving faith in Jesus?
    - Does it mean a common belief, understanding, philosophy, and methodology based upon the principles of God and God's kingdom.
    - When Jesus is Lord, and the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and spirits, do we begin to have common practices and principles?
    - And this is the fruit or result of God's living law being written into our hearts (Heb 8:10)
6. One baptism
    - What is this one baptism?
    - Is this referring to the ceremony with water?
    - Does one have to be baptized in water to be saved?
        - Thief on the cross
        - Enoch, Elijah, Daniel, and all those before Christ.
    - So, is this text referring to the ceremony with water or to what the water ceremony represents?
    - What does the water ceremony represent? The immersion of the self (heart and mind) into the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit where the entire sin-sick, selfish, self dies and is resurrected to a new life with a new heart and right spirit that loves God and others.
    - Can a person be saved without the water ceremony?
    - Can a person be saved without their hearts/minds being immersed in the Holy Spirit and being reborn? No, because that is what being saved or salvation actually means; it means to be healed, or renewed, or recreated in righteousness.
    - Does this mean that the water ceremony is unimportant and we don't need to do it? No—the ceremony is important. It is part of the process of how our choices and actions in responding to the truth help solidify the truth into our being. When we accept truth, we must put that truth into practice, and in so doing we are cooperating with God for our healing and transformation.
    - So how this works is that the baptism or immersing of the heart and mind by the Holy Spirit happens first, this cleanses and recreates the heart and the person is reborn into a new life in Christ. Then, with their new heart, the reborn Christian want to take a stand for God, they want to live out the truth of God, and thus they choose to be ceremonially baptized in water as a public witness to others. And in so doing they solidify into their own being their love, commitment, devotion, to God and demonstrate their willingness to follow where He leads. This helps them develop their faith relationship with God.
7. One God and Father of all
    - What does this mean?
    - Does this mean there is no Holy Spirit or that Jesus is not fully God?

- No, it means that the members of the Godhead have, amongst themselves, taken different roles in how they govern, and the Father has taken the role of being the Supreme Source of all. And we recognize Him as Sovereign.

Read last paragraph,

- Note carefully two ideas about the unity of the church (Eph. 4:1–6). First, unity is a spiritual fact, rooted in these seven "ones," a reality to be celebrated (Eph. 4:4–6). Second, this unity requires our zeal to nurture and grow it (Eph. 4:3). There will often be cause to weep at our failings in actualizing this unity. However, whatever our failings, we should rejoice in the work of God-in-Christ in unifying the church, rejoicing in the theological reality of the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3). Doing so will empower us to return to the hard work of advancing this unity but with fresh conviction that in doing so we are accomplishing God's own work. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 58).

How do we achieve unity in the church?

Can we ever achieve unity by imposing a list of rules? If it cannot be achieved in this way, what would it mean if people tried to achieve it in this way? That those pursuing unity through rules and authority and enforcement are immature, don't understand reality, don't understand God's kingdom, and are implementing the principles of force and control which originate in Satan's kingdom.

In his book, Angry Saints, George Knight, documents the history of the 1888 Minneapolis GC and describes that in the conflict between those who brought the righteousness by faith message, which is based upon design law, and the leadership who clung to imposed law, that the leadership let by Butler, repeatedly sought to get the delegates to vote and use authority of office to impose their conclusions on the church and force everyone to comply with what they thought was right. Jones and Waggoner did not use these methods. They used the methods of presenting their ideas in love, and inviting critique, and leaving everyone free to decide for themselves.

EGW sided with Jones and Waggoner, on multiple points, which included:

- Righteousness by faith
- The added law in Galatians included the Ten Commandments and is not just the ceremonial law
- And in opposing authoritarian methods to silence and force compliance

Sadly, the church rejected every one of these.

- The legalistic church leaders substituted legally declaring people righteous who are not righteous, for people becoming the righteousness of God as 2 Cor 5:21 teaches
- The legalistic leaders clung to teaching the imposed law view of the Ten Commandments, rather than recognizing the Ten Commandments have not always existed, do not reveal an

imposed legal form of governing by God, but were added as a helpful tool for sinful human beings to be accurately diagnosed and led back to Jesus for healing

- Legalistic leaders have continued to use the authority of office to silence, intimidate, and force their dogmas. This has created a selection bias in the church membership and church leadership in which the voices who are advancing light and truth are purged from the organized church and thus the church languishes in a false legally theology while it create the illusion of unity when what they have is authoritarian uniformity.

Can we achieve unity through public attestation to a common creed or a list of fundamental beliefs?

Can we achieve unity by the exercise of external might and power?

Can we achieve unity through legislation?

Can we achieve unity through majority vote? When the church votes in General Conference session on a certain doctrinal issue, does that vote cause unity among the members?

Is there a difference between unity and uniformity? What is the difference?

Jesus prayed,

- I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23 NIV84).

What is this unity, this oneness Jesus prayed for? How do we achieve this?

Is there some part of God's design, as taught in Scripture, that would enlighten us to this unity?

What about marriage? Did God create Adam and Eve as two separate individuals, who were to become one, to have unity?

And today, even in this sinful world, can a man and a woman, who have been reborn in godly love, come into the unity, the oneness that God designed?

So, if you have experienced that unity, that oneness, where two become one—how did that happen?

Can godly marital oneness be achieved through:

- Force?
- Rules?
- Imposed law?
- Threats?
- Punishments?
- External pressures?
- Declarations?
- Belief in a common list of doctrines?
- Being members of the same denomination?

How do two separate individuals become one in marriage?

They love the other more than self and unite their individualities upon common heavenly principles in which they value, cherish, and esteem the other more than themselves. They rejoice in and invest in the success of the other. They get real joy in doing for and uplifting their partner. They know each other intimately and each partner is trustworthy, reliable, mature and has the best interest of the other at the forefront of their motives. They are a united team that retain their individuality, their unique gifts, talents, abilities, and the two rejoice in their differences, learn to share in each other's preferences, give each other real freedom, and both are enriched by the differences in the other.

In our relationship with Jesus, we must love Him more than ourselves and value His design law methods and principles. We must then love others and rejoice in their success, seek to uplift others, but this doesn't mean we surrender our individuality to others and let others tell us what to do. That would be harmful to all parties. Jesus did not do what others told Him, and neither should we.

Unity doesn't mean uniformity, nor does it mean there are never any loving disagreements, differences of opinion, or heartfelt discussions.

Consider Abraham disagreeing with Jesus' plan to destroy Sodom, or Moses disagreeing with God's plan to wipe out Israel and start over with Moses. Think about Paul going to Jerusalem when God warned him repeatedly not to go because he would be arrested and killed. Their loving disagreement and discussions with God did not break up their unity with Him. In, fact, God called Abraham and Moses His friends and I believe it was because they retained their individuality and had such discussions with Him.

I value my wife because she has her own mind, her own individuality, her own perspectives. I would not want someone as my spouse who was only my shadow, only agreed with me in every detail. That would be boring, would have no depth, or substance, or interest. My life is enriched and more interesting because Christie has her own mind and way of seeing and doing things. Now, it is true that I don't agree with everything she says and she doesn't agree with everything I say, but I have learned to listen to her, to consider her insights, perspectives, and counsel. And I am a much wiser person today because I have learned from her. I would be less and our marriage would be less if either one of

us surrendered our individuality to the other and let the other do our thinking for us. Godly unity does not mean uniformity, it is the unity of love.

TUESDAY

Read Ephesians 4:7-10:

- But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) (Ephesians 4:7-10 NIV84).

What does this mean to you?

My view is that this refers to Jesus' condescension, as describe in Philippians 2:5-11:

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11 NIV84).

Jesus descended and then Jesus ascended and was exalted. And when Jesus ascended He took with Him the first fruits of His victory, those who were resurrected from the dead when Jesus died.

- At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people (Matthew 27:51-53 NIV84).

We are not told who these individuals were. I suspect, that if they were to be witnesses to those living at that time then at least some of them had to be people who lived and died during the lifetime of those alive when they were resurrected.

However, I like to imagine that God the Father partially answered Jesus' prayer from John 17 when Jesus prayed:

- "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24 NIV84).

And that the Father raised some of Jesus' friends from the past to be with Jesus in heaven. I like to imagine that perhaps people like Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, Elisha, Jeremiah, Isaiah and others were raised at this time. And these individuals are represented in Revelation 4:4:

- Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads (Revelation 4:4 NIV84).

The white robes represent the righteousness of Christ, and the gold crown represents the crown of victory the saints receive from Christ. So, these twenty-four elders represent saved human beings and not angels or other intelligent beings from other unfallen worlds.

And given the Bible only names three people taken to heaven, Enoch, Elijah, and Moses—yet here we have twenty-four elders described in Revelation. I don't think it is too much of a stretch to consider the other seats are filled by those who were resurrected when Jesus died.

What does it mean that He gave gifts to men?

Most people understand this to be the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which occurred at Pentecost.

Jesus said to His disciples before His crucifixion:

- I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you (John 14:16-18 NIV84).

Was the Holy Spirit not in the world before Jesus' death and resurrection?

Yes, David prayed that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him.

So, why didn't the disciples experience the Holy Spirit more fully prior to Pentecost?

Consider this commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

- Before this the **Spirit had been in the world**; from the very beginning of the work of redemption He had been moving upon men's hearts. **But while Christ was on earth, the disciples had desired no other helper**. Not until they were deprived of His presence would

> they feel their need of the Spirit, and then He would come. (The Desire of Ages 669.1, emphasis mine).
>
> The **Holy Spirit is Christ's representative**, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. **Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally**. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be **His successor on earth**. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. **By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all**. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high (The Desire of Ages 669.2, emphasis mine).

I love this description—it is beautiful, it is powerful, and it is sensible. God would not give some advantage over another by limiting access to Jesus. Just think about it: On Earth today, what is it like to try and get access to someone powerful and famous? What would it be like if Jesus were on Earth today personally and there was no Holy Spirit to represent Him to everyone?

And when you read various descriptions about Jesus in heaven pleading for sinners—remember that Jesus said,

- "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, **the Spirit of truth, comes,** he will guide you into all truth. **He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears,** and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by **taking from what is mine and making it known to you** (John 16:12-14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The Holy Spirit communicates to us what Jesus is speaking. When Jesus is pleading in heaven, He is pleading to you and me, He is pleading for us to trust Him. He is pleading for us to let Him save us, for us to stop listening to the lies of Satan, for us not to give into to temptation, to not give in to the feelings of discouragement, to stop looking at the problems and keep our eyes fixed on Him our Savior and Deliverer.

And then, when we hear Jesus calling us and we respond to His love by opening our hearts in trust, we receive the Holy Spirit working within us to take what Christ achieved and reproduce it in us. We get new motives, new desires, and when we choose to act on those new motives, then we receive divine power to succeed. Thus, it is the Holy Spirit that makes the victory of Christ a reality in our individual lives.

The Desire of Ages describes it this way:

- In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. **The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts** that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The **Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity

> was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer.** It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. **Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature.** Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church (The Desire of Ages 671, emphasis mine).

Jesus came to Earth and became a real human being and as our substitute confronted and overcame Satan and sin and procured the remedy to our terminal sin condition. The Holy Spirit takes that remedy and applies it in the hearts and minds of all who trust Him. We are recreated within with new hearts and new desires and are empowered to live victoriously as we receive the new life from Jesus and brought to us by the Holy Spirit.

Do you see why Satan attacks the Trinity and seeks to destroy the belief in the Holy Spirit?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Paul identifies four groups of "gifted" people as part of the treasure trove of the exalted Jesus that He gives to His church: (1) apostles; (2) prophets; (3) evangelists; (4) shepherds (ESV) and teachers (the structure of the Greek phrase suggests these are a single group). Christ gives these gifts to accomplish important work: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, ESV) and "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 60).

What do you make of these different roles?

Apostles are typically thought of as those who met Jesus and were personally instructed by Jesus. Most Christians don't call themselves Apostles and reserve that term for the 12 and Paul, who was also personally instructed by Jesus.

What about the others—prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers?

Evangelists would be people who primarily take the gospel message to the world, to those who have not yet been converted to Christ, but this doesn't mean they don't teach, but that their primary role would be that of reaching out to convert the unconverted.

Pastors and teachers are people who work to educate, lead, care for, and build up those who have been converted to Christ, to help them grow, mature, and advance in the things of God.

What about the prophets? Who are the prophets?

Does this term refer only to those who have had a vision or those who have written Scripture?

No, there are many prophets described in Scripture who we have no record of them receiving a vision, or writing Scripture, but they were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak a message from God, whether in words or in deeds.

So a better term today would be spokesperson for God—someone who speaks a message from God for the people of that time and place.

Revelation seven gives insight:

- After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the **foreheads of the servants of our God**" (Revelation 7:1-3 NIV84).

Who are these servants of God who are to be sealed before the four winds blow?

- "But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands you gave through **your servants the prophets**. (Ezra 9:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you **my servants the prophets**. (Jeremiah 7:25 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to **his servants the prophets**. (Amos 3:7, NIV84, emphasis mine).

- This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Are you not the one I spoke of in former days **by my servants the prophets** of Israel? (Ezekiel 38:17, NIV84, emphasis mine).

- We have not listened to **your servants the prophets**, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. (Daniel 9:6, NIV84, emphasis mine).

- But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded **my servants the prophets**, overtake your forefathers? (Zechariah 1:6, NIV84, emphasis mine).

- But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to **his servants the prophets.** (Revelation 10:7, NIV84, emphasis mine).

The prophets are those who have a message from God—God's spokespersons. Revelation seven makes some very interesting points about being a prophet, or the gift of prophecy, being gifted by God to speak a message from Him to the people. First point, is that the empowerment by the Holy Spirit to be a spokesperson for God to take a message from God to the people *did not stop after Pentecost*.

According to Revelation seven, there will be a large group of people, symbolically represented by the 144,000 who are prophets, God's spokespersons at the end of time. This would affirm that God continues to empower people to give His message to others. And my view, is that this end-time message is the message found in Revelation 14, which calls people back to Creator worship, which requires the rejection of imposed law, the Romanization of Christianity, and return to design law view of things.

The next point is that according to Revelation seven, right before Jesus comes there will be a large group of people who have been empowered by God to give that final message of mercy to the world, and they will be settled or sealed into the truth so that no trial, trouble, or tribulation will shake them out of it. And from their witness, a great multitude from every nation, tribe, language, and people will accept the truth and be saved.

Who can be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be one of these end-times spokespersons for God?

- Is being empowered the Holy Spirit to speak a message from God something that only happens through the acknowledgement and official actions of denominational churches?
- In other words, is ordination by a church the same thing as being gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit?
- Who speaks with greater authority someone who is gifted by the Holy Spirit with the prophetic gift or someone who is not gifted by the Holy Spirit but is ordained by your church and even holds high office in the organization?
- Why would the one gifted by the Holy Spirit speak with more authority? From where does authority come? What do the gifts of the Holy Spirit do for a person—and in this case specifically a prophet would be gifted to do what? Speak the truth clearly. So what gives the prophet's message more authority than an ordained minister? **The power and authority of the truth itself!**

We must stop surrendering our thinking to others. We must stop allowing people in positions of office, with credentials, with organizational authority to tell us what to think. We should be humble, respectful, listen and then study for ourselves but always follow where the truth leads.

THURSDAY

What does it mean to grow up in Christ?

Consider what the writer of Hebrews wrote:

- We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the **elementary** truths of God's word all over again. You need **milk**, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still **an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness**. But solid food is for the **mature**, who by constant use have **trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.** Therefore let us leave the **elementary teachings** about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the **foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death**… (Hebrews 5:11-6:1 NIV84).

What do you understand this to be telling us?

What is elementary school? Elementary school teaches elementary or basic things, the beginning stuff—the a,b,c's that need to be understood before one can read, but this is milk, not solid food.

Is milk important to an infant, necessary even? So, these elementary things are essential to the Christian experience, but they are elementary, infantile. What would we say to those who insist on never learning more than the a,b,c's, if at church each week they insisted we always sing the alphabet song, but we never actually read?

And what specifically does Hebrews 5-6 tell us is the elementary teaching? "repentance from acts that lead to death" which is a focus on the dos and don'ts, the rules, the law. This is childlike thinking, the penal legal way of understanding things, its wrong not to brush one's teeth because mommy has a rule. The child doesn't think about the laws of health, only obeying the rules. The child doesn't want to get in trouble, doesn't want to get punished. But the child also is very intolerant of rule-breaking, and this is why elementary school is filled with tattletales, "Johnny was passing notes teacher."

And the church is filled with such infantile Christians who are rule-keepers and tattletales.

And according to this text, those who remain on the elementary teachings, the rules, are not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. And this has proved true as the imposed law adherents, have replaced righteousness by faith with the penal legal fiction of declaring someone righteous who is not. They are no acquainted at all with the teaching about righteousness.s

Read the second paragraph,

- Paul believes divisiveness to be an important mark of error: That which nourishes and grows the body and helps it hold together is good while that which depletes and divides it is evil. By turning from the divisive teaching and to that of tested and trusted teachers (Eph. 4:11), they

> will advance toward true Christian maturity and play effective roles in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12, 13; compare Eph. 4:15, 16). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 61).

There is truth in the idea that error brings division, and in fact Satan is a divider and constantly seeks to cause division, and that when Christ is in the heart there is unity. But how can this idea of divisiveness being used as a mark of error actually be used to advance error and Satan's kingdom?

- Did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of teaching divisive things, ideas that were breaking away from their orthodoxy and introducing division?
- Did the Jews accuse the Apostles of being divisive?
- Did the church of the Dark Ages accuse the Reformers of being divisive?
- And the legalist SDA leaders at 1888 GC accused Jones and Waggoner of being divisive

So, what is the balance here—how is it that lies and error bring division, and division can be a sign of error, but when the truth comes division seems to occur? In fact aren't we instructed to call God's people out of Babylon and wouldn't that cause division—separating people from that old system?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 8
Christ-Shaped Lives and Spirit-Inspired Speech

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson tells a story of a man named Jose who was living homeless and was unwashed, disheveled when a man gave him a complete makeover, haircut, shave, bath, new clothes and how he didn't even look like the same person and this changed his life for the better. Then, in the last paragraph, the lesson draws this comparison:

- In Ephesians 4:17–32, Paul argues that believers have experienced a complete transformation. They have taken off their old selves and have embraced their new identity. Somewhat like Jose's change, though, this is no mere external transformation. It includes being "renewed in the spirit of your minds" (Eph. 4:23, ESV), bringing into the life "true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24, ESV). This is the ultimate makeover. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 64).

I am so happy to see that the lesson is teaching that salvation is a complete transformation of the person, being healed, renewed in heart and mind. This is exactly right, salvation is not penal legal it is actual recreation, transformation, restoration to holiness, righteousness, godly perfection through Christ.

Can you think of other places where the Bible uses the metaphor of a change of clothing for salvation?

Turn to MONDAY's lesson and read the second paragraph,

- Paul tells us that the adoption of a Christ-shaped life requires three processes, which he expresses through clothing imagery: (1) to "put off" or turn away from the old way of life (Eph. 4:22); (2) to experience inner renewal (Eph. 4:23); and (3) to "put on" the new, Godlike pattern of life (Eph. 4:24). Paul's metaphor reflects the use of clothing in the Old Testament as a symbol for both sinfulness (e.g., Ps. 73:6; Zech. 3:3, 4; Mal. 2:16) and salvation (e.g., Isa. 61:10; Ezek. 16:8; Zech. 3:4, 5). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 66).

And from the references above:

- Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence (Psalm 73:6 NIV84).

- Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you" (Zechariah 3:3–4 NIV84).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10 NIV84).

And we also read in Scripture:

- All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6 NIV84).

- "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless (Matthew 22:11-12 NIV84).

- Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads (Revelation 4:4 NIV84).

So the Bible does use the metaphor of clothing, dirty, filthy, torn clothing representing our sinfulness, and fine, clean, white robes representing the righteousness of Jesus that the saved become dressed in.

And the lesson points out that Paul is calling for the believers to exchange their old sinful clothes/lives for new clean clothes or holy/pure/righteous lives.

How does one do that?

Does Jesus take off our old sinful selves for us?

Can Jesus take off our old sinful selves for us or is letting go of our old ways, our old preferences, desires, and priorities, our choice to make?

Do we have to choose to surrender all, to let go of self, to stop trying to make ourselves look good, to be honest with God and ourselves and to disrobe, to be open and truthful about our own sin condition? Do we have to choose to say, "I admit that I am a sinner and I am completely infected with fear and selfishness. That on my own all I do is corrupt and impure. I don't want to be sick in heart and mind, I surrender my old fear-based survival drive self to Jesus"?

But even if we do surrender, take off the old self, can we prepare, sew, create the new clothing for ourselves—meaning can we create, by our good works, a new righteous character?

In the wedding parable, why was the man who showed up without the wedding garment called out for not wearing the wedding clothes? Was he being called out because he didn't buy wedding clothes or didn't make wedding clothes? No, the wedding clothes were provided free of charge by the groom and

the man chose not to wear them. Is there a lesson in this parable about our old sinful selves and our new selves in Christ?

Who creates develops and makes the robe of righteousness? Jesus!

Who decides to put off our old self and put on a new self?

Our lesson this week focuses on Ephesians 4:17-32, lets read these verses and see who Paul says is the one who must act to change these metaphorical clothes:

- **You** were taught, with regard to your former way of life, **to put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and **to put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

  Therefore **each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully** to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": **Do not** let the sun go down while you are still angry, and **do not** give the devil a foothold. **He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work,** doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

  Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind** and compassionate to one another, **forgiving** each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:22–32 NIV84, emphasis mine).

In these verses, who is the one that is being instructed to act, to do? Is the instruction, be still and passively let God put off your old self, and put on a new self, to passively let God take control of your mouth so you become an organic mobile speaker platform that God speaks through?

Is the instruction that we are to have God choose for us what emotions we have and how we deal with them and what words we speak? Is it saying that God is the one who decides for us whether we respond to or reject the Holy Spirit, whether we hold onto bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice or let it go? Whether we are kind and whether we forgive—or is Paul saying in all of these matters and more, that we have to choose, decide, how we will act, what principles we will apply to ourselves in how we live and deal with others?

Who then is deciding, moment by moment, what methods we use? And is it in those decisions of life that we are deciding how we dress ourselves?

Consider this Bible passage, describing the bride of Christ:

- Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and **his bride has made herself ready**. Fine linen, bright and clean, was **given her to wear**." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (Revelation 19:7-8 NIV84).

Does this mean that we, through our choices, good works, and good deeds create our own robe of righteousness, that our works save us?

Think back on the metaphor of old and new clothing, can Jesus choose for you to surrender your fear, hate, resentment, anger, bitterness, malice, jealousy, envy, desire for revenge, sense of injustice, outrage that life is not fair, desire to punish others, unforgiveness, hatred, and selfishness? Can Jesus choose for you to surrender your heart and mind to Him?

Can Jesus make the choice for you to forgive those who have wronged you? When you are mistreated does Jesus choose your response for you? Is Jesus the one who decides whether you lie or tell the truth, whether you spread tales or protect the reputations of others, whether you cheat or are honest, whether you steal or get a job? Who makes these choices for every person?

Then is our salvation up to us, are we saving ourselves?

What law lens are you understanding salvation through?

- If we understand God's law as imposed law, like human laws, then we falsely conclude that salvation is legal and performance based. Either personal legalism in which the sinner is required, after being legally pardoned based on the legal payment of Jesus and having their past sins forgiven, to then live a behaviorally legally righteous life.
- Or, as others teach, that since they can never live perfectly then all sins for all time for all people have already been legally paid for by Jesus and that we just need to accept the legal payment and live however we want because we are saved by grace, meaning the legal payment of our debt has been made in the courts above.
- And still others believe that it is through the legal application of the blood payment in heaven for every act of sin that we remember to confess and ask forgiveness for that we get legal pardon.

But notice, all of these descriptions are some form of legalism, it is not reality.

What is the reality? Design law, the laws life and health are built by God to operate upon, and the best way to understand that are the laws of health.

Consider having some illness, some terminal condition, whether an infection, or cancer or something else. Whatever the condition is, you have symptoms, you are getting worse, you are dying and there is nothing you can personally do to cure this condition. But, you have a loving father who is a medical doctor and scientist who has sacrificed time, energy, and money to develop a remedy that will perfectly cure you. Your father offers you this remedy free of charge—do you still have to take it in order to get well and live?

And what if the remedy also requires you to stop some of the coping behaviors you were using to deal with your terminal condition—say, you had pain associated with your condition and you had been drinking heavily or smoking marijuana to deal with the pain, and for the remedy to work you must stop adding more injury to yourself which requires that you to stop other activities that diminish you symptoms but at the same time are making you worse?

Who would decide whether you take the remedy and stop the old coping behaviors—you or your physician father?

And if you do choose to daily take the remedy and stop the old coping behaviors are you saving yourself? Did you create the remedy or are you only partaking of and participating in the remedy that was 100 percent developed and provided by another?

This is salvation, this is the Scriptural balance of faith and works. Our works never create the remedy, never cure the sin condition, never save ourselves. Everything necessary for salvation was provided by Jesus, who became a real human being and all by Himself, without any help from any other human being, developed the remedy for our sin condition. And now He offers it to us free of charge. Yet, it is still our choice and responsibility to take what Jesus offers or reject it, to let go of the old and embrace the new, to take off the old coping strategies and apply the healing remedies of Christ.

So, EGW describes it this way in COL:

- This **robe**, woven in the loom of heaven, **has in it not one thread of human devising**. **Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character**, and this character **He offers to impart to us**. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God "was manifested **to take away our sins**; and in Him is no sin." Sin is defined to be "the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:5, 4. [What law, imposed rules, or God's design protocols for life—whatever is not of faith is sin Romans 14:23] But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, "I have kept My Father's commandments." John 15:10. By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah (Christ's Object Lessons 311).

She describes it again in the book *The Desire of Ages:*

- **The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give**. [Why does the law require this? For the same reason the law of respiration requires that we breathe, because God's laws are the protocols life is built to operate upon. There is no

> other way to be and live.] He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, **and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift** to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have **remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God**. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. (The Desire of Ages 762).

This is reality, it is the plan of salvation in which Jesus took upon Himself the responsibility of destroying the death causing principle of fear and selfishness and restoring in the human species God's living law of love, God's design law, God's protocols for life, and thereby restoring the species human to unity with God and heaven. In doing this, Jesus became the second Adam, the new head of humanity through whom flows the love, truth, life, power, purity of God that we receive through faith.

Thus the Bible says:

- Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8,9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus as a human, was tempted in all points like we are, but Jesus, as a human, chose only love and loyalty to God and rejected all temptations. Thus, as a human, Jesus learned obedience, learned, developed, grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. Jesus developed a perfect, sinless, righteous, and holy human character, by the exercise of human abilities in the face of all the weakness and temptation that His humanity was incumbered with.

At the cross Jesus destroyed, from the humanity that He took upon Himself, from the humanity He inherited from Adam, the destructive elements that Adam brought into it that were the avenue for His temptations. When Jesus was in Gethsemane, Jesus anguished in horrible human emotions that tempted Him with the temptation to avoid the cross—to act selfishly, to save self. But Jesus chose love and self-sacrifice instead of survival of the fittest, instead of saving self. And thus, in the humanity of Jesus the living law of God was perfectly restored and the law of sin and death was purged and Jesus became the second Adam, the new head of humanity, our Lord, Savior, King, Redeemer, and Remedy.

When we surrender to Jesus in faith/trust, we take off our old self, and receive a new self, a new identity, with new motives and desires—the mind/character of Jesus, which is the robe of righteousness.

Then, in our daily walk through life, we are faced with choices, do we choose the new desires, to love God and others, to trust Jesus, to put Him at the center of our hearts and motives, to seek to glorify Him because we love Him so much and are so thankful to Him, or do we continue to embrace and practice our long held sinful self-centered coping mechanisms? When we have bills due, do we fulfill all our duties to the best of our ability, to be honest and trust Jesus with the future, with how it turns

out (like Joseph while he was a slave), or do we distrust, allow fear to control our choices and choose to steal, embezzle, or cheat in some way to pay our bills?

When someone says all manner of evil against us falsely, do we choose to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness and bless them and pray for those who persecute us, or do we continue to wear the filthy rags of this world and lash back with hate, anger, name-calling, attacking them in any way we can, seeking to make them pay, to get revenge—even if all of that is only in our hearts and minds?

If we choose to fall on our knees, hurt, frustrated, angry because life is not fair, because we have been wronged, and we cry out to Jesus and tell Him how much it hurts, and tell Him of our anger, our frustration, our desire to go punch someone—but we also say, Jesus this is not who I want to be. I want to love my enemies like you love me. I want to bless those who persecute me, not curse them. But I don't have it in me, please create in me a clean heart O God and renew your right spirit within me, and if then we experience freedom from anger, bitterness, resentment, and the peace that passes understanding—who is doing that? Who is taking off the old and putting on the new? But are you saving yourself, or only choosing to partake of Jesus in real time, in real circumstances, and in so doing Jesus makes a real difference in the inner workings of your heart and mind?

One more thought on the new clothes we are to put on, Jesus counsel to His church in Revelation:

- I counsel you to **buy from me** gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and **white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness**; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see (Revelation 3:18 NIV84).

How are we to buy from Jesus the white robes of His righteous character so that we are not dressed in our own corrupt selfishness but are dressed in the beauty of His righteousness?

It is the barter system—we buy through exchange—we must exchange:

- our sin-sickness for His holiness,
- our guilt for His peace,
- our shame for His purity,
- our fear for His confidence,
- our doubt for His surety,
- our confusion for His clarity,
- our selfishness for His love,
- our dishonesty for His honesty,
- our terminal condition for his holy condition,
- our mortal life for His eternal life.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Paul is not just concerned about specific sins or behaviors exhibited by Gentiles. He is concerned about a pattern of behavior that they exhibit, a downward trajectory of living in the grip of sin. At the heart of Ephesians 4:17–19 is a portrait of a calloused spirituality: "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:17, 18, NKJV). This calloused spirituality is the source of the darkened understanding highlighted at the beginning of the passage ("because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous," Eph. 4:18, 19, ESV) and the depraved sexual practice underlined at its end ("and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity," Eph. 4:19, ESV). Alienated from God, they don't know how to live, and separated from His saving grace, they continue in a downward spiral of sin and depravity. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 65).

What is being described here? Again, I must commend the lesson for focusing our attention, not on a specific list of sins, but on the underlying spiritual sickness that leads to the sinful behaviors or acts.

Why is it an error, a mistake, to focus only on specific sins, even if it is a comprehensive list of sins?

Sins are the symptoms of the condition—when we forget this, when we have rejected God's design law and instead advance Romanism, the idea that God's law functions like human law, then we fail to recognize that the acts of sin are only the symptoms of hearts and minds that are out of harmony with God and His design for life. We think that sin is behavioral, rather than motivational, and false legal solutions are substituted for the true healing remedy that God provides.

Sin absolutely manifests in behaviors, but rightly understood the behaviors are not the problem, they are the symptoms of the problem.

Any Bible texts to support this idea?

- "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment (Matthew 5:21-22 NIV84)

- "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28 NIV84).

- "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV84).

- For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet" (Romans 7:7 NIV84).

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts (Hebrews 8:10 NIV84).

Do you see that the behaviors are the symptoms of the disease of sin, not the primary problem? It is like how fever, cough, and chills are symptoms of pneumonia—but the symptoms are not the primary problem. And the solution for pneumonia is not merely to treat the symptoms, but to cure the disease.

The penal legal theologies, based upon the lie that God's law functions like human law, focus on the symptoms, and have a form of godliness with no power. The truth is that through Jesus Christ we get new hearts and right spirits, are reborn, and recreated to live with new lives with new motives that we receive from Jesus and the symptoms resolve as we grow in Christ.

Now with all of this in mind, consider the following description from Jesus, how would you explain this to someone, what is the relationship between our deeds, behaviors, and the judgment?

- "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:33-37 NIV84).

If the issue is our heart condition, then why is Jesus saying it is by their words that they will be either condemned or acquitted in the judgment? Is Jesus making salvation legal and behavioral?

He is saying that everything in His kingdom is reality based. Those who partake of Him, the Remedy for sin, will experience healing, transformation, renewal, rebirth and have God's living law of love written upon their hearts and they will live holy lives and their words and deeds will produce the fruit of the Spirit. But those who cling to fear with its legal systems of this world will not have hearts renewed and their words and deeds will be selfish and sinful. Thus, at the judgment those who are goats (lost) are accurately identified as the goats that they actually are and those who are sheep (saved) are accurately identified as the sheep that they actually are; those who **are** righteous are going to be righteous still and those who **are** wicked are going to be wicked still.

God's judgment does not determine who is righteous and who is wicked, God's judgment accurately diagnosis, identifies, and separates those who have chosen to accept the free gift of Christ's righteousness and become righteous from the wicked who have rejected Christ and hardened themselves in unrighteousness—in fear and selfishness.

TUESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- Paul then commands, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29, NKJV), which describes a destructive word making its seemingly unstoppable way toward the lips to do its damaging work. Positively, Paul imagines any negative expression not being just stopped, but replaced by a statement that exhibits three criteria: It (1) "is good for building up," (2) "fits the occasion," and (3) gives "grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29, ESV). If only all our words could be like that! (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 67).

What would qualify as "corrupt words"?

Certainly, bearing false witness, words intended to deceive, mislead, and words intended to tempt into sin—all such words would be corrupt.

Any other examples of corrupt words?

What about cursing—when Peter denied Jesus with cursing were his words corrupt?

What if Peter would have said, "Yes, you blankety blank losers, I blankety blank know Him. What are you blankety blank going to do about it?" would those words have been pure and uncorrupted or still corrupt?

If you say corrupt, why? Wouldn't that statement be a statement of being truthful, of taking a stand for Jesus? Or despite speaking the truth, does saying it with vulgarity and cursing and accusation against one's enemies reveal the sin infection is still operating in the heart—that there is fear, selfishness, anger and hatred directing the actions rather than love and trust?

Consider James 3:9-11:

- One moment we praise God our Father, and the very next moment we curse the very men and women created in his image. Think about it: Out of the same mouth come both praises and curses. My brothers and sisters, this is wrong, and it must stop. Does a spring bring forth fresh water one moment and sewage the next? (James 3:9-11 REM).

Other examples of corrupt speech?

What about words intended to hurt another person—even if those words are factually true, but the reason for saying them is to wound, hurt, injure, control, manipulate for one's own ends?

What about saying things that are not true to get along, to avoid conflict, to keep one's job, something everyone else agrees with, but you do not? Say being put in a situation where you have to deny Jesus

in order to keep your job? What about denying some other aspect of reality, like there is no male or female?

Is there a design law at work in what we say and why we need to be careful in our speech?

Consider this commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

- Closely connected with Christ's warning in regard to the sin against the Holy Spirit is a warning against **idle and evil words**. The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But **the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character**. **Men are influenced by their own words**. Often under a momentary impulse, prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, **expressing that which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words**, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation. **Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are**. It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. **The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character**, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (The Desire of Ages 323, emphasis mine).

Now consider what is happening in the world today, people are being pressured to speak things that they do not believe, to call a man a woman and a woman a man.

Is there any danger in speaking things **that you believe are false** simply to get along, to avoid conflict, to keep your job?

This is one of the great evils in what is happening in the world today. Evil always seeks to force its way upon others. Righteousness always seeks to win hearts and minds to friendship, to the voluntary service of love, based on understanding and agreement.

Evil is based upon lies and selfishness, righteousness is based upon truth and love. Thus, evil cannot allow honest dialogue, discussion, or leave people free to decide for themselves because the truth will always expose evil as fraudulent and destructive. Thus, evil will always end up using coercive pressure to force its way.

When it comes to personal pronouns notice the evil methods being employed, and the purpose and goal of these evil methods. The method is to use external coercive pressure to force another person to speak and act against their conscience. If one speaks against their own conscience to avoid being ostracized, rejected, being fired from a job, or expelled from school etc. one's mind is damaged, and they become less capable of both discerning truth for themselves and standing for truth.

But, Jesus also said not to cast your pearls before swine lest they turn and rend you asunder, and there were times when Jesus remained silent and didn't speak. To remain silent is not the same as speaking a lie to get along. There will be times when wisdom directs us to remain silent rather than speak the truth boldly, but at other times, we are to speak the truth. We must ask the Holy Spirit to lead us in every circumstance. But, **what the Holy Spirit will not lead us to do is to bear false witness, to deceive, to go against the truth**.

Don't be deceived by what is happening in the world, it is an assault on the hearts, minds, and characters of the righteous.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points out how Paul repeatedly describes how sinful living, refusing to apply to one's life the methods and principles of God, grieves the Holy Spirit. Then the lesson states the following in the third paragraph,

- Paul underlines the full divinity of the Spirit as "the Holy Spirit of God" and highlights the personhood of the Spirit by portraying the Holy Spirit as grieving. (See also Rom. 8:16, 26, 27; 1 Cor. 2:10, 13; 1 Cor. 12:11; Gal. 5:17, 18.) (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 68).

Have you heard things going around the circle that attack the full divinity of either Jesus or the Holy Spirit? Things suggesting that there is no Holy Spirit?

There is a reason for this—it is a strategy of Satan to stop people from experiencing salvation. Jesus is God the Son, fully and completely God who is our Savior. Jesus has life original to Himself, unborrowed and underived from another source. Without Jesus' becoming human, living a sinless life, dying selflessly as our substationary Savior and rising again no human could be saved from sin.

But what Jesus accomplished for us must be partaken of by us if we are to benefit from it. And the Holy Spirit, who is also fully God, is the one who administers into our hearts the benefits of what Jesus has accomplished in our behalf. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ's victory would not benefit us personally.

Christ's victory would still benefit the loyal angels who would have the truth He revealed. It would still benefit the planet in that Jesus, in His person, successfully restored God's living law back into the species human because Jesus was fully human. And Jesus defeated Satan and reclaimed Earth under human governance—His governance as the second Adam.

But for us to individually participate in what Jesus has accomplished it requires His victory to be made effectual in our hearts and minds. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, first to put a desire for something better than this sinful world of selfishness into our hearts, a longing for God, for love, for our heavenly home. Then the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, brings us to conviction that we are not right,

that something is wrong, and the Holy Spirit enlightens us to the truth, whether we see that truth in nature as Paul says in Romans 1:20 and 2:12, or in Scripture, and then, when we surrender to God, it is the Holy Spirit who takes the righteousness of Christ and reproduces it in us, so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

- Satan knows that if he can get people to deny the Father and believe in evolutionism, humanism, or some other godless philosophy and live for self that they won't be saved.
- Satan knows that if he can get people to deny Jesus and pursue salvation in some other means or mode without Jesus then they won't be saved.
- And Satan knows that if he can get people to deny the Holy Spirit, to grieve the Holy Spirit, and refuse the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives that they won't be saved.

All these attacks on the Godhead are attacks on the character of God to undermine our faith in God, and to replace the truth of God's character of love with Satan's character of selfishness.

Understand this clearly: **Love does not and cannot exist in a singularity**, in a solitary being with no other living entity. For love to exist and **function** it ***requires*** an other, someone to love, to sacrifice and give of self for and to. And godly agape love does not exist in a dyad, the fullest form of other centered love requires at a minimum, three.

Two people who constantly adore each other can fall into narcissistic reinforcement. Immature couples sometimes do this, when they love each other completely, and are all into each other, and constantly pay attention to and engage positively with the other. And then, at some point, a child is born and the mother begins to pay appropriate time and attention to the child and is not as available to constantly adore the husband, and the immature husband becomes frustrated, angry, and jealous. Their relationship was not godly love, but narcissistic reinforcement.

The minimum for genuine self-sacrificial godly agape love is three. And in the testimony of Scripture we see this. Jesus constantly seeks, not glory for Himself, but to uplift the Father, the Holy Spirit comes not to speak on His own but to uplift and promote Jesus the Son, and the Father sends the Spirit to do His work.

Satan wants to corrupt our understanding of the character of God to be anything other than love, to create a hierarchical system with a supreme ruler who uses power and authority over others. That is Satan's method and system.

Jesus gave this testimony:

- "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Counselor** to be with you forever—the **Spirit** of truth. The world cannot accept **him**, because it neither sees **him** nor knows **him**. But you know **him**, for **he** lives with you and will be in you (John 14:15-17, emphasis mine).

Now, if there is no third person of the Godhead that we call the Holy Spirit, Jesus words here are quite strange and misleading. If the Holy Spirit is merely the omnipresence of the Father, as some claim, then Jesus should have said: "I will ask the Father, and **He Himself** will come to you to be with you forever…" If the Holy Spirit were not a person, but a force, then Jesus should have said, "The world cannot accept **it**, because the world neither sees **it** nor knows **it**."

In the Old Testament we find all three members of the Godhead:

- Then God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness… Genesis 1:26

God did not say, "I will make man in my image."

But what about "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Notice the passage in English uses both "Lord" and "God."

The reading of this passage with the Hebrew names for "Lord" and "God" would go like this: "Hear, O Israel: *Yahweh* our *Elohim*, *Yahweh* is One."

What is interesting is that the word *Elohim* in Hebrew is plural and is the same word used for God in Genesis 1:26. Thus an accurate meaning of this text would go like this: "The One is more than One yet is One"

In Hebrew there are two words for one, *Yacheed* and *Echad*. The first indicates singular unity as in one and only, the second indicates compound unity, as the oneness of two or more. In this text *Echad* is used along with the plural name of God *Elohim* indicating the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament also provides texts in which all members of the Godhead are referenced:

- And now the Sovereign Lord [Father] has sent me [Son], with his Spirit [Holy Spirit]. This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: Isaiah 48:16,17
- "Here is my [Father] servant [Son], whom I [Father] uphold, my [Father] chosen one [Son] in whom I [Father] delight; I [Father] will put my Spirit [Holy Spirit] on him [Son] and he [Son] will bring justice to the nations. Isaiah 42:1

Ellen White affirmed the full divinity of the three persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

- In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.**

The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power**. **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. (The Desire of Ages 671).

- There are **three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers–the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**–those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.– (Evangelism, p. 615)

THURSDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- In the final exhortation of Ephesians 4:17–32, Paul again provides a negative command, this one identifying six vices that are to "be put away from you" (Eph. 4:31); a positive command to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving (Eph. 4:32), and a rationale. Believers are to forgive one another "even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32, NKJV). The list of six vices begins and ends with general, all-encompassing terms, "all bitterness" and "all malice." In between come four additional terms: "wrath," "anger," "clamor," and "slander" (Eph. 4:31, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 69).

Why are we to forgive those who wrong us?

If we forgive them does that mean what they did was okay?
Does it mean we have to trust them? Why not?
If we forgive do we have to treat them as if they did not wrong us? What if they remain untrustworthy?
If we forgive them do they get away with their sin against us?
If God forgives people, like Jesus did on the cross, do they get away with their sin?

Does forgiving someone mean forgetting?

Does forgiving someone mean they become your friend?

Who is changed when we forgive?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at https://www.honeylake.clinic/

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered, residential, psychiatric, treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.

- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 9
Living Wisely

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

How would you explain what it means to live wisely?

It means to understand and live in harmony with objective reality, in harmony the laws God built reality to operate upon.

Jesus taught this when He said:

- "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matthew 7:24 NIV84).

Jesus was saying the wise understand God, God's character, methods, principles, design laws and put them into practice, and their lives are built on the solid foundation trust in God and harmony with His never-changing protocols for life.

Jesus did NOT say the wise man accepts my vicarious legal payment in his behalf and gets a legal declaration that proclaims his life to be righteous while he remains unrighteous.

Why is it foolishness to build on the penal legal system of salvation? Because the penal legal system of salvation is made up, fantasy, built on the lies of Satan that God's law functions like human law.

Let's examine more wisdom Scripture and see if you can identify the consistent theme that wisdom is harmony with God and the laws He built reality to operate upon:

- The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. (Proverbs 12:15 NIV84).
- A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke. (Proverbs 13:1 NIV84).
- The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin. (Proverbs 10:8 NIV84). [What is described? What does it mean to listen to advice, heed instructions, and accept commands? Does it mean mindless, thoughtless, blind obedience—simply doing what someone else tells us? No! It means acknowledging reality—that we are finite beings and do not know everything, and that other people have perspectives, knowledge, insights, understanding, truths that we may not have yet understood ourselves. The wise person is willing to listen, to hear, to consider, to examine, to grow through assimilating truth from others. The fool thinks they know it all already and they cannot learn for they will not listen to anything that doesn't agree with what they already think. And where does truth, learning have its impact? Is the change that comes from accepting truth, direction, instruction, a legal change

in record books or actual change in thought and when applied functional change in the individual?]

- The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. (Proverbs 11:30 NIV84). [How does fruit come forth? Under what type of law? Is fruit legally proclaimed to exist when in reality it does not exist?]

- Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18 NIV84).
- The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. (Proverbs 13:14 NIV84).
- The path of life leads upward for the wise to keep him from going down to the grave. (Proverbs 15:24 NIV84). [Why do the words of the wise bring healing? Why are the teachings of the wise a fountain of life? Because wisdom is how life works, teaching the laws of health, not legal adjustments, but objective reality.]

- He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. (Proverbs 13:20 NIV84). [Do you know of a New Testament passage that teaches the same thing? "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (1 Corinthians 15:53 NIV84). Is there a law involved here? The law of exertion and worship, by beholding we become changed.]

- Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1 NIV84). [What is it saying? Is the Bible making a rule that if you ever ingest any ethanol containing substance you are sinning? So, any cough syrup with alcohol needs to be confessed and paid for by the blood of Jesus or else you will be burned in hell for it? No! it is not setting up a rule, it is describing design law, the laws of health. Alcoholic beverages when consumed can intoxicate, interfere with higher cortical function, problem solving, diminish self-restraint, impair judgment, and result in impulsive and destructive decision making. If consumed repeatedly it can alter neural circuits, people can become physically addicted and lose their freedom to a substance and the need to take more of the substance to avoid withdrawal. All of this is unhealthy and therefore unwise.]

- Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. (Isaiah 5:21 NIV84). [What is being described here? Why is this foolishness? Because it closes the mind to truth, to development, to advancement. Cuts oneself off from God who is the source of ultimate truth.]

- The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of **rules taught by men**. Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish." (Isaiah 29:13–14 NIV84).

When Jesus quoted this text in Mark 7:7, He quoted it as:

- They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. (Mark 7:7 NIV84).

[What is going on? Aren't these people wise because they praise God and worship God with their words and singing and go to religious meetings? Why does Isaiah, and then Jesus, say that their praising of God is in vain, is worthless and ultimately foolish and not wise? Because they do it legally, rules taught by men, rather than living out objective reality, rather than living in harmony with God's design laws of truth, love, and liberty.]

Are you seeing a theme in Scripture yet—wisdom is living in harmony with God's design laws, foolishness is breaking them, either in direct rejection and rebellion, or replacing them with man-made religious rules, a legal system of salvation. Consider this passage from Jeremiah:

- How can you say, "We are wise, for we have the law of the LORD," when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely? (Jeremiah 8:8 NIV84). [What is the message here? Do we see this today, people claiming wisdom because they have the law, the Torah, the Bible, the Commandments and claim to obey all Ten, yet they have Romanized Christianity and made God out to be like a Roman Caesar who makes up rules and is required by law to use His power to inflict death. They handle the Bible falsely, the law of God falsely and in reality are worshiping a creature, a being whose functions no differently that a created being, they are not worshiping the Creator who built reality and sustains it.]

So what is wisdom?

- This is what the LORD says:
  "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom
  or the strong man boast of his strength
  or the rich man boast of his riches,
  but **let him who boasts boast about this:**
  that he understands and knows me,
  that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
  justice and righteousness on earth,
  for in these I delight,"
  declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23–24 NIV84, emphasis mine). [What is wisdom in this text? It is knowing God, as Jesus prayed life eternal is knowing God, not knowing about God. Why is this wisdom? Is getting such wisdom the same as getting a doctoral degree in theology? What does knowing God look like? When we know God we have intimate connection with God, and to know God is to trust God. And when we trust Him we are restored to righteousness, we receive new hearts and right spirits, we have the living law of God written in our hearts and minds.]

- The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Proverbs 9:10 NIV84). [What does this mean? What law is involved? Is it speaking of terror and dread? No, it is speaking of awe, admiration, reverence, what we revere. And when we do have awe, admiration, respect and reverence for God then by beholding Him in truth and love we are changed. We surrender ourselves to Him, an intelligent being who is superior to ourselves that we have come to know as completely good and trustworthy and we

eagerly want to be closer to Him and more like Him; we are eager to be corrected, instructed, and directed, because we want to learn of Him and from Him, we want to be His student, pupil, disciple—and that is the beginning of wisdom.]

- Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. (Romans 1:22–23 NIV84). [Why did they become fools? Is there a design law involved here? The law of worship, by beholding we are changed.]

- Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. [What is the wisdom of the world? The strong survive, the weak die. Might makes right. The ends justify the means. The more you take the more you have. Survival of the fittest, is the wisdom of the world. But that is foolishness because it violates the design law that God built reality to operate upon. It is actually the law of sin and death. But it seems to work in a world infected with evil, so the godless, those who don't know God, those without true wisdom think it is wise to dominate, control, and abuse others to make themselves feel safe.] Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. (1 Corinthians 1:19–25 NIV84). [It is foolish to base one's security in miracles for miracles can be counterfeited, but miracles suggest power and power suggests dominance and control over others and that appears wise to the worldly. It is foolish to look to the philosophies of the world for they are all corrupt with selfishness and advance some form of survival of the fittest, which is the law of sin and death. True wisdom is found only in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But the message of self-sacrificial love is contrary to the systems of this sinful world and thus appears foolish.]

And of course, could we discuss biblical wisdom without considering Psalm 19:

- The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. [What kind of law can revive a soul? If someone ties a plastic bag over their head, transgressing the law of respiration and they are not yet dead, but have passed out. What happens if we remove the bag and put them back in harmony with the law? They revive!]
  The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. [When we understand the laws that God built reality to operate upon and live in harmony with them, we grow in wisdom, because we not only get healthier, we also see more clearly why and how things are designed to work, and we notice things that we didn't notice before. How many of you have grown in wisdom as you have embraced and applied God's design laws to your life?]
  The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. [From where does joy come? Happiness is the byproduct of healthiness, which occurs from living in harmony with God's design laws. Joy is the byproduct

of fulfilling our calling, our purpose in God's kingdom, and some common purposes we all have is to love God and others, to live lives of honesty, integrity, and service. When we do this, we experience joy.]
The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.
They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.
By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:7–11 NIV84). [Why are God's ordinances, laws, precepts sweet and why is there great rewarding in keeping them? For they are the protocols of life and it is so sweet to be free, healthy, happy, and joyful; and freedom, health, happiness, and joy are only possible in harmony with God and the laws He built reality to operate upon. Satan tricks people into substituting pleasure seeking for happiness and often pleasure seeking violates the laws of health and makes people worse.]

So how would you describe wisdom? Do you see true wisdom is found only in God and in embracing, understanding, and living out the design laws that He built reality to operate upon? It is foolishness to promote a penal legal religious system because such a system is fantasy, make-believe, fraudulent, a construct of the great liar.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Paul urges the believers in Ephesus to walk in love, a call important to this section (see Eph. 5:8, 15). This "walking in love" (see Eph. 5:2) is to be modeled after Christ's own love for us (compare Eph. 4:32), expressed in **His atoning sacrifice**. Paul affirms four things about that sacrifice: (1) It is motivated by both the love of God the Father (Eph. 5:1) and of Christ Himself (Eph. 5:2); (2) it is substitutionary, with Christ dying in our place. Christ is no passive victim but gave Himself up for us; (3) under the imagery of the Old Testament sanctuary service, **Christ's death is also a sacrifice, which is made to God**; and (4) **the sacrifice is accepted by God since it is "a fragrant offering"** (Eph. 5:2, ESV; compare Exod. 29:18, Lev. 2:9, Phil. 4:18). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 73, emphasis mine).

Any concerns with this paragraph? Any truths mixed with error and thereby promoting a false gospel and causing confusion?

I find statements like this so sad, because it so mispresents God whom the people who wrote this claim to love and worship. So, I find it sad when someone is tricked into doing something evil, harmful, while they think they are actually doing something good.

First, let's affirm the truth:

- God is love and God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are love and they love us.
- Jesus became a real human being, lived a sinless life, became the second Adam, and as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God." So, yes Jesus became our substitute so that we might become the righteousness of God, and by restoring us to righteousness we are brought back into unity or at-one-ment with God. So, we believe in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus as our Savior.

But the lesson then reveals how it has accepted the lie about God's law and has Romanized the gospel making it penal legal rather than healing, how it misrepresents God, when it says:

- **Christ's death is also a sacrifice, which is made to God**; and (4) **the sacrifice is accepted by God since it is "a fragrant offering"**

They reference Ephesians 5:2, so let's read this verse in several translations and see what you think. This is an excellent exercise because it will demonstrate how the translators, can in all innocence, use legitimate translation options and unknowingly translate in their own penal/legal biases and thereby change the meaning of the Scripture.

In other words, every translation I am going to show you are legitimate translations, none of them violate the rules of translation, none of them are malicious, manipulative, or deceitful. They are done by people of integrity seeking to do their honest best. But when one has accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law, and is translating and then has the option of translating something in a legal way, those choices get made and errors of meaning creep in.

- live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice **to** God. (Ephesians 5:2 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering **to** God. (Ephesians 5:2 NET, emphasis mine).

- walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice **to** God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (Ephesians 5:2 NKJV, emphasis mine).

So, we see that this idea of offering a sacrifice to God is commonly translated into the text.

But, do the following translations, which are also legitimate options, mean the same thing:

- Your life must be controlled by love, just as Christ loved us and gave his life for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice **that pleases God**. (Ephesians 5:2 GNT).

- Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a **pleasing aroma to God**. (Ephesians 5:2 NLT).

Do these suggest the same meaning as the others? What do these translations suggest?

That God was pleased by what Christ did, because of Christ's sacrifice accomplished something that was pleasing to God—and what did Christ's sinless life and substitutionary death accomplish?

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death**—that is, the devil—and **free those who all their lives were held in slavery** by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14–15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light** through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil's work**. (1 John 3:8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

So, Jesus came to Earth to destroy Satan, Satan's power, death, Satan's work, and FREE humans from the slavery to fear, selfishness, sin, and death.

And who sent Jesus to do this?

- For **God** so loved the world that **he gave** his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For **God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him**. (John 3:16-17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- **God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ**, not counting men's sins against them. (2 Corinthians 5:19 NIV84, emphasis mine).

So, what is the truth here? That God was pleased with Jesus because Jesus accomplished God's purpose, God's will, God's desire, God's goal to destroy sin and Satan and death and to restore humanity back to perfection and unity with Him.

Nothing is being done to God, or paid to God, or offered as a sacrifice to God.

But what is being presented to God is the victory, the success, with its results—the redeemed, the cleansed and perfected humanity and **that pleases God very much, because this was God's whole purpose in sending Jesus!!!**

What about the Old Testament sacrificial system and the aroma of the burnt offering being pleasing to God?

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

The Old Testament sacrificial system was theater; it acted out in symbolism the larger reality, but it was not reality. And what did that theater act out? The eradication of sin, the curing, healing, saving of humanity from sin, and the restoration of humanity back into at-one-ment with God. Thus, the burnt offering represented the burning out of the lies, rebellion, selfishness, distrust—the burning out of sin that has taken root in the hearts and minds of people. The burning representing the killing of the carnal man, through Jesus' become human, being tempted in all points like we are but, not giving in to any temptation but taking that humanity to the cross and killing it, and arising in a purified humanity free from that infection of fear and selfishness.

It would be like a physician using radiation to burn out the cancer that was killing his child—seeing the cancer burn away and his child saved would be quite pleasing.

This is what the imagery is depicting.

MONDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The phrase "the wrath of God" is a challenging one. That it is the wrath or anger of God suggests a contrast to the usual, moody human variety (compare Eph. 4:31). It is the **just response** of a long-suffering and righteous God against stubborn commitment to evil, not a crazed, volcanic reaction to some minor infraction. Moreover, mentions of divine wrath most often occur in the context of inspired, biblical warnings about the **coming judgments** of God (e.g., Rev. 6:12–17, Rev. 16:1–16, Rev. 19:11–16). **God warns of His own coming judgments**—an act of grace, since human beings are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3, ESV), subject to those judgments. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 74, emphasis mine).

There is no question that the Bible uses the words, wrath, anger, judgment. But what is the first question we must answer before we can accurately understand the true meaning of these things?

What law lens are we thinking through—if we accept the Romanization of Christianity, that God's law functions like human, Roman, imposed laws, then judgment is judicial, wrath and anger are inflicted and so-called just punishments.

But when we return to worshiping God as Creator and understand His laws are the design protocols reality is constructed to operate upon, then we understand that His wrath is letting go, **the cessation of the use of power** and allowing beings to reap what unremedied sin does—just as the Bible describes repeatedly, including in Romans 1:18-32. We recognize God's anger is directed at sin, at the disease, at the unnecessary loss of His creation, like a doctor is angry at disease and wants to destroy disease, but is not angry at the patient.

And if the disease is a disease of the mind that causes the patient to refuse the healing remedy—which happens sometimes. We doctors hate, are angry, at the brain disease, but we are not angry at our patients, we are sad for them.

And God's judgments are His accurate diagnosis of what is wrong and His therapeutic judgments of what is necessary to heal and restore, and in the final end the judgment of the lost is God's accurate diagnosis of what is, that the lost are beyond healing, that they have destroyed within themselves the faculties that respond to truth and love and no further amount of truth and love will have any redeeming, healing or saving impact—in fact more truth and love causes them to suffer, so God stops using power to shield them and keep them alive in a situation in which they will only suffer. God in sadness, but in truth and mercy, ceases using power and lets them go to reap what they have chosen, separation from Him and they die eternally.

We cannot lighten the world for Christ's return as long as we continue to take pagan views of a legal punishing god to the world. We must return to worshiping God as Creator and that requires we reject the Romanization of Christianity and return to understanding God's law as design law.

From *Hard Sayings of the Bible:*

- In some sense, God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause or own disintegration. P 542

  The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). P 543

  The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves. P 543

  In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained… God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. P 543 (Kaiser, W., et al., Hard Saying of the Bible, Intervarsity Press, 1996).

TUESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Ephesians 5:11-14, let's read those verses from The Remedy;

- Don't have anything to do with the destructive practices of those whose minds are darkened, but rather present the light of truth, which exposes them. For it is damaging and degrading to dwell upon what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light of truth becomes understandable, for it is the truth that reveals all things. This is why it is said: "Wake up your brain and start thinking. Stop zoning out like you're dead, and Christ will shine the light of truth into your mind." (Ephesians 5:11-14 REM).

Do you see this counsel as pertinent to people today?

Are there forces at work that seek to get people to stop thinking, to accept what they are told, to believe voices of authority over evidence and truth?

During the Dark Ages, what method did that abusive system use upon people? Power, authority, force of office, do what we say or get punished, don't ask questions, don't research evidence for yourself, anyone who does is a heretic.

What about today, are we seeing the same practices of using power, intimidation, public shaming, shunning, accusation of heresy, of being conspiracy nuts, of not caring about others, of wanting to harm others, of being racist or transphobe to silence those who have legitimate questions?

What is the goal—to turn beings created in the image of God, with our own individuality ability to reason and think into mindless pawns, serfs, a functional slave class who are easily manipulated and controlled by those with authority, charisma and power.

We are to be mature, to develop the ability to think for ourselves, we are to be thinkers, not reflectors of other people's thoughts.

Recognize the methods being used by people and when you see these ungodly methods, don't go along, don't surrender your mind, your thinking, your practices and actions to the world.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Ephesians 5:17, which reads,

- Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is (Ephesians 5:17 NIV84).

Then the lesson states in the second paragraph,

- We do not look within for wisdom. To be wise is to reach beyond ourselves, to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 76).

This is absolutely true—we cannot find wisdom by turning away from God, turning away from the sources of truth God has provided for us, like Scripture, nature, and life's experiences, and turning inward.

Are there any philosophies and practices that are advancing in the world and in Western medicine that do exactly that, turn the mind inward to find solutions?

Eastern meditation practices, do this, they are an emptying form of meditation that cuts the mind and heart off from God, but results in powerful feelings and physiological benefits without actually healing the terminal sin condition. It is a counterfeit to Biblical meditation. If you would like a full exploration of the differences between Biblical and Eastern Meditation check out our Meditation Guide which contrasts the two documenting the differences in underlying philosophy, method, practice, impact on brain and character. You can find it on our website at https://comeandreason.com/meditation-guide/

And our blog Lectio Divina describes the biblical method of meditation https://comeandreason.com/lectio-divina/

To be wise we must understand God's will—how do we do that? Any other Bible verses come to mind?

- Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2 NIV84).

Paul says that if we do something, if we experience something, then we will be able to test and approve what God's will is. What is that that we must do or experience?

We surrender our complete selves to God and stop patterning ourselves after the methods and systems of the world. Would that include stop living by checklists of rules and start living out the principles of God? Would it require us to grow up and mature and stop thinking righteousness is in rule-keeping and recognize righteousness in harmony with God and His methods, principles, and design law for life?

THURSDAY

What does it mean to have Spirit-Filled Worship?

Consider these texts:

- The **Spirit gives life**; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. (John 6:63 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the **Spirit of life** set me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1–2 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the **Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires**. The mind of sinful man is death, but the **mind controlled by the Spirit is life** and peace… (Romans 8:5–6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- And if the **Spirit** of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit**, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if **by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The **Spirit himself** testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:11-17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the **Spirit gives life**. (2 Corinthians 3:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please **the Spirit**, from the **Spirit will reap eternal life**. (Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is the Bible making the case that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that works in us a change, heals us, transforms us, is the life giving energy of God applying into our inmost being what Christ has wrought out for us?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at https://www.honeylake.clinic/

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered residential psychiatric treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.

- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

2023 Q3 Ephesians – Lesson 10
Husbands and Wives: Together at the Cross

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

Love and Marriage, husbands and wives – what does the Bible say about it, what do we think about it?

Children ages 5-10 were asked about love and Marriage. Some of their responses were:

Love and Marriage:

- "My mother says to look for a man who is kind. That's what I'll do. I'll find somebody who's kinda tall and handsome." -- *Carolyn, age 8*
- "One of you should know how to write a check. Because, even if you have tons of love, there is still going to be a lot of bills." -- *Ava, age 8*
- "Love will find you, even if you are trying to hide from it. I been trying to hide from it since I was five, but the girls keep finding me." -- *Dave, age 8*
- "Don't do things like have smelly, green sneakers. You might get attention, but attention ain't the same thing as love." -- *Alonzo, age 9*
- "Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough." -- *Lynnette, age 8*
- "Be a good kisser. It might make your wife forget that you never take out the trash." -- *Erin, age 8*

What does the Bible say about it? Our memory text is from a letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” *(Ephesians 5:25-27, NKJV)*.

If we break this down, it might look like this:

Husbands, LOVE YOUR WIVES (HOW?)

- Just as JESUS LOVED the church
- AND GAVE HIMSELF for her (WHY?)
    1. That He might SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE HER
       With the washing of water by the word
    2. That He might PRESENT HER TO HIMSELF
       A GLORIOUS CHURCH
        1. Not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing
        2. But that she should be holy
        3. And without blemish

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

Does any of this look like what we see in most marriages today? Do we see husbands taking the leadership roll in the spiritual wellbeing of their wife and children, or do they just "bring home the bacon" and watch or play sports, pray the stock market, listen to politics, view pornography

Do we think God put men "over" women because he's bigger, stronger and can overpower her; force her to comply? Or did God predict this is what would happen in selfish relationships after sin, but that women would desire a man's love and protection anyway?

Do we understand that the husband's leadership roll is as the Chief Executive Officer/CEO of his family corporation? In a corporation, the buck stops at the CEO. Whether the company succeeds or not reflects on his leadership responsibilities and skills.

Will God hold men accountable for how those under their leadership fared? Were their families nurtured and enriched to their full potential? Were they given a roll model to emulate and guidance for success in this life and the next, or were they selfishly used and abused, controlled and criticized?

I have seen both sides of the marital experience. I had an 18 year not-so-good marriage, and am currently in a 26 year much better marriage. I'm always learning, so, researching and teaching this lesson about marriage has been yet another learning experience for me.

I recall visiting a church shortly after my divorce years ago, when a minister there decried "all the young people getting a divorce these days". He asked what he and other ministers could do to help stem this tide? I had already taken note of this man before he talked with me, and saw the body language between him and his wife. He took no note of her whatsoever, like she wasn't even in the same room. So, I responded to him, "You can truly love your wife, and SHOW us what a loving marriage relationship looks like." I found out shortly afterward that he hadn't married his wife for love, but for the need to have a wife in order to get a job as a minister. My heart went out to both of them in such an unloving marriage.

There is no loneliness like the loneliness of a loveless marriage.

SUNDAY

Counsel to Christian Wives

So, we come to the submission of wives to their husbands, a sticky point to a lot of women.

Submission means, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

1. a: a legal agreement to submit to the decision of arbitrators
   b: an act of submitting something (as for consideration or inspection)
   also : something submitted (such as a manuscript)

2. the condition of being submissive, humble, or compliant
3. an act of submitting to the authority or control of another

Thiw week's lesson did a fine job of interpretation of scriptures where:

> Paul invites **Christian wives to submit to "your own husbands, as to the Lord"** *(Eph. 5:22, ESV)*, clarifying that he is discussing the submission of wives to their respective husbands *(see also 1 Pet. 3:1, 5)*. When Paul says wives are to

do so "as to the Lord," **does he mean a wife is to submit to her husband as though he were Christ; or, instead, does He mean that Christ is the truest and highest focus of her submission**?

In view of Ephesians 6:7, where slaves are asked to serve "as to the Lord, and not to men" (NKJV), and Colossians 3:18, where wives are asked to submit to their husbands "as is fitting in the Lord" (NKJV), the latter view is to be preferred. **Wives are themselves believers who must ultimately honor Christ over their husbands.**

In both Colossians and Ephesians, Christ — and only Christ — is identified as the Head of the church, which is His body *(Eph. 1:22, Eph. 5:23, Col. 1:18)*: "Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" *(Eph. 5:23, NKJV)*. By analogy, **the husband is "the head of the wife" *(Eph. 5:23)*, with the church's faithfulness to Christ serving as a model for the wife's loyalty to her husband. The passage presumes a loving, caring marriage, and not a dysfunctional one. This verse should not be interpreted to allow any form of domestic abuse.**

In "*Could It Be This Simple?*," Dr. Jennings describes a case of his that I found very interesting. Page 54, Marriage and the Law of Liberty.

For those who value Ellen White, one of the founders of the church, she says:

> If the husband "is a coarse, rough, boisterous, egotistical, harsh, and overbearing man, let him never utter the word that the husband is the head of the wife, and that she must submit to him in everything; for he is not the Lord, he is not the husband in the true significance of the term." — Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 117.

Jesus is held up as our example, but was never married. Perhaps we can glean some insight by looking at Jesus' example of servanthood and submission?

> **When the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest,** "Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whosever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** Mark 10:42-45

The wife is often looked on as treated as a servant of not only her husband, but her whole family. She may be made to feel as if she is less capable or not worthy of respect and appreciation.

> "The best way to educate children to respect their father and mother is to give them the opportunity of seeing the father offering kindly attentions to the mother and the mother rendering respect and reverence to the father. It is by beholding love in their parents that children are led to obey the fifth commandment and to heed the injunction, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Adventist Home, pg 198

> "The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. **Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;** so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash **his disciples' feet**, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." John 13: 2-5

NOTE: Every one of those disciples was going to betray, desert, or deny Jesus in some way that very evening!

So are we talking about servanthood in marriage, by both Husband and Wife?

Marriage as a Dance

Years ago, Ken and I went to a marriage seminar called, "Marriage is a Dance". I think it was headed up by Ryan Dobson, the son of Dr. James Dobson. I checked online to see if these are still being done, but couldn't find evidence of it. We had invited several friends of ours who we knew or suspected didn't have the best of marriages. None of them came. We had a great marriage, but wanted it to be even better, if possible, so we went. I have been to marriage seminars run by women, and found that these men ran it with a completely different perspective.

We came away with at least 3 helpful ideas:

- **Think about marriage as a sports team.** On a sports team, does any one player win or lose? No! Either the team wins, or it loses. Where there are problems in a marriage, a solution should be sought that ends up in a win-win resolution**. Anything a couple can do to find that type of solution needs to be done….prayer, counseling, reading, asking for wise advise, research, etc.** If either one of you loses, you both lose. Your team loses. And if you love your spouse, would you always want them to be wrong? Would you always want to be made to feel you are wrong? Sometimes you are right, sometimes you are wrong. It's important to find out that you don't always have to be right. Anyone can make mistakes or be wrong. **Make yours a winning TEAM!**

- **Get a PHD in your spouse.** Heart Pillow! **At the beginning of a relationship, we want to know "everything" about them!** As time goes by, we think we do know everything about them; maybe even know them better than they know themselves, because we have a front row seat to all of their behaviors and words. It's easy to look elsewhere for interest. Next thing you know, the couple is living more and more of their lives separated, until they are merely roommates. But do we box each other in, based on what they did or said in the past? Does that give us room to grow and learn in the relationship? How about finding new things to learn together, perhaps something neither of you have tried before? We should learn a lesson from Eve in the Garden of Eden….it was when she wondered off by herself that she lost the strength of the relationship between her husband and her God, and we lost our world to Satan. **Keep digging for the veins of gold in each other and learning new things TOGETHER!**

- **<u>Being unfaithful happens long before actual adultery.</u> Unfaithfulness begins when you create FEAR in your spouse. A wife longs for love and security. A husband longs for admiration and respect. That's why the "do unto others what you would have them to unto you" text doesn't work very well in marriage. Men and Women need different things. If these are denied, fear will enter into the relationship and self preservation and loss of intimate relationship with your spouse has begun; unfaithfulness has begun. Adultery is just then end point of that process. <u>NO FEAR</u>!**

MONDAY

The Church as the Bride of Christ: Part 1

As Paul, in Ephesians 5:25-27, 29, shapes his wedding-marriage metaphor for the church and its relationship with Christ, **he draws creatively on the customs and roles of an ancient wedding.** In relationship to the church as bride, Christ is the divine Bridegroom who:

1. ***<u>Loves the church as bride</u>*** *(Eph. 5:25)*. We must never forget that this is heart work for Jesus. He loves us!
2. ***<u>Gives Himself as the bride price</u>*.** In the context of ancient wedding arrangements, the bridegroom would "purchase" the bride with the "bride price," which was usually a large sum of money and valuables, so large that ancient village economies depended upon the custom. Christ pays the ultimate price for the church as His bride since He "gave Himself for her" *(Eph. 5:25, NKJV)*. In the Incarnation and at the cross, He gives Himself as the bride price.
3. ***<u>Bathes His bride.</u>*** The preparation of the bride was an important part of the ancient wedding festivities. As is also true today, it was the bridesmaids and female relatives of the bride who prepared her for the ceremony. Paul, though, imagines the divine Bridegroom preparing His bride for the wedding! It is He who sanctifies and cleanses her "by the washing of water" *(Eph. 5:26, ESV)*, a probable reference to baptism.
4. ***<u>Speaks the word of promise</u>*.** This cleansing is performed "with the word" *(Eph. 5:26, ESV)*, pointing to the word of promise that the divine Bridegroom speaks to His bride, perhaps in the context of the betrothal ceremony *(compare Eph. 1:3-14, Eph. 2:1-10, noting God's promises to believers at the time of their conversion)*. Betrothal was the ancient version of modern engagement, but was a

much more serious set of negotiations, which included a written agreement about the bride price (from the husband) and the dowry (assets the bride would bring to the marriage from her family).

5. ***Prepares and adorns the bride***. When the bride is finally presented to her Groom, she is fabulously beautiful, appearing in flawless splendor *(Eph. 5:27)*. Christ not only bathes the bride; He prepares and adorns her as well. (**Show picture of modern day Indian Bride**.)

Story of Johnny Lingo

TUESDAY

The Church as the Bride of Christ: Part 2

Using one final element of the ancient wedding, in Ephesians 5:25-27 Paul portrays Christ as the One who:

P**resents *the bride (to Himself!)*.** In ancient times the bride would be given away by the best man, best men, or her father. Never by her groom! Here, though, Paul imagines Jesus presenting the church as bride to Himself.

Paul uses marriage customs and roles to highlight Christ's relationship to the church in an unfolding, chronological pattern: **1.*Betrothal*.** Christ offered Himself up for the church (as "bride price") and so became betrothed to her *(Eph. 5:25)*. **2. *Preparation for the wedding ceremony***. The attentions of the bridegroom continue in his present efforts to sanctify and cleanse the bride *(Eph. 5:26)*. **3. *The wedding ceremony itself*.** Christ's present attentions are in view of the "presentation" of the bride at the wedding *(Eph. 5:27)*. This last element looks to the grand wedding celebration at His return when Christ, the Bridegroom, will come to claim the church as bride and present her to Himself *(Eph. 5:27; compare 2 Cor. 11:1, 2; Col. 1:21-23, 28)*.

Ancient weddings often began with a nighttime parade *(see Matt. 25:1-13)*. The groom and his entourage would gather at the groom's home — the couple's new home — and with grand ceremony begin a procession. Lit by torches and accompanied by joyful, lilting music and great rejoicing, the crowd jostles toward the home of the father of the bride. Gathering up the bride there or meeting the bride's own procession on the way, the parade would convey the couple to their new home, where the guests would settle

into a **weeklong feast**, culminating in the wedding ceremony, when the bride would be presented to the groom.

When Paul portrays Christ presenting the church to Himself, he alludes to this grand parade and to the moment of presentation. In doing so, he provides a moving portrait of Christ's return as a future wedding ceremony, when the long betrothal between Christ and His church is complete and the wedding celebrated.

WEDNESDAY

Love Your Wife as You Do Yourself

Paul's rules for the Christian household *(Eph. 5:21-6:9)* disclose a challenging social context. In Ephesians 5:28-30, Paul addresses husbands who, following the all-too-frequent pattern of the time, may choose to "hate their own flesh" *(see Eph. 5:28, 29)*, abusing and beating their wives. In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day, the legal power of the "father of the family" (Latin, *pater familias*) was very broad. He could punish harshly or even kill his wife, children, and slaves and be within his legal rights (though exercising such power in extreme ways was increasingly constrained by public opinion).

In Ephesians 5:25-27, Paul has detailed the ultimate example of love, Christ's love for the church, offering a drastically different model for husbands than the usual one. Now, before laying out a new argument, he points again to that great Example, asking Christian husbands to respond "in the same way" *(Eph. 5:28, ESV)* as Jesus, who "gave himself up" for His bride, the church, and attends to her every need *(Eph. 5:25-27, ESV)*. **Paul challenges Christian husbands to turn from the expected practices of their time and seek to match Christ's tender love.**

In Ephesians 5:28-30, Paul adds a new rationale to support the love of Christian husbands for their wives: Self-love. Paul offers a truism: "no one ever hated his own flesh" (at least no one thinking clearly). Husbands don't harm themselves or beat up on their own bodies. Instead, they "nourish and cherish" them *(Eph. 5:29, NKJV)*. **In a bid to eliminate harshness and violence against Christian wives,**

Paul invites the Christian husband to identify with his wife. You are so much one with your wife, Paul argues, that to harm her is nothing short of inflicting self-harm, and most people in their right minds don't do that.

Returning to the example of Jesus, Paul argues that Christ is Himself practicing tender self-care in cherishing believers who are "his body" *(Eph. 5:29, 30, ESV)***. Model your behavior toward your wife, says Paul, on the way you treat yourself and, ultimately, on the way Christ treats you.**

I once read the book "Princess" by an unnamed Arab princess, who was too afraid to give her name, but she wanted people to know what life was like for many Arab women, and for Muslim women. Before then, I hadn't really given much thought to the day-to-day life of Arab women. To say I was shocked would be an understatement! I learned that Women are submitted to men in the following ways, just to give some examples:

---

1. If their husbands are displeased for any reason, the wife can be locked in a room the rest of her life, can be drowned in the backyard pool, or killed in other ways with absolutely no legal issue at all.
2. If a male is in the house and tries to be friendly with her, say a friend of a girl's brother, she could be accused of sexual misconduct, even if nothing happened, and stoned to death, but not him of course.
3. They stone by digging a hole in the ground until just the head or upper shoulders show, once she is thrown in there. She can't get away from being stoned to death.
4. When out of the house, women must wear a hijab or head scarf covering in some Arab areas, or a Burka full body covering over their clothes in others, no matter how hot it is, or how black the Burka is… would be like being in an oven.
5. Before a girl marries, the women of the potential husband come and physically inspect every part of the girl to make sure there are no defects.
6. The girl is thrown a party when she hits puberty, and at the party, without warning, the female relatives hold her down while her clitoris is surgically removed, often without any numbing agent at all. They do this so that women will not enjoy sex and therefore not be promiscuous. Scars form and she will have painful sex the rest of her life. What these husbands are missing out on!
7. Women wear a lot of gold jewelry, because at any given moment, the husband can throw her out, and all she has on is all she can take with her to live on.

8. The husband holds her passport, if there is one, and must give his permission for her to travel. She can't drive herself anywhere (which would be hard to do wearing a burka anyway, or walk anywhere without a family escort.

We can see that Jesus gave respect to women, which wasn't always to case in His day, or even in ours.

THURSDAY

The "One Flesh" Model of Marriage

A key to applying Paul's counsel to wives and husbands is to see his citation of Genesis 2:24 *(in Ephesians 5:31)* as the culmination of it. As he meditates on the Creation story of Genesis, Paul considers the needs of Christian congregations and the health of family relationships within them. He hears in Genesis 2:24 a message that echoes down through time. **By divine design, marriage is intended to be a "one flesh" relationship, with sexual unity mirrored in emotional and spiritual unity, and emotional and spiritual unity bringing meaning to the sexual relationship.**

Note that in choosing Genesis 2:24, Paul selects a statement about marriage made before the Fall and applies it to the relationships between Christian husbands and wives. **In our distinctly post-Fall world, rampant exploitation of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman reveals how deeply entrenched in modern cultures is the idea that the sexual union represents subjugation of the woman. Paul argues that the sexual relationship, as reflected in Genesis, is not one of subjugation but of union. It does not symbolize or actualize the dominance of the male but the union of husband and wife, so much so that they are "one flesh."** We may look to both Ephesians 5:21-33 and Genesis 2:24, then, for an important, countercultural, and corrective theology of marriage and sexuality.

In this same context, Paul in the next verse talks about a "profound mystery" *(see Eph. 5:32, ESV)*. This includes both sides of the double metaphor Paul has been discussing: Christian marriage understood in the light of Christ's relationship with His church *(Eph. 5:32)*and Christ's relationship with His church understood in the light of Christian marriage *(Eph. 5:32)*.

Christian marriage is elevated by comparing it to the relationship between Christ and the church. In addition, by thinking of the church's relationship to Christ through the lens of a caring, Christian marriage, believers gain new clarity about their shared relationship to Christ.

FRIDAY

So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. **It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies.** Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 34, 35

Ellen G. White consistently urges marriage partners to turn away from efforts to control the other: "**Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love.** Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous." *The Adventist Home,* p. 118.

She comments directly on the interpretation and application of Colossians 3:18 *(and Eph. 5:22-24)*:

The question is often asked, 'Shall a wife have no will of her own?' The Bible plainly states that the husband is the head of the family. 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands.' If this injunction ended here, we might say that the position of the wife is not an enviable one … **Many husbands stop at the words, 'Wives, submit yourselves,' but we will read the conclusion of the same injunction, which is, 'As it is fit in the Lord' [Col. 3:18]. God requires that the wife shall keep the fear and glory of God ever before her. Entire submission is to be made only to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has purchased her as His own child by the infinite price of His life … . There is One who stands higher than the husband to the wife; it is her Redeemer, and her**

submission to her husband is to be rendered as God has directed — 'as it is fit in the Lord.' *The Adventist Home*, pp. 115, 116.

Our marriage relationship and our homes should be a piece of heaven on earth, and show others what that looks like by our example!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

Lesson 11:

Practicing Supreme Loyalty to Christ

by Eve Knight

What is loyalty? How would you define loyalty?

> Mirriam-Webster dictionary defines loyalty as:
> 1. unswerving in allegiance (devotion): such as
>
> a. faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government
> i.e. they were loyal to their king
> b. faithful to a private person to whom faithfulness is due
> i.e. he is a loyal husband
> c. faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution, or product
> i.e. she is a loyal churchgoer

Another word that could be used is faithful, right? Is it possible to be loyal to the wrong thing? Or the wrong person? Did Hitler, for example, have many loyal followers? How did that loyalty impact them? Did David Koresh have many loyal followers? How did that loyalty impact them?

What was wrong with the kind of loyalty displayed in those two examples? The people surrendered their thinking and choices to someone else. Is that the kind of loyalty God desires? No! In fact, what does God ask of us?

> "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18 (NKJV)

According to this verse, God wants us to stop thinking, and just do what we're told…No? What does this verse tell us God wants? He wants us to come to Him, converse with Him, and exercise our thinking, through reasoning *with* Him.

Could a random stranger stand in front of us today, and declare that we are all now loyal to him? No! Why? Loyalty can't be declared to be present. If that person had a gun, and told us that he would shoot anybody who chose not to be loyal to him, would that cause loyalty in us? No! Why? Fear cannot create loyalty. It might create obedience temporarily, but not loyalty. Why? Where does loyalty come from? What is necessary for us to willingly choose to be loyal to someone? Knowledge of that person & their character, with love and devotion that grows out of that knowledge.

In the context of our lesson title, which says that we should be loyal to Christ, how does Christ gain our loyalty?

- He loves us
- He showed us His character
- He procured the remedy that can save us
- He defeated death
- He heals and restores us back to His design (and more)

So, back to our lesson title, what does it mean to **practice** "supreme loyalty to Christ?" What does that look like?

- Putting our loyalty to Him first, above all other loyalties
- Continuing to love the truth and grow in our understanding
- Practicing His methods of truth, love, and freedom
- Valuing what He values
- Living a life of love towards others (and more)

The lesson suggests that this overarching theme of supreme loyalty to Christ is addressed in Ephesians. Let's look at the first part of the passage suggested for **Sunday's lesson:**

> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

How do we understand this text? Let's take a look at what a lexicon tells us about it and see if we can reason through it. I often use the lexicon found at biblehub.com, and this is what it looks like for Ephesians 6:1:

◄ **Ephesians 6:1** ►

NASB Lexicon

NASB ©	Greek	Strong's
Children,	τέκνα (tekna)	5043: a child (of either sex)
obey	ὑπακούετε (upakouete)	5219: to listen, attend to
your parents	γονεῦσιν (goneusin)	1118: a parent
in the Lord,	κυρίῳ (kuriō)	2962: lord, master
for this		3778: this
is right.	δίκαιον (dikaion)	1342: correct, righteous, by impl. innocent

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

You can see from this, that the word translated as obey doesn't mean just obey. So, if I click on the blue number, it brings up a more detailed description of that word:

Strong's Concordance

hupakouó: to listen, attend to
Original Word: ὑπακούω
Part of Speech: Verb
Transliteration: hupakouó
Phonetic Spelling: (hoop-ak-oo'-o)
Definition: to listen, attend to
Usage: I listen, hearken to, obey, answer.

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 5219 *hypakoúō* (from 5259 */hypó*, "under" and 191 */akoúō*, "hear") – properly, to *obey* what is heard (literally, "under hearing"). See 5218 (*hypakoē*).

5219 */hypakoúō* ("obey") is acting *under the authority of* the one speaking, i.e. *really listening* to the one giving the charge (order). 5219 */hypakoúō* ("to hearken, obey") suggests *attentively* listening, i.e. fully compliant (responsive).

[5219 (*hypakoúō*) is an "intensification" of the simple verb "to listen" (191 */akoúō*, "hear").]

Copyright © 2021 by Discovery Bible.

From this, we can see that the word "obey" could be translated as "attentively listen to."

Now, let's think through the text, and try to understand it. First, is this just an arbitrary rule that children need to follow? Isn't it often taught this way? How do we know it isn't arbitrary? (Because it's given a conditional phrase, "in the Lord.") How does this conditional phrase alter the command? What does it mean? Perhaps that even children are to evaluate the advice and commands of their parents, and then heed them as long as they don't go against the revealed will of God?

The text also says, "for this is right." What does that part mean? Again, is this arbitrary, or could there be a design law involved? Let's look at the next part of the verse, and see if it helps us better understand what design law that might be:

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

> "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1 (NIV)

What does it mean to "honor" your parents? When I looked that word up in the lexicon, this is what it says:

> Definition: to fix the value, to price
> Usage: a) I value at a price, estimate, b) I honor, reverence
> Properly – assign value (give honor) as it reflects the personal esteem (value, preciousness) attached to it by the beholder.

What might be another word we could use here to reflect this understanding of the definition? Respect, maybe?

Which means that Paul is telling children to listen attentively to their parents and treat them with respect. The text also points out the desired result if children listen to this advice: "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Let's continue thinking it through. If children listen attentively to their parents, what will that teach them? How does that help them grow? If children treat their parents with respect, what will that teach them? How will that help them grow? If children evaluate what they hear in light of God's word, what does that teach them? How does that help them grow?

Are you noticing the design law here? It's the law of exertion. If you want to get better at something, practice it. If children practice respect for their parents, what else do they learn? They learn to treat others with respect, too. If they learn to listen to their parents, what kinds of things are they listening to? In a good home, they should be learning to listen to training, guidance, and correction, to name a few. Can these things help that child in their future? Can they even help that child have a better relationship with God?

Did you notice there's a second design law involved in this text? That of sowing and reaping. Is someone more likely to have their life "go well," if they are respectful to others or disrespectful? How about if they have the ability to listen or if they never listen? We reap what we sow.

Based on what we now understand about the text, is Paul's advice to children about their outward behavior? No! What is it about? It's about an attitude of the heart. An attitude that can be practiced, one that helps that child develop, grow, and have a more positive future.

Is this an attitude that only children should practice? Of course not. It's something that we, as adults, can also practice. Even if we didn't learn this heart attitude as a child, it's still something that can be learned and practiced, now.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

MONDAY

Paul doesn't leave his advice for just the children, however. Next, he addresses the parents, and we'll look at two different translations:

> Fathers,[or parents] do not exasperate your children;… (Ephesians 6:4a NIV)
>
> Fathers, [or parents] do not provoke your children to anger,… (Ephesians 6:4a RSV)

What does it mean to exasperate? Or as the other translation put it, "to provoke to anger"?

From the Biblehub lexicon:

> Definition: to provoke to anger
> Usage: I provoke to anger, exasperate
> 3949 parorgízō (from 3844 /pará, "from close-beside" and 3710 /orgízō, "become angry") – properly, rouse someone to anger; to provoke in a way that "really pushes someone's buttons," i.e. to "really get to them" in an "up-close-and-personal" way (because so near, literally "close beside").

What does it mean, "to push someone else's buttons"? Have you ever known someone so well that you knew exactly what to say or do to get them angry; or you knew the areas that were particularly painful to that person, and you could "poke" that spot with your words and cause a big blowout? This is what the text is pointing to. How well do parents know their children? So how easily could parents "push their child's buttons."

Why does Paul tell parents to avoid doing this? If you were the child, being provoked in this way, would your relationship with that parent get better or worse? Would you be more likely to withdraw, become distrustful, and begin to protect self? Would this response teach you to be more Christlike and loving toward others, or would it teach you to be more like the world, practicing its method of survival of the fittest? Would you begin to think God was like your parent, especially if the parent is claiming to be a Christian? How would that impact your desire to know God?

Now, imagine that you are the parent practicing this behavior. What is that practice doing to you? Is it making you more Christlike to treat your child in this way, or is it moving you away from God?

People who purposefully provoke children instead of being sensitive to their needs are hardening their own hearts, which could eventually lead to abusing them in other ways. And abuse impacts both parties when it comes to having a good relationship with God. Am I saying that in this type of abuse scenario, the child and the parent can't get to know God? No! What it means is they both end up with problem areas that need to be overcome in order to have a good relationship with God. The child has to overcome pain, injury, low self-esteem, shame, an inability to trust, and fear of authority figures (not an exhaustive list), but their conscience hasn't been seared. The parent has to overcome the

searing of their own conscience from the evil choices they made, which makes it harder for them to respond to God. It's not impossible, though, for with God, all things are possible.

Now, is all this something that ONLY parents need to be careful about? Of course not! How easy is it for us to hurt those that are closest to us? Parent, spouse, child, friend, coworker – anyone we know well, we also know how to hurt. The warning is for us, too, and it follows the same design law of exertion.

I remember a story about a high school basketball coach and his son. They had been outside, practicing, when the father received a phone call and went inside. The son, who was tired by this time, started just tossing the ball at the net, not caring whether he made a basket or not. When the father returned, he watched his son for a moment, and then simply said, "Be careful, son; what you practice is what you get better at."

Every time we practice something, we get better at it. If it is complaining, we get better at it. If it is gossiping, we get better at it. If it's being negative in our speech, we get better at it. It's also true that if we practice better things, we get better at those, too. Let's look at the rest of what Paul said, which points to some better options:

> Fathers,[or parents] do not exasperate your children; **instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.** (Ephesians 6:4 NIV)
>
> Fathers, [or parents] do not provoke your children to anger, **but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** (Ephesians 6:4 RSV)

Notice that Paul is contrasting these two behaviors. There's something to avoid, and something to do in its place. Let's look at the phrases, which Paul clarifies as being "of the Lord." Here's the first phrase, which I've summarized from the information in the Biblehub lexicon:

Bring them up in: to bring up to maturity, to nourish, to nurture.

What does it mean to nurture or nourish a child? To feed them; to provide what is necessary for their growth and development; to notice what they are good at and encourage them in those areas; to have as a goal their maturity.

Training/Discipline: training and education of children, hence: instruction; chastisement, correction. Properly, instruction that trains someone to reach full development or maturity.

What does it mean to discipline? To disciple, train, provide opportunities to learn and grow, to teach ways and methods, even to learn about how to think things through. When necessary, it also involves correction. What does a child learn when they are corrected? Do they learn to recognize harmful behavior? Potentially how to soften their heart in response to the correction? How to try to "make things right," by repairing relationships hurt by their behavior? Can these things benefit the child both in the moment, and in their growth and maturity? Can they also benefit the child in their relationship

with God?

Instruction: admonition, warning, counsel. Warning through teaching – improves a person's reasoning so they can reach God's solution; for example, by going through His thought process.

What does it mean to provide Instruction? Teaching God's word, His methods, and how He created the world to operate. Learning how He sees people, about His love for all of us, and even how to have our "hard hearts" removed and replaced with His "heart of flesh."

Did you notice the common theme in these definitions? To bring up to maturity, to train someone to reach full maturity, to improve reasoning by learning how God thinks, learning His methods. And what is biblical perfection? Maturity. The goal of the parent is to help their child grow up, think for themselves, and become mature adults who choose to practice God's ways and methods and have His law written on their hearts and minds.

Again, is this advice only for parents? Certainly not. First, let's look at how it applies personally. Do we have a responsibility to nurture ourselves? To be committed to learning and growing in both the discipline and the instruction of the Lord? What does that look like? Could it include being careful about how we think about ourselves as well? Learning to see who we are in Christ? Overcoming the negative thought patterns that we all have learned, and replacing them with truth? And how do we learn the truth?

Consider also what happens to many who are abused: they are often emotionally "stuck" at the age of the abuse. So can that person provide what Paul is suggesting to their own "inner child"? And can those who haven't experienced abuse assist by speaking truth, and encouraging maturity?

Second, how does it apply to how we treat others? Is it enough to just avoid hurting those around us? No! We all have a sphere of influence, don't we? Can we be the kind of people who nurture those around us, and find ways to help them grow in maturity as well? Are there texts that come to mind regarding how we should practice treating others?

> So then, in everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you, for this is [the essence of] the Law and the [writings of the] Prophets. (Matthew 7:12 AMP)
>
> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. … Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:29 & 32 NIV)
>
> Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 4:11 NIV)
>
> So then, we must always aim at those things that bring peace and that help strengthen one another. (Romans 14:19 GNT)

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:2-3 NIV)
>
> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:12-14 NIV)
>
> Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love. (Ephesians 4:16 GNT)
>
> A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:35 NIV)

What are some of the pitfalls of being able to treat others well? Our own pride? Selfishness? Anger or other out of control emotions? How much does it matter how we treat others? Perhaps more than we think?

> It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. (C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory)

How does any of this connect to the theme for the lesson this week of practicing supreme loyalty to God?

Would God want us to treat others with respect? Would He want us to attentively listen to other people? Would these types of attitudes be considered part of being loyal to God? Can we treat people well, even when we disagree with them? Can we treat them well, even if they are criticizing us? Can we treat them well, even if they are actively trying to cause us harm? Can we reflect God's character to those around us, thus demonstrating our loyalty to Him? And would that, in fact, be a "supreme" loyalty, because it is not contingent on circumstances, or on what others do, but on staying true to God? And can we do any of this without the Lord working in us and through us? It is our job to cooperate with Him, to make the choices, and He provides the power for us to be like Him.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

TUESDAY

> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5-8 NIV)

Slavery was pretty common during Paul's time, and in the culture he lived in, as well as in all the cultures around him. Some slaves were captured enemies. Some were those who owed too much debt and sold themselves into slavery until that debt was paid off. These were called bondservants, but also called slaves. In the last sentence of Sabbath's lesson, it says,

> "What can we learn as we watch Paul apply the values of the gospel to the flawed social structures of his day?"

Was Paul trying to apply the gospel to the social structures? It doesn't seem so from the text. *Can* you apply the gospel to social structures at all? No! How do we know that? What does the gospel do? What is it's power?

> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentiles. (Romans 1:16 NIV)

Where is the gospel applied? In everyone who believes. The gospel has power to heal <u>individuals</u>. What is the danger in trying to apply the gospel to social structures? We end up using Satan's methods of imposed law to try to do good. Can we do God's work using Satan's methods? No!
Let's go back to the verse:

> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5-8 NIV)

Notice where this advice is directed. To the individual slaves…we can presume that these slaves are believers, because they are in the group listening to the letter.

In this advice, was Paul concerned about outward behavior? Or again, is he focusing on an attitude of the heart? Notice what he's telling them to do, obey (attentively listen to) their masters, with respect. Does this sound familiar? It's the same advice that he gave to children, and it's based on the same design laws: the law of exertion and the law of sowing and reaping. Do you think it would benefit the slave to be known as one who listens well and respects his master? Although we are not slaves, could it benefit us to have a similar attitude towards those who might have authority over us in some way?

Our bosses, for example? What about others who are in positions of authority? Police? Store managers? Emergency personnel? Whether we agree with them or not, can we still cultivate an attitude of respect for all of them?

The phrase "sincerity of heart," can also be translated as simplicity, purity, graciousness, singleness of mind, or "single-focus." How could this attitude benefit the slave in Paul's day? How would such an attitude benefit us? Have you ever had a hard time focusing on a task? Has it ever occurred to you that you could ask God to help with this? I admit, it didn't occur to me until I studied this passage.

Notice also, this attitude is not just when the slave was being watched, but all the time. What type of attitude does someone tend to have if they only obey while they are being watched? Usually a resentful one, right? What does that do to the character? Do bosses (or masters) want this kind of worker? No! What would you call this attitude of working well, even when nobody is watching? Integrity maybe? How would an attitude of integrity benefit the slave? How would it benefit us in our work? Would you say that if you practiced this kind of integrity that you would be growing in Christ? Certainly, it would reflect His work in us, wouldn't it?

The word wholeheartedly can also be translated as goodwill, kindliness, and enthusiasm, and Paul directs them to work in all things as if serving the Lord. Why would Paul give them these suggestions? What would be the result of a slave who worked in this way? Might the master look favorably on such a slave? Do we have any examples in scripture of someone with an attitude like this? Like Joseph or Namaan's servant girl? Joseph committed to be true to God, no matter his circumstances. The servant girl had a good enough relationship with her masters that they listened to her when she suggested going to the prophet. She clearly cared about her master, wanting healing for him.

How does working like this change the individual? How does it impact the character? Where is this person's loyalty, ultimately? Does this kind of attitude depend at all on the character of the "earthly master"? No. Whose character are we responsible for? Our own! Our thoughts, choices, and actions are either building for us a character more like Christ, or one more like Satan. God promises to prompt and guide, but it is always our choice to cooperate with Him, and then He provides the power.

THURSDAY

Paul then focuses on the master in this slave/master relationship. This master is also a believer. How do we know? Because they are also listening to the same letter.

> And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (Ephesians 6:9 NIV)

Here, Paul says that masters were to treat their slaves in the "same way." The same way as what? As the slaves were told to treat them: with respect, looking out for their good, treating them with integrity and sincere hearts, as if they were serving Christ. How would this attitude benefit the master? How

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

would this attitude benefit us, if we are in a position of authority over someone else?

Masters also were to avoid something specifically: threatening their slaves. Why avoid this? This is Satan's way, and it's not something believers should practice, because we want to get better at Christ's methods, not the enemy's methods.

Notice also that the master is told that both the slave and the master have another Master in heaven. Why might the master have needed to be reminded of that? How were they probably tempted to think of their slaves? Possibly as less-than? Below them? What does it do to the character of one who thinks this about another person? Who thinks of them as possibly less than human, or who thinks of themselves as higher than other people? It damages their character and moves them away from God's design. And it sets the stage for abuse of another. Can you think of any examples in recent history when people were *encouraged* to divide themselves into two categories and look down on the opposite group?

How does God view people?

> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28 NIV)

As the masters needed to be careful how they thought of their slaves, so too, we should be careful how we think about other people. We want to practice God's methods, with His power. Loyalty to God changes how we view others, because He is changing us, writing His laws into our hearts and minds. When our hearts are changed, our actions follow.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

3Q 2023 Lesson 12 –
The Call to Stand

by Lori Atkins

INTRODUCTION

memory text is from Ephesians 6:10,11 –

> "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

What is armor and why do we need it?
Has anyone here ever served in the military or been deployed in combat?
What is your concept of armor and why did you have it?
How did you use it?

The dictionary definition says armor is a noun that means any covering worn as a defense against weapons, and lists these related words: shield, defense, guard, protection, and security.

Now why in the world would Paul think we need a "defense against weapons", or a shield or protection in the spiritual realm?
Is there something else going on…maybe behind the scenes that maybe we need to be aware of?

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

Are there any Bible texts that might help us determine why Paul believes we need to gird ourselves in the "whole armor of God"?

The first chapter in the book of Job when Satan presents himself before the heavenly counsel reveals a larger sin problem outside of humanity and this universe alone.

> "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:19–20 NIV84).

What about Elishah's servant, remember him? This story is mentioned in Saturday's lesson – Elisha's bleary-eyed servant stumbles out of his tent and sees an alarming sight—a large, well-equipped and hostile army with "troops, horses, and chariots everywhere." Speaking to the prophet Elisha, he stammers out the news, along with his harried question, " 'Oh, sir, what will we do now?' " Elisha responds, " 'Don't be afraid! . . . For there are more on our side than on theirs!' " a response that fails to register in the face of his servant. Elisha, pulling him close, prays for him: " 'O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!' " The prophet's prayer is answered immediately. The servant steps to the ramparts again, but this time the veil between the seen and the unseen lifts. He now sees not one army, but two. "The Lord opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire" (2 Kings 6:15–17, NLT).

Do we need to pray that the Lord will open our eyes…that the veil between the seen and the unseen be lifted sometimes? Listen to what Mrs. White said on this subject:

> "That time will soon come, and we shall have to keep hold of the strong arm of Jehovah; for all these great signs and mighty wonders of the devil are designed to deceive God's people and overthrow them. Our minds must be stayed upon God, and we must not fear the fear of the wicked, that is, fear what they fear, and reverence what they reverence, but be bold and valiant for the truth. Could our eyes be opened, we should see forms of evil angels around us, trying to invent some new way to annoy and destroy us. And we should also see angels of God guarding us from their power; for God's watchful eye is ever over Israel for good, and He will protect and save His people, if they put their trust in Him. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. – {CET 170.1}

What about the next verse of our memory text:

> "Put on all the armor that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. **For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age**" (Ephesians 6:11-12 GNT).

> "**And there was war in heaven**. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who

leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him" (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

One of the founders of our church agreed when she wrote this:

> "God assembled the angelic host to take measures to avert the threatened evil. It was decided in Heaven's council for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe. Two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents. The holy pair received them with joyful innocence, expressing their grateful thanks to their Creator for thus surrounding them with such a profusion of his bounty. Everything lovely and attractive was theirs to enjoy, and everything seemed wisely adapted to their wants; and that which they prized above all other blessings, was the society of the Son of God and the heavenly angels, for they had much to relate to them at every visit, of their new discoveries of the beauties of nature in their lovely Eden home, and they had many questions to ask relative to many things which they could but indistinctly comprehend. 1SP 32.3
>
> The angels graciously and lovingly gave them the information they desired. **They also gave them the sad history of Satan's rebellion and fall**. They then distinctly informed them that the tree of knowledge was placed in the garden to be a pledge of their obedience and love to God; that the high and happy estate of the holy angels was to be retained upon condition of obedience; that they were similarly situated; that they could obey the law of God and be inexpressibly happy, or disobey, and lose their high estate, and be plunged into hopeless despair. 1SP 33.1

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

> They told Adam and Eve that **God would not compel them to obey—that he had not removed from them power to go contrary to his will; that they were moral agents, free to obey or disobey**. There was but one prohibition that God had seen fit to lay upon them as yet. If they should transgress the will of God, they would surely die. They told Adam and Eve that the most exalted angel, next in order to Christ, refused obedience to the law of God which he had ordained to govern heavenly beings; **that this rebellion had caused war in Heaven which resulted in the rebellious being expelled therefrom, and every angel was driven out of Heaven who united with him in questioning the authority of the great Jehovah; and that this fallen foe was now an enemy to all that concerned the interest of God and his dear Son**. 1SP 33.2

We're gonna veer off on a small tangent…and it won't be the last one.

If Adam and Eve were not to know evil, then why did God and the angels educate them about the rebellion, the war in heaven, and evil?

Because the issue of "knowing" in the Bible isn't about cognitive awareness, comprehension, or factual understanding, Biblical knowing is when something becomes part of your experience. It is knowing intimately, through experience, not through mere information. It is not knowing *about* something or someone, but actually knowing it or them.

For instance:

- There is a difference between knowing about swimming and knowing how to swim.

- There is a difference between knowing the fact that chocolate and vanilla are different ice cream flavors and knowing the deliciousness of what they actually taste like
- There is a difference between knowing about a famous celebrity and knowing them personally
- There is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God intimately and experientially

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't a place of theoretical knowledge, cognitive knowledge, or academic knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, and about death being the result of sin. The two had been instructed. Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. But having mere facts is not what the tree was about – it was about experience, knowing by experience either good or evil. Choose to trust and believe God and know good – or choose to believe lies, distrust God, and know evil. God told them, "It is at this tree you will have knowledge, so choose well; choose to trust me and not to partake of the fruit and you will know good – you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness. All of this will solidify in your character. So please, my precious children, choose to know good! But if you choose to believe lies, distrust me and partake in the fruit, you will know evil – you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering, and death. Please, my precious children, don't choose to know evil."

God already knew evil – not in His character, but in His heart, as His heavenly home had been fractured. He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, rebellion, being lied about, and the loss of many of His

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

beloved angels. God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, or heartache. He wanted humankind to know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God – to choose the good in order for them to know it.

So God warned them and placed this tree there for their development as free beings, with His goal for them to choose to know good and solidify themselves in loyalty and love to Him and develop their own mature godlike character. Unfortunately, they *chose* to know evil and humanity was plunged into pain, suffering and death, and Jesus stepped in to take this terrible terminal condition upon Himself and overcome it and restore the human species back to God's perfection, eradicating the death causing principles and writing God's law of love, the life causing protocols back into humanity, thus becoming our Savior.

So what was the purpose of placing this tree in the garden? It was for their development and maturity of character. Consider this historic quote:

> "God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. **Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being**, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule." {CC 13.3}

Is this what you were taught about the tree in the garden?

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

My own church…my own church school taught me that the taunting tree and the command not to eat the fruit were an arbitrary test of obedience…yet the very founder of that church says that **NOT** having the tree there or intervening to stop them from touching the forbidden fruit is what would have been arbitrary – not giving them the choice to either trust God and perfect their characters…or believe the lie and corrupt their characters…would have been *unworthy* of God's highest most intelligent creation, and would have provided evidence to the onlooking universe that Satan's allegations against God were true.

Let's read Isaiah 9:6 and verse 7…I'm headed off on another little tangent here – we may be on a tangent within a tangent at this point, but I promise we'll end up back right back in a cosmic war:

> 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (NKJV)

- What do these verses mean to you?
- What do they say about the divinity of Jesus?
- Who is the Counselor? The Holy Spirit
- Who is the Everlasting Father?
- Who is the Prince of Peace?

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

- How can all three names/descriptions be said of Jesus?

Does this mean there is only one individuality and Jesus is that one individuality, or rather that the three individualities are so united in perfection of Their character of love that when you see Jesus you see the Father and the Spirit?

What does the idea of "Prince of Peace" and "His government and peace" mean to you?

- In this world today do we need more peace?
- Do we need the kingdom of the Prince of Peace? Is peace a situation? A person? A state of being?

How does one achieve peace? Can we achieve peace through war? Yet the Bible says

> "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back." (Rev 12:7 NIV84)

How do we understand this?
How is it that we cannot achieve peace by prosecuting war, yet Michael and His angels warred against the devil and Jesus is the Prince of Peace?
What law lens are we understanding this through?

If we understand law and government to be like human governments where law is imposed, injustice must be punished, and war is won through

conquest, through force and might, through power over, through killing one's enemies and forcing submission.

But if we understand design law then we understand that peace is only achieved by destroying the elements that cause division and hostility. How do we do that…what is the ONLY way to truly accomplish that? **We destroy lies, fear, and selfishness out of the hearts of intelligent beings**.

Thus, the Bible says:

> "3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does [Side note…next week's lesson is entitled "Waging Peace"]. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:3–5 NIV84).

What kind of weapons do we use? Those that demolish lies about God and win hearts to love and trust—can you win hearts by force and violence? No – the Law of Liberty prevents it! Only the truth about God's character of Love, His Design Laws, and methods can demolish the lies and win hearts to love and trust.

This all fits perfectly as the word in Revelation 12 translated "war" "there was war in heaven…" is:

> πόλεμος [polemos /pol·em·os/] n m.
> From pelomai (to bustle); TDNT 6:502; TDNTA 904; GK

> 4483; 18 occurrences; AV translates as “war” 12 times, “battle” five times, and “fight” once. 1 a war. 2 a fight, a battle. 3 a dispute, strife, quarrel.1
> 1 Strong, J. (1995). Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

In English we get the word polemic which means: “a controversial argument, as one against some opinion, doctrine, etc.”

Are there dangers in taking the “warfare” metaphor and all this military language literally?

History provides the evidence – the Dark Ages, the Crusades, Witch Trials, or current branches of Islam, Judaism, & Christianity, etc. Don’t forget what kind of war we are fighting and what kind of weapons are used. God fights the war with the weapons of truth, love, freedom, evidence, revelation—Satan fights with lies, deception, flattery, coercion, manipulation, propaganda, and violence. Remember…we can never get peace using Satan’s methods—never!

Aaaaand we’re back…toldja I wouldn’t get lost on our tangent(s). I want to dig into our memory verse a bit more by reading and unpacking the verses before and after from *The Remedy*, and then we’ll look at each element of the “armor of God”:

> 10 Finally, stay strong in your connection and devotion to the Lord and his mighty power. 11 Arm your minds with God's complete set of armor so that you can join the ranks of Christ's soldiers and stand successfully in the face of the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is

not against flesh and blood, with man-made weapons, but against all individuals, entities and powers that misrepresent God and darken minds, and against Satan–the originator of lies about God–and his cohorts who also misrepresent God in the heavenly realms. [does this bring to mind 2Cor 10:35? our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds, arguments, pretensions…] 13 Therefore arm your minds with God's full set of armor so that when Satan's grand deception comes and it seems the heavens are about to fall, you are able to stand; [Do you typically think of the armor of God as mental armor, arming your mind to not be infected, degraded, discouraged, corrupted?] and when you have done everything to present the truth and expose Satan's lies–don't falter; stand! 14 Stand firm, with the truth of God wrapped around you like a belt; [what truth is the truth that we need? Is it primarily the truth about which day is the Sabbath? If we have that truth but we believe God imposed the day arbitrarily and will punish people for not observing it, then are we worshipping the true God or the false version Satan alleges? So the primary truth is always about God, His character, and His methods of truth, love, and freedom] with a righteous, Christlike character developed within–like a breastplate; [How do we experience a righteous character? Is it passive, only through trust and God does it all? Or is it cooperative, we trust God who provides new desires, motives, insights, wisdom, truths, but we must choose to accept, apply, internalize and identify with God and His truths and do what is right, healthy, and reasonable in governance of ourselves?] 15 and the peace that comes from accepting the good news about God–like track shoes providing good traction and a solid foundation. [Have you found increased peace as you have come to experience God as Designer and Creator and rejected the dictator views?] 16 Also, hold fast the shield of trust, which extinguishes all the

> burning fear and insecurity brought by the devil's temptations. [How does trust in God overcome temptation? Are not most temptations related to some fear or insecurity? Does trust reduce fear and insecurity? But can you trust a being whom you believe will hurt you if you don't trust them?] 17 Take with you the helmet of a healed mind–a mind protected from the assaults of Satan; [What heals the mind and also protects against the assaults of Satan? A mind that has developed by practice the ability to tell the right from the wrong (Heb 5:14), a mind that loves and discerns truth] and attack the lies about God with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God–the truth. 18 And talk with God with an enlightened mind, intelligently, on all occasions, about all of your concerns, requests, plans, and issues. With all of this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for God's people.

What beautiful promises and instruction given to us by Paul, right? Note that he first tells us what the warfare is and why the armor is important in verses 10-13, and then he explains what each element of that armor is:

Belt = Truth:
Truth eradicates the lies that are part of our DNA.

Breastplate = Righteousness:
Heart transformation yields Righteousness – Christ weaves His character into ours, i.e., "covered with the robe of righteousness", "we live His life"…doing that which is Right, because it IS right.

Shoes = Gospel of Peace:
True conversion cannot happen without our wanting to share our experience.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

Note it's a gospel of "Peace" NOT the "wrath of the Lamb".

Shield = Faith:
Trust based on EVIDENCE – not a blind faith. What happens when we lose trust?

Helmet = Salvation:
Conscious understanding & cooperation with God's methods, principles, & government yields healing or Salvation. Level 7 – Friend of God.

Sword of the Spirit = Word of God [see Heb. 4: 12]
This is not a "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" use of the Word of God, nor is it an actual weapon to beat others over the head with. Again, it's a Level 7 "Friend of God" approach, where He no longer calls us servants He calls us friends and we understand God's Word is LIFE itself, because He designed it to function in perfect harmony with His Character of Love.

SUNDAY

Battle Speech

When one sincere, Spirit-filled, devoted Christian stands up for Christ, the whole world changes. Also, Luther did not make his defense loudly or unnaturally. He took his stand in faith. He did not speak based on his own power or schemes; he went to Worms as one already condemned to death. But Luther spoke as Christ's soldier, covered in the armor of God. The battle he went to fight was not his battle. It was God's battle. All he needed to say was "Here I stand," and God changed the course of the great controversy forever.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

Battle exhortations in the Old Testament (see, for instance, Deut. 20:2–4; Judges 7:15–18; 2 Chron. 20:13–20; 2 Chron. 32:6–8; Neh. 4:14, 19, 20) underline the idea that Israel's success in battle does not depend on the superiority of its own weapons or an army that outnumbers its foes. Rather, victory results from depending on the presence and power of God. The key to the Israelites' success was not confidence in themselves but firm trust in God's power and His provision for their success. Paul makes bold use of these themes to exhort believers to be:

(1) active in pursuing the church's mission;
(2) attentive to the unseen dimensions that impact their lives and witness;
(3) cognizant of the divine provision for their success; and
(4) always alert to the importance of unity and collaboration among believers

WEDNESDAY

Standing on the Ancient Battlefield

Battle speeches included in the writings of Thucydides, one of the great classical authors of battle literature, highlight three successive actions that must occur if a side is to be victorious:

(1) soldiers must "close with the enemy," which means they must march to meet their foes; then,
(2) they must attack and "stand fast," or "stand our ground," fighting hand-to-hand with their foes; and finally,
(3) they must "beat back the enemy" (see Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1910], 4.10.1–5).

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

The key moment of an ancient battle occurred with the second of these three actions, when the two opposing phalanxes came crashing together in

> "a terrible cacophony of smashed bronze, wood, and flesh," which ancient author Xenophon refers to as that " 'awful crash.' "—Victor Davis Hanson, The Western Way of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 152, 153.

Standing firm, holding one's ground at this strategic moment, was the great challenge of ancient battle. In the close combat that would ensue, each side would seek momentum for "the push." This is no relaxed stance! To "stand," then, is to be vigorously engaged in battle, employing every weapon in close-order combat, a point obvious from the military imagery in Paul's earlier exhortation to be found "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, ESV).

THURSDAY

Wrestling Against Evil Powers

> "Satan has come down with great power to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. The powers of deception are working upon minds in every country to gain a foothold. Satan is seeking to hedge up our way in this country. [Hedge up our way means to restrict our liberties, to have our churches closed, to restrict visitations, to close our schools, to interfere with free assembly and association and free speech and to censor ideas that disagree with the lies of Satan. Do we see that happening today? And have you seen many in the church supporting these dark movements of Satan?] The

night of trial, the night of weeping, the night of persecution for the truth's sake, is not far distant. [Are we entering this time, is it about to break upon us?] It is through much tribulation that we shall stand as faithful sentinels for God, not swerving one hair from truth and righteousness. Famines will increase; pestilences will sweep away thousands. Dangers are all around us from the powers without and Satanic workings within, but the restraining power of God is now being exercised.
12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 16 [The restraining power of God was being exercised in 1897, it is still being exercised, but the four winds are loosening, Satanic powers are gaining greater freedom to act. Do you recognize this?]

"Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat," is applicable to very many souls. Yet we are not left helpless. The Lord spreads his covering hand over us, saying, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." [Luke 22:31, 32.]
12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 17
[Yes, the enemy is raging, but we have a Savior who will not leave us nor forsake us. We must keep our eyes fixed on Christ.]

The church militant is not the church triumphant. We are enjoined, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." [Ephesians 6:10-17.]
12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 18

The night of trial is nearly spent. Satan is bringing in his masterly power because he knoweth that his time is short. [Are you encouraged? The trial is nearing its conclusion. But Satan is bringing his final great masterful deception to fruition. Can you discern it?] The chastisement of God is upon the world to call all who know the truth to hide in the cleft of the Rock and view the glory of God. [What is the chastisement of God? It is God letting go His protection and allowing more of the disasters and evil to occur, so that the people who have not hardened their hearts against God can see the difference between the methods of God and the methods of Satan. God's people, those who love truth, love and liberty, who do their own thinking, to present themselves to God as living sacrifices will not conform to the worldly methods of lies, coercion, control and blind submission. We will speak the truth in love, while leaving others free.] **The truth must not be muffled now. Plain statements must be made. Unvarnished truth must be spoken in leaflets and pamphlets, and these must be scattered like the leaves of autumn**.
12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 19

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 13
Waging Peace

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Do you like the title? I like it, it stirs the imagination—what comes to mind for you with this title?

How can we wage peace?

Is this referring to

- societal peace, that we are to wage peace in our communities?
- Or internal personal peace, that we are to wage war with our own selves to experience peace?
- Or spiritual peace, that we are to wage war against everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God so we have peace with God?
- Or are all three connected in some way?

How are they all connected?

If you think about the three aspects of peace, personal, spiritual (peace with God), and societal, is there a first place we must start to experience peace?

Can we have peace with ourselves, genuine peace, if we do not have peace with God? Why or why not?

Can we have peace with others if we do not have peace with ourselves?

When does the battle with self really begin? Isn't it when we receive a new heart and right spirit, when we are reborn, when we are converted—which is when we are set right, justified in our heart attitude and allegiance to God.

- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1 NIV84).

So, step one is to be reconciled to God, to experience His grace, goodness, mercy, forgiveness, healing and transforming power and presence through faith, trusting in all Jesus has done in our behalf.

Then, we begin the real battle with ourselves, with our old habits, distorted thinking, false beliefs, fears, insecurities, guilt, and shame. We must choose to act upon our trust in Jesus by choosing new ways, methods, practices in how we think, live, and treat others. We must reject the lies that we are beyond saving, we must reject the lies that our sins are too horrible to be forgiven, or that we have gone too far to be healed.

Simultaneously, as we are battling with old habits, fears, negative thought patterns we will find we need to change some of our relationships. There will be people in our network who are being used by God to build us up, encourage us, help us, and others who are being used by the enemy to tempt us, discourage us, lead us back into the old patterns of destructive living. As we are battling to overcome the old destructive habits, we will necessarily need to make some changes in who we trust, listen to, what we watch, read, and who we hang out with. Some relationships will need to be permanently ended and new friendships established.

Then with new hearts and minds, with maturing and ever-increasing Christlike character, wisdom, insight, and developing fruits of the Spirit—we go forth in our communities to bring peace, to be peacemakers. We forgive those who have wronged us, we seek to use our energies to bless, uplift, protect, heal and restore others, to lead others to the truth as it is in Jesus—but only through the methods of God, truth, love, and liberty. As Jesus said:

- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9 NIV84).

And as we do this we look forward to the healing of the various human tribes, kindreds, cultures, and nations under one head Jesus Christ. As the Bible says:

- Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. **He will proclaim peace to the nations**. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9–10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. (Isaiah 9:6–7 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We first have peace with God, and then we battle ourselves to experience healing in heart and mind, and have God's design law methods restored within us, then we live out God's law of love in how we treat others, and trusting in Jesus we advance the gospel of peace to the world.

But, what do we do with Jesus' words here:

- "**Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword**. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' (Matthew 10:34–36 NIV84, emphasis mine).

If Jesus is the prince of peace, what is going on here?

Can we have peace with those who are actively working to harm, destroy, deceive, and lead away from God and His methods and principles?

Can we love those who are bent on doing evil? Yes! But can we have peace with them?

Here it is from The Remedy:

- "Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family (Matthew 10:34–36 REM).

Health relationships *require* health people. We cannot have peaceful, healthy relationships with people who remain in rebellion against God, who are unconverted, who are not fighting their own battle with selfishness in themselves, who refuse to take responsibility for their own shortcomings, who refuse to mature and grow in godliness. Even if we were sinless and perfect, like Jesus. Look what happened to His relationship with Judas—it ended in betrayal, why? Because Judas was unconverted, remained controlled by fear and selfishness and betrayed his relationship with Jesus. Was Jesus responsible for that?

This is a powerful lesson for us today. I know many people who have had relationships breakdown and they falsely take responsibility for what the other person chose to do. Or they stay in dysfunctional relationships allowing others to manipulate them and control them in order to avoid rejection and abandonment, rather than focusing on choosing in governance of themselves to do what is right, reasonable, and health—fulfilling God's calling and purpose in their own life.

Peace on all levels is only possible as we are reconciled to God and have His living law restored in our inmost being.

SUNDAY

What do you think of the metaphor of the church as an army?

Do you remember the song *Onward Christian Soldiers*?

> Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war
> With the cross of Jesus going on before
> Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe
> Forward into battle see His banners go

When you think of this war what comes to mind?

Jesus said,

- "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it" (Matthew 11:12, NIV84).

If Jesus' kingdom is the kingdom of peace, how do forceful people lay hold of it?

Can God's kingdom be advanced, procured, achieved by force, might, or power? Didn't God previously say that it is,

- "not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit" that His kingdom advances (Zechariah 4:6)?

So how can forceful people lay hold of God's kingdom if it doesn't advance with might and power?

The Good News translation helps clear up this confusion:

- "From the time John preached his message until this very day the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violent attacks, and violent men try to seize it" (Matthew 11:12).

God's kingdom is the kingdom of love, truth, and liberty. It is built upon design law, the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate. It cannot be advanced through might, power, force, coercion, external control, imposed laws, or inflicted punishments.

God cannot win people to love and trust by threatening to torture and kill those who don't love and trust Him. Such actions result in just the opposite outcome, more rebellion, less trust, and the destruction of love.

It is Satan's kingdom that operates upon imposed law with inflicted punishments and advances through external control, legal enforcement, and violence. Jesus is telling us that since John the Baptist came preaching about the true kingdom of God—the kingdom that operates within the hearts and minds of men (Luke 17:21)—that violent men, humans who embrace Satan's kingdom of imposed laws and coercive force, have been trying to take control of it. Meaning, that violent men, those who use imposed law, inflicted punishments, and external control, have been trying to take control of the Christian message and ultimately control of human hearts and minds. And sadly, they have succeeded far too often.

We are fighting upon the same battlefield, with the same enemy and utilizing the same weapons that Jesus did. Jesus won every encounter, but after His ascension the violent people slowly took over the "church" and created a "church" built, not upon God's design laws of truth, love, and freedom but, upon Roman law, Roman power, and violent methods of coercive control.

The idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring God to use power to punish rule-breakers, has become assumed truth to almost all Christians. And, thus, violent people have taken control of the theology of Christianity and teach a violent punishing god that is the opposite of Jesus and what Jesus lived, taught, and revealed.

But Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against His true church that is built upon Himself (Matthew 16:18). What a strange and interesting expression—gates will not prevail? Think about that imagery. In warfare, what role to gates play? Do people carry gates into battle? Gates are used to close out opposing forces and to seal in a captive people.

Jesus is saying that Satan, with his lies about God, has taken the hearts and minds of people captive in fear and selfishness. He has closed the minds and hearts of many in fear and falsehood, but his gates of lies, of fear, of selfishness cannot prevail against the divine weapons given to us by God.

> - For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds.** We **demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Our divine weapons have the power to demolish the gates of hell, to open hearts and minds to healing and salvation, to set the captives free!

- The divine weapon of truth demolishes lies—"you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32 NIV84).
- The divine weapon of love demolishes fear—"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1John 4:18 NRSV).

We war against lies with truth and against fear and selfishness with love—the infinite love of God found only in Jesus. We do as Jesus instructed:

> - "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven… Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:44–45 & 48 NIV84).

We can never win the war for God's kingdom by embracing and practice the methods of this world. We cannot win people to love and friendship by seeking to control, dominate, punish, and destroy those who disagree with us. So we move forward with the truth, presented in love, while leaving others free.

But we also cannot win the war by compromising with the enemy, by agreeing with their falsehoods in order to get their approval. **The truth cannot be exchanged for a lie for the sake of peace.** No, we are at war. We must war against lies, falsehoods, and all violations of the kingdom of God.

In war the force that takes the initiative dictates the flow of the battle, the battlefield, and often wins the conflict, while the force defending scrambles to react to the force directing the terms of the engagement.

As Christians, we are to be advancing the kingdom of God, taking the initiative, moving the truth about Jesus forward, standing firm for reality as God created things to be. But all too often, reacting to the false allegations of God's enemy, too many good-hearted people find themselves placating the enemy rather than advancing the truth God has given them.

Have we fallen into a trap of reacting to the methods, standards, practices, rules, and logic of the world, trying to meet the worldly on the platform of godless standards, or are we advancing the kingdom of God on God's terms, with God's methods, holding to God's principles and refusing to step down into the perversion of the world?

When COVID swept the world and the fear-messaging, mind manipulation, coercive tactics were employed did Christian organizations stand for the principles of truth, love, and liberty of conscience, or did far too many embrace the methods of the world and justify coercion of conscience and collusion with the false governmental narratives?

When greed-driven corporations and power-hungry politicians divide society based on race, sex, gender, or any other identity issue, does the church fall into their trap and seek to prove how inclusive it is by holding sensitivity training and working to be inclusive of each and every identity group, or does the church stand for the principles of God's kingdom and stand firm on the truth that there are only two groups of people: the righteous and the wicked, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares, the saved and the lost. Do Christians recognize that in God's kingdom race, sex, nationality, tribe, language, marital status, vax status doesn't matter, what matters is character. In God's kingdom

- "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 NIV84).

In God's kingdom there are only those who are like Jesus in character and we are to advance the kingdom of God by keeping Christ, His character, methods, principles and design laws central.

Yes, we are at war, but it is not a war of might or power, it is a war of methods: truth, love, freedom at war against lies, fear and selfishness, and control. We will only succeed as we embrace the kingdom of God and advance it by using His methods—truth, love, and freedom.

Read first paragraph,

- Victory in Greek and Roman warfare was dependent on the cooperation of the soldiers in a military unit and especially in their support for each other in the heat of battle. Individualism in battle was regarded as a characteristic of barbarian warriors, dooming them to defeat. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 105).

There is a lot of truth in this. We can be so much more effective when we are united in common cause, with hearts aligned in love, minds focused on Jesus, and motivated to advance His kingdom and we pool our talents, resources, abilities, when we support, encourage, and help each other. No question about it. So we never want to undermine the power of a united force working for good and we want to do all we can to develop such godly community, cohesion, and unity.

But does that mean we never fight alone? Does that mean it is wrong to fight alone? Does that mean we should not prepare ourselves to be able to fight alone?

Consider this passage which refers to Jesus and His experience in Gethsemane and crucifixion weekend:

> I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me (Isaiah 63:3 NIV84).

What about the following, who stood with them in their warfare?

- Job?
- Moses?
- Joseph?
- Jeremiah?
- Elijah?
- John the Baptist?

And have there been many in history who stood alone before tribunals and counsels for their faith?

What about this quotation from Counsels to Writers and Editors:

- And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe, but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith, and **compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth**. Certain it is that there has been among us a departure from the living God, and a turning to men, **putting human wisdom in place of divine.** Counsels to Writers and Editors 39.

So, of course let's fight as a team, united in love, truth, motive, method, and principle—but let's also be settled into the truth for ourselves that if we ever find ourselves alone we will not be shaken from the truth, that we as individuals have our own personal relationship with God, have developed our own ability to think and reason, know for ourselves the difference between reality and fantasy (truth and lies), and are not dependent upon others to approve of us in order to stand for what we know is true.

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY

Examines the armor of God as described by Paul in Ephesians—what do you think of this armor?

Is the armor that we are to use referring to fighting external warfare, or internal warfare?

Paul wrote:

- When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my **inner being** I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work **in the members of my body**, **waging war** against the **law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin **at work within my members** (Romans 7:21–23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We are warring against the power of sin, selfishness, fear, lies, deception, propaganda, lusts, and the evil methods of this world. The primary focus of our fight is internal, against our own fears, hurts, disappointments, doubts, the inherited desire of selfishness, and the dysfunctional and destructive habits that we have developed along the road of life.

Sometimes, we might not realize that our battle is internal and not external, because of a superficial reading of Bible statements like this one:

- For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12 NIV84).

This could be perceived as saying that our fight is outside of ourselves, as in a physical fight. But our battle against demonic and satanic forces occurs *within our hearts and minds!* Notice how, in Ephesians 6:13–17, Paul describes the armor of God that we use to battle these various demonic powers:

- The belt of truth—truth is internalized, understood, believed and, when accepted, transforms our mind, destroys lies, and restores us to trust in God. The impact of truth is upon our own hearts and minds.
- The breastplate of righteousness—this is a heart, a character, that is reborn to be like Christ. We have had the stony, cold, hard heart removed and a tender, compassionate, merciful heart recreated within us by the power of God. Again, the battleground is internal.
- The gospel of peace functions like track shoes gripping the ground—it gives our hearts and minds a solid grip on reality so that we don't lose our confidence, our security, our peace and so that we don't emotionally fall down and give up when assaulted with the accusations, misrepresentations, and injustices of this world. Again, the gospel of peace fights against fear and doubt within our hearts to maintain our connection with Jesus.

- The shield of faith—this is our trust in God, trusting Him with how things turn out, the future, and not allowing fear of the unknown to control our actions and lead us to act selfishly. The war is still being fought in our own inner world.
- The helmet of salvation—this is a mind renewed to be like Jesus; "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). It is being an understanding friend of Jesus (John 15:15), developing by practice the ability to discern right from wrong (Hebrews 5:14). This is, again, a growing up to bear the image of God more perfectly in all that we do.
- The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God that we wield in our thinking; when we are confronted with temptations; when we are faced with external attacks, questions, doubts, and uncertainties. Every day, we are to wield the Word of God as Jesus did to live out and advance the truth of God in all we do.

Our battle, our fight, is against the infection of sin, against fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, lies, distortions, all of which undermine our love and trust in God. Through the weapons God has provided,

- Those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the sinful nature** with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- We have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit **you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live**, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:12–14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- **Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature**: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. … You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now **you must rid yourselves of all such things as these**: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:5–10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We fight the good fight by using divine weapons, not earthly weapons, in the choices we make in governance of self when confronted with the pain, heartache, mistreatment, and abuse of this evil world. We have a different goal than the world. The world wants the "justice" that makes the perpetrator pay, that uses force to inflict punishment, that seeks to control others to make self feel safe.

The kingdom of God wants the justice that loves our enemies, that blesses those who persecute us, that controls self in order to win enemies to Jesus and turn them into friends.

As God's people, we fight for a different outcome than the world. The worldly fight against others in order to empower self. We fight against sin and selfishness in our own hearts in order to eradicate evil's corrupting principles from our inmost being so that we can be free from sin's control. Then we fight to faithfully live out the principles of God in how we govern ourselves and in how we treat

others; we live to be lights in a dark world, demonstrating in word and deed that we belong to a kingdom that is distinctly different than the kingdoms of this selfish world. While the world pursues power to conquer others, the followers of Christ are empowered by God to conquer self.

- We fight by loving God and others, not by self-seeking.
- We fight by speaking truth, not by spreading lies, propaganda, deceit, or falsehood.
- We fight by giving, not by selfish taking.
- We fight by forgiving, not by punishing.
- We fight by disciplining those we love, not by fearfully indulging.
- We fight by saying no to evil, not by giving in to get along.
- We fight by showing mercy, not by retaliating.
- We fight by blessing and praying for our enemies, not by seeking to destroy them.
- We fight by being useful in our communities, not by neglecting our duties.
- We fight by seeking to serve, not seeking to be served.
- We fight by being kind, not by being cruel.
- We fight by being patient, not by being easily angered.
- We fight by rejoicing in the success of others, not by being envious.
- We fight by being meek and humble, not by being arrogant and prideful.
- We fight by standing for the truth, not by colluding with falsehood.
- We fight by sharing the good news of God's kingdom of love, not by promoting politics and worldly divisions.
- We fight by surrendering self to Jesus, not by promoting self.
- We fight by being faithful to our spouse, not by betraying their trust.
- We fight by talking with God, not by gossiping about others.
- We fight by being honest, not by being deceitful.
- We fight by distributing wealth to help others, not by accumulating wealth to aggrandize self.
- We fight by controlling self, not by seeking to control others.
- We fight by crucifying self, not by crucifying others.
- We fight by being respectful, not by being rude.
- We fight by taking responsibility for our own mistakes, not by blaming others.
- We fight by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, not by being engrossed with life's problems or entertainments.
- We fight by persevering through trials, not by compromising to relieve the burden.
- We fight by trusting God, not by trying to make life go the way we demand.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on prayer and its importance in our warfare. What is prayer, how is it involved? Does it matter to whom one is praying? Does the attitude of the heart matter?

- The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16 NIV84)

What about the prayers of the unrighteous?

If someone prays for something and the prayer is not answered in a way they can see or recognize, does that mean they are unrighteous?

Consider Moses:

- At that time I pleaded with the LORD: "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon." But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the LORD said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. (Deuteronomy 3:23-26 NIV84).

Consider Jeremiah:

- Do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you. (Jeremiah 7:16 NIV84).

Why is God not only not answering their prayers as they would like, He is telling them to stop praying these prayers?

Were these two men unrighteous? Or, were they praying for something that in God's plan would be harmful, would interfere with the plan of salvation, though they didn't realize it?

Could we ever do this? What was the response of Moses and Jeremiah? What enabled them to accept the directive from God?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at https://www.honeylake.clinic/

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered residential psychiatric treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.

- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

NEW Pamphlet: The Book of Job and the Last Days: A Cosmic Overview—7 Truths to Prepare for Christ's Return is now available. You can order your FREE copies at https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/The-Book-of-Job-and-the-Last-Days-A-Cosmic-Overview_p_56.html

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 Now Available in South Africa!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 14
Ephesians in the Heart

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse:

- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV84).

What does this text mean?

What do you understand the grace of God to be? A classic answer is "unmerited favor," and what is usually meant by that is something we have not earned.

And it is certainly true that none of us have earned God's grace. His grace is not a paycheck, a medal, or a reward for some achievement on our part. But to talk about grace in this way focuses on the process of receiving grace—not on what grace is.

Unmerited favor is when you receive something you didn't earn or didn't merit; in other words, you don't have a right to claim something as being owed to you. In that sense, God's grace is not ours to claim by right. But understanding that God's grace is not something we earn still doesn't tell us what that grace is.

If someone gave you a glass of water as you were dying of thirst, you didn't buy it, earn it, or work for it—it was a gift. One could say the water was unmerited; it was given to you freely. But the water is water—the method of how you get it, whether free or at a cost to you, is separate from the substance of what it is.

The gift of God's grace to us is the manifestation of His character of love; it is gracious of God. But the fact that God gives His grace freely does not tell us what that grace is. Consider grace as a noun; the action of gifting it is a verb—we receive God's grace without earning it, but what is His grace?

Since it is true that God's grace is a gift to us—something we have not earned, something we are not owed, something we do not receive by right—does that also mean we do not deserve God's grace?

Does the law lens we use impact how we understand the word "deserve"? If we use the human law lens, imposed rules, reward and punishment based upon one's behavior, then deserve means what we have earned.

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

But if we use design law, the law of love, then deserve means what is morally right, what love compels one to do.

Does a child born with a terminal illness deserve to be treated with kindness, compassion, and offered a remedy if one exists to restore them to wellness—even though they have done nothing to earn such treatment? Why would they deserve it? Does a child, simply by being a human child, deserve the love of its parents—not because the child earned anything but because of who the child is to the parents? Do we have value and worth to God, not because of our achievements or any work we have done, but because of who God created us to be, because of what God has designed for us and invested in us?

When the Bible describes Jesus as growing in wisdom and stature and favor (which is the Greek word for grace) with God and men (Luke 2:52), did Jesus not deserve His Father's grace or favor?

Was the grace that Jesus received from His Father, as our human substitute, given freely by His Father or did Jesus have to earn it? The Father gave His grace to Jesus in the same way He gives His grace to us! Jesus didn't "earn" grace from His Father through some system of employment or quest fulfillment. Jesus, as a human, received the free grace of His Father and was empowered by the Father's grace in order to accomplish their joint purpose in saving humanity from sin.

So what is God's grace?

The Greek word translated as grace is χάρις [charis /khar·ece/], and the Strong lexicon says it is "good will, loving-kindness, favour … the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues" (Strong, J. 1995. In Enhanced Strong's Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship).

This is exactly what Paul wrote in Romans 2:4: "God's kindness leads you toward repentance" (NIV84).

And the kindness of God is freely given because of who God is. We see God's grace in His every action, all His activities, which are the outflow of His character of love and which always fights against evil, opposes corruption, stands against sin, and heals, renews, recreates, cleanses, and ultimately destroys death and brings life and immortality to light (2 Timothy 1:10).

God's grace is the dispersement of His energy, love, life, and power and is seen in His every act, but it is most fully seen in response to rebellion and sin. As Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20 NKJV).

God was just as gracious before sin and His grace was present and active before sin, but after sin His grace has been active and revealed in ways that were never before seen in the universe because it was never before needed—including the gracious condescension of Jesus to be our Savior. Sunlight has always had cleansing power, but sunlight's power to kill pathogens was never known until pathogens

occurred after sin. Likewise, prior to sin, God was just as gracious, but His grace never had to function to overcome sin until sin occurred.

We see God's grace in talking with Adam in the cool of the day *before* Adam sinned, but His grace is more powerfully revealed when God gently called, "Adam, where are you?" when Adam was hiding in the bushes after he sinned.

We see God's grace in His patient forbearance toward lost sinners prior to the Flood, waiting to act until there was no other option, when only one righteous man was left on the earth; and we see God's grace in bringing the Flood as a therapeutic intervention to keep open the avenue for the Messiah in order to save the species human from sin and eternal death.

But we see God's grace most fully revealed in sending Jesus to take up humanity, broken and damaged by Adam's sin, and overcome where we never could.

- "The **Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have **seen his glory**, **the glory of the One and Only**, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth**" (John 1:14 NIV84).

- "From the **fullness of his grace** we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**" (John 1:16, 17 NIV84).

- "But each of us was **given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift**" (Ephesians 4:7 NRSV).

The grace of God is indeed a gift—like water to a person dying of thirst is a gift; the gifting is gracious, but the grace is more than the act; it is the *substance* of God's character—His love, truth, methods, power, glory, righteousness—fully manifested in Jesus.

When we receive God's grace, we are receiving the presence and power of God via His indwelling Spirit, we are receiving the gift of Jesus, and can say as Paul did, "It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). When we receive God's grace, we receive a new heart and right spirit; we have His law written upon our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10).

To receive the grace of God means that when we trust Him, when we place our faith in Him, we receive God, via His Spirit, into our hearts, and Jesus lives in us—this is the living grace of God that heals and transforms us. So this is how I paraphrased our memory text:

- It is only because of God's grace that you have been healed through trust–and you did not create this trust yourself, but it was established through the evidence of God's character revealed in the gift of Jesus Christ. This is not by some human work–No way!–so there is no room for anyone to boast. We are God's special creation brought to existence by Christ Jesus to showcase his character–his living law of love–which was always God's design for us. (Ephesians 2:8-10 REM).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph

- Ephesians 1:3–14 functions like a map at a mountain's summit that identifies the peaks on the horizon, as Paul orients us to our blessed place in the vast landscape of the plan of salvation. The scenery covers the full span of salvation history, from eternity past, through God's grace-filled actions in Christ, to eternity future. God's redemption of believers reflects divine initiatives taken "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), which are now being worked out in our lives (see Eph. 1:7, 8, 13, 14). These pre-Creation strategies will be fully accomplished at the end of time (Eph. 1:9, 10). Then, "all things," both "in heaven" and "on earth" will be gathered together or united in Christ, and God's plan for "the fullness of time" (ESV) will be fulfilled (Eph. 1:10). Then, we will experience fully God's mysterious plan (Eph. 1:9). In the present, we may be certain that the Christ-centered salvation in which we stand is an important part of God's wide-reaching plan for the redemption of "all things." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 113).

Why is God's plan of salvation called a mysterious plan, or God's secret plan? Why was it secret? What made it a mystery or difficult to understand?

Is God the author of confusion? Jesus said,

- I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. (John 18:20 NIV84).

Paul elsewhere in Ephesians says,

- Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:11 NIV84).

John wrote:

- This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5 NIV84).

So is God the source of the mystery? Is God making things hard to understand?
Who is? Why is God's plan difficult for people to comprehend and understand?

- In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:4-5 NIV84)

What does this mean? What is the light symbolic of? Truth, love, the character of God—and what is the darkness?

Why do people prefer the darkness of lies, fear, selfishness, coercion, power, control over the light of heavenly truth and love?

Because they are afraid—because of the infection of sin, which causes people to feel fear, shame, guilt—people are motivated by fear—fear of rejection, fear of exploitation, fear of punishment and they don't trust others. Sin causes people to project our their own selfishness, their own corruption and see others as untrustworthy as they are. So, they believe the only way they can be safe, secure, succeed, is by lying, exploiting, abusing, gaining more power over others to force their way. To tell the truth, especially about themselves, causes their fear to increase—it makes them feel vulnerable, and thus they prefer the darkness.

So, how does God accomplish His purpose, the salvation of humanity and the eradication of sin from the universe?

Can God bring unity and eradicate the sin by imposed laws, force, and inflicted punishment? Why not? Because in order to eliminate sin the roots of sin, lies, fear, and selfishness must be eliminated from hearts and minds. And lies, fear, and selfishness cannot be eliminated by force, threat, or inflicted punishments. In fact, such methods cause more fear, selfishness, and sin.

This is why the Bible teaches it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance. It is not by might and power but by the Spirit of truth and love that God's kingdom advances.

Then why do so many Christians teach that God, in order to be just, must use His power to inflict punishment for sin? Because they believe God's law works like human law, imposed rules. But these theologies only promote the rebellion, not the kingdom of God.

Do you see how the Romanization of Christianity obstructs God's plan from being realized and delays the second coming of Christ?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- "But God. . . ." Those two words must be the most hope-filled ones known to humankind. In Ephesians 2:1–10, Paul describes the grim past of his audience. Sharing the plight of all humanity, they were bent toward rebellion against God, their lives dominated by sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1–3). "But God, who is rich in mercy . . . " And what did God do for them and for us? (1) He made us alive with Christ—Christ's resurrection is our own. (2) He raised us up with Christ—Christ's ascension is our own. (3) In heaven, He seated us with Christ—Christ's coronation is our own (Eph. 2:4–7). We are not just bystanders to the cosmos-shifting events of

> Christ's life! God takes these remarkable actions, not because of any merit in us but because of His grace (Eph. 2:8, 9), and He intends believers to live in solidarity with Jesus and practice "good works" (Eph. 2:10). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 114).

Why is all humanity bent toward rebellion against God? What is the reason, the cause, the problem?

Is it our fault, yours and mine, that we have a bent toward rebellion? If it is not our fault, if we were born this way, then are we guilty before God or innocent? Or is that a trap question—does that question subtly lead people to a legal understanding of things? In truth, we are not legally guilty because we didn't choose the condition of our birth—but that doesn't mean we don't have a problem. Even though it isn't our fault that we are born in this condition, the condition itself is a terminal condition—without remedy it causes symptoms and results in death. Like a baby born HIV positive—the baby is not legally guilty, but has a condition that requires treatment and without treatment will cause symptoms and death.

So, understanding this we understand that our problem is not legal, it is a condition of being, that Adam and Eve experienced a change of heart from love and trust to fear and selfishness, and we are born with that corruption of heart and mind.

If the problem sin caused is a change in the heart, mind, character, motive from love and trust to fear and selfishness—then what is the solution that restores us to loving friendship, loyalty, devotion to God such that we are united with Him and can be trusted by God?

Can a legal declaration cause such a change? Can adjustment in accounting books cause such a change? Where must the change occur if this problem is to be fixed for you personally?

What does it mean that God made us alive with Christ? How is that? First, it is speaking of the human race being redeemed in Jesus who became a real human being and fixed in His humanity what Adam did to it. After He completed that mission, He became the second Adam, the head of a new family tree that is built on God's design law of love and not on Satan's law of sin and death, which is fear and selfishness.

When we are won back to trust we receive from the indwelling Holy Spirit the attributes of Christ, **we experience love**, that we are precious to God, **we experience His grace, forgiveness, removal of the guilt and shame** and are no longer controlled by fear and the need to protect self. **We are recreated** within with new motives and desires that are not natural to the carnal heart. With the new heart **we then must choose to act** upon the new desires choosing to live in new ways **because we prefer the new ways, and we receive the power from God to succeed in our new choices**, but the choice is ours to make. And it is in this **cooperative relationship** with Jesus that we are not **only reborn (justified, set right in heart with God) but are transformed (sanctified, matured, perfected to have mature character like Christ). And thus we become partakers of the divine nature through the victory of Christ**.

Our good works are the unavoidable result of hearts that are recreated to be like Christ. A thief who is reborn to Christ stops stealing, a liar reborn to Christ becomes honest, an abusive spouse becomes a protector who sacrifices self for their spouse like Christ does for the church, a cheat becomes loyal—none of these works of righteousness earn anything, they are the result of, the outgrowth of, the fruit of a change in heart, of having the living law of love restored as the motivating power in the soul. And all of that comes from Jesus through the indwelling Spirit.

In the second paragraph the lesson states,

- Gentiles, once excluded from worship in sacred places of the temple, now join Jewish believers in becoming one. We, too, become part of God's church, a "holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:19–22). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 114).

What was the purpose of the Old Testament Jewish sanctuary/temple?

One of the best descriptions I have ever read of the purpose of that temple is in the book *The Desire of Ages.* Do you agree with this description?

- "In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an **object lesson** [What is an object lesson? Is the object lesson reality or does it illustrate reality? Is the object lesson for salvation? Is the reality which the object lesson is teaching required?] for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being**, from the bright and holy seraph to **man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator**. [What kind of a temple is this? Is such a temple suggested here, composed of living beings one built by human hands?] **Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God.** Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, **the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled**. [What is God's purpose for humanity? And what was God's purpose in the incarnation of Jesus?] God dwells in humanity, and **through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple**. [What does this mean? And would the heart of a sinner become again the temple where God dwells require some cleansing work to be done? Could we call that the cleansing of the temple?] God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high **destiny open to every soul**. **But the Jews had not understood** the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. [How about Christians today, have we understood?] They did not **yield themselves as holy temples** for the Divine Spirit. [How about Christians today?] The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul**. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's

> fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver**." Mal. 3:1-3. (The Desire of Ages 161).

What do you think of this description of the purpose of the Old Testament temple? It points to the reality of a temple built out of living stones. And in order to build that temple from sinners Jesus had to become part of this species and lay the foundation stone, the template, the new sinless humanity, and from Jesus we all must be molded, reformed, redeemed, shaped, honed, refined, recreated, transformed. The living stones have to be purified or cleansed, just as Malachi described.

And did you know that the Adventist founders taught that the prophecy of Malachi 3:1-3 in which Jesus comes to cleanse the Levites—who represent the priesthood of believers, is the same event as the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 the cleansing of the sanctuary?

- **The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14;** the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and **the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event;** and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25 (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 426).

And what is this event?

If the temple is built out of living beings who are defiled by sin—what must be accomplished to cleanse the temple? The cleansing of the hearts and minds of sinners.

And what is it that defiles our hearts and minds? The lies that Satan tells about God that we believe that cause us to distrust God and rebel from Him, to live in fear and selfishness because we no longer love and trust God.

Thus the Bible teaches that:

- For though we live in the world, we **do not wage war as the world does**. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds**. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

The issue in the war has always been over whether we love and trust God, and that is determined by whether we actually know Him for who He really is, or whether we have accepted a false version of Him, a view of God that is like Satan in some way.

In order to have our Spirit temples cleansed we must internalize the truth about God and be won back to trust in Him. We must stop judging God to be like a Roman Caesar, a being whose law functions

like human law, a being we accuse of being the source of inflicted pain and death as punishment for sin, and recognize the truth that God is the source of life, Satan is the source of death and sin is the cause of death.

Thus the Adventist founders taught:

> Both the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," and the first angel's message, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of **His judgment** is come," **pointed to Christ's ministration in the most holy place, to the investigative judgment,** and not to the coming of Christ for the redemption of His people and the destruction of the wicked. (The Great controversy 424).

The hour has come in human history for us to make a right judgment about God, to judge Him to be our Creator, the God of love, whose laws are design laws, to have our Spirit temples cleansed of the lie that God functions like a creature and start worshiping Him in His true glory as Creator. It is the fulfillment of what Paul wrote:

- Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged." (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

WEDNESDAY

How do we experience genuine unity? How is it achieved? Can unity ever be achieved through rules, coercion, inflicted punishment?

What is meant by the unity inherent in our faith?

Read second paragraph,

- While unity is a theological certainty, it requires our hard work. So, we should always be "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3, NKJV). One way each of us may do so is by being an active "part" of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:7–16). Every member is a gifted part of the body and should contribute to the health of it (Eph. 4:7, 16). And all should benefit by the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11, 12). These, like ligaments and tendons, have a unifying function, helping us grow up together into Christ who is the Head of the body (Eph. 4:13, 15). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 116).

What do you think of this idea that we promote unity by each member being an active part of the body of Christ?

What I have noticed over the last 13 years is a pattern that has emerged across the denominational church all over the world when people present the truth of God's design law and His character of love—and that is that the legalistic leaders of the churches tell those who present the design law love

of God that they can no longer speak, teach, hold office and eventually that they are not welcome in fellowship.

What I have not seen is those of us who hold the design law view telling people who hold the legal view that they are not welcome, that they cannot speak. There is a reason for this.

Truth loses nothing by questions, examination, challenge, and honest investigation of the evidence. However, positions based on falsehood cannot stand the light of truth shining in, those systems will collapse. Thus, those who hold to the penal/legal view when the truth of God's design law is presented will either change their view and be converted, or will act to stop the truth from being presented.

Thus, genuine unity can only be achieved by the methods and principles of God being applied to hearts and minds.

Read third paragraph

- At the time, Paul also told them "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:14, NKJV), words that clearly suggest that the early church faced some internal struggles from "the trickery of men." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 116).

What does it mean to be a child in this context? What is it about children that make them vulnerable to being tricked? They trust too much, what else? Do children know how and why things work? Or are children, as good children, primarily living by the judgment, direction, and instructions of others? When it comes to important decisions, do children make their own assessments of risks versus benefits, do they evaluate the cause and effect principles, the design laws of why things work the way they do and then make decisions or do they make decisions based on what someone in authority has told them, on rules, and with concern of what the authority will do to them—either reward or punishment?

How many physiological adults function like children, allowing people in authority to tell them the answer, rules-oriented thinking, rather than learning how to figure out the answer for themselves. And this is the big difference between an immature Christian and a mature one. The mature Christian is one who has developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong, (Hebrews 5:14). The immature is the one who focuses on rule-keeping but with no real understanding of the purpose or reason for the rule, only that it is a rule.

The key to being able to figure out right from wrong is having a reliable toolkit, an accurate measuring stick, a genuine understanding of reality and the laws upon which God built reality to operate upon. The mature are those who not only love God (children love God but are not mature), the mature also know and understand God's character and His design laws and methods. This is what Jesus wants and why He invites us into understanding friendship with Him—John 15:15. This maturity helps us understand why good is good and evil is evil.

But children, the immature, they don't know why, they trust what someone in authority says, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" and all manner of other stand ins for God—such as "the Bible said it" or "EGW said it" or "the pope, priest, pastor, elder said it" or "my godly grandmother said it" or "the theology professors as seminary said it" or "the church in GC session voted it."

God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, and the truth is objective reality, and the truth understood is authoritative. If God was going to win the war by mere assertion of power, position, and authority as God and Creator, He would have done so when Lucifer rebelled. He would have called the angels together and said, "I am just, I am love, you can trust me. Lucifer is a liar and justice requires I execute Him. You don't need to ask any questions because I am in charge here and I have the power to ensure justice is done. Watch as I exterminate this rebel. Now, any questions?"

This description is satanic. God is the God of love and love is won, it is never forced. Thus God wins by truth and love and the mature have come to know God for who He is as Jesus revealed Him to be.

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

- As believers, we are called to model our behavior toward others on God's forgiveness and grace toward us. We are to imitate God! (Compare Matt. 5:43–48.) (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 117).

Why are we to forgive those who have wronged us?

Why will the same measure we use against others be used against us?

What are the barriers that keep people from forgiving others?

Does the idea about law have any role in that?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at https://www.honeylake.clinic/

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered residential psychiatric treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.

- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 1
God's Mission to Us - 1

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction they describe a parable of a dreadful swamp in which people in which people often were overcome and died, and how their distressing cries could be heard by the people of the nearby village.

The people of the village got together and held meetings, counsels, wrote papers, advanced theories as to what to do, held fundraisers to support the people who were sacrificing work time to spend time in the meetings, but they never actually did anything to help the people dying in the swamp.

What are the lessons from this parable?

This is why we at Come and Reason Ministries create materials that we give away to people, materials that are not just theory, but are practical, applicable, and bring real change to people's lives.

It is why we go to events like the American Association of Christian Counselors, which we were at last week. And while there we gave away all kinds of resources:

- The Remedy and Remedy Psalms
- God is Love children's book
- Could It Be This Simple?
- Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 magazine
- Critical Race Theory Unmasking the Lies While Advancing the Gospel magazine
- The Wedding of Christ to His Bride magazine
- The Final Message of Mercy to the World—the Three Angels magazine
- Meditation Biblical versus Easter guide
- The Book of Job and the Last Days pamphlet
- 9 different tracts

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

We had more people that we can count come up and tell us how they follow us online, how they use our materials with their patients and church members. We heard many stories of how lives have been changed, people who were doubting God giving their hearts to Him. People came back to get more materials to share.

People were blown away with the quality of the materials, but also the fact that we were giving it all away when everyone else was selling. I was stopped in the hallways more than once by people thanking me, telling me they love our ministry, or telling me how much the materials were appreciated.

More times that we could count people came up to us and asked us how we are able to do give it all away. Some asked if I was independently wealthy. One man came up and said he represented another not for profit ministry and his task during this conference was to go to other not for profit ministries and inquire how they monetized their ministry—what worked for them. And when I told him we have never done a fund raiser, we don't solicit, we give away our materials and people whose lives have been changed often choose to start supporting us in producing and sharing these materials with others. We told him we practice the principle of freely you have received freely give. And he shook his head and said he has never head anything like this.

So, we want you to know we are doing more than sitting in committees, we are producing materials, sharing resources, and meeting people and seeing lives changed for God's kingdom.

SABBATH

The lesson begins by pointing out God initiates mission and relationships—God created life, angels, Adam and Eve, and after sin God sought Adam—God went on a mission to reach fallen humanity, to reconnect, and to provide all that is necessary to save and restore humans back to sinless perfection.

Then the lesson says:

- The foundation of any mission endeavor, therefore, must be centered on a relationship with the Creator and with the proper understanding of His missionary nature and character. But before we understand the mission of God, it is essential to better understand the God of mission. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023,

God's Mission My Mission p. 6).

What does it mean to build a relationship with the Creator, to understanding His missionary nature and character, and His mission?

Would this relate to the 3 Angels' messages and calling people back to Creator worship?

And what does that entail?

At the AACC a nice young man come up to me and asked about the mark of the beast in our Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 magazine. He wanted to know if someone who was saved could get the mark of the beast.

What would you say to that?

I asked him what he meant by being saved? Did he mean someone who made a proclamation of faith in Jesus, was baptized in a church, identified as a Christian, joined a Christian church and began doing mission work in the name of Jesus? He thought that sounded right, so I asked him, then what about Jesus words:

- Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22–23 NIV84).

Are these people Christians? He didn't know how to answer that, but wasn't sure about my suggesting these people were Christians. So I pointed out the parable of the 10 virgins who represent the church: the 5 wise and 5 foolish—and asked, "Are those five foolish, who are members of the church, and who are not allowed into the kingdom because they have no oil in their lamps, meaning that they are lost in the end, saved at some point or never saved?"

He didn't know how to answer. I pointed out Caiaphas and Annas the High Priests who thought they were leading God's people and believed they, as High Priests, were anointed by God but yet they crucified Jesus. Were they saved?

I pointed out the Christians in the Dark Ages who went on crusades or burned people at the stake in the name of Jesus, were they saved because they claimed to be following Jesus?

So, the point is, can people identify themselves as Christian, make a profession of faith, go through the ritual of baptism, join the church organization they believe is God's church, and engage in activities that are mission oriented to advance what they understand to be the gospel, yet still be unsaved, and be working against God, working for God's enemy, and even hold church office? Remember the wheat and tares grow up together in the church until the harvest.

So, can a person who is saved receive the mark of the beast—well again it depends on what you mean by saved, what does it mean to be saved?

What would you say?

We talked about experiencing a new heart and right spirit, being reborn, having the heart circumcised by the Holy Spirit, having the law written upon the heart, which ultimately results in being sealed by the Holy Spirit—which is having transformation of character so that we are so settled into the truth about God both intellectually and spiritually, that like Job, no matter what comes we will not be shaken from our love, loyalty, and devotion to God and the living out of His methods and principles. Such people do not receive the mark of the beast because they are sealed of God.

But he said, but sometimes I don't do what I know is right, sometimes I fail, I fall short, I get angry and say things that are not right—am I lost. What would you say to that?

I pointed him to Romans chapter seven, this is from the Remedy:

- I am frustrated with what I do! For having been restored to trust, I want to do what is in harmony with God and his methods and principles; but I find that even though I trust God, my old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. And if I find an old habit causing me to behave in ways that I now find detestable, I affirm that the law is a very helpful tool revealing residual damage in need of healing. What is happening is this: I have come to trust God, and I desire to do his will, but old habits and conditioned responses — which

> present almost reflexively in certain situations — have not yet been totally eliminated and thus cause me to do things I do not want to do. I know that my mind was completely infected with distrust, fear and selfishness, which totally perverted all my desires and faculties, so that even when distrust has been eradicated and trust has been restored, the damage caused by years of distrustful and selfish behavior has not yet been fully healed. So, I find that at times, I have the desire to do what is right, but do not yet have the ability to carry out the desire. For the old habits and conditioned responses are not the good I want to do: No! They are remnants of my selfish, unconverted mind. So, if I find myself doing what I no longer desire to do, it is not myself that acts, but the vestiges of old habits and conditioned responses that have yet to be removed. And through God's grace, they will soon be removed. (Romans 7:15-20 REM)

The difference between a saved and unsaved person is that the saved person, when old habits emerge, is grieved and goes to God in sorrow and repentance not only for forgiveness, but transforming power to change so they gain victory and stop repeating such behaviors over time. The unconverted, unsaved, person justify and defend their sinful actions, they blame others, claim that the other person deserved what they got etc.

So, what do you think was the root of this individual's concern, and how do you see me handling it?

Does the law lens people hold have any bearing on how they understand the sin problem and God's solution, what it means to be saved? And does worshiping the Creator have anything to do with how we understand God's law?

If we worship the Creator we worship the Builder of reality, not just the Builder, but the Bible says He is the Sustainer, holding all things together. His laws are the laws that reality functions upon, design law. Breaking them injures and causes death. God is working through Christ to eliminate breaks in His law that cause death and restore His people back into harmony with Him and His law of love.

Thus the mission of God is redemptive, saving, healing, transforming, cleansing, recreating—and salvation means to be reborn, healed, cleansed, transformed, renewed, restored and ultimately sealed in heart and mind to be like Jesus in character and function.

But if one holds the human law model, imposed rules that require the rule giver to use

power to torture and kill, then one is not won back to trust that god, but to trust in some mechanism to propitiate that god, whether it is human works, penances, ceremonies, sacraments, or the works of another intercessor who will plead to that false punishing god in our behalf offering that god the legal blood payment to assuage his wrath. The confidence, faith, trust is not in the god, it is in the various other mechanics, saints, or mediators who are working on that god to stop him from killing us.

Further, through the law of worship, which is a design law of how we are transformed and changed, if we worship an authoritarian rule-enforcing god, we become authoritarian, legal, and we find emotional security in some form of legal authority, some payment, some claim of legal forgiveness and salvation through legal means.

So what does it mean to be marked beastly? It means to embrace and practice the methods of the beast on others, to mark oneself in mind, heart, character, and function to be beastlike.

So, what is God's mission and how do we enter into a relationship with the Creator and join Him in His mission?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph:

- God created us in His image and likeness. He gave us a perfect world, and His purpose was that we would live in perfect connection with Him, a relationship centered in His most precious attribute: love. But for love to be real, God also gave us another precious gift: free will—the freedom to choose which way to follow. Of course, God gave clear instructions to Adam and Eve about the danger and deadly consequences of disobedience (Gen. 2:16, 17). Satan, in turn, deceptively persuaded Eve that she could eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but without any negative results. On the contrary, he claimed that they would "be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5, NKJV). Unfortunately, Eve chose to eat and gave the fruit to Adam, who made the same choice. The perfect creation, then, was stained by sin. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 7).

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

This is so well said, the lesson emphasizing that God is love is absolutely right and it is right that love can only exist in freedom and God gives real freedom, and how God in love warned Adam and Eve of the deadly *consequences* of sin—not the threat of inflicted punishment from God. This is well said. And how Satan deceived, and what do lies that are believed do to the circle of love and trust?

And when the circle of love and trust is broken what results? Fear and selfishness, so let's read the second and third paragraphs:

- That moment changed God's original plan and purpose for the newly created planet Earth. The mission of salvation, which had been designed "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), had now to be implemented.

  Of course, God knew exactly where they were. Dominated by fear, Adam and Eve were the ones who needed to see what was going on. But they also needed to be confronted so they could understand the dreadful consequences of their sin. Satan also needed to be defeated. For that, God then began to present His mission: the plan of redemption (see Gen. 3:14, 15)—the only hope of "reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 7).

Again, well said by the lesson. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned the living law of God, the law of other centered love was replaced with fear and selfishness, the survival of the fittest drives, this is what the Bible calls the law of sin and death.

When Adam and Eve sinned what changed? Did God get changed? Did God's law get changed? It was the condition of Adam and Eve that change!

Since the change sinned caused was in Adam and Eve, where will the remedy, the solution, the healing power of God have to be applied in order to save human sinners? In human beings.

Understand this, the entire plan of salvation, all the various manifestations of grace, the actions of God, what Jesus has done, all of it has never and will never do anything to change God—He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is perfect, holy, righteous, and eternal, there is nothing wrong with God and nothing in God needs to be fixed, updated, amended, changed, or reconciled to sinners.

We need to be fixed, updated, amended, changed, healed, cleansed, restored, and reconciled back to God. And that is the plan of salvation, God's plan to intervene in humanity to eradicate the infection of sin within us and restore His living law of love in our inmost being reconciling us back to at-one-ment with God.

TUESDAY

Why did Jesus have to become human? Why did God have to become one with us?

It is very straightforward and simple—it is reality—once Adam and Eve sinned the species human—all of whom are offspring, outgrowth, fruit of Adam and Eve are born with a terminal sin condition. The only way to save human sinners is to eliminate the sin condition from human beings. This requires action within the human being. The actions required are the following:

- Truth must be revealed and then accepted and believed to destroy the lies and restore fearful, distrusting, rebellious human hearts and minds back to trust in God. Only God Himself could fully and accurately reveal the truth about Himself. If an angel would have come as a human instead of God we would learn about angels, and we would learn that God was willing to sacrifice angels to protect Himself. So step one as to why Jesus became human is because it was the only way God could reveal to humans (and to the onlooking universe Colossians 1:18-20) the truth about Himself.
- But having been restored to trust by accepting the truth that Jesus revealed, doesn't remove the infection the carnal nature from the species human. The salvation of humanity, in addition to defeating the lies and restoring trust, requires a new sinless, perfect, mature, and righteous character/nature. Character cannot be created, it must be developed by the exercise of free choice of the sapient being. Jesus had to become human, and use only His human abilities—the power to think, to choose, to exercise faith in His Father, to love, in order to confront the temptations of sin and eliminate the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle into humanity, and thus save the species created in Eden.
- These two actions, revealing the truth and developing a mature, perfect, sinless human character by the exercise of human abilities destroys the devil's power

(Hebrews 2:14), destroys the sympathy for Satan with any heavenly angels who knew him and had questions (Colossians 1:18-20), destroys death itself and brings life and immortality to light (2Tim 1:10), destroys the carnal nature and replaced it with a sinless righteous human nature (1 John 3:8).

- When we receive the truth, metaphorically the bread or flesh, we are won back to trust and open our hearts to God and receive the wine/blood, the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), we receive the life of Christ, the new heart, right spirit, with new righteous motives, love for God and others, and then as we choose to live out those new desires we receive power to succeed and it is no longer our old sinful, fear-ridden, selfish selves that live, but Christ lives in us, we are new creations, partaking of the divine nature, and having the mind of Christ. As we continue to choose, in faith, to live out God's principles we are sealed by the Holy Spirit into our devotion, loyalty, trust of God and nothing will shake us from it.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Jesus' life and ministry were God's ultimate revelation. In about three years God was able to reveal more about who He was and what His mission was all about than in all He had done through any other method in previous generations. Christ was the perfect "image of the invisible God," the One in whom "all the fullness should dwell, . . . having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:15, 19, 20, NKJV). In Christ, the missionary nature of God was completely made known. Jesus Himself revealed His mission, saying, " 'the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost' " (Luke 19:10, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 10).

What is the peace that Jesus made through the blood of His cross? How would you explain it? Do you hear it as doing something to God, or as I just described fixing the damage that sin caused to God's creation?

Read the last paragraph,

- Christ's death was part of the reconciliation process, not the end of it. Through His resurrection, Jesus conquered death and received " 'all authority . . . in heaven and on earth' " (Matt. 28:18, NKJV). Based on this reality, He then commissioned all of His followers to make disciples around the world, with an awesome promise: " 'I am with you always, even to the end of the age' " (Matt. 28:20, NKJV; emphasis supplied). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 10).

I think we all agree that the plan of salvation did not end at the cross, that we have a work of evangelizing the world with the gospel, but then what did Jesus mean when at the cross he said, "It is finished"?

I encourage you to read the chapter It Is Finished in the book *The Desire of Ages*, it is one of the best chapters ever written by anyone on this subject. And I want us to unpack some of this chapter together:

- Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He **had revealed himself as a murderer**. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings… The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. (The Desire of Ages 761.2) [One of the things that Christ finished at the cross was providing the evidence of who is the source of death, who was responsible for Christ's death, who is the murderer, destroyer, and the truth of what happens when God stops using power to prevent death from occurring. The cross reveals who does what—God let Christ go—setting Jesus free to experience what Jesus freely chose, and that was to destroy sin and death. Therefore, at the cross God stopped using power, stepped back, let go, and severed His live-giving link with His Son, so that Jesus could complete Their joint mission. This reveals that death does not come out from God as an inflicted punishment. Further, at the cross Satan revealed that he is the one from whom death comes. As Hebrews 2:14 says Satan holds the power of death, but Christ destroys both Satan and his power of death and brings life and immortality to light. This truth was revealed at the cross, but not fully understood by finite beings. Yet sadly, most of Christianity, having believed the lie that God's law functions like human law, teach that God killed Jesus on the cross.]

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. **The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed**. And for **the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued**. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve. (The Desire of Ages 761.3) [Despite the cross revealing the contrast between love and selfishness, between God's use of power and Satan's, the heavenly angels and humans still didn't fully understand the difference between the two. Why? Because one foundational lie had not been fully eliminated and that was the lie about God's law, note what the author says next.]

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, **should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted... (The Desire of Ages 761.4) [What kind of law requires the infliction of punishment? Imposed law, made up law, the kind of law created beings make. This was Satan's lie from the beginning and this lie continues to infect human hearts and minds and the church. Worshiping a beings whose law works like this means one is worshiping a creature and not the Creator. This is why we are called at this time in history to call people back to Creator worship, which requires we reject human imposed law and understand the reality of God as Creator and Sustainer that His law is design alw. The problem of salvation isn't legal, it is functional, the actual condition of hearts and minds, harmony or disharmony with God and the laws He built reality to operate upon.]

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. [How? What was different? Why can the death of Jesus save human sinners but not Satan?] Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. **Understanding the character of God**, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. **This choice was final.** There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was **deceived**; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. **The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God.** (The Desire of Ages 761.5) [If the problem were a legal

problem and the solution is the payment of sinless blood of God's sin—then such a solution would be available to Satan and his fallen angels. But the problem isn't legal, and legal payments cannot solve it. The problem is reality, functional, the actual condition of hearts and minds. Satan's rejected the truth of God's character, methods, and design laws, and hardened within himself the preference for selfishness. But humanity was in a different position, humanity was tricked, deceived, and therefore there was hope for humanity. Where is humanity's hope? In being won back to trust by the revelation of the truth of God. There is hope in the truth of God's character, winning humans back to trust and offering them an alternative to selfishness, the truth, love, and liberty of God as manifested and restored into humanity by Jesus.]

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not set aside justice. [What does this mean?] The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. **God did not change His law**, [Why because it is perfect, and it is the protocols life is built to operate upon. We must be changed to harmonize with the law.] but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. (The Desire of Ages 762.1)

The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them**. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, **through the forbearance of God**. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character**, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. (The Desire of Ages 762.2) [The law of God requires that we live in harmony with it, just like the law of respiration requires we breathe. And God doesn't change His law, He restores His living law in us through the works of Jesus.]

By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world. [What kind of laws do humans enact? When we teach God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring God to use power to punish

rule breakers and salvation is legal, we have substituted human law for God's law. We are worshiping a creature rather than the Creator.] This work is foretold in prophecy. Of the great apostate power which is the representative of Satan, it is declared, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand." Daniel 7:25. (The Desire of Ages 763.1)

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. **They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men**. (The Desire of Ages 763.2) [This has certainly happened in the Dark Ages over issues of worship. But more recently it happened over COVID. And sadly many church leaders couldn't recognize the beastly methods of Satan that were employed, and they led the church to unite and practice these beastly methods on others. They didn't recognize it because they couldn't find an authority somewhere that tells them the answer because they believe the lie that God's law functions like human law.]

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. **All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn**. There will be but two classes. **Every character will be fully developed;** and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. (The Desire of Ages 763.3) [The law we choose to apply to ourselves in how we treat others determines the type of character we develop.]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion **will be cut off.** Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Malachi 4:1),—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, "Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; ... I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." Then "the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;" "they shall be as though they had not been." Ezekiel 28:6-19; Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16. (The Desire of Ages 763.4)

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. [This is design law, the natural result of

cutting self off from God the source of life. It happens when God stops using power to hold their destructive choices at bay.] **God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life**. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, **they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them**. (The Desire of Ages 764.1) [But remember the righteous live eternally in that same glory—the glory of God is not harmful, it is life-giving. What is harmful is unremedied sin in the individual.]

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. **A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.** (The Desire of Ages 764.2) [In order to eliminate sin from the universe God had to do more than eliminate Satan, He has to eliminate the lies, the fear, the doubts about God that infect hearts and minds. This is why Satan's existence has been continued, to manifest his own methods and principles and ultimately condemn and destroy himself.]

All of this was finished—the evidence and truth that brings it all to an end—at the cross.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- In the Old Testament narrative, God continues to act according to His missionary nature in order to fulfill His purposes. For instance, after the Flood the people of Babel decided to gather in one place to build a city and a tower that would reach to the heavens. God intervened, confusing their language with the goal to scatter

> them around the world (Gen. 11:1–9). He then enlarged His mission, calling Abram (who later became Abraham) to be a channel of His blessings to the whole world (Gen. 12:1–3). God's promises to Abraham and his descendants were multifold, but one emerges above all. Several times God basically declared to them: "I will be [your] God." "I will be with you." "I am with you" (see Gen. 17:7, 8; Gen. 26:3, NKJV; Gen. 28:15, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 8).

Why did God confuse the languages at Babel?

Did God do this as punishment? Was God angry? Was He seeking to destroy? Or was this an act of love, an act of mercy, grace, and redemption?

The lesson then uses language that I find a little strange, in fact I am not sure what is meant, so I will ask you, what do you think they mean by: "He then enlarged His mission, calling Abram (who later became Abraham) to be a channel of His blessings to the whole world (Gen. 12:1–3)."

I don't understand the word "enlarged" in this context. Wasn't God's mission to send Jesus as our Savior announced in Genesis 3:15?

And weren't the following part of that mission to send Jesus, destroy sin, death, Satan, and save humanity:

- Barring the way to the Tree of Life?
- The animal sacrifices?
- The confrontation with Cain?
- The preaching of Noah for 120 years followed by the Flood
- The confusion of the languages and scattering of the people and, in my view, it was there that the different genetic racial differences were introduced to separate people into different groups—why? To prevent the world from uniting again in a total, global, worldwide rebellion against heaven, in order to give time for God's mission, the plan of salvation, Jesus to come.

So, I don't understand the word enlarged in this context—it is the carrying out what was already promised, and the Bible focus narrows. We no longer focus on the entire world, but only on Abraham's family, which narrows to Isaac's descendants, which narrows to

Jacob's which narrows eventually to the tribe of Judah—why? Because the entire Bible story is the coming Messiah, the plan of salvation, which is focused upon Jesus.

Let's be very clear about something—no human can be saved from sin at any from Adam and Eve all the way down to the last sinner saved at the end of time without Jesus. Jesus is the only means of salvation for every single human being. Human salvation required Jesus to become part of the human species, a real human being; it required He be tempted like us in every way; it required that He overcome every temptation and be sinless; it required that He develop a perfect mature human character; and that required Him to die to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness and to establish by action, by deed, by choice, by faith and trust in His Father the eternal law of love sealed into His human character; and having done this human salvation required Him to arise from the dead because He defeated and destroyed the cause of death and restored the law of life back into the species human. And thus Jesus becomes the connecting link, the only means whereby every other human, who is born dead in trespass and sin, can experience through their faith in Him a recreation of their inner person and be reborn with God's law of love, law of life, restored within them. Thus they are reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.

Does that mean that one has to place their faith in a Savior they call Jesus? What if they call Him Joshua, or Yoshua, or El-Shaadi, or Elohim, or Yahweh, or Yah, or any of a variety of other names?

What if someone does accept Jesus by that name as their Savior and is baptized into a Christian church and spends their life doing Christian mission—does that mean they are saved? We already quoted this earlier, but Jesus Himself said,

- "Not everyone who **says to me, 'Lord, Lord**,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will **say to me** on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in **your name**, and in **your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**'" (Matthew 7:21-23 NIV84).

Jesus is describing people who are calling Him Lord and doing all their works in His name, in other words, these people would identify themselves as Christians, but Jesus said He never knew them and they are evil doers.

How can this be?

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? In other words, what does it mean to be truly saved?

What is the problem that sin caused that God's mission through Jesus is fixing?

Is the problem a legal problem or a problem of our actual condition?

If we replace God's design law with human imposed law, then the problem is misconstrued as a legal problem in which God is required by law and justice to inflict a legal death penalty, and salvation becomes some means to get that legal penalty paid. And people can claim legal salvation and the acceptance of the payment of Jesus' blood to pay their sin debt, go through ritual baptism, join a church, spend their lives in mission, but never know Jesus, never have their hearts renewed to be like Jesus.

The Bible does not teach that Jesus came to take away our punishment for sin. The Bible teaches that Jesus came to take away the sin of the world, to take away the cause of pain, suffering, and death and that cause is sin, not God. But Satan, the master deceiver has duped billions into believing God is the cause of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin.

So the promise to Abraham—what is that promise? Is it a different promise than given to Adam in Genesis 3:15? If it is the same promise, then is that promise restricted to the biological, the genetic, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

The promise to Abraham had two meanings—one that the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be the biological branch of the human family tree through which Messiah would come. The land that was shown to Abraham would be given to them for them to carry out the purpose of being the repository of Scripture, the symbolic theater of the sanctuary, and being the avenue through whom Jesus would be born. This promise was given in Genesis 12:7.

- The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land" (Genesis 12 7).

But God was not sending Jesus to save only biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God was sending Jesus to save the entire world. And God was not promising Abraham's descendants only a narrow strip of land in the Middle East, He was telling Abraham that through the fulfillment of His promise to Adam of the promised seed of the woman, who would be born to one of Abraham's descendants, the entire human family would be saved and they will inherent the entire world. Just as Jesus said: "the meek will inherent the earth" not the "meek will inherent Palestine."

It is Abraham's descendant Jesus who sets up a kingdom that encompasses the entire world, the rock that destroys the image in Daniel 2, He reigns on a throne that will never be removed, and the New Jerusalem comes down from Heaven and God moves the throne of the universe to this planet.

This is the promise given to Abraham. Through God's constant mercy, grace, and discipline the biological descendants were able to barely succeed in being the avenue through which Jesus was born as a human 2000 years ago. That part of their calling and God's promise to given them that land to fulfill that part of their mission is complete. Now, what we are waiting for God to fulfill is the larger, final, aspect of His promise, for Jesus to come again and to purify the earth from all sin and given the entire planet to the saved.

Thus the Bible teaches that

- If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29 NET).

To be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in salvation is not about biology—it is about experiencing what they did:

- A descendant of Abraham has the saving faith that Abraham had and thus their heart is set right or justified with God from the natural state of distrust to trust in that trust they
- Become a descendant of Isaac as they experience the miracle of rebirth—Isaac was the miracle birth child and we are his descendant when we are reborn through the miracle of God's divine power working in us and
- We become a descendant of Jacob when in our faith relationship with Jesus, with our new reborn heart, we yoke up with Jesus and wrestle against our own fears

> and selfishness to be an overcomer—thus we get a new name that Jesus writes on our foreheads, just as Jacob's name was changed from deceiver, to Israel—one who with God overcomes.

And the writer of Hebrews agrees with our assessment. Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived "in the promised land" (Hebrews 11:9)—"did not receive the things promised" (Hebrews 11:13), that they were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "All of these people" of faith "did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. … They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that "all of these people" did not receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn't he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous. Then the promise will be realized and we, who have faith like Abraham, will receive our inheritance of a goodly land, a beautiful home, perfect and flawless that God intended Adam and Eve to possess. It is true that the meek will inherit the earth, for what God has promised He will fulfill.

In the last paragraph, the lesson asks, "What was one of the main purposes of the Old Testament sanctuary?"

What do you think?

The lesson has a quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, which reflects the SDA church's position:

- "The sacrificial offerings, and the priesthood of the Jewish system, were instituted to represent the death and mediatorial work of Christ. All those ceremonies had no meaning, and no virtue, only as they related to Christ."—Ellen G. White, Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath, December 17, 1872.

Do you agree with this? Is there Biblical evidence to support this position?

- "The gifts and sacrifices being offered were **not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper**. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order… But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. (Hebrews 9:9.10, 10:3,4).

But this was not something new to the New Testament writers, God told them this all through the Old Testament:

- "The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have **no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats**… wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:11,16,17)
- "I want your constant love, **not your animal sacrifices**. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me." (Hosea 6:6)

So, the position that the OT sanctuary was only theater, a teaching tool, object lesson, ceremony with no saving value in the rituals is biblical.

However, not all Christians see it this way, some believe that in Old Testament times it was the sacrifices of animals and animal blood that took care of the sin problem, despite the texts I read.

Here is a quote from a theology professor heard on Christian radio:

- In the Old Testament, the death of an animal was required to take care of the human sin problem and now we have not the death of an animal, but of the very Son of God, who dies for us. And so his loss of blood is the thing whereby He succumbed on our behalf. (Chris Fabry Live Radio Show March 23, 2016, Moody Broadcasting).

The reason this idea exists is that many good Christian people fail to recognize the Great Controversy perspective, that there is only one sin problem and only one solution

for it, and the entire Bible is teaching the exact same truth—the truth about God, the truth about sin, the truth about the purpose of the creation of humankind and the fall, the truth about God's design law and heavenly government, the truth about Jesus as our Savior as the only avenue for salvation for any human being. All the parts of the Bible teach the same eternal truths and must be harmonized together in order to understand correctly these truths.

Sadly, much of Christianity has broken the Bible into various parts and believe that salvation had other avenues than Jesus in Old Testament times.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at https://www.honeylake.clinic/

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered residential psychiatric treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation

- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.
- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

The God Shaped Heart, has just been released in German in Germany, *Herz voll Gott*, published by the Adventist publishing house in Germany.

NEW Pamphlet: The Book of Job and the Last Days: A Cosmic Overview—7 Truths to Prepare for Christ's Return is now available. You can order your FREE copies at https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/The-Book-of-Job-and-the-Last-

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

Days-A-Cosmic-Overview_p_56.html

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 2
God's Mission to Us: Part 2

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19 NIV84).

What do you think of this text? Those who don't believe that God is an infinite being of love of Three individualities united in a way we cannot fully comprehend, claim that this text is not in original manuscripts. However, this claim is disproved.

I put the references for any scholars who would like to do their own research, but:

- Early church writings attest to baptismal interrogations, in which the baptismal candidates are given an opportunity to confess their faith in connection with baptism (Kinzig and Vinzent, "Recent Research", 542; von Campenhausen, "Das Bekenntnis im Urchristentum", 228). **According to the second-century church father Tertullian, the baptismal candidate would renounce Satan and profess Christian faith in response to a set of three formal questions about belief in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** Hippolytus (AD 215) described the baptismal rite of the church of Rome in comparable language (Stevenson, New Eusebius, 141–43). Cyprian reports a similar practice in Rome. Similar questions are found in **Palestine, Cappadocia, and Alexandria** (compare Kinzig and Vinzent, "Recent Research," 542–43).

  These confessions of faith at the entrance to church membership were interrogative or dialogical in structure. The baptismal candidate **would respond "I believe"** to questions, likely adapted from the Trinitarian baptismal formula, about God and His salvific acts (**Matt 28:19**; Didache 7.1.3; Kinzig and Vinzent, "Recent Research", 547).

  By the mid-fourth century, baptismal questions were changed into a declaratory creed, the so-called Roman Creed, which emerged in connection with the Arian controversy (Kinzig and Vinzent, "Recent Research", 545–52). The oldest witness to the Roman Creed is Marcellus' letter to Julius of Rome in AD 340/41. His confession of faith needed the authority of Rome and the apostles in order to guarantee its continuing existence in the liturgy. It was called the Roman Creed partly because its text was composed and approved in Rome. In the seventh century, the first and third articles were extended to become the Apostles' Creed (Vinzent and Kinzig, "Recent Research," 559). (Hasel, F. M. (2016). (Creeds and Confessions. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.)

- Although some scholars have denied that the trinitarian baptismal formula in the Great Commission was a part of the original text of Matthew, **there is no manuscript support for their contention…** For discussion (and refutation of the conjecture that removes this baptismal formula), see B. J. Hubbard, The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning (SBLDS 19), 163–64, 167–75; and Jane Schaberg, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (SBLDS 61), 27–29. (NET commentary on Matthew 28:19).

So, historical review does not support the idea that the early church baptized only in the name of Jesus and not in the name of the Father and Holy Spirit.

More importantly, what does the Bible itself reveal?

- When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:15-17 NIV84).

- At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. (Luke 10:21 NIV84).

- To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:1–2 NIV84).

But let's look at the divinity of all three:

- In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God. He was with God in the beginning**. **Through him all things were made**; without him nothing was made that has been made. **In him was life**, and that life was the light of men...The **Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. From the fullness of **his grace** we have all received one blessing after another... No one has ever seen God, but **God the One and Only**, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:1-4, 14, 16, 18 NIV84).

Who was the Word that became flesh? Jesus, and Jesus was with God from the beginning and it was through Jesus that all things were made; Jesus had life in Himself, and Jesus became human and lived among us, and it is His grace that blesses us, and He is God equal to and revealing the Father to us.

As the Bible says elsewhere about Jesus:

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** over all creation. For **by him all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. **He is before all things, and in him all things hold together**. (Colossians 1:15-17 NIV84).

What does firstborn mean? It depends on context—grammatically the word itself can mean the one who is literally born into existence, like one's firstborn child, but it also has another meaning—it means the one who holds the family authority, who receives the inheritance. In Abraham's family, who was the biological first born son of Abraham? Ishmael, but who is considered the firstborn, the one through who received the family authority and through who the promises were to be fulfilled? Isaac. So, firstborn doesn't necessarily refer to biological birth, the context must determine. And in Colossians Paul is clearly referring to authority.

Jesus also claimed to be God, one with the Father:

- "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, **I am!"** (John 8:58)
- I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

The Apostles recognized Jesus as God:

- Thomas said to him, "My Lord and **my God**!" (John 20:28)
- We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his **Son Jesus Christ**. **He is the true God** and eternal life. (1John 5:20)

Jesus taught there was a third member of the Godhead called the Comforter, Counselor or Spirit:

- "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Counselor** to be with you forever—the **Spirit** of truth. The world cannot accept **him**, because it neither sees **him** nor knows **him**. But you know **him**, for he lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)
- But the **Counselor, the Holy Spirit**, whom the **Father** will send in **my** name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)
- "When the **Counselor** comes, whom I will send to you from the **Father**, the **Spirit** of truth who goes out from the **Father**, **he** will testify about **me**. (John 15:26)

The Old Testament teaches God is a plurality, not a singularity:

- Then God said, "Let us make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness… (Genesis 1:26)
- Even the text quoted by Jews and Muslims that "God is one" teaches a plurality, not a singularity:
    - Hear, O Israel: The **LORD** our **God** *is* one **LORD**: (Deuteronomy 6:4)
        - Notice the passage in English uses "Lord" and "God". The reading of this passage with the Hebrew names for "Lord" and "God" would go like this: "Hear, O Israel: ***Yahweh*** our ***Elohim***, ***Yahweh*** is **One**."

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

- What is interesting is that the word *Elohim* in Hebrew is plural and is the same word used for God in Genesis 1:26. Thus an accurate English reading might go like this: "**The One is more than One yet is One"**
- In Hebrew there are two words for one, *Yacheed* and *Echad*. The first indicates singular unity as in one and only, the second indicates compound unity, as the oneness of two or more. In this text *Echad* is used along with the plural name of God *Elohim* indicating the oneness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament also provides texts in which all members of the Godhead are referenced:

- And now the Sovereign **Lord [Father]** has sent **me [Son],** with his **Spirit [Holy Spirit]**. This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: (Isaiah 48:16,17)
- "Here is **my [Father] servant [Son]**, whom **I [Father]** uphold, **my [Father]** chosen **one [Son]** in whom **I [Father]** delight; **I [Father]** will put my **Spirit [Holy Spirit]** on **him [Son]** and **he [Son]** will bring justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1)

The Bible gives strong evidence for the plurality of our One God, supporting the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are a perfect unity of three separate individualities.

But, for me all the above evidence is not what is most compelling. The most compelling evidence for me that God exists in plurality rather than singularity is the nature and character of God Himself.

The Bible says, "God is love." 1John 4:8. Further the Bible teaches that this love is "not self seeking." 1Corithians 13:5. Love is outward moving, other-centered. Therefore, God, being love, could not be love in isolation because love requires an object to pour itself upon. Love is other-centered! **God's nature and character of love, rightly understood, is the most powerful argument for the plurality of God** and we see this in the Old Testament texts above as the Father is delighting in the Son and the Son rejoicing in the Father and the Spirit loving them both.

Therefore, when God created us in His image He created "**them male and female" and the "two shall become one"** united in a triune relationship – husband, wife and God indwelling their hearts via His Spirit!

Those who seek to destroy the truth about the plurality of the Godhead seek to destroy the truth about God's character of love and, in so doing, place an obstacle to the only healing remedy for sin: God's "perfect love [that] casts out all fear."

If Jesus is not fully and equally God, then we do not learn from Jesus about God, we learn that God was willing to sacrifice a subordinate to protect Himself.

Amongst the founders of the SDA church there was great debate regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Some saw Christ as the offspring of God and, as such, He was not a "created" being, but was of the same "substance" as the Father, yet still not equal to the Father for the Son arose from the Father. This idea goes back millennia and is sometimes referred to as Arian theology.

But, Ellen G. White opposed this theology and came out strongly in favor of the Bible position above. Here are a few of her quotes:

- **Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,–one in nature, in character, in purpose,**–the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6). His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).–Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34. (7ABC 437.2)

  The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a convicting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as **he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes**.–The Signs of the Times, Nov. 27, 1893, p. 54. (7ABC 437.3)

- "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). **It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God.** The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But **the life of Christ was unborrowed**. No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself" (John 10: 18), He said. **In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived**. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world. (1 Selected Messages 296)

- In describing to His disciples the office work of the **Holy Spirit**, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The **Holy Spirit** was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the **Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.** It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. (The Desire of Ages 671)

- **There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers–the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit–those** who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ. (Evangelism, p. 615)

So, for me personally, I find the evidence overwhelming for the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—from Scripture, historical records of the early church, from EGWs writings, from how relationships work where more than one individual can become one with another.

But, I don't believe it is directly a salvation question—it becomes a question, like all issues of theology do, if our conclusions lead us to replace the truth of God with a false God, if we replace the methods of God with the methods of this world, if we practice in our characters the authoritarian principles of Satan. So, I believe there will be people in heaven who have believed what I believe about the Godhead, but there will be people in heaven who have believed an Arian view that Jesus came later and there is no Holy Spirit. But everyone in heaven will believe God is love, and will have His living law of love, truth, and liberty restored within them and have the character of Christ.

SUNDAY

Any questions about the Trinity and the gospel commission?

MONDAY

The lesson title is "Making Disciples" –what is a disciple? They are pupils, students of another. Disciples of Christ would be students of His.

In Luke, written by the physician Luke, Jesus is often called Teacher and historically those who were teachers were called doctors. We have doctoral degrees for various professions and eventually physicians were called doctors. And the students of a physician are called either interns or residents so in my paraphrase of Luke I use the term interns when referring to the disciples to emphasize the learning aspect of what they were to be doing. As in Luke 12:22:

- Then turning to his interns, Jesus said: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about how the future will turn out, about where your next meal will come from, or with what to clothe your body. (Luke 12:22 REM)

What does it mean to be a student/intern/disciple of Jesus?

Is being a disciple of Jesus determined by which church one belongs?

What about whose Bible class one attends or which theology professor one had?

- I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are

PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

> quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13 NIV84)

What about today—someone says, "I follow Luther; I follow Calvin; I follow Wesley; I follow White; I follow the Pope?" Or within a denomination, do we say "I follow Maxwell; I follow Batchelor; I follow Jennings." Is Christ divided?

If we are all disciples of Christ, why are there so many divisions within Christianity? Is it because we have separate Scripture from God's other lesson books, nature/science, and life's experiences? Is it because we have accepted the view that God's law is amendable and changeable and therefore it is all about finding the right rules, rituals, ceremonies, procedures, doctrinal beliefs, creeds to adhere to? That our salvation is not truly in Jesus, but in our right thinking, our right procedure of Christianity?

How do we tell who is following Christ and who is not—more importantly, how can we tell if we are following Christ or not?

- "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35 NIV84).

What does this mean? Is this love observable? Is it measurable? Does it have real world impact, or is it merely an internal emotional state that no one else can know?

If it is only internal emotional state how could all people know we are Christ's disciples by our love? It must be something actionable, observable—what does it look like? How does love function?

Some years ago I was consulted to see a man admitted to the ICU after a suicide attempt. After introductions, I asked him, "Tell me, what's going on in your life that brought you to the point that you tried to take your own life?"

He said, "My wife is leaving me; and I love her so much I don't want her to leave. I told her that if she left me I would kill myself. If she leaves me I want her to regret it and know how much she hurt me."

I asked him, "So your goal is to die and punish your wife?" He said, "No I want her to come back to me because I love her so much."

He says he loves her; he is so committed to his declarations of love that he is willing to put his life on the line, but does he in reality love her? Are his actions the actions of love? No!

Love seeks to do what is in the best interest of others, not self. This man's behavior was not focused on what was good for his wife, her best interests. He showed no interest in understanding her, discovering why she wanted to leave—could it be because he manipulated, controlled and emotionally

abused her? He was only interested in getting for himself, actually taking away her liberty under emotional manipulation.

So, our first step in being disciples of Christ is that we must be converted, our self-centered, me-first motives must be replaced with love for God and others. We must have the desire, the intent, the motivation to bless, uplift, and benefit other people because we want what is best for them. Without this change of heart, we might make action that is objectively beneficial—like give a donation that helps build an orphanage, but if our motive is so that we can get a tax write off rather than love, then we are not disciples of Jesus. Disciples of Christ love God and others. So, the first step is to be reborn with a new heart.

But, one can be an immature disciple of Jesus, be a person who has been converted, has the motive to bless others, and takes actions with all good will to be a blessing, but the actions harm another. An example would be the doctors who treated George Washington when he had pneumonia—they bled him and leached him to get out the evil humors, and thereby destroyed his immune system contributing to his death. Their intention was love, to help, to protect, to heal, but their actions harmed.

We can still recognize that their motivation was to bless even though the action was harmful—but this gives a good example of how love must move past compassionate, altruistic desire, and intention to be truly healing and beneficial.

What must be coupled with love in order for it to become powerful for good?

Truth, those doctors didn't have the truth about infections and the immune system, and despite their love, the falsehood they were operating under impaired their ability to **BE** a blessing to others.

Jesus is the source of both our new hearts of love and the truth—and who is it that makes Jesus' love and truth functional and real inside of us? It is the Holy Spirit—who is described in Scripture as the Spirit of truth and love.

Remember in Eden, Adam and Eve had pure love for God and each other, but the lies they believed broke the circle of love and trust and resulted in fear and selfishness—the carnal, me-first, survival of the fittest drives that cause anti-love, or sin.

Thus, to be powerful, the disciples of Jesus we must be reborn with hearts that love God and others, but we must also be lovers of truth, be individuals who hunger and thirst for truth, who long to comprehend and apply the truth to our own lives at the earliest possible moment that we are capable of doing so.

Then when love is coupled with truth, we are able to become mighty agents for good, true disciples Jesus. And the most important truth that we must know is the truth about God's character—**which is determined by how we understand God's law.** If we understand God's law to be imperial, imposed, made up rules, then we introduce falsehood into our hearts and minds that will cause us to take actions, that even if our intent is to bless, will cause harm.

I had a woman who was suffering from depression and she was a Christian, married to a Christian husband and she belonged to a tradition that taught women are to be subordinate to their husbands and husbands are to rule over them. So in her marriage her individuality was constantly submersed under that of her husband's, and as is predictable when a design law is violated, she suffered, and eventually she became depressed. When she became my patient, I began to teach her about the law of liberty, of thinking for herself, of giving her husband respect and allowing him to have his own views, perspectives, ideas, but that she was not required to agree until she was fully persuaded in her own mind of the truth. As she began thinking and acting for herself in harmony with the truth to fulfill what she understood God would have her do her depression lifted. But in the middle of one our sessions her husband actually barged into my office with his Bible in his hand, forcefully laid it on my desk and said, "Will you tell my wife that the Bible says that a wife is supposed to submit to the leadership of her husband!?!"

Prior to his entry she was sitting up, making eye contact, smiling. But as he said this, her head dropped, her shoulders rolled in and her hands went between her knees and she looked fearful and hopeless.

What do you think I said? I quoted Ephesians 5:25…

Fortunately, for this family the husband had a good heart and was seeking to love his wife, but he was also a victim of the lies about God and believed God's law functioned like human law and was practicing the worldly methods of rulership and not God's methods of loving leadership. When I pointed this out to him he began attending marital therapy and began applying God's law of liberty to his own self in how he treated his wife and their marriage healed and her depression resolved.

The point here is that even with good motives, if one believes lies about God and His law and methods, they can take actions that harm rather than heal.

I think Paul was referring to this in 1 Corinthians chapter three:

- If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15 NIV84).

The actions of these workers are to build up, are to bless, or to help, thus their actions suggest they have converted hearts and thus they will be saved. However, there is an objective difference between gold, silver, costly stones—which are symbols of righteousness and used in the building of the temple, and wood, hay, or straw which are burned up in fire.

This suggest some people who had love in their hearts built upon the reality of God's kingdom, they understood God's character and His design laws, while others who had come to love God and people,

were not freed of the imposed law lies and tried to build for God's kingdom using the methods of this world. What they built will be lost because they built on the wrong foundation, but they themselves will be saved because their hearts were motivated by love.

So I paraphrased it this way:

- One can build on this foundation using pure, holy and costly materials, or using ordinary, common and cheap materials, but ultimately, the work will reveal itself for what it is, because the day on which Christ returns will bring everything into the light of truth. On that day, the quality of a person's character-building will be revealed by the fiery glory of God's presence– for only those whose characters are in harmony with God's character will be able to stand in the fiery presence of his life-giving glory. And if those whom the builders have worked to build up in Christ survive, the builders will be rewarded with happiness and joy. If, however, the builder's work is burned up, the builder will suffer great sorrow and loss: the builder will be saved, but only as one whose misunderstandings, errors, misconceptions and mistakes are consumed in the fire of God's truth and love. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15 REM).

So with this in mind, how do we identify who are disciples of Jesus? Wouldn't it be those who love others and work for the benefit of others?

But who are the mature disciples of Jesus, the wise ones, the faithful servant who hears "Well done" from Jesus, the ones who celebrate in the end?

They are the ones who not only have hearts that love God and others, but who have loved the truth and **grown in the truth** (not know all truth—only God knows all truth) of God's character, design law methods and have built using the methods and principles of God.

So, some thought problems on how love functions when combined with truth:

If your friend is hungry because they have a serious drug problem, won't work, has been arrested multiple times for shoplifting in order to fund their addiction, and then they ask you for money for food, what does love do in that situation?

If you're hiking with your spouse and she falls and breaks a leg, and you need to splint her leg, but doing so will cause more pain, would it be an act of love to splint the leg? Would it be loving to have surgery even if that caused pain? And when it is time for physical therapy and your spouse cries from the pain, is it an act of love to do her exercises for her?

What if it is not a broken leg, but a broken heart—she has been traumatized in the past and is hurting—is it an act of love to focus merely on relieving her pain, or does love focus on the truth, on healing the emotional wound even if the work to heal it is painful? What if she gets angry and accuses you of attacking her—is it love to accept the accusation and apologize for trying to help?

Once there is brokenness, there are no pain-free options. The path of love is to bring healing, even though the healing interventions are painful. Unfortunately, many wounded people focus merely on the immediate experience and instead of seeking to heal, seek to relieve the pain or discomfort and, thus, actually harm. And many of the helpers focus on the other person's response, their discomfort level as the measure of whether what they are doing is right or not and thus allow the injured, the wounded, to direct the actions of those seeking to heal.

But genuine godly love becomes powerful and healing only when it is united with the truth, only when it applies the truth, God's design laws and operates in harmony with reality.

So, when we seek to make disciples for Jesus does it require us to do more than teach them a Creed, more than attestation to a list of Fundamental Beliefs, more than participation in a ceremonial event, more than joining a denomination and sending in the proper tithe?

Making disciples of Jesus requires that we first know Jesus for ourselves, love Him as our Savior, know the truth of His character and methods, and then we have something to share and teach others. We invite people to know Jesus as their Savior, but we also invite them into a community of believers who love Jesus and who are also lovers of the truth, seeking to better understand God, God's methods, principles, design laws, will, and purpose and live God's calling in their lives.

TUESDAY

And that takes us right into TUESDAY's lesson which is about the eternal gospel. What is the eternal good news, the news that has been good throughout all eternity, both eternity past and eternity future?

How would you describe the eternal gospel, good news, to someone?

Let's read the first paragraph in Tuesday's lesson:

- This is the only place in Scripture in which the words "eternal" and "gospel" are connected. The gospel is the good news of grace offered to all through Jesus Christ. He came into our world to show us "grace and truth" (John 1:14). He lived a sinless life and died on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice to bear the penalty of our sins (Isa. 53:4, 5; 1 Pet. 3:18). He rose to life, returned to heaven, was exalted by the Father, and today intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 1:18, Acts 2:33, Heb. 7:25). He will soon fulfill His greatest promise—to return in majesty and glory and, ultimately, after the millennium to establish God's kingdom on earth (John 14:1–4, Acts 1:11, Rev. 21:1–4). These are all essential realities of the eternal gospel. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 17).

Thoughts? There is good news described in this paragraph—it is certainly good news that Jesus is for us, that God's grace is manifest to us to save us from sin, that Jesus came to reveal the truth and save us, to bear the penalty of our sins—that expression isn't terrible, it didn't say the penalty of God

inflicted as punishment for sin, but the penalty for our sins could mean the penalty that sin brings, pain, suffering, death etc.

But, is our salvation in Jesus the good news that is eternally true? Was this the good news the angels needed when Lucifer started his war in heaven? Did the angels need to hear about a future event in which Jesus would become human and give his life for humans who didn't even exist yet in order for them to resist what Lucifer was doing in heaven? Was that the good news the angels needed?

But Colossians 1:18 tells us that some aspect of what Jesus did at the Cross was good news for the heavenly beings.

The unfallen angels didn't need a Savior to die to pay their sin debt; but they did need the gospel, the good news, what good news?

What did Lucifer do in heaven that caused 1/3 of the angels to rebel? He lied about God, and lies believed break the circle of love and trust. Thus, the eternal good news is the good news about the Eternal One, the good news about God that is always true, that God is not the kind of being Satan alleges. That God is not arbitrary, that God's law is not made up rules, that God is love and His law is an expression of His character, the protocols upon which life is built.

It is incredible good news to realize God is not the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin—He never was and never will be. Thus, the eternal good news is tied with the call to worship our Creator, Him who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water.

What about the idea of Jesus interceding for us in the heavenly sanctuary? What does that mean? Have you heard this presented in a way that was not good news, but actually taught bad news?

Read last paragraph,

- "The proclamation of the judgment [Rev. 14:6, 7] is an announcement of Christ's second coming as at hand. And this proclamation is called the everlasting gospel. Thus the preaching of Christ's second coming, the announcement of its nearness, is shown to be an essential part of the gospel message."—Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 227, 228. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 17).

This is referring to the 3 Angels' messages,

- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **eternal gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of **his judgment** has come. **Worship him who made** the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Revelation 14:6-7 NIV84).

What does this mean? How is this judgment connected with the eternal gospel and the announcement of Christ's soon return?

Which judgment is it?

What law model are we reading through? For those who have Romanized Christianity and replaced God's design law with imposed human law, then they read this as a legal proceeding, with the heavenly magistrate reviewing legal records and determining guilt and innocence.

There are so many problems with that view it is mind boggling that so many believe it—but just to bullet point a few of the problems:

- It misdiagnosis sin as a legal problem
- It replaces God's law with human law
- It mischaracterizes God as the source of death as inflicted punishment for sin
- It has God acting a con, working to erase records and pretend that things that are one way when they are in reality another way
- It places God in the role of punishing the innocent and declaring the guilty innocent
- It has a god that requires something be done to protect us from him and we thus have an intercessor pleading our case to protect us from that god
- It creates distrust in god and trust in another—the intercessor, the mechanism, means, mode to appease, propitiate, or assuage the god, the law, our behavior, something other than actual love and trust for the punishing god

But when we return to design law, we recognize that the war in heaven began when Satan lied about God and caused angels to distrust God. It spread to Earth when Satan lied about God and Adam and Eve believed those lies and broke trust with God and infected themselves with fear and selfishness. And it resolves by the truth about God replacing the lies and winning us back to trust. Thus, the final movements are when the truth of God is accepted by the jury pool, you and me, and we stop judging God to be like a Roman Caesar and judge Him to be Creator. This requires we reject the Roman view of God's law and again worship Him who made the heaven, earth, sea and fountains of water by returning to design law understanding of reality.

So the good news is about God, when we accept the good news about God we judge Him to be like Jesus revealed and we reject all the Roman penal legal lies and we stop worshiping a creature and worship the Creator, and in that worship we open the heart in trust and receive the indwelling Spirit, we become like Him, sealed and settled into the truth that we cannot be moved, and thus Jesus comes to take us home!

This is what Paul meant when he wrote:

- Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged." (Romans 3:4 NET).

WEDNESDAY

Who are God's people? They are the ones who are like God—the ones who know God, trust God, and have God's law written upon their hearts and minds.

Is this determined by denomination? What determines this?

For what purpose did God call the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

- To be the avenue for the birth of the Messiah
- To evangelize the world and tell people about the coming Messiah, thus bringing people back to faith in God and the coming Messiah

How did they do?

What interfered with their effectiveness in carrying out that mission?

For what purpose has God called Christians?

- To evangelize the world with the truth about Himself as revealed in Christ and the plan of salvation—how we can be reconciled to God and delivered from sin and thus prepare the world for the second advent of the Messiah

How is the Christian world doing?

What interferes with our ability to be effective in fulfilling this mission?

THURSDAY

What are the three fields we are called to witness in?

- To the people closest to us (family and friends)
- To our local communities who share our language and culture
- The world at large, foreigners

How can we be more effective in any or all of these fields?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JOIN DR. JENNINGS TREATMENT TEAM

Dr. Jennings is now in his new position as Medical Director of Honey Lake Clinic in Greenville, Florida. See their website at https://www.honeylake.clinic/

Honey Lake Clinic is the only Christ-centered residential psychiatric treatment program in the country. We have two campuses—adult and female adolescent (Dr. Jennings is Medical Director of the Adult Campus). The program takes a holistic approach to treatment integrating the best of modern neuroscience with biblical principles (design laws) to bring healing to mind, body, soul, and spirit.

As you likely know, the need for such whole-person Christian mental health care is huge and therefore we are expanding our services to be able to treat more people But in order to do that, **we need more staff**—staff who are both professionally competent and licensed but who are also committed Christians who have the vision to integrate Christ and Christian principles into treating the whole person.

If you are interested in becoming part of the treatment team at Honey Lake Clinic and working with Dr. Jennings, see the jobs posted below and contact Honey Lake for more details. (LCSWs should also apply). If you are interested in any of the positions below email HR@honeylakeclinic.com

Psychiatry Mental Health Nurse Practitioner- Advance Practice Nurse Practitioner

- Able to empathically and compassionately interview patients presenting with a MH issue using the organization's comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Able to elicit medical histories and assess for medical causes of the MH issues or for comorbid medical issues that are a result of the MH disorder and/or exacerbate the MH disorder
- Utilization of interview, assessment and diagnostics in comprehensive treatment of dual diagnosis patients
- Able to assess for level of detox and use standard CIWA and COWS for withdrawal severity and then initiate detox treatment
- Able to prescribe initial psychiatric and detox medications, monitor and document results and side effects, and perform follow-up medication management within accepted standard of care guidelines.
- Familiarity with ASAM or LOCUS for assignment of levels of care

Adult Program Clinical Director

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Florida Licensure (LMHC, LCSW or LMFT) active and in good standing, is required.
- Experience providing therapy to adults with mental health and substance diagnoses 2 years post-licensure is required.
- Supervisory experience, minimum of 2 years is required, post-licensure is preferred.

- Experience in Clinical Supervision and Program Management, 2 years post-licensure is preferred.

Licensed Therapist

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- Licensure is required
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

Individual Therapist- Registered Intern

- Masters in mental health counseling, psychology or social work required. Other graduate degrees that lead to MHC, MSW or MFT licensure are acceptable.
- EMDR with other trauma modalities is preferred.
- Experience with adults with mental health and/or substance diagnoses is preferred.

The God Shaped Heart, has just been released in German in Germany, *Herz voll Gott*, published by the Adventist publishing house in Germany.

NEW Pamphlet: The Book of Job and the Last Days: A Cosmic Overview—7 Truths to Prepare for Christ's Return is now available. You can order your FREE copies at https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/The-Book-of-Job-and-the-Last-Days-A-Cosmic-Overview_p_56.html

comeandreason MINISTRIES
PO Box 28266, Chattanooga, TN 37424
comeandreason.com
topics@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 3
God's Call to Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NIV84).

What power? What kind of power? From who does the power come? What is the purpose of the power?

Are their conditions on receiving this power? What are those conditions?

In the book The Desire of Ages it describes the power this way, what do you think?

- Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on **conditions**. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not **surrender the soul** to be **guided** and **controlled** by the divine agencies. **We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us**. Through the Spirit God works in His people "to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13. **But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves.** This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. **The power of God awaits their demand and reception**. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, **brings all other blessings in its train**. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive. (The Desire of Ages 672)

What are the conditions to receive the Holy Spirit? That we surrender self—our selfishness, our self-promotion, our own agenda, our need to do things our way, or seeking to make ourselves successful. We must be willing to be taught, to be lead, to be instructed, corrected, guided, molded, reshaped, healed, cleansed, renewed.

But what does it mean that the Holy Spirit uses us—does that mean we become pawns, puppets, playthings, toys, disposable objects like we use a dishrag—a dishrag doesn't use us? No!

In order to understand how the Holy Spirit "uses" us correctly, we must understand the character of God and His design law methods. If we do understand this, then we know that God is always for His

people—Romans 8 "If God is for us…" God is always using His energy for the best interest of every person. God doesn't choose to lead them in ways they would disagree with if they could know all the variables that God knows. Thus, the same author wrote the following, do you believe this to be true?

- God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the purpose they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. (Ministry of Healing 479).

So God's "use" of us is for our good, for our higher development, for our eternal life, for our ability to grow, mature, attain, fulfill, and eventually discern and be thankful for our amazing God who condescended to meet us in our ignorant and childlike need.

And this is why the Bible says, when we do surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to use us, to do in us exactly what the Holy Spirit desires we develop fruits of the Spirit which are:

- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and **self-control**. (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV84).

We do NOT become puppets when we are being used by the Holy Spirit, we become freed from fear, freed from selfishness, freed from addictions, old destructive habits, freed from the control and manipulation of other people—and restored to God's original design to be self-governed, self-controlled, individuals who live out God's design laws for life in all that we do.

Will God empower people to lie about Him, to misrepresent Him?

If you are an SDA or familiar with the SDA church, have you ever wonder why the SDA church preaches that they have a message that is to lighten the world to hasten the second coming, but the second coming has been delayed? Is it possible that there has been a delay because the church leadership officially rejected the special message that they are to be giving and therefore the Holy Spirit, which empowers the people to do the work, has not been poured out and instead God is waiting for a people to embrace the final message so He can empower them to give it?

Consider these two quotes from the same author, who was at the 1888 GC and is the most influential founder of the SDA church:

> "When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: [The following is a quote is written as coming from the angel of the Lord, which is one of the names for Jesus (see Exodus 3) as the context of the quote has the speaker claiming that the people are His and He is the source of grace given to the people.] "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over [re-enacting] the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**. I have placed you in your proper position, **which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; [What was EGW advocating? The healing view of the gospel promoted by Jones and Waggoner, which recognized design law even though they didn't label it design law and advocated that the written law that was added

included the Ten Commandments. They taught that righteousness by faith is actual, real, genuine restoration to righteousness within the heart/mind of those who trust in Jesus, which is also the rebuilding and healing of our characters when we trust in Jesus—which is metaphorically taught in the fulfillment of the day of at-one-ment, the purifying of the bride, the groom receiving His bride bringing her into unity/oneness with Him. But the church leadership rejected this healing view and chose instead to embrace the false imperial legal view of declaring people legally righteous even though they remain unrighteous. Like Korah, they rejected the manna (heavenly bread of truth) and chose the fleshpots of Egypt (worldly ways and methods which are death). This, is, according to the angel of the Lord, like Korah saying "we can't succeed in going into the promised land." And church leaders, who prefer the imperial law view, have been telling Adventists ever since that we can't succeed in experiencing Christ's righteousness, sin is too great, God can't give us power to be victorious in our lives so we will be prepared to stand in God's presence when Jesus returns, no we are only legally declared in courts of heaven to be righteous while we remain unrighteous.] but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. **It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people**. [Friends of Come and Reason around the world, realize that when you are told you are not welcome, you cannot teach your Bible class, that you cannot share the wonders of God's love that has so transformed your life—that it is not you they are rejecting but Christ they are rejecting.] **They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness**. I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should **heal them**. **They have obscured their spiritual eyesight.** [What does this mean? By refusing the truth of God's design law, by holding to Rome's imperial law lie, they have blinded themselves to how reality works and live in a religious legal fantasy of confusion and contradictions mirroring this sinful world with a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death which they call justice. And if they persist in teaching this, they become blind and incapable of seeing the truth or leading others into the promised land. And the SDA church has been wandering in the wilderness for over 135 years. God is waiting for a people to return to worshiping Him as Creator and then His Spirit will empower them to lighten the world for His return.] **They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word.** [This again, is presented as the voice of Jesus talking] Lightness, trifling, jesting and joking are daily practiced. **They have not set their hearts to seek Me**. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: "Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." These words from God I have not dared to disregard."–Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. (To "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie," Nov. 5, 1892.) {3 Manuscript Release 191}

- **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth** [that the Ten Commandments were added] lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from **our people**,

> in a great measure, **the special power of the Holy Spirit** that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in **carrying the truth to the world**, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. **The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world** (1 Selected Messages 234).

Do you see the exact same problems still occurring today? Perhaps even worse as these imperial lies have become imbedded into our schools and published materials.

Do we want the power of the Holy Spirit today?

What are the conditions?

- We must surrender ourselves first to be cleansed in heart, mind, soul, and spirit
- We must be willing to be transformed, changed, renewed, recreated
- We must be willing to give up wrong ideas for the eternal truth as God reveals it to us—thus we must be lovers of truth, not lovers of creeds, or fundamental beliefs, or doctrinal statements, or other people's opinions, or holding some office, or position in an organization.
- We must know and be willing to share the truth of God's character of love and His design law methods and principles.

When we do this, then we will receive power to advance the truth.

I must take a minute and discuss the process of what I just did—for invariably I will receive an email expressing dissatisfaction with me, suggesting that I have been attacking the church, suggesting that I am embittered, that I am voicing sour grapes and being negative, and that I should instead focus on the positive, lift up Jesus and stop being so critical of the errors in the system.

Let me be clear—I am not against the SDA church anymore that Jesus and the Apostles were against the Jewish people or the Jewish nation. I love the church like Jesus and the Apostles loved the Jewish nation and people. They were against the lies that had infected the Jewish system that prevented those people from recognizing the Messiah. Likewise, I am against the legal lies, the imposed law imperial Romanization of Christianity that has infected the church and presents God as a dictator who is the source of inflicted pain and suffering and has resulted in the shutting away the power of the Holy Spirit. I want to see those lies removed so the transforming, saving, power of the Holy Spirit might be poured out and the Latter Rain occur and Jesus come.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph:

- In order to reach others, God intends for us to move beyond our comfort zone. The desire to remain only with our own ilk and ethnic or social kind can lead to selfishness, even evil. This danger is one of the lessons derived from the story of Babel. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 23).

What is the problem with this paragraph? It misplaces the problem, it says:

- The desire to remain only with our own ilk and ethnic or social kind can lead to selfishness, even evil.

But it is the reverse—we are born with selfishness, none of us chose to be sinners, we were born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalms 51:5). This is the carnal nature, the me-first orientation that drives us to choose actions that violate God's design laws, what we call sins.

It is selfishness that is the problem, and selfishness if not replaced in our hearts as our primary motivator with love for God and others—which occurs when we are reborn to love—if the selfish motivation is not replaced with love then we divide into various groups that make us feel good about ourselves and we find others that we can denigrate and project our own flaws and self-dissatisfaction upon.

In other words, instead of hating the evil within our own selfish hearts, we justify our selfishness and see the evil in others and seek to destroy what we believe is evil by dominating, controlling, or destroying others who we identify as evil.

So humans divide—we always divide—because that is what sin and selfishness does, sin breaks down the bonds of love and trust.

If fear and selfishness doesn't lead people to divide by ethnic or social commonality, then they divide into other groups and pit themselves against others such as:

- Nationality (nation states are artificial, yet people will identify with their nations and pit themselves against others, claiming those other nationalities are evil)
- Sports teams—have you noticed the hostility an violence that happens toward others who root for a different team
- Gangs—consider how gangs divide and they make up their artificial standards that members must meet to join
- Political parties—consider how societies divide along these artificial lines

Sin divides, but at the Tower of Babel they were united—why? Because they had what they perceived was a common enemy or a common threat—they were afraid of another Flood, they didn't trust God, and thus they united to protect themselves from what they perceived was a common existential threat.

What would happen to all the divisions we see in the world today if it was known that an asteroid was on a collision course with Earth and it would wipe out all life? Wouldn't all the nation states unite in

common cause to use their military power and technology to try and alter the course of the asteroid? Wouldn't all the peoples begin praying in common cause for protection and success in redirecting the asteroid?

So, we see at the Tower of Babel the people were motivated by fear, by selfishness, and identified God as the enemy and threat and they united against their source of life.

So, what did God do?

- The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. (Genesis 11:6-8 NIV84).

First, what does it mean that if they have begun to do this speaking the same language that nothing they plan will be impossible for them?

Does this mean:

- That if they planned to become angels, then they could become angels?
- That if they planned to create a new planet, that they could create a new planet?
- That if they planned to become God themselves, that they could become God?
- That if their men planned to become women, that the men could actually become women?

So, the text doesn't mean that they could actually do anything they plan, because they cannot do everything or anything, there are limitations by reality on what they can do. So, what might this text mean?

What is the context? What is the meaning of what they are doing? They are rejecting God's Word; they do not trust God; and they are choosing to do their own thing, they are choosing sin and selfishness by building this tower. Thus, the context is that of refusing God and in doing that there is no evil or sin that they plan that they won't be able to do.

Why did God confuse their languages?

What just happened—The human race, having one language from Eden, had just united in selfishness and every single human, except for Noah and his family, hardened their hearts against God and the avenue for Messiah (genesis 3:15) was almost closed. God acted in mercy to keep open the avenue for Jesus to come and save humanity by sending the Flood.

But at Babel the people are already uniting in rebellion against God again, thus God mercifully and therapeutically confused the languages to prevent another worldwide rejection of Him, to prevent the hardening of all human hearts, to slow the spread of evil and sin, and keep open the avenue for Messiah. And the Bible says that the people of the world will not be fully united against heaven as they were at the time of the Flood until the final conclusion when all the world wonders after the beast.

This is described in Revelation 17:

- The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. (Revelation 17:8 NIV84).

The beast described here is the worldwide violent, beastly system of satanic rule of coercion, force, intimidation, domination, and selfishness which was in existence before the Flood when the entire world was united against heaven, but hasn't existed since then, but will exist again right before Jesus comes, but is destroyed by the second coming of Jesus!

So why did God confuse the languages? To keep open the avenue for Messiah, to slow the spread of sin and evil, it was an act of love and mercy.

The Bible is clear that it was at the Tower of Babel that God confused the languages, and it is my conclusion that at that time God also caused the racial differences we see in the different human races on Earth, such as height, facial structure, skin color, eye color and shape etc.

The SDA Bible commentary seems to agree with this:

- By confusing their language and thus forcing them to separate, God designed to forestall future united action. Each of the groups might yet pursue an evil course, but the division of society into many groups would prevent concerted opposition to God. **Upon repeated occasions since the dispersion of the races at Babel**, ambitious men have sought, unsuccessfully, to contravene the divine decree of separation... Evidence from many lands testifies to the presence of human beings within a comparatively short time after the Flood. Archeological discoveries point to the Mesopotamian valley as the first locality to develop a distinct civilization. Similar civilizations sprang up soon afterward in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, India, China, and elsewhere. All available evidence supports the cryptic saying of Holy Writ that "the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." (Nichol, F. D., ed. (1978). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 285–286). Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

So God divided humanity in mercy to prevent the human race from uniting in sin against heaven. But God also provided the gift of languages so that the gospel was not obstructed from reaching all the people groups on Earth. And the Bible tells us that when Jesus comes the saved will be:

- a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9 NIV84)

This division of society is only remedied, eliminated, resolved, removed by Jesus, by returning into the hearts of people the living law of love and when that happens we become one, just as Jesus prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one.

Read last paragraph,

- Though Scripture does not say it explicitly, Ellen White says that **they didn't trust God's promise that He would never destroy the earth with water again** (Gen. 9:14, 15). They intended to build for their own perceived safety rather than to trust God's Word. Whatever their ultimate motives, God knew that **their intentions were not pure** but were filled with **selfish ambition**, and so He prevented them from achieving their stated goals. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 23).

This beast that existed before the Flood the Bible tells us will exist again before Jesus comes. The people after the Flood were uniting against heaven because they didn't believe God's promise to never destroy the world again by water, with a Flood.

What about today? Will a similar lie be used to unite the world against heaven? Do you see the same disbelief, distrust of God and His promise made right after the Flood uniting the world against heaven today?

- **As long as the earth endures**, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, **summer and winter**, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22 NIV 84).

God made a promise about our climate—is that promise believed or is the world uniting again against heaven, against God, on the lie about climate change?

Understand how evil people and angels work:

- They identify some threat that you yourself cannot see, touch, taste, feel, hear, or identify with any means God has given you—such as climate change.
- They bombard us with propaganda from all sources to promote a lie, a false narrative, they take unrelated events and claim those events are due to climate change—such as a heat wave, or a hurricane, or a fire.
- Then, they make decisions to artificially create consequences they can attribute to climate change—like shutting down our production of oil, which raises energy costs, and decreases the production of fertilizers and result in reduction of crop production thus increasing food and energy prices—which results in the mega rich getting richer as they can charge more for the artificially reduce products their corporations produce, and the poor getting poorer and lose freedoms.
- All of this increases fear in the people who believe the lie that it is all happening because of climate change, so they go along with the artificial interventions claimed to stop climate change, such as—climate saving light bulbs and straws that have no evidence of protecting the environment, but do result in enriching the companies that are producing them at the expense of the poor who are forced to buy them.

Do you see how the nation states are uniting on the climate change lies, because they reject God, and they reject God's promise and they are using fear to exploit, dominate, and enslave the masses. Jesus said:

- **As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood** came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Despite Noah's preaching of the impending flood for 120 years, the people didn't know, they didn't understand, they didn't recognize what was about to happen. Why? Because they accepted the false narrative and rejected the message of truth coming from God.

If you lived back in Noah's day, with your current belief in God and the Bible, who would you have believed: Noah or the media and scientific experts of the day?

Jesus said something similar would happen in our day: As His second coming approaches, people will be unaware of it and will be unprepared for His return. Why? Because they, like the wicked antediluvians, will reject the message of God and, instead, choose to believe the false narratives that comes from Satan.
And one of Satan's false narratives deluding the world today is a direct denial, rejection, and replacement of a promise given to humanity by God in the aftermath of the Flood.

God's promise is that our climate and seasons will continue until the second coming of Christ—that is, "as long as the earth endures." But the lie of Satan, the false narrative of this corrupt world, is that of "climate change," climate disaster, the ending of human life through the destruction of the climate.

And just like the antediluvians, we must decide which view we believe: the godless, the evolutionists, the pundits of this world, the same people who foisted COVID mandates upon the world, restricted our liberties, and injured our children—or our Creator?

We are not facing a global climate disaster—we are facing a global spiritual disaster.

We are not facing man-made global warming—we are facing man-made global coldness of heart; Jesus said,

- "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12 NIV84).

Satan blinds people to reality by getting them to focus on something emotional as a distraction to what is really happening:

- The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV84).

Satan's end-time push is active and aggressive and turns the mind away from God, away from the Bible, away from the hope of a new heaven and new earth, to a future in which we supposedly destroy ourselves through overpopulation and climate disaster. And he offers the false solution that we must save ourselves **through activities that actually harm the people**—the many various solutions proposed by the so-called "green" movement. Their proposed solutions are anti-human, anti-science, and anti-liberty, and they are pro-elite, designed to help the ruling class dominate and control others. The green movement of climate change propogandists is a movement of the godless bent on destroying the image of God in people and the liberty of conscience.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the focal point of the Bible, the key to understanding the Old Testament, the most important text that anchors the rest of Scripture—Genesis 3:15, God is speaking to the serpent after the fall of Adam and Eve:

- "And I will put enmity
  Between you and the woman,
  And between your seed and her Seed;
  He shall bruise your head,
  And you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:15 NKJV)

What is the significance of this passage?

This passage sets the stage, the context, the focus of the entire Old Testament. Everything recorded in the Old Testament is about the fulfillment of this promise—the war between God and Satan. Satan is working to stop the fulfillment of this promise and God is working to keep it.

The focus on Abraham and the promises made to him are the outworking of this promise made in Eden. Abraham doesn't get a new promise with a different Messiah—he and his descendants are the branch of the human family through whom the Genesis 3:15 promise will be fulfilled.

And thus the Bible narrows its focus from the entire world at the time of the Flood, to the family of Abraham, and the Bible continues to narrow its focus staying with the Isaac, not Ishmael's children, then Jacob, not Esau's children, and then keeping the focus on the tribe of Judah after the ten tribes to the north broke away and were dispersed, because the Messiah, the fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 3:15 was coming through Judah.

And while it was difficult, while the children of Abraham were to a great degree unfaithful, rebellious, and failed to prepare the world for the Messiah—they did survive with enough faithful people that Jesus was born to a Jewish woman in Bethlehem, and He was able to call from the descendants of

Abraham a following of disciples who were able to throw of the legal misunderstandings that corrupted the system that God had given them and embrace the reality it was all designed to teach.

And then the Bible focus shifts away from the Jewish people because their purpose in being the avenue through whom Messiah would be born was accomplished and focuses on the good news that Jesus brought and accomplished for the completion of the promise of Genesis 3:15 the crushing of the serpent and all the sin and evil he has caused.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Abraham's call and how when he initially arrived in the new land he lied to Pharaoh and Abimelech about his wife being his sister—and she was his half-sister, so it wasn't a full lie, he just didn't tell the truth about her status as his wife.

Why did Abraham do this? Because he was afraid—and when in Abraham's life did such fear get into his heart and mind?

He was born with it, just like you and me. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid—fear is part of the infection of sin that causes people to act selfishly, like Abraham did.

While he trusted God enough to leave his home and go to a new land, he still was not free of fear and suffered temptation that in these two occasions caused him to act out of fear and not out of faith or trust in God. And "everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

So, with this in mind, what does God want for Abraham? He wants to heal Abraham; God wants to free Abraham from being controlled by fear, from making fear-based decisions and increase Abraham's faith in Him.

So God intervenes in both of this situations to protect Sarah and teach Abraham some lessons, but then God later puts Abraham in a situation that was specifically designed to get Abraham over this vulnerability—what therapeutic measure did God bring to Abraham?

God placed Abraham in a position where Abraham had to choose to trust or not trust God.

This is the only way God can heal the heart of a person and have that person's individuality, identity, and personhood retained. We must actively choose to participate with God. When we trust Him, receive the indwelling Spirit, and then choose to do God's will, despite feelings of fear and insecurity, then our brains rewire and our characters become changed.

Abraham was a sinner, just like the rest of us, and he needed the same divine Remedy, so what does Abraham's experience teach us about God's plan to heal and restore?

We see in Abraham our model of faith, but he ***became*** a model of faith; he was not born as a model of faith. Abraham struggled with the same temptations and failings with which you and I struggle. God led Abraham on a path designed to mature him and instill in him a trusting, god-like character.

The only way this could happen was to bring Abraham to points of decision where he had to exercise his will—to choose—to trust God, open his heart to the Spirit, and then choose to do what he knew was right in the face of powerful feelings tempting him to move in the opposite direction. One Bible commentary describes it this way:

- God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 147).

Why did God call Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? For multiple reasons.

The first reason was for Abraham's character development. Abraham needed to choose to trust God and overcome his own fear, insecurity, and patterns of seeking to save self.

- You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless? How was our ancestor Abraham put right with God? It was through his actions, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. Can't you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions. And the scripture came true that said, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous." And so Abraham was called God's friend. You see, then, that it is by people's actions that they are put right with God, and not by their faith alone (James 2:20–24 GNT).

We must come to know the truth, but the knowledge of truth is not enough; we must put the truth into action before we are changed by the truth.

If you are sick with pneumonia and the doctor gives you an antibiotic, and you believe the antibiotic will help you (and in truth it will), but you never take the antibiotic, does your belief of the truth without applying it (taking the antibiotic) heal you? Of course not. Likewise, believing the truth without putting it into action doesn't result in healing and transformation in our lives. Why? Because the only way our individuality can be retained and our characters transformed is for each of us to choose to trust God, open our hearts to the Spirit, and *then apply* to our own lives His directions.

The second reason God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is found in John 8:56. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (NIV84).

Abraham longed to know God more intimately, to understand God's character and plan of salvation, and to comprehend and see the Savior. God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a means to fulfill Abraham's desire of understanding, connecting with, empathizing with, knowing, and moving into greater intimacy with God. It was God's answer to Abraham's own request. In the agonizing struggle to sacrifice his son, Abraham identified with and gained insight into the heart of God.

The third reason God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was to demonstrate to the intelligent beings in heaven, the sinless angels, that those who trust God are healed and restored—to show that God's methods work!

The apostle Paul wrote:

- "I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle [theater] to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9 NKJV).

The apostle Peter wrote:

- "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:12 NIV84).

Angels cannot read the secrets of the heart—only God can. If angels could see the secrets of the heart, then a third of them would not have been deceived by Lucifer. Therefore, God must demonstrate that His methods work.

Just as he did in the case of Job, Satan, in heaven before God and the angels, made allegations against Abraham—claiming he had lied and broke trust with God. Therefore, Satan accused that Abraham was not fit to be the father of the faithful, the father of the family through whom the Messiah would come. But God knew Abraham's heart and that, though Abraham struggled with fear and selfishness, he had come to trust God. Therefore, God provided this unorthodox intervention to give Abraham the opportunity to choose to trust God under careful observation of the intelligences in heaven, to show them that Abraham was transformed within and that selfishness no longer ruled in his heart.

The book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 154, describes it this way:

- The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate

> that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation. (Patriarchs and Prophets p. 154)

One More Reason

We must also remember that in the instructions for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, God never intended for Abraham to actually kill his son. God already knew what Abraham was willing to do, so while God called Abraham to sacrifice his son for the reasons already stated, he also accomplished one more thing: **to demonstrate that human sacrifice is not what God wants, nor will God accept it.**

Many pagan cultures in Abraham's time and throughout history have promoted human sacrifice. God, through Abraham, demonstrated that He does not require, nor accept, human sacrifice as payment. Through the prophet Micah, the Bible states:

- With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:6–8).

When we embrace God's design law, we can read frightening stories like God's instructions to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac and realize there is much more to them than what we have been led to believe. They are meant to show us that, yes, humans are sick in sin, but that God is the source of goodness, truth, love, and life, and that He is always working to heal and restore all who trust Him.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Peter and how he identified with the "circumcision" group, the Jewish converts who were still strongly dedicated to the forms and customs of Judaism and wanted to bring many of those over into Christianity. And how Peter shied away from the uncircumcised and had to be corrected by Paul.

This is such a powerful story and lesson for us, because it teaches us some important truths.

First, was Peter an Apostle blessed by Jesus to carry forward the gospel? Was Peter inspired to write Scripture?

And yet, despite being an inspired Apostle and Bible writer, Peter was wrong on some matters of theology and had to be corrected by Paul.

What does that mean?

- Does inspiration of an individual make them sinless?
- Does inspiration of an individual make them all knowing?
- Does inspiration of an individual make them flawless?
- Does inspiration of an individual mean they get everything on Bible matters correct?
- Does the fact an inspired individual make mistakes, like Peter, does that mean they are not inspired and that we should throw away their writings?

So what is the point? Romans 14:5 every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind—we cannot surrender our thinking, our judgment to another person even if that person is inspired by God and has the gift of prophecy.

One of the problems some have within Christianity is proof text or quote approach, finding some statement, instruction, declaration written by an inspired writer and then applying it without thought, without understanding, as a rule to be kept.

And often using quotes as proofs if the Bible said it I believe it and there is nothing more to say about it.

Am I saying that the Bible can't be trusted or the Bible has errors? Absolutely not—the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is completely trustworthy on all matters related to salvation from sin. But, the Bible is not the authority on music theory, or mathematics, or mechanical engineering, or the practice of medicine.

The Bible sets the standards of morality and the design laws of God upon which life and health operate, reveals the eternal truths of God's character, and the protocols for life—but the application of God's principles require individual though and understanding to the life and situation.

FRIDAY

The lesson is about missions and carrying out the gospel mission, being missionaries to the world.

Why do you think many of our institutions have removed "missionary" from their names:

- Emmanuel Missionary College changed its name to Andrews University
- Southern Missionary College changed its name to Southern Adventist University

Why?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 4
Sharing God's Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse:

- A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:34-35 NIV84).

When Jesus told His disciples that He was giving them a new command to love one another, He did not mean it was a new teaching, principle, directive, instruction, or idea that God had not previous given, but that it was **new to them**. For God had previously already instructed them to:

- "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18 NIV84).

This means that despite God having previously given them the instruction to love God and each other, they somehow didn't know it, didn't understand it, and therefore Jesus said His command to love was something new to them.

What about for us today? Surely, we have all heard that God is love and that we are to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. And even more, we know Jesus told us to love not just our neighbors but our enemies. Yet, could we also need Jesus' "new" command? Could we struggle with a similar need to the disciples?

- Where does this love that Jesus said we are to have for each other originate?
- Are we able to produce it because Jesus has told us to?
- Is this love something we have within ourselves and we only need to have better psychological attitude and choose to love, or is it something that only comes from outside of us and we must choose to receive it, be transformed by it and then act in harmony with it?

Jesus gives us additional insight in John 15:

- As the **Father has loved** me, so have **I loved** you. Now **remain** in my love. If you **obey my commands**, you will **remain in my love**, just as **I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love**. I have told you this so that my **joy** may be in you and that **your joy may be complete**. My **command** is this: **Love each other as I have loved you**. **Greater love** has no one than this, that he **lay down his life for his friends**. You are my **friends** if you do what I **command**. **I no longer call you servants**, because a servant does not know his master's

> business. Instead, **I have called you friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. **This is my command: Love each other** (vss. 9-17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The first truth Jesus tells us is that love originates in God, love's source is God, for God is love (1 John 4:8). This love flows from God among the Godhead and thus God loves Jesus the Son and it is through Jesus that God's love reaches us.

We do not possess this love in and of ourselves, but we receive it as we receive the sunshine—it constantly shines down upon us from heaven above. Yet, just like sunshine, which never stops streaming from the sun, can sometimes be hidden behind storm clouds, so too God's love, despite never ceasing, can sometimes feel hidden behind our emotional storms. That is when, we must turn to reality as revealed in Scripture and know that God's love never fails and never ceases, just as surely as we know on the stormiest day that the sun continues to shine!

We receive love just as we receive sunshine—by placing ourselves in its rays. But we can choose to stay in the dark, to cover the windows with blinds, to never go outside during the day and cut ourselves off from the sun. Likewise, despite God's love constantly flowing from heaven, we can choose to cut ourselves off from it, to stay in the darkness of bitterness, resentment, hatred, bigotry, selfishness, fear, doubt, idolatry, legalistic religious enslavement, entertainment, or various forms of substance induced stupors.

And when we cut ourselves off from sunlight, we necessarily suffer various forms of physical and mental breakdown. Likewise, when we cut ourselves off from God's love and fill our hearts with fear, selfishness, and the false numbing comforts of this world we invariably suffering various physical and mental breakdowns.

The love of God shines everywhere and when God's love is combined with the truth that Jesus revealed, we realize how empty we are without Him, how sick of heart and mind our natural selfish state is, how exhausting it is to constantly work to prove ourselves and get ahead, how much we need God's love. Thus, when by the truth and love of God we are won back to trust, we open our hearts to Him and are set right with God (justified) and He pours His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) which transforms and heals us (sanctified). Paul puts it this way:

- Since we have been made **right with God by our faith**, we have peace with God. This happened through our Lord Jesus Christ, who through our faith has brought us into that blessing of God's grace that we now enjoy. And we are happy because of the hope we have of sharing God's glory. We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. And this hope will never disappoint us, because **God has poured out his love to fill our hearts**. He gave us his love through the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us (Romans 5:1-5 NCV, emphasis mine).

Love and truth originate in God and it is this reality, the goodness of God that wins us back to trust (Romans 2:4). When we trust God we give God our consent, our permission to work in us and it is then that we are transformed and healed through the application of truth and love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We are then to "remain" in God's love. We don't earn God's love; we don't fight for it; we don't have to prove ourselves, to work, to compete, or in any other fashion struggle to receive God's love. God's love is not conditional, we are to abide in His love, to rest in His presence, love, goodness, grace. We are to remain and live in God's love every single day, but we are to especially "rest" in His love on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a special gift from God built into time especially for human beings designed for us to **exercise our rest**—for us to choose to stop all our working—whether working for our own advancement here on earth (business, school etc.), working to earn love or prove ourselves to others (working to get six-pack abs to win a romantic interest, housework or yardwork to win affection), or working to save ourselves through various religious rituals and law-keeping.

The Sabbath is God's gift to us, made for humans (humans were not made for the Sabbath) to give us the time to **exercise our rest** in Jesus, to rest in God's love and be renewed, refreshed, and strengthened. **But the Sabbath is only a blessing if it is a delight—if it is a rule we must keep in fear of doing something wrong then we are not resting, we are working on the Sabbath**. (Isaiah 58:13)

But remaining in God's love means we are to obey His commands, but can we command people to love us and get love? Can you get more love from your spouse or children by commanding love with authority and threats of punishment? No, for ordering others against their will only destroys love and incites rebellion—so what does this mean that Jesus commands us to love but love cannot be commanded?

Our understanding and experience with God are directly connected to how we understand God's character and law. If we believe Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require legal oversight and infliction of "just" punishments from the ruling authority, then we hear the words "command" or "commandment" as something legal, imposed, a rule to be enforced. But to worship a being like this is to worship a creature—for creatures, not the Creator, makes up rules that require legal enforcement.

When we return to worshiping the Creator, we understand that He built the cosmos and His laws are design laws—the protocols reality exists and functions upon—like the laws of health, physics, and the moral laws. We realize that life and health are only possible in harmony with God and His design protocols built into reality itself. Then we understand what Jesus is saying. He is saying that if you want to be healthy and thrive, then live in harmony with the laws of health—obey the laws of health. If you want to remain in my love then don't break the law of love—if you want to remain healthy, don't break the laws of health. It is that simple.

Sin breaks God's design (law) for life. It is driven by fear and fear turns the mind toward self and the me-first survival drives dominate. But God's perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). When we experience and remain in God's love His love frees us from being controlled by fear. And instead of seeking to protect self at the expense of others, we sacrifice ourselves to uplift and benefit others—just as Jesus has done for us!

This selfless love is not of this sinful world; it is not found in Satan or the kingdoms of this world. This eternal, healing, life-giving love comes only from God and flows to us through Jesus Christ via the work of His representative on Earth, the Holy Spirit. Whenever and wherever we see such love we are seeing the outworking of the Holy Spirit applying the victory of Jesus to individual lives, whether the people who love like this realize it or not, whether they acknowledge Jesus or not.

Understand this very clearly—no human since Adam sinned possesses self-sacrificial love for others as a natural expression of their heart. Therefore, anytime you see selfless love in action, it is evidence of God's working in their heart to save them from fear and selfishness.

Then Jesus does the most incredible, unbelievable, truly preposterous thing from and worldly standpoint—He refuses to accept us in the role of servants to Him the King of kings and Lord of lord, the Creator and Sustainer of all reality, and instead tells us His desire, intent, wishes, and will for us—that we are to be His friends! This is astonishing—can you really imagine it? God, our Creator, our Savior, the infinite one Himself invites you and me to be His friends!

What does it mean to be a friend of God? Have you considered yourself God's friend? What is the difference between a servant and a friend?

As Graham Maxwell used to ask: Is there a difference between friendly service and a serving friend? What is that difference?

So, does being a friend of God mean that we don't serve or that we give the only type of service that matters—the service that comes from understanding love, which friends have, and not the service that comes from fear, which servants have?

So, the first step in being a friend of God is that we must first and foremost be won back to love and trust in God and Jesus. As long as fear and selfishness dominate us, as long as we love ourselves more than God, we will eventually betray God to protect ourselves. So in order to be a true friend of God we must be won back to trust in Him, complete, abiding, and settled trust. This requires that we know God (John 17:3) not know about God. Sadly, far too many Christians know about God, like studying the biography of Abraham Lincoln they get doctoral degrees to be experts in knowing all about God—but that doesn't mean they actually know Him. And if we don't actually know Him for ourselves, if we only know about Him, then we don't truly trust Him, and therefore are not His friends.

This is what Jesus meant when He foretold of the day when Christians will say to Him,

- "'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in **your** name, and in **your** name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you**. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22-23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

These people worked, served, in the name of Jesus, but they never knew Jesus, they were not His friends.

We become Jesus' friend when we are reborn to love and trust and know Him personally, our hearts are settled into the truth and love of God: This is the sealing. And then, like Job, we might not understand what is happening, we might experience frustration, we might have many questions—but we trust God so that our hearts stay focused on seeking God, on talking with God, on searching out the answers from God—just like Job did.

Despite all the world can throw at us, if we are God's friend, we will never believe God is against us, that God is our enemy, that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death. We will be true friends of God, and like Job say of God what is right!

But this requires that we not only love God, but as Jesus explicitly said, that we understand God's business! Servants don't understand the master or his business—they simply do what they are told. Servants are focused on the rules, the commands, the instructions—if the master said, they believe, and that is all there is to it.

But friends go beyond rule-keeping, beyond simply doing what they are told—they enter into understanding relationship, empathy, and appreciation with and for the master. A friend of God's shares in His desires, values, methods, principles and they align themselves with Him in heart. They are jealous for His reputation, His goals, His kingdom. They love what He loves and hate what He hates.

And then, as God's friends, who are won to love and trust, who understand His methods, principles, and design laws—His business of saving souls, we choose to work in God's field, God's garden, seeking to tend to hurting souls to bring them back into friendship with God.

- Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! (2 Corinthians 5:17-20 GNT).

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the gift of hospitality—what do you understand this gift to be?

The dictionary definition is: "the friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers."

What does this mean today? Does this mean we have no boundaries, that every person is welcomed? Or do we need to have discernment and not open our hearts, homes, and resources to individuals intent on doing harm?

Jesus said,

- "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:6, NIV84).

Paul wrote:

- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the **last days**. People will be **lovers of themselves**, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—**having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.** (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Should we show hospitality to everyone, or should we have discernment and set some boundaries and limit our contact with some people?

How do we love our enemies as Jesus did, show godly hospitality, yet also set healthy boundaries to limit and restrict the ability of those intent on doing evil from harming us and those we love, those put in our care to protect, and the mission God has called us to carry out?

MONDAY

Love for everyone—what does this mean in action?

Does it mean giving every person what they want, what they say they want? What about what they say they need? What about if they need it? What if they need it but they could procure it on their own, but their choices prevent them from doing so?

What about what Paul writes here in Romans 5:

- We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:3-5 NIV84).

What does this mean? We want God to pour His love into our hearts, and Paul connects suffering, persevering, and character building with God's love being poured into our hearts—what is the connection?

Is suffering required for character building? Do we help people if in all circumstances we seek to relieve their suffering? Or is suffering sometimes necessary for spiritual victory and character building?

- Did Jacob experience any trials and sufferings? Were those trials and sufferings important for Jacob's ultimate victory and being renamed Israel? Would we have helped Jacob if we would have done something to relieve the night of his trouble, the night he wrestled with the angel?
    - Couldn't God have inspired Esau to send a messenger ahead before that night to let Jacob know he was forgive and all was well? If Jacob had received that assurance prior to the night he wrestled with the angel would that information have been a benefit to him or not? Why not?
- Did Peter suffer for a period of time after he denied Jesus? Would we have helped Peter during that suffering, that emotional anguish, if we could have offered him a Xanax or valium to relieve his anxiety and emotional distress? Why or why not? Would it be an act of love to seek to relieve his suffering, or in that circumstance was the most loving action anyone could take be to allow Peter to wrestle out his own turmoil with God?

Love seeks to do what is in the best eternal interest of others, not what they want, or what will make them feel better in the moment, but which will help them achieve victory, spiritual victory and get better. And that often requires some period of suffering.

Do you understand how corrupt and evil the current demonic philosophy that is overtaking our society and culture is—which suggests that if it feels bad it is bad and that feelings are what matters, emotions are what defines reality?

Love is only love when, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13, it rejoices with the truth! If it is not truthful, it is not love.

The lesson points out that Abraham demonstrated love for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah when he asked God to spare the city for 50, 40, 30, 20, and 10 righteous people.

Abraham had concern for the sin-sick, the wicked, the perishing and he asked God not to destroy the city if ten righteous remained.

We see the heart of compassion and love from Abraham, but we also see God acting to destroy the city. Does that mean God has less love and compassion than Abraham?

If God has more love and compassion than Abraham, then why did He destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?

Genesis 3:15—it is all about the promised Messiah—even without these five cities that were destroyed—how many tribes of Israel made it through to the day Jesus was born? Only two—the other ten tribes had been dispersed.

In other words, God looking down the corridor of time, saw the ongoing war against Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's children, the branch of the family tree through whom Messiah would come, and understood that if He didn't act that the corruption and perversity of the nations around them would destroy that branch of the human family. So, God like a good surgeon, excised the necrotic tissue, the corrupt and hardened people that were beyond salvation and who lived in that area as a means to limit their ability to work against the plan of salvation—for without Jesus no human could be saved from sin.

God first discussed it with Abraham, **foreknowing Abraham would ask these questions so that God could answer them and let Abraham and EVERYONE OF US know these people were beyond saving**, they had so hardened there hearts there was nothing more God could do for them—just like the people who died in the Flood. So God's actions here are not actions to punish sin, they are therapeutic actions to keep open avenue for Messiah.

We must also remember that these "deaths" are what the Bible calls sleep deaths, they are the first death, the same type of death that Daniel experienced. And all of these people will arise in a resurrection to complete their own life by their exercise of their own free will choices—at the end of the 1000 years.

And remember, that even in the false legal model, punishment for sin doesn't happen until after the judgment and the judgment is future from these events, so God's actions here, even in the false legal model do not fit with the punishment for sin.

Abraham also had concern for God and God's reputation, but Abraham's prayer not to destroy the city was based upon limited knowledge. Abraham didn't know the future and Abraham assumed that there were more than ten righteous people in Sodom, more than ten people who had not permanently destroyed the faculties that respond to love and truth, people who could still come to repentance and be saved. But, there were not, so God listens to Abraham, but then does what love requires in order to save and heal.

As we read about Abraham talking with God, could we consider that Abraham was praying? And he was praying for the saving of others, but what do you make of John's instructions in 1 John 5:16-17?

- If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. (1 John 5:16-17 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do we understand it? If we view it through a legal model it becomes quite confusing—it sets up all kinds of ideas that don't make sense—like some sins are mortal sins but other are not. But if we understand design law it is easy to understand, and thus I paraphrased it this way:

- If you see a fellow Christian who desires to be Christlike commit an act of sin, you should talk with God about them, knowing that God will completely heal them and give them life if they open their heart in trust to God. Such sin does not result in eternal death, as it is merely a residual symptom of a heart in the process of being healed. However, there is no use in asking God to heal and give eternal life to the sinners who close their hearts to God and stubbornly refuse to allow God to heal them. Love cannot be forced, and God cannot force people to love and trust him, so there is no use in praying for God to force people to accept him. All violations of love are sin, but violations of love which occur in someone who opens their heart to God do not lead to eternal death. (1 John 5:16-17 REM)

TUESDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- The dialogue between Abraham and God is a type, a representation, of intercessory prayer. Abraham is presented in this chapter as an intercessor before God for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was pleading for them, in behalf of them; that is, he was in a way acting as a type, a symbol, of Jesus as our Intercessor before the Father. Our mission today will be successful only if we proceed with these kinds of prayer. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 33).

What does this mean?

- Does this mean God must be plead with in order to show us mercy?
- Does this mean that Jesus is pleading with His Father in heaven right now in our behalf?
- Have you ever heard it presented that we can have assurance because Jesus is our intercessor with the Father? But is that true?
    - Jesus Himself said, "In that day you will ask in my name. I am **not** saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you" (John 16:26 NIV84).
    - Romans 8—if God is for you who can be against you…

Jesus said that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father—they are one. To suggest that one member of the Godhead is for us, but another member requires something done to Him to get Him to support us is diabolical, it is evil, it is a lie, and it comes from the father of lies—Satan himself.

It is rooted in the lie about God's law, the idea that God's law functions like human law and therefore God is required to use His power to inflict punishment for sin, which is death, and therefore Jesus took our punishment and offers His blood as a payment to God to pay for our sins and propitiate the righteous wrath of the Father which burns against us.

Understand, those who believe God's law functions like human law cannot understand the truth of Jesus' ministry as our intercessor. They will always distort it into teaching a lie, to teaching things that undermine our trust in God.

It is only when we return to worshiping God as Creator and realize that His law is design law that things make sense.

I am going to read you a passage from one of the founders of the SDA church, this paragraph is often used by those who hold to the lie that God's law is like human law and believe falsely that Jesus as our intercessor is pleading to God in our behalf. Consider this quotation and think, what would you say if it was used in conversation with someone who was arguing for the penal legal view and that Jesus is in fact pleading in our behalf to the Father.

> Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man… But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own. (5 Testimonies 470).

What do you hear? Are you hearing a legal proceeding in heaven in which Satan accuses us and Jesus acts as our defense attorney before God the ultimate judge and Jesus wins the case with His Father by arguing His perfect righteousness as our defense?

It doesn't say or mean anything close to that. Such conclusions are not in the text, but read into the text by those whose minds are biased by the lie about God's law.

We know that the quote doesn't mean something penal/legal because first Jesus said He would not pray the Father in our behalf—there is no need. And anything true will always harmonize with Scripture.

But such a legal conclusion contradicts the setting from where that paragraph was drawn. So when dealing with quotes like this we must first know the Bible and know the truth of God's character and design law, and then we will resist false interpretations, but second, we must go to the source being quoted for ourselves and read it in its larger setting, and also read from the same author other places that speak to the same issue. But for now, we will just examine this quote in a three-paragraph setting and as we do you will note how it becomes very clear nothing penal legal is going on, but something healing and restorative.

- **As Satan accused Joshua** and his people, **so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the "accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins**. He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ**. **Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation**. (5 Testimonies 470.1) [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

  He [Satan] leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations and restore their confidence?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it**; **therefore he presents their sins before *them* *<u>to discourage them</u>***. [Notice the dynamic here. The author doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them and gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. So Satan accuses the sinner to the sinner to discourage the repentant sinner tempting them to give up and let go of their faith in Jesus. So, again, where is Christ plea directed?] He [Satan] is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt**. [To whom is Satan seeking to make our best seem corrupt? To the repentant sinner in order to discourage and dishearten them so THEY GIVE UP. So, to

whom would Christ be pleading for them not to listen to the accusations of Satan?] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he [Satan] endeavors to secure their condemnation**. [By whom? From whom is Satan seeking to get the sinner condemned? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself**. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sinned, I am righteous in my own strength." NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose this condition and I have had many symptoms along the way many sins and shortcomings from your glorious ideal. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin. I am only here before you because Jesus overcame where I cannot and Jesus has gifted me His victory, His mind, His heart, His love, His motives, His character and it is no longer I that live but Jesus lives in me through the indwelling Spirit." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary**. [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan that we are too sinful to be saved are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you and to me!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man**. [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us. God doesn't win God's mercy, or beg God to be merciful, He claims the mercy that is God's, because of God's mercy Jesus was sent and became our Remedy to sin.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.**' These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] **Those who rely upon Him** in faith receive the comforting assurance: "**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment**." [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power… Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. (5 Testimonies 470.2)

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who**

> **profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves**. [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and the investigating the truth about God to experience the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own**. (5 Testimonies 471.1)

Jesus pleads **before** the Father not **to** the Father; Jesus is carrying out the Father's purpose to save sinners, the Holy Spirit listens to Christ and works in you and me to communicate the love, grace and pleas of Christ to you and me to win us back to trust, so we will open the door to our hearts and let Him save us from fear and selfishness!

WEDNESDAY

What is Abraham's mission? In the context of the lesson, Abraham had a mission to save people—that is what the lesson wants us to notice.

Then, why didn't Abraham open a children's center, rehab center, center for porn addiction in Sodom? Why didn't Abraham open a church, a Sabbath school class, a Bible study—oh, because no Bible's existed yet. Okay, then why didn't he put an altar to God in Sodom and regularly offer sacrifices to Yahweh and preach on the streets of Sodom?

The point I am making is that I believe Abraham did have love for people, but that doesn't mean all actions are beneficial in all circumstances and settings.

Likewise today, do you think it will be beneficial to stand on a street corner in New York City with a sign "Repent" and shout "Repent, Jesus is coming soon and if you don't repent you will burn!"

THURSDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: When God revealed to Abraham the destiny of these two cities, Abraham, full of love, tried to save the cities. Because there were not even ten righteous persons in the cities, the cities were destroyed. Abraham submitted to the will of God and

> accepted God's judgment of these cities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 35).

It is true that there were less that ten righteous people in Sodom, but is that the reason the city was destroyed? Or was there another reason that must be included to understand why the city was destroyed—it was the two elements together. In other words, if more than ten righteous were in the city it wouldn't have bene destroyed despite this other element, but because there were not ten righteous along with this other element the combined points required the city to be destroyed?

Let me put it another way—do we think that through all of human history Sodom was the only city in which there were less than ten righteous people? Or, do we consider that throughout all human history if any city has less than ten righteous people God will show up and destroy them, that having less than ten righteous people is some cosmic threshold that triggers God to act?

I am suggesting that it was the combination of the city being completely corrupt in unrighteousness, and its location in the geographic area where the Israelites would life for the fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3:15 and their ability to seduce and corrupt the Israelites, thus obstructing the plan of salvation, had they remained.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 5
Excuses to Avoid Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think if the title?

We will explore the lesson's focus in a moment, but what are the excuses you have heard or perhaps even used?

- Someone else will do it?
- I am not good that—is that an excuse or a fact? When does this become a fact to act on rather than an excuse?
- It is uncomfortable?
- It will take too long?
- I am busy?
- I am tired?
- I don't feel like it?
- I have other priorities?

Should we stop and inquire—what does it mean to be on Mission for God? Should we define what it means to "do mission"?

Are we on mission everywhere all the time no matter what we are doing?

Was Jesus describing mission when He said this?

- "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Mathew 5:14-16 NIV84).

Or was Jesus describing mission only when He gave the gospel commission to make disciples baptizing people into the church?

What about a parent who works 80 hours a week to provide for their children and get them a Christian education, but doesn't have time to volunteer at a food kitchen, or go on a mission trip—are they doing mission for Jesus?

If we define mission only as seeking out people in evangelistic series to convert for the first time to Jesus do we have too narrow a definition of what mission for Jesus means?

When Solomon built the temple was on mission for God? What about the woodsmen who fell the trees, the stonemen who cut the stone, the craftsmen who made the lamp stands, altars and ark—were they on mission for God when they did these things, or is mission only seeking out those who don't yet know about God?

What about writers, artists, publishers, IT people who keep websites operating—if those books, artwork, and sites are used for the gospel are those people doing mission?

So, what would it mean to avoid mission—doesn't avoiding mission ultimately mean avoiding living our lives as God would have us live, in other words, living for self and this world?

Can people live for self and this world why they are actively evangelizing for the church and winning converts?

Jesus said,

- Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. (Matthew 23:15 NIV84).

Weren't these members of God's chosen people who were evangelizing to convert people to God's chosen church group doing mission for God? Why not?

What about the Good Samaritan, when he stopped to help the beaten man and cared for him, was he on mission for God? But do we have any record that the Good Samaritan preached the gospel, gave a Bible study, won the person to be baptized? Then how was the Samaritan on mission for God?

Is there a difference from being on mission for Jesus Christ and being on mission for the denomination? What is that difference?

What is the mission God wants all of us to be on—how would you describe it? Is the mission that we are to be on at this time in history to convert people to membership in a denomination—is that the mission? Is it to obstruct people from joining a denomination? It is neither—membership in denominational churches to not determine salvation—what does?

In the lesson it focuses on Jonah and compares his mission to Nineveh with Abraham's conversation with God over Sodom. Why did God destroy Sodom but not Nineveh? Why didn't God send someone to Sodom like He sent Jonah to Nineveh?

Because there were no people in Sodom who were capable of repentance, the people in Sodom had destroyed the faculties that respond to love and truth, whereas, the people in Nineveh had not destroyed their ability to respond to love and truth and thus repented.

SUNDAY

The lesson points out that Nineveh was known as a violent city, cruel, abusive, and that perhaps Jonah was afraid of what they might do to him. Thus, the lesson points out one obstacle to mission is fear.

Read last paragraph,

- In spite of all of this, we often read Jonah's story with disapproval for letting fear get in the way of carrying out God's instructions. What we fail to realize is that we can do the same thing (i.e., allow ourselves to be controlled by our fears rather than by God). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 39).

What causes fear? From where does fear come?

When did fear become part of the human experience? And what does fear motivate people to do?

How does fear manifest itself in the action and conduct of people?

What is the motive for

- the greedy?
- the abuser?
- the cheat?
- the liar?
- the megalomaniac?
- the religious oppressor?
- the legalist?
- essentially all actions that seek to control others?

Have you seen any people in the church being controlled by fear to such an extent that they run away from their mission like Jonah?

What about during COVID? Did churches shut down? Did people stop visiting the shut ins, stop evangelism, stop schools, stop almost all mission? Why?

Did you hear the claims that this was all done in love? But does love stop ministering to others, stop seeking to save souls, stop their mission for God? And does love take away liberty, seek to coerce conscience? No, it was driven by fear and fear is a tool of Satan—and fear rises where lies abound, and the fear over COVID was based upon mountains of lies and misinformation, that continues to this day.

What is the solution to this infection of fear?

Truth and love, the truth sets us free and love casts out fear—from where does this truth and love originate or come?

How do we experience or participate in God's eternal truth and love?

Satan counterfeits truth with all forms of propaganda, through authority of office, of getting people to believe based on what an expert says rather than examining and understanding the evidence, facts, truth, principles, methods for oneself. This happened in the Dark Ages church when the religious authorities made proclamations that were enforced—such as the Earth is the center of God's universe and rejected Galileo's observations of reality.

And it happens today all the time from the godless left when they declare things to be so but without evidence.

What counterfeits does Satan offer to God's love?

- Love in a bottle—alcohol, ecstasy, and other drugs
- Porn and erotic exploitation
- Fame and glory seeking—being loved by the masses
- Codependent fear-based relationships of control and manipulation but with intense emotional attachment
- Being loved for your sin—loved/valued by a group like a gang for doing gang violence, or cults for joining the cult, or deviant groups for being deviant
- Others?

MONDAY

The lesson is on false views that interfere with our mission for God. Can you think of any false views that interfere with the church's mission today?

Read first paragraph, which I found quite astounding, true, but astounding that it is in the lesson guide:

- When the storm came, Jonah blamed himself (Jon. 1:1–12). His attitude does reveal something about the kind of worldview and understanding of God or "gods" that many had back then. While various gods, they believed, ruled in their various lands, the sea was deemed the chaotic realm of demons. **In the worldview of the mariners, sacrifice was needed to appease their wrath.** Although Jonah was a Hebrew**, he quite possibly had a worldview that was influenced by the traditional beliefs of his times**. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 40, emphasis mine).

Do you think the lesson is suggesting that we should not believe in a god who requires sacrifice to appease its wrath? Or should we believe in that god?

Do Christians teach a god who requires the sacrifice of an innocent human to propitiate, assuage, appease, expiate, or in some way turn away its wrath?

- **Roman Catholic:**
  Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, could **offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath against the sins of mankind** (emphasis mine)**. (**Sungenis, Robert. Not By Faith Alone. Queenship, 1997. As quoted in Webster, William. "The Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation and Justification." Christian Resources, https://christiantruth.com/articles/rcjustification, pp. 107, 108).

- **Eastern Orthodox**
  Christ was for us a curse, through being hung upon the tree of the cross, so as to offer Himself **as a sacrifice to His Father**, to annihilate **the sentence of God** by the superabundant worth of the sacrifice (emphasis mine). (Saint Symeon the New Theologian. "On the Transgression of Adam" (homily). As quoted in "Thinking About the Atonement: The New Testament." Orthodox Church in America, https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr.-lawrence-farley/thinking-about-the-atonement-the-new-testament).

- **Methodist**
  The sufferings of Christ are an atonement for sin by substitution, in the sense that they were intentionally endured for sinners under **judicial condemnation,** and **for the sake of their forgiveness**. They are an atonement for sin in the sense that they render its forgiveness consistent with the divine justice. They provide for such consistency, in the sense that justice none the less fulfills its rectoral office in the interest of moral government. Such office of justice is so fulfilled in the sense that, in granting forgiveness only on the ground of such a substitution in atonement, the honor and authority of the divine Ruler, together with the rights and interests of his subjects, are equally maintained as by the **infliction of merited penalty upon sin** (emphasis mine). (John Miley, D.D., 1813–1895, Methodist theologian and professor of systematic theology at Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey. The Atonement in Christ. 1881. As quoted in "The Governmental Theory of Atonement." Truth in Heart, http://truthinheart.com/EarlyOberlinCD/CD/4/Miley/miley.htm, Chapter 8).

- **Reformation Theology**
  Jesus Christ took upon himself the **punishment** that the sins of his people deserved. In other words, the Reformers understood that the atonement was a **satisfaction by means of punishment** (emphasis mine). (Waddington, Jeffrey. "Surveying the Wondrous Cross: The Atonement in Church History." Reformation 21, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Nov. 2008, http://www.reformation21.org/articles/surveying-the-wondrous-cross-the-atonement-in-church-history.php).

- **Evangelical**
  We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, **propitiating the Father by paying for our sins** and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel (emphasis mine).

(Neff, David. “A Call to Evangelical Unity.” Christianity Today, June 14, 1999, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1999/june14/9t7049.html).

- **Pentecostal**
  The word “propitiation” properly signifies the **turning away of wrath by a sacrifice.** Thus it signifies **appeasement.** … According to Leon Morris: “The consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. That wrath is averted only by Christ’s atoning offering. From this standpoint his **saving work is properly called propitiation”** (emphasis mine). (Van Cleave, Nathaniel M., and Duffield, Guy P. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983).

- **Seventh-day Adventist**
  The Hebrew wording in both Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 was the same: “and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed …” (9:24, NKJV). Consumed what? In the first case, the offering; in the other, the sinners. What a powerful representation of the plan of salvation. **At the Cross, the “fire from God,” the wrath of God, “consumed” the offering, and that was Jesus** (emphasis mine). (Goldstein, C. “Fire From Before the Lord.” Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Jul. 25, 2011, https://www.ssnet.org/lessons/11c/less05m.html, p. 40).

Does Christianity teach that a human sacrifice of an innocent is needed to appease the wrath of God?

If this is true, then, where is the sacrifice being applied, where is it doing its work, having its influence, applying its merits, or exercising its power—it is working on God. Then what does that mean? If God is the one to whom the sacrifice of Christ must be given, applied, or presented, then something is wrong with God that needs fixing. Is that true?

Who is the one who suggests that there is something wrong with God that needs fixing? It is Satan, the liar from the beginning. And he has introduced his lie into Christianity under the guise of holiness, righteousness, justice, perfection, to have good people believe and teach lies about God, pagan lies, lies that our gracious God functions like a pagan deity who requires sacrifice to appease his wrath.

How did this happen? What is the root lie that causes this lie? It is the lie that God’s law functions like human law. Whenever and wherever people believe that God’s law functions like human law, the laws that creatures make up and enforce through punishment, they always believe—in fact they are powerless not to believe the subsequent lies about God—that God in order to be just must use His power to inflict punishment for sin. Therefore, the sacrifice of Jesus must be used to pay that punishment payment to the offended deity, that is paganism. And that is what happened when Rome took over Christianity, it substituted Roman law for God’s law and teaches that God functions like a creature rather than the Creator.

This is why before Christ returns a message is to lighten the world that calls people to stop judging God to be like a creature, and worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water. Worship of the Creator requires we reject imposed law and realize God’s laws are design laws.

But just to be sure no one things that we reject substitutionary atonement, let me state it very clearly, we do not reject substitutionary atonement but teach it the way the Bible does. No human could be saved from sin without the incarnation of Jesus, His sinless life, voluntary self-sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension. But for the reasons the Bible says—not to appease God or do something to God, but to do something to and in humanity:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21NIV84, emphasis mine).
- the Lamb of God, who **takes away the sin** of the world! (John 1:29 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! **All this is from God**, who **reconciled us to himself** through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that **God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ**, not counting men's sins against them. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19 NIV84, emphasis mine).

All of Scripture teaches the reality that God was working through Jesus for the purpose of removing sin from human beings so that we can be restored to at-one-ment, unity, harmony, with God.

Satan's lies have perverted the gospel into a message that states Jesus died to do something to God to get God to be loving, kind, forgiving, gracious, unwrathful to us.

Read third paragraph,

- We, too, can have misunderstandings about God and what He expects of us. One common misunderstanding is that God's desire for us is to focus on our own salvation and to remove ourselves from the wickedness of the world around us. Though we are instructed to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27, NKJV), our focus should be on how we can bring God's blessings and hope to those in need. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 40, emphasis mine).

This is sad, they recognize that we can have misunderstandings about God, but fail to realize the most serious misconception of all—the imperial Roman dictator view of God that comes from believing the lie that God's law functions like human law and causes people to teach the pagan notion that God requires sacrifice to appease His wrath.

Instead, they focus on one narrow consequence that lie has on the worshiper—focusing on one's behavior, attempts to save self through legal means, or by hiding away from the world. But the real problem is the root to all of this, which is believing lies about God that cause of to fear Him as the source of punishment for our sins.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on inconvenience as an obstacle to fulfilling the mission God has called us to fulfill.

Read first paragraph,

- Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish (see Jonah 2) was a dramatic show of God's love and mercy, and Jonah's prayer reveals that he didn't miss God's message of love. **But just because he had had an incredible encounter with God didn't mean that his old thought habits or attitudes would easily change,** even though he went to Nineveh anyway. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 41, emphasis mine).

This is a very important point and one that many Christians don't fully appreciate. When we are truly converted to Jesus, we have a wonderful and powerful experience with Him, we experience peace, the removal of guilt and shame; we have joy and a desire for better living, a new lease on life, a new perspective, a new heart and right spirit. But all of these new attitudes, desires, motives of the reborn person is still functioning, living, operating on the old hardware, the brain that we built by our life experiences prior to our full conversion to Jesus.

Because of this, even though we have new desires, new motives, a new heart that rejoices in the truth and is repulsed by evil, we still have habits, preconditioned responses, and neural pathways that were built by us before we were converted. These habits and conditioned responses often exert themselves and we sometimes react and do things we no longer intend or want to do.

If we don't understand this process then we are vulnerable to discouragement, about ourselves and God.

- We begin to doubt our conversion—"was I really converted, maybe I just had an emotional high during a powerful sermon."
- We doubt our salvation—"God gave me His grace, but I just blew it again, it was more than 70 times 7, more than the 490th time, there is no hope for me."
- We are vulnerable to doubt God—"my godless friends are right, Christianity is just a lie, if God were real then I wouldn't keep falling back into old habits, after all God is supposed to be all powerful, more powerful than me and my habits."

But when we understand reality—that we get new hearts and right spirits here and now—but we do not get new biology until this mortal puts on immortality and this corruption puts on incorruption at the second coming and that means that we will still struggle against old habits and preconditioned responses, but when those moments occur where we fall short, having been converted we are grieved in our hearts, we recognize it wasn't our true selves doing this, but vestiges of old habits that haven't been fully eliminated from our neurobiology and reflexive responses. We go to God and confess and

thank Him for His mercy and long for our full deliverance, and we choose new actions and over time our brain circuitry does change, we wire in new healthy habits. This is what Paul wrote about in Romans chapter seven, this is from The Remedy:

- We know that the law is consistent, reliable and reasonable; but I am inconsistent, unreliable and unreasonable, because the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness has warped my mind and damaged my thinking. I am frustrated with what I do! For having been restored to trust, I want to do what is in harmony with God and his methods and principles; but I find that even though I trust God, my old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. And if I find an old habit causing me to behave in ways that I now find detestable, I affirm that the law is a very helpful tool revealing residual damage in need of healing. What is happening is this: I have come to trust God, and I desire to do his will, but old habits and conditioned responses — which present almost reflexively in certain situations — have not yet been totally eliminated and thus cause me to do things I do not want to do. I know that my mind was completely infected with distrust, fear and selfishness, which totally perverted all my desires and faculties, so that even when distrust has been eradicated and trust has been restored, the damage caused by years of distrustful and selfish behavior has not yet been fully healed. So, I find that at times, I have the desire to do what is right, but do not yet have the ability to carry out the desire. For the old habits and conditioned responses are not the good I want to do: No! They are remnants of my selfish, unconverted mind. So, if I find myself doing what I no longer desire to do, it is not myself that acts, but the vestiges of old habits and conditioned responses that have yet to be removed. And through God's grace, they will soon be removed.

  So I find this reality at work: When I want to do good, my old selfish habits and residual feelings of fear are right there with me. In my mind, I rejoice in God's methods and principles, but I recognize that I remain damaged from years of being infected with distrust and practicing Satan's methods, so that even though the infection of distrust has been removed, the old habits of fear and self-promotion tempt me from within. What a damaged and corrupt man I am! Who will deliver and heal me from a brain and body so diseased and deformed? Praise be to God– for he has provided the healing solution through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I find that in my mind I am now renewed with trust in God and love of his methods, but my brain and body remain damaged by years of self-indulgent behavior. (Romans 7:14-25 REM).

Read fifth paragraph,

- And finally, being involved in mission often requires that we change how we feel about and use our money. Whether related to providing care for people, purchasing literature and outreach materials, or paying for services or conveniences to free up time for mission work, there are expenses related to mission. Whatever form it may take, mission work requires sacrifice. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 41).

What message do you hear from this paragraph?

Since they are talking about monetary sacrifice and supporting the mission with money—would this include prayerfully and carefully considering where one donates? What is the message being presented by the materials and organization to which one is donating? Do we want to donate to organizations that we believe are misrepresenting God and obstructing the final message of mercy to the world? I can't tell anyone where to give their tithes and offerings, but I can advance the principles of God that we are to support the gospel ministry and that requires us to individually know what the gospel is and then to evaluate what the organizations we are supporting to promoting—doesn't it?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Jonah had such a deep hatred for the people God sent him to that he felt it was better that he die than to lose face when the failure of his doomsday preaching against Nineveh was revealed. Jonah wanted Nineveh to be the next Sodom and Gomorrah. He was hoping for God's judgment on these hated people. When it didn't happen, his worldview was being shaken to the core, and Jonah would rather die than allow his world to be turned upside down. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 42).

The day's title is uncomfortable confrontation—what is the uncomfortable confrontation Jonah had to face? Was it confronting the people he hated, or was it confronting the emotions in his own heart?

Consider this quotation from the book *Steps to Christ:*

- The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness. (Steps to Christ 43).

The most uncomfortable confrontation we have is internal, confronting our own fears, guilt, shame, self-righteousness, pride, expectations, fantasies, desires, demands, selfishness.

Many people think that others are their problem, when the problem is how we feel, react, and respond to others, our anger, resentment, bitterness, hurt, hatred, bigotry, prejudice is the problem—especially when dealing with the objectively offensive, rude, cruel, and evil.

When Jesus instructs us to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us, who is the primary beneficiary of such instruction? Who is the one who reaps the most benefit from doing this, who will 100% of the time be benefited if they do it?

What happens inside of us when someone does objective wrong to us and we don't forgive them, we don't respond with grace, mercy, love and instead respond with righteous indignation, bitterness,

resentment, and desire for revenge—even if that desire is processed through our legal justice system, or anticipating a future in which God makes them pay? What happens in us?

The lesson talks about worldviews and how our worldview often takes something dramatic in our life to get us to reevaluate it and change it.

What they are speaking about is our way of understanding why things happen the way they happen, the system we orient life through that gives us a sense of security, peace, safety, and control.

If we believe in the law and order method, that the system works, that if you do good you get a good reward and if you do bad you get punishment, then when injustice happens, when people who riot are called peaceful protestors and peaceful protestors are called insurrectionists, when violent criminals are not incarcerated and non-violent political opponents are imprisoned, when innocents go to jail and the guilty get off—our worldview is challenged, and we either reevaluate our worldview or surrender our thinking to others and trust them mindlessly. Do you see this happening to so many in the world?

God permits events to happen so that objective reality, consequence of decision-making, including breaking His design laws, will be evidenced and people can see that evidence, that truth and reevaluate the fantasy belief system that comes from Satan.

This is part of the working out of the truth—the false systems always break down, and those who love the truth will, during difficult times, search for answers that are ever more consistent with the truth and ultimately lead back to God.

This process includes the emotional detachment from things that give us security and instead attaching to God, if we are following the truth.

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read Isaiah 1:1-8:

- In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. Round him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. They were calling out to each other:

  "Holy, holy, holy!
  The LORD Almighty is holy!
  His glory fills the world."

  The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself was filled with smoke.

> I said, “There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes, I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!”
>
> Then one of the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, “This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven.”
>
> Then I heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?”
>
> I answered, “I will go! Send me!” (Isaiah 6:1-8 GNT).

What lessons do we learn from this passage?

- Did Isaiah feel condemnation when he saw the glory of God?
- Did that condemnation come from God?
- From where did it come?
- What was necessary to resolve Isaiah’s guilt?
- What did the angel do?
- What happened to Isaiah?
- What was necessary for Isaiah to be useful in God’s mission?
- What is represented by the burning coal?

Do we find any other Scriptures that give insight into this scene?

Revelation 14:18-19 reads:

- Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe” (Revelation 14:18, 19 NIV84).

And this was interpreted in our study guide to mean the following:

- “Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire” (Rev. 14:18, NKJV). Here is the angel who commands the fires of God’s final judgment (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, 2nd Quarter, 2023, “Three Cosmic Messages,” p. 23).

From your reading of Revelation 14:18 in light of Isaiah 6, do you agree with the interpretation of the quarterly? Why or why not?

- Does the angel in Revelation 14 use the fire to inflict punishment?
- Is fire used at all?
- If you allow the text to influence your conclusion about this fire, what fire would you say it is?
- From where is the angel coming?
- The altar of God.

- And when it says that the angel is in charge of the fire, would the text be suggesting that the fire is the fire associated with the altar in God's temple?
- And is it likely that this "fire" is literal, a fire of combustion, or is it symbolic of something else?
- Is it the same type of fire described in Daniel 7:9, 10, as coming out like a river from the throne of God with billions standing in it?
- Then consider what we just read in Isaiah—the angel comes with coal and fire from the altar and does what with it?

- "This has touched your lips, and **now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven"** (Isaiah 6:1–7 GNT, emphasis mine).

The fire from this altar cleansed Isaiah—burning away his guilt and bringing healing and forgiveness from sin. So, the angel in Revelation 14, who is God's agent, is in charge of this *cleansing* fire! He is the one who is represented in the prophecy as administering the purifying power of God to cleanse the saints from sin. (Do you think this is a symbolic representation of Jesus in His high priestly role of cleansing His people from sin?)

This angel then leaves his cleansing work and tells the other angel with a sharp sickle to harvest the wicked. Why? Because there are no more people who are willing to be cleansed by the fires of truth and love that flow from the temple of God. Every person has already either been cleansed by the fire from the altar and, therefore, are settled, sealed, solidified into loyal love to God—or they have hardened themselves into rebellion, sinfulness, and selfishness and destroyed within themselves the faculties that respond to truth and love so that they are beyond healing. Therefore, the angel from the altar, the one who is in charge of the cleansing fire, goes to the harvesting angel and says: *There is no one left for me to heal; the harvest is ripe; it is time to reap*.

God's fires are not the source of pain, suffering, and death—they are the cleansing fires of truth and love that originate in His infinite being.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 6
Motivation and Preparation for Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think about the title?

What is to be our motivation? Love for God and love for others.

Can people have godly motivation, be reborn—but still not be ready for mission? Can people start mission without proper preparation and things not go well?

Any Bible examples of people needing preparation before mission?

- Moses—he started his own mission at 40 by murdering an overseer, but wasn't truly ready for God's mission for another 40 years.
- Elisha—had a training period with Elijah
- The Apostles—who spent 3.5 years with Jesus and then reorganized after the resurrection waiting for the Holy Spirit
- Paul after his conversion on the Damascus road, went to Arabia to commune with Jesus and only after that time of preparation did he engage in ministry
- Others?

Read the first two paragraphs,

- Wrote Paul to the Philippians: "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:15–18, NKJV).

  Powerful words! Whether in "pretense or in truth," Christ is preached—and that is what mattered to Paul. Ideally, though, our motives for preaching Christ, for mission, for reaching others with the good news, should be out of love, and out of truth—and not from selfish ambition, envy, or strife. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 46).

Does this mean Paul takes no issue with false doctrines or false teachings, he voices no concerns about what it means to be Christian, or what is necessary for converts to do to experience the blessings of God in their lives? No! He takes strong stances in opposing false ideas—like Peter not associating with the circumcision group, and basically every teaching that tries to make Christianity into a works program, or burden people with legal concepts of salvation.

Why does Paul take this stance against false ideas, but doesn't take a stance against preachers preaching with selfish motives?

Have you ever heard that "all publicity is good publicity"—especially where the idea, concept, person, or product is new and unknown? In Paul's day, Jesus was unknown to the entire world. Paul's primary concern was to get the word about Jesus out, to get people to hear about Jesus and have an opportunity to investigate for themselves so that they could choose Jesus.

What is the principle that Paul practicing when he refuses to silence people who are preaching from selfish motives? Freedom, liberty, freedom of speech, liberty of conscience, freedom of self-determination.

But promoting liberty is not the same thing as agreeing with the false ideas, or letting the falsehoods go unchallenged by the truth.

You will notice that those who love truth do not seek to censor or silence those who are wrong, who are presenting falsehoods, they counter the false with the truth and the truth prevails. But those who are advancing falsehoods must silence the sources of truth because their views will be destroyed by the truth.

This, the action to censor and silence, the actions to restrict liberties of conscience such as freedom of worship, speech, peaceful assembly, communication, and bodily autonomy is always a sign that evil is being practiced and is what Jesus meant when He said, by their fruits you will know them. By the methods they practice, not by the words they declare.

In fact, the truly evil will frequently espouse words that you can agree with, but will practice the methods of evil—coercion, force, intimidation, censoring, restricting liberty—but it will all be done under the claim of seeking some good, seeking to stomp out an evil, to protect, to save.

The forces of evil always oppose the methods of God, which means they will oppose the truth. But they won't do it by saying they are opposing truth—they will do it by saying they are screening out misinformation, censoring disinformation, or deplatforming speakers with dangerous ideas.

But the lovers of truth don't use such methods, they are open and invite honest investigation and questions.

What are some of the ways that evil forces seek to silence the truth?

By Direct Destruction of the Speakers of Truth

Execution—consider all the martyrs executed through time for so-called heresy.

By Imprisonment

Consider all the truth-speakers imprisoned and sent off to concentration camps or gulags or city jails.

By Devaluing the Messenger

- "Isn't this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55 NIV84).
- "How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?" (John 7:15 NRSV).

Who is he to teach about theology when he doesn't have a degree in theology—you can't trust what he says!

Name Calling and Character Assassination—Attacking the Messenger Instead of the Message

- But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" (Matthew 12:24 NIV84).
- The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" (John 8:48 NIV84).

Accusing the Righteous of the Evil That They Are Doing

- Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" (Matthew 26:65, 66 NIV84).

Twisting Words and Perjury

- Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days'" (Matthew 26:60, 61 NIV84).

Appeal to Expert Opinions Rather than the Truth to Intimidate

- Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

  "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.

  "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them" (John 7:45–49 NIV84).

Intimidation via Sanctions and Restricting Liberties

- His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22 NIV84).
- No one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews (John 7:13 NIV84).

Rejection and Mob Violence

- All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff (Luke 4:28–30 NIV84).

Shouting Down Voices of Truth to Silence, Intimidate, and Incite Riots

- When they heard this, **they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in an uproar.** The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

  The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. But when they realized he was a Jew, **they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"** (Acts 19:28–34 NIV84).

Refusing to Listen and Murdering Voices of Truth

- At this they **covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices**, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and **began to stone him**. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7:57–60 NIV84).

Do we see all of these methods being employed today? And who is employing them? Do the righteous use them? No, only those without the truth. And are these methods used only by the godless, or do those who claim a belief in God also use these methods? What does that mean?

SUNDAY

The lesson points us to the women who went to Christ's tomb Sunday morning and found it empty and met the two angels who told them Jesus had risen from the dead. How they immediately went to tell the disciples, but the disciples didn't believe them.

Read second paragraph,

- Can you imagine how the women must have felt? They had just had an amazing experience, one that certainly filled them with awe, but the disciples called their experience "idle tales" and would not believe them. Thus, not sure whether to believe the women or not, Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 47).

Have you ever had the experience of sharing truth with others, including church leaders, only to have them reject the message and belittle you telling you that you were bearing idle tales or some falsehood or been duped by someone?

What do we do when we are advancing the truth and are met with hostility, incredulity, disbelief, and rejection—especially from those in church leadership?

What have you found to be helpful in coping with such rejection?

- Don't take it personal, remember Jesus said:
    - "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Luke 10:16 NIV84).
    - "If the world hates you, just remember that it has hated me first. If you belonged to the world, then the world would love you as its own. But I chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it; that is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'Slaves are not greater than their master.' If people persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours too. (John 15:18-20 GNT).

  So, when we find that church leaders or others reject the truth, don't take it personal, it is not us they are rejecting, it is the truth that Jesus brought they are rejecting, and ultimately they are rejecting Him, for the truth is an expression of His character and those who reject it prefer a god that functions like this world, power over others, force, compelling power, coercion, inflicted punishment.

  Does this mean that all initial presentations of truth will be accepted, or all who initially reject the truth are enemies of Christ? No! Look at our story when the disciples heard about Christ's resurrection—they initially rejected it, but then the Holy Spirit convicted them, they went and investigated, and Jesus brought more truth to them and they eventually accepted it. Sometimes, people will initially reject the truth, but the seed is planted and the Holy Spirit begins to work, and the same truth is brought to their mind from different sources and those with hearts that love the truth eventually embrace it.

- Pray—pray for wisdom from God on who to share the truth with, who is open to the truth; and pray for efficiency in how to present the truth; pray for the Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to heart of those who hear it.
- Share how the new truth has been a blessing to you, how it has brought you closer to Christ, helped you experience a deeper faith, resolved some struggle you have had for years, whether guilt, shame, fear, or overcoming some habit. Share how the new truth has brought you greater love and appreciation for God. It is difficult to argue against a person's experience, especially when that experience is bearing fruits of the Spirit.
- Get to know people, build a relationship, if people know you, know your heart for the Lord, know you care about them, they will be more willing to listen to what you have to share.

- Leave people free, present the truth under the umbrella of liberty, let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind. This means, that it is presented in a way that they know if they don't agree with you, you will still value and love them as a friend, family member, or church member.
- Discern the attitudes, mindsets, and motivations of those with whom you seek to share. If, after prayerful consideration, you conclude certain people are not only closed, but hostile to the truth, leave them be and seek new people who are open. As Jesus said, "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces" (Matthew 7:6 NIV84).
- Other methods or actions?

Read last paragraph,

- Of course, we need a personal experience with God ourselves before we can share it with others. Our desire to share with others what we love so much must be a crucial part of our motivation for mission. In the end, we can't share what we ourselves don't have, can we? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 47).

If one doesn't have a personal experience with God, but is actively sharing their faith—what are they sharing? Anything that they themselves have found that gives them comfort, a sense of security, safety, meaning, purpose—but it might not be God. Consider those religious leaders Jesus confronted when he told them that they search the world for a convert and make them twice the son of hell as they were.

These religious leaders were sharing what they knew—but they didn't know God. They knew law, rules, elitism and they developed a certain security in their beliefs, but those beliefs did not result in actual salvation, despite being based on Scripture and being religious in nature.

What kinds of things become replacements or proxies for a saving relationship with God?

- Faith in a false god—so the person is exercising faith, is worshiping, is religious, but the god they believe in is not the true God—this would be all the false gods in the world, but also the false versions of God taught in Christianity.
- Faith in self under the guise of religion—faith in law-keeping, Sabbath keeping, performance, Pharisaical legalism.
- Faith in a religious leader—whether priest, pope, pastor, cleric, rabbi, or other.
- Faith in denominational affiliation—feeling secure for being part of a church organization that one believes is God's remnant or God's church on Earth; like the Jews 2000 years ago had faith in being descendants of Abraham.
- Faith in sacraments, rituals, ceremonies

All of these proxies have a place in a genuine saving relationship with God. In a saving relationship we do:

- worship, but we worship the true God
- obey the law of God, but not as a means to make us feel safe or secure, or a work, but as a fruit, a result, a free choice because we love God and love His methods and agree with Him
- respect, but do not place our faith in religious leaders; we place our faith in God. Thus while we respect God's workmen, we do not surrender our thinking to them, and we recognize they can be wrong
- become part of a body of believers, whether denominational or non-denominational, in order to organize ourselves, pool resources, share our gifts more efficiently for the spreading of the gospel—but our security is not found in the organization, it is found in Jesus.
- practice certain ceremonies or rituals because they help us in our development, solidifying our commitments, such as baptism, or child dedication, or weddings, or communion, but we do not place our faith in the ceremony—we carry out the ceremony as a public testimony to our faith in Jesus and our desire to live out His principles.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Luke 24:36-49:

- While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

  They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

  When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

  He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

  Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:36-49 NIV84).

Why didn't the disciples believe?

- Fear—at first they were startled and afraid, and fear neurobiologically interferes with the ability to assimilate new information, to think, to process, we simply react. So they are initially startled, and Christ reassures them and tells them not to be afraid.
- Joy—it is too good to be true—it can't be real, can it? They start to believe, but this is all they hoped, dreamed, wished for can it really be true. So they move from startled fear, to nothing this good can really be true, the doubt of joy.

What did Jesus do to help them? He used the integrative evidence-based approach, revealing truth to them from all three threads, Scripture, Science, and Experience:

- He had them touch Him, **experience** for themselves that He was real
- He then ate fish, showing the laws of nature in operation, **scientific** demonstration of objective reality
- Then He took them through **Scripture** documenting how His life fulfilled all that was prophesied confirming their experience and the scientific evidence.

All three threads agreed—Jesus was risen from the dead!

Read the fourth paragraph,

- Here, too, we find a powerful motivation for witness, for mission: the Word of God. Jesus knew that to solidify the disciples' experience, they needed to understand why He had to die and what His resurrection signified. They needed their worldview to be shifted from a political and earthly kingdom to the great solution to sin and the victory of Christ over death. The gospel was so much more than achieving political sovereignty for Israel. It revealed Christ's victory over Satan and guaranteed that one day all wickedness in the world would be destroyed, that the earth would be created anew, and that God would be among His people. He "opened their understanding" (Luke 24:45, NKJV) so they could comprehend these truths, which they were to share with the world. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 48).

The lesson points out that the disciples needed their worldview shifted—they needed to realize that Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, built upon the principles, methods, and laws of this world. He did not come to use might and power, coercion, force, threats, punishments, physical war to overthrow the earthly enemies of Israel and establish an earthly kingdom that functions like all the other kingdoms of this world.

He came to eradicate the root to all conflict, war, division, hostility, fighting, abuse, exploitation, injustice and establish a kingdom of truth, love, and righteousness. And that requires the eradication of fear, selfishness, and sin out of the hearts of all who will be part of His kingdom.

So the disciples had to have a shift in understanding, what is called a worldview. They had believed rightly that Israel was called by God for a mission, **but they believed wrongly that the mission was**

to establish and earthly kingdom that ruled by the same sinful and evil methods of all the other nations of the world.

What about Christianity—did Jesus, after His resurrection, call His followers to advance His kingdom on Earth? Yes! But did Christianity fall into the same trap as the Jewish nation, of thinking that the kingdom was to be advanced by using the same methods, principles, and processes that the evil nations of this world use? Did the church go to physical war, use imposed law, coercion, force, intimidation, imprisonment, and death to advance itself?

Why? Because the church accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law and justice is the punishing of law-breaking.

What about today? Are Christian's vulnerable to being drawn into sinful, worldly, fallen, kingdoms and support the practice of coercion, force, threat, punishment upon others on issues of conscience because they believe it is right to do so—because they believe it will save lives?

How do we protect ourselves from falling into this trap? By having a change in worldview, in understanding of the kingdom of God. And the core truth that determines our understanding of all if it, is our understanding about God's law. If we believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, we will always conclude God's justice is infliction of just punishment. This is why we must reject the Roman view of God's law and return to worshiping the Creator God whose laws are design laws.

Consider this historical quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

- The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God,** and men are **led to worship the creature rather than the Creator,** may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator,** and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers (emphasis mine). (E.G. White, Great Controversy x.1).

This is the entire basis of the conflict, Satan alleges God makes up rules and then uses power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking, and people worship a creature rather than the Creator. We only return to worshiping the Creator when we reject the imposed law lie and realize God's laws are design laws.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses upon the disciples waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before they begin their mission.

Thoughts? What is your understanding of the balance between waiting on and acting for the Lord?

Here are the lyrics to a song released by the Christian group Petra back in 1982—41 years ago. The song is entitled *More Power to Ya*

You say you've been feeling weaker, weaker by the day
You say you can't make the joy of your salvation stay
But good things come to them that wait
Not to those who hesitate
So hurry up and wait upon the Lord

More power to ya
When you're standing on His word
When you're trusting with your whole heart in the message you have heard
More power to ya
When we're all in one accord
They that wait upon the Lord, they shall renew, they shall renew their strength

Jesus promised His disciples He'd give strength to them
Jesus told them all to tarry in Jerusalem
When they were all in one accord
The power of His Spirit poured
And they began to turn the world around

So be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might
Put on all His armor and fight the good fight
In all of our weakness, He becomes so strong
When He gives us the power and the strength to carry on

I love the truth in this song and the word play, we are both to wait—i.e. pause, cease, be still and know that God is the Lord, and to know His will, but we are also to actively be waiting, i.e. His wait staff, carrying out His will and purposes. A waiter is to wait nearby a table until something is needed and then carry out the duty—we are do wait upon the Lord, wait for our empowering, our enabling, out instructions, but then we are carry out our duties.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points us to Acts chapter two, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter's sermon, how he called them out for crucifying Jesus and…

- When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37 NIV84).

What did Peter tell them?

- Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39 NIV84).

First note that the promise is not just for those individuals but for every person called by God—which is every person.

But what is promised if we repent and are baptized? The NIV says "the forgiveness of your sins" does that mean legal pardon or something else?

The KJV and NKJV read:

- Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission** of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NKJV).

The various lexicons give this definition for the Greek:

- ἄφεσις [aphesis /af·es·is/] translates as "remission" nine times, "forgiveness" six times, "deliverance" once, and "liberty" once. 1 release from bondage or imprisonment. 2 forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty. (Strong, J. (1995). In Enhanced Strong's Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship).

- the process of setting free or liberating—'release, liberty.' ἀπέσταλκέν με κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν 'he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives' Lk 4:18. (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 487). United Bible Societies).

So, this Greek word translated forgiveness means to release, set free, provide liberty—the question is from what?

And that is determined by the law lens one uses. If one uses the human law lens, and thereby is worshiping a creature rather than the Creator, then they think forgiveness is legal pardon by God

achieved through the penalty being paid by Jesus. But when we worship the Creator and understand His laws are design laws, we realize that we are held in bondage by the lies about God we believe and our own sinful, carnal, nature with its fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame. And we are set free by the truth about God—the truth will set you free Jesus said (John 8:32), and we are set free when we respond to that truth in repentance and experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit which cleanses us, we are cleansed from guilt and shame through God's grace, and we receive new hearts and right spirits and are reborn with new desires that love God and others—all symbolized by baptism, the dying to the old life and the rising to the new life of trust in Jesus. Thus Biblical forgiveness for salvation is not a legal pardon, it is a restoration to righteousness through the grace and power of God.

Consider this quote from *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing:*

- But **forgiveness** has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly **pardon**," [modern translations read "freely pardon"] He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. [Human ways are legal, based on imposed law and payment and punishment is required. But God's ways are the ways of the Creator whose laws are design laws. And payments and punishments are not required, healing and restoration is!] **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart**. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us**." Psalm 103:12. (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing 114, emphasis mine).

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to consider how the early church functioned:

- They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42–47 NIV84).

Where did they meet? In homes
What kind of services did they have? Discussion, like SS, not sermons.
What does it mean they had everything in common, selling their possessions and goods to help those in need?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Free Time-Limited Give Away:

As we enter this season of gratitude and thanksgiving Come and Reason Ministries would like to provide you with one of our special resources to share with someone else. We have just completed reprinting our popular resource *The Remedy of the Lord in Song The Psalms* with an embossed text and soft touch cover—beautiful for gift giving!

These books will be available 10/14/2023 until 11/17/2023 in quantities of 1, 2, or 5 per order. It's our way of showing our gratitude to you and hope you share with other the good news shared in the Psalms! The printed copy is available in the USA only. For our global audience you can access and share the Psalms through The Remedy app which is downloaded through your App Store.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 7
Mission to My Neighbor

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory verse:

- He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

We are to love our neighbor, but as we love ourselves, what does that mean?

- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?
- Does it mean we have a responsibility to love ourselves—a duty?
- Does it mean that if we don't love ourselves that we are breaking the law of God?
- Is loving self the same as being selfish? What is the difference?
- What is love?
- Love is the principle of giving—but not giving anything, only giving that which is in harmony with God's designs for life, giving what is right, good, noble, true, pure, holy—giving what heals, restores, recreates, builds up, refreshes, nurtures. In other words, giving what is necessary to fulfill God's purposes.
- So what does it mean to love oneself?
    - It means to love oneself enough that we do not poison our bodies with substances that damage the brain, impair thinking, destroy one's health, and enslaves one.
    - It means loving oneself enough to give self healthy foods, reasonable exercise, adequate sleep, hydration, mental and spiritual rest—keeping oneself in the best health and condition to be able to fulfill God's purpose in one's life
    - It means ingesting the word of God into one's mind and meditating on Him, His character, His blessings and seeking to worship (model) oneself to be like Him
    - It means to be true to yourself—i.e., don't betray yourself by choosing to do that which you **already know** is wrong for you to do, is harmful. It means you don't give in to peer pressure, or emotional manipulation from others who try to get you to do something in governance of self that you know is wrong for you to do. It might be a moral issue like taking drugs; it might be a non moral issue like someone asking you to adopt their dog so they can go off to college. But if you love yourself, you are true to yourself, you choose to do that which your judgment determines is best for you in harmony with God's will for your life, not what others think.

- What does it mean to love others like this? It means that we seek to use our abilities and resources to bless others, to present truth in love that others need, that will bless them if they choose to accept it; it means we model godly living and the application of God's design laws to our own lives as a witness; it means we don't participate in clearly unhealthy and destructive practices and we give warning to those who do. And it means we always leave people free to reject the truth and suffering the consequences, and then bring grace and healing options to them when they seek help from those consequences.
- What does it mean to love God with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind?
    - Doesn't it mean we are dedicated to God completely, our entire selves and thus seek with all our abilities to glorify God and advance His kingdom?
    - Does that mean we don't take a vacation because it would be selfish to do so? No—it means we **do** take a vacation because we want to love ourselves in a godly way—we want to have rest, time to rejuvenate, to keep ourselves healthy. But vacation means a break, time away, from our work, meaning we can't take a vacation if we aren't engaged in productive activity in the first place. So we are also actively engaged in productive living, whether for a paycheck, or volunteering, or running a household and homeschooling your children.

One of Satan's traps, if he cannot get good people to choose evil, is to overwhelm them with so many worthy and good projects, responsibilities, duties that they forget to love themselves, they stop resting, overwork themselves on the good to the point that they burn out and are no longer useful in God's cause.

Thus, we are to live lives of love for God and others, but that requires we love ourselves in a God-designed way. Which brings us to the first rule of caregiving.

If you are caregiver, whether a parent caring for a child, a nurse or doctor caring for a patient, a child caring for an elderly parent—the first rule is the health of the caregiver, because if you don't maintain your health then you cannot provide care to others and will need others to care for you. Thus it is important to step back and establish the baseline requirements in your life to maintain your health—such as 7-8 hours of sleep per night, regular healthy meals, time for exercise, time for personal meditation and prayer, time for Sabbath rest, relaxation, recreation. And we only compromise these routines for true emergencies, and only for brief periods of time.

Even Jesus our Savior and model, regularly took time away from needy people to sleep, eat, spend time with His Father, and with His friends.

Read first paragraph,

- We all know the text: " ' "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" ' " (Luke 10:27, NIV). Yet, our love for God can become superficial if we say that we love God but do not obey Him. We think that we love God, but how is this love demonstrated in our day-to-day life? Loving God requires full commitment of our heart, soul, body, and mind—daily. Anyone can say that he or she loves

> God; doing it, however, requires conscious effort. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 56).

How do you hear this sentence? "Yet, our love for God can become superficial if we say that we love God but do not obey Him"?

Have you ever heard this before? Jesus of course said that if we love Him we will obey His commandments—so this is quite a righteous idea; it is absolutely true. Yet, is it possible this truth, straight from Jesus, can be twisted to teach a lie, to discourage and tear down rather than encourage and build up? Can people who love God and seek to obey Him because they love Him actually have that love destroyed and end up leaving God because they sought to obey Him?

If this can happen how and what is the underlying problem, distortion, or lie that causes the one seeking to obey God because they love Him to leave Him?

How about this scenario—and you tell me if I am merely making up something that is complete fantasy, make-believe, has never happened, or is so remote it basically doesn't really occur, or is this something you have seen and heard of?

A young person goes to a Christian high school or college for the first time, and while there they meet Christian friends who share Jesus with them, and the Holy Spirit moves on their heart, and they experience the joy of salvation. They give their heart to Jesus and are thrilled with His love in their heart and they are on fire with love for Jesus and want to tell everyone they know about Him.

They eagerly want to get baptized, so they go to the local church pastor, with joy and happiness in their heart, telling of their love for Jesus and ask for baptism. But the pastor, instead of celebrating their conversion and scheduling a baptism, asks them if they have accepted the 28 fundamental beliefs and begun obeying God's law?

The young person looks confused and admits they haven't heard of the 28 fundamental beliefs. So the pastor goes on to tell them that if they love God they will obey His commandments and do all that God has instructed us to do. He then shows the Scripture where Jesus says "if you love me you will keep my commandments", and then tells the young student that there are 28 fundamental beliefs that Jesus commands us to accept and follow. Well the new convert certainly doesn't want to disobey Jesus, so they eagerly agree to baptismal classes to learn how to obey.

In the classes they learn that before they can be baptized, they:

- Must, as at absolutely minimum, stop eating pork, shellfish, or other "unclean" meats, but it would be much better if they became a vegetarian and also gave up cheese.
- Must stop wearing jewelry, wedding rings are acceptable, but it would be better to not wear those either.
- Must stop having the occasional glass of wine with dinner or beer during a ball game.
- Must absolutely stop their smoking habit, for God would not allow such a filthy habit to go through the cleansing waters of baptism.

- Must, as a minimum, stop paid employment from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset—(unless of course they work in the healthcare industry for a corporation that makes billions of dollars, but if it is their own private practice they must close it down each week). They are also given a long list of traditional rules that must be followed during the Sabbath hours, like not eating out in restaurants on Sabbath, unless one has pre-purchased voucher to pay for the meal ahead of time, and many more similar rules that must be obeyed in order to love Jesus.
- They are told they must start paying a faithful tithe of 10% pretax dollars to the local church, and offerings on top of that.
- They are taught that sin is breaking God's law and if we love God we don't break his rules, that we obey. And whenever we do break God's law, He records it in His heavenly record and if we don't get Jesus' blood applied to our account by repentance and confession and claiming His blood as our payment, then that sin remains and will come up against us in the judgment and God will be required to punish us for our sin, which means torture and execution. So, it is important to always, every single day obey, to not do anything wrong, and not get into any legal trouble with God, but if you do slip up it is imperative to confess it right away, for if you sin and suddenly get hit by a car before you have time to claim the blood of Jesus, then that sin will remain and God will find you guilty and you will not be saved.

And after weeks of working hard to obey, of going to indoctrination classes to be told what to think, of being scared out of their love and into fearful obedience, they are finally baptized, but the joy, the love, the passion for Jesus—the light has gone out. Instead, they live in fear of making a mistake, of not doing things right, of forgetting something that could be disobedience and getting them in legal trouble. They either live a miserable joyless legalistic Christianity, or they leave the church.

Is this scenario a complete fantasy or has it happened to far too many people? And what is the root cause to this false Christianity? The lie that God's law functions like human law.

So, what does it actually mean to obey? It means we have in our heart the desire to listen, understand, and follow God's instructions, directions, leadings, and design laws to the best of our ability.

It is like the little child who eagerly wants to please mommy or daddy.

Consider, a parent out weeding in their garden and behind them walks up their three-year-old and the three-year-old sees what they are doing and pulls up a tomato plant with a big smile and says, "help daddy?" Is this a rebellious and disobedient child? But how is their performance? They pulled up a tomato plant not a weed?

Alternatively, you send your fourteen-year-old son out to weed the garden and they pull up only weeds, yet while they do it they curse daddy because they can't be inside playing on their game station.

Which child is the obedient child? Biblical obedience is having the heart right with God, a willingness to listen and do—to the best of our ability and understanding what God would have us do. It is not about how well we do something, or even if we are doing it right at all—the action of the child who

pulled up the tomato plant was completely wrong—but the heart attitude was completely right. And as soon as that child can comprehend the difference, that child will stop pulling tomato plants and joyfully pull only weeds.

The imposed law view, Satan's view, focuses on the behavior, the outward appearance, but God focuses on the heart!

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Who are we? Why are we here? What happens when we die? What is our ultimate fate? These are, in many ways, the most important questions mortal beings, beings who know that they are mortal (oysters and chickens are, too, but don't know it), can ask. And in the Gospel of Luke, someone comes to Jesus with what is, in fact, the most crucial question of all. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 57).

How do you answer these questions?

- Who are we?
    - Human beings—intelligent creatures, created by God in the image of God to be the living repository of God's living law of love, His character, His methods, the primary operating code upon which God Himself functions—and we have been given godlike abilities—the ability to procreate beings in our image, dominion to govern a planet, intelligence, self-determination, capacity to think and to act. We are created to be God's offspring, God's children, God's special creation.
- Why are we here?
    - Because God is love and God wanted a creation like ours to possess as many of His abilities as a creature could possess, to be able to pro-create, to make little beings in our image and to raise them and share in the joy of God when He creates beings and raises them—the joy of seeing them grow and learn. He wanted a creation that could share in some of His experiences, what it is like to govern in love, to dumb down your explanations in the treatment of children, or given none at all when lovingly caring for dogs, cats, goats, sheep. If Adam and Eve would have remained loyal. They would have had children in a world without sin, they would have governed over the entire planet, and they would have interacted with their children differently than the other creatures. God and humans would have grown in fellowship, intimacy as they shared their parenting and governing experiences together.
    - But we are here in this circumstance because of evil, because of Satan, because he was jealous of Jesus and because he began lying about God in heaven and lied about God to Adam and Eve. Those lies were believed and the circle of love and trust was broken. Adam and Eve infected themselves with fear and selfishness, known as sin, and their condition was no longer in harmony with God and God's law of life. Thus they became

terminal, dead in trespass and sin. And because they still had the ability to procreate beings in their image, they had children born infected with fear and selfishness, born with a terminal sin condition. This is our state now. But God loved us too much to let us die of this condition, so He sent Jesus to take up our terminal condition and cure it, to eradicate from the humanity He partook the infecting death causing element and restore humanity to perfect sinlessness thus becoming the second Adam, the new head of humanity. And through trust we can participate in that victory and experience the indwelling Holy Spirit who takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us. We are reborn with new hearts and right spirits that again operate upon God's law of love and truth.

- What happens when we die?
    - The hardware degrades, the body turns to dust
    - The energy (breath of life) returns to God who gave it
    - The soul/psyche/individuality/software is stored safely with Jesus in heaven on the heavenly servers the Bible calls the Lamb's book of life, asleep, waiting for download into new hardware at the second coming.
- What is our ultimate fate?
    - It depends on whether we have accepted the remedy to our terminal condition—
        - For those who have taken the Remedy of Jesus their ultimate fate is eternal life
        - For those who have not their ultimate fate is eternal non-existence

These are my answers to the questions above—does the world offer different answers?

And what is the result of the world's answers?

What happens to a person if they believe that they are only a biological accident, the latest evolutionary change brought about by random forces, that they have no Creator, no purpose, no future, and that the principle of life is kill competitors in order to pass your genes along to another generation?

This godless philosophy is demonic, it is a hopeless discouraging worldview, that increases fear, despondency, discouragement, and people, seeking to avoid this demoralizing experience turn to all forms of distractions and entertainments—alcohol, drugs, gaming, movies, adventure seeking—all purposeless simply to divert their minds away to momentary pleasures, or they seek ever more power and control to make themselves feel safe.

MONDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Sometimes we want answers but do not put in the work ourselves to find them. Jesus said: " 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' " (Luke 10:26, ESV). Jesus pointed to a

> very important aspect of learning. Instead of only listening to what others have to tell us, we need to read the Scriptures (the Word of God) for ourselves. The answers already are there, and the Holy Spirit works on our hearts to impress upon us what we need to do. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 58).

The lesson points out a very important truth, that all strength, all learning, is the result of personal effort, exertion, application. But often people who want answers, rather than studying for themselves they ask someone else to tell them the answer.

There is certainly a place for teachers, parents, professors to instruct students, to teach the facts, the principles, the methods, the protocols, reality—for without someone to tell us the basics we wouldn't know anything. A child wouldn't know the sky is blue and the grass is green if they are not told. But, teaching facts, design laws, reality, is not the same things as telling people how to problem solve, the answers to difficult questions, the explanations of life. Each person must study and know for themselves.

There is a difference between knowing the right answer and knowing why it is the right answer. For instance, if your child says—"2 plus 2 is 4" and you say, "How do you know that?" and they say, "because the teacher said so." They have the right answer, but they don't know how to math, they can't problem solve, they need someone else to tell them the answers. And if it isn't math, if it is a life problem, same concern—can they problem solve without someone telling them the answer. And if it is a spiritual issue, do they know the truth for themselves, or only the answers someone else has told them?

In relationships—can one person tell you ABOUT another person? Can one person KNOW another person FOR YOU?

Can other people tell you the facts, principles, science of buoyancy, and the mechanics of swimming? Can other people swim for you?

Can other people describe the nutritional facts of oranges? Can other people enjoy the taste of the orange and absorb the nutrients for you?

Understand design law—it is reality. Our God is the God of reality. And no other person can know God for you, can experience salvation for you, can mature and gain wisdom for you, can understand how reality works for you.

We can tell you how to swim, but you must get in the water, we can share the joy of what God's love and grace has done in our lives, but you must experience it for yourself.

The problem with the evil systems of the world—Satan's systems is that he doesn't want people to develop like this. He wants people to be mindless, thoughtless drones, serfs, slaves that allow another to do their thinking for them, who have accepted what another says, and obey because someone else has decided.

Consider these two historic quotes, what do you think?

> Under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit, the powers of the missionary of the Lord are to be put to their very highest use. It is thus that man may become a laborer together with God. **All whom God has endowed with reasoning powers may become intellectual Christians**. God has given abundant **evidence of the truth of his word**, and he requires that those who would be counted as the followers of Christ should **study the Scriptures**, that they may be able to give to every man a **reason** of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. **He has not required any one to believe without evidence.** Let the inquirer after truth **put to the stretch his mental powers** in diligent study of the word of God. **To neglect this duty is to place the soul in peril of eternal death**. Each one is **required to understand the conditions upon which eternal life depends**. We must know what saith the Lord, that we may be able to live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." **We cannot afford to have another settle questions** of such momentous import as those concerning our soul's salvation. **We must open the Scriptures for ourselves**, searching the word of God prayerfully, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus. **We cannot afford to trust to the ministers, to follow idle traditions, to subject our souls to human authority**, but we must know for ourselves what God has said. We are to be laborers together with God, and we must know, we must be determined to know, what are the conditions upon which we may become heirs of salvation. **If we neglect this important duty, we shall die in our sins**. (Medical Missionary May 1, 1892, par. 5).

What is being described? Is what is being described true? Why?

- Is there a difference in an external authority granting a legal declaration over someone and someone experiencing a change in their internal operational functions?
- Is there a difference in a doctor declaring someone cancer free and the person actually being cancer free?
- Is there a difference in a judge declaring someone free of guilt and the person actually being free of guilt?
- Is there a difference in a teacher declaring that a student knows how to do calculus and the student actually being able to do calculus?

God is the God of reality—of truth, of what is real. Satan is the father of fantasy, of pretend, of make believe, of declaring what is not true to be true. Thus, if we want salvation we must in reality experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who transforms us. We must know God and Jesus Christ for ourselves. Consider this quote:

> **If we get the wisdom of man before us as the wisdom of God**, we are led astray by the foolishness of man's wisdom. [What is the wisdom of man? That God's law is imposed, that justice is holding people accountable for their crimes by the infliction of punishment. That we can have an orderly society by exercising more might, power, and force. That God is the source of inflicted death for sin. That authority comes from the one with the most power and therefore we are to surrender our thinking to those who make the rules and do what they say lest we be

punished. Thus, we let the pastor, pope, priest, rabbi, cleric, doctor, governor, president, head of the CDC tell us what to think.] Here is the great danger with many. **They have not an experience for themselves**. [They believe what they are told, they have not examined and tested things for themselves and come to their own conclusion based on objective reality.] They have not been in the habit of prayerfully **considering for themselves, with unprejudiced, unbiased judgment,** questions and subjects that are new, which are liable to arise. [They don't examine the questions, the issues, based on the merits, based on the facts, evidence, truths, and principles of God—the design law of how life operates. No! They answer questions through biases, assumptions, prejudices of what they have been previously taught, through traditions of the church or society, through the human imposed law lie.] **They wait to see what others will think**. If they dissent, that is all that is needed. The evidence in their own minds then is positive that it is all of no account whatever. [They surrender their thinking to others. They replace objective truth with the opinion of the scholar or theologian or some other subject matter expert, rather than examining the evidence for themselves and prayerfully coming to their own conclusion.] This class is not small; but although their numbers are large, it does not change the fact that they are **weak minded through long yielding to the enemy, inexperienced, and will always be as sickly as babes, walking by others' light, living on others' experience, feeling as others feel, acting as others act**. They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others. They are merely **shadows of others** whom they think [are] right. [Having spent their lives surrendering their thinking to others, allowing others to tell them the answers, they don't know how to problem solve, they don't know how to differentiate objective facts for claims, opinions, and proclamations, they don't know the design laws of God. They only know what others have told them. They know doctrines, they know rules, they know what others will think, what the media tells them, but they don't have a clue for themselves of what is right and wrong.] **These will all fail of everlasting life unless they become sensible** of their wavering character, and correct it. They will be **unable to cope** with the perils of the last days. They will **possess no stamina** to resist the Devil; **for they do not know that it is he. Some one must be at their side to inform them whether it is a foe approaching, or a friend**. [They don't have the ability to discern, they have never developed by practice the ability to tell right from wrong (Hebrews 5:14. They have not exercised their God given ability to reason, think, weigh evidences—and if you don't use it you lose it.] They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned. They are **not wise** in those things which relate to the kingdom of God. [Which is reality, objective truth, design laws. They have accepted fantasy, imposed law, rules, made up consequences, the belief in a future in which the Creator is the source of death inflicted out of unpropitiated wrath.] None, young or old, are excusable in **trusting to another to have an experience for them.** Said the angel, "Cursed be man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." A **noble self-reliance** is needed in the Christian experience and warfare. (Review and Herald August 10, 1886).

So how do we have an experience for ourselves?

Consider this historical quote, do you agree or disagree?

> Experience is said to be the best teacher. Genuine experience is indeed superior to mere theoretical knowledge, but many have an erroneous idea as to what constitutes experience. **Real experience is gained by a variety of careful experiments, made with the mind free from prejudice, uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits.** The **results** are marked with careful solicitude, and an anxious **desire to learn, to improve, and to reform** on every point that is not in harmony with **physical and moral laws**. (Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene p. 109).

This is the integrative evidence-based approach, studying God's word and comparing it with God's laws built into nature and how life actually works, our experiences.

Fantasy is when we believe things that contradict objective reality—like there is no male and female, gender is a social construct etc. That is fantasy, falsehood, demonic.

And the goal of all of this is to decouple minds from reality, to get minds to live in a fantasy world a "reimagined" world, where lies are accepted as truth. This has been done throughout history through religions of all kinds, and is done in Christianity when we accept the fantasy that God functions like a human dictator making up rules and using power to inflict punishment for rule breaking—the penal legal punishment theory of atonement. And it is being done today by the godless left with their fantasies about essentially everything.

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs,

- The lawyer had asked the question, and he himself gave the answer: " ' "Love the Lord your God with all your heart . . ." and "Love your neighbor as yourself" ' "(Luke 10:27, NIV).
  What was the response of Jesus? He said, " 'You have answered rightly' " (Luke 10:28, NKJV). Jesus went on to challenge him to do something about it, by saying, " 'Do this and you will live' " (Luke 10:28, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 59).

Is Jesus' instruction to "do this and you will live" a rule one must keep in order to avoid getting into legal trouble and executed by the rule-giving judge?

Why did Jesus say that if you love God and others you will have eternal life?

What is the basis of life? Life comes from God, and God is love—and God has built living organisms to operate upon certain design protocols. What are those protocols called? His laws, and what happens if we break the design protocols for life? Injury, suffering, and if not healed, death. Thus the plan of salvation is the plan of life, it is a rescue plan, a recovery plan, a redemption plan, a healing plan that restores those out of harmony with how life is built to operate to be back in harmony to how God constructed life to operate. It is restoring God's living law into the heart and mind of the sinner:

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (Hebrews 8:10 NIV84).

This is why the Bible says:

- The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. (Psalm 19:7 NIV84).

Jesus is simply saying if you live in harmony with the laws of life you have life.

It is sin, fear, selfishness, the breech in love that severs your connection with God that causes death. Restoration of trust/faith, based upon the truth, results in opening the heart to receive the indwelling Spirit who purges the fear and selfishness, strengthens our trust and love and solidifies our understanding in truth.

The lesson cites James 2:17-22:

- In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. (James 2:17-22 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Martin Luther rejected the book of James as inspired because of this passage. He considered this adding works to faith and Martin Luther while seeking to follow the truth created a new theological theory that moved away from old ideas, but sadly that idea itself was based upon imposed human law and thus was also false, but still a move in the right direction. And that made up theological construct is called penal substitution theology which Martin Luther invented in order to overthrow the false teaching about purgatory. But his penal/legal theory sadly was based on the human law lie and while moving away from some of the errors of the past, like purgatory, his theories did not complete the Reformation. More truth was needed for that—and the key truth, which many theologians in our own church have not accepted is the truth that God's laws are design laws, not imposed rules like Rome makes.

If you understand the law as imposed rules then you teach various systems of works or vicarious legal theologies with law keeping done by Jesus that frees us of the responsibility to keep the law.

But if you come back to worship God as Creator and understand His law as design law, it makes perfect sense. It is simply saying that:

- believing that it is beneficial to eat a healthy diet does you no good if you eat only junk food
- believing that being faithful to one's spouse is right, builds trust, prevents guilt and shame does you no good if you cheat on your spouse
- believing that an antibiotic will cure your pneumonia does you no good if you don't take it
- believing that exercise will make you stronger does you no good if you don't exercise
- believing in Jesus and believing that salvation is through trust in Him, does you no good if you don't actually trust Him. And how do we trust Him? By putting into action what we know He would have us do with our lives—we do what is right in governance of ourselves and we trust Jesus with how things turn out, instead of calculating how to get every advantage for self or make things turn out the way we want. Abraham is an example, the three worthies on the plain of Durah are an example.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- "Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation."—Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 49. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 60).

What is another name for "principle"? Law, thus the underlying law of God's government is love.

The same author is a variety of places makes this clear, here is one example:

- It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of **self-sacrificing love**. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that **the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven**; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has **its source in the heart of God**; and that in the meek and lowly **One is manifested the character of Him** who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. (The Desire of Ages p. 19).

The law of love is the law of life—what does this mean? Is it a rule that God says you must do or He will kill you? Or is it operational, functional, a design protocol upon which life is actually built by God to operate?

It is the principle of giving upon which all life is constructed to operate—we have given many examples of this, such as the oxygen/CO2 cycle, the water cycle and more.

And this law, this principle, this motive to actions must be the basis of Christian character—why? For it is the only basis for life, it is the only possible way to be at-one with God who is love; any other basis takes us out of harmony with God and His kingdom.

How do we experience this love? By coming to know God:

- We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19 NIV84)
- God's kindness leads you toward repentance (Romans 2:4 NIV84).

It is only through experiencing, knowing, God for ourselves that our fears can be overcome by His goodness, mercy, love, kindness, grace and that we surrender our hearts to Him and invite Him and our hope for transformation is not disappointed because:

- God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:5 NIV84)

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the story of the Good Samaritan, read the second and third paragraph,

- Are there people around us who have been unjustly treated by others? Have we done whatever we can to help them?

  It is true that sometimes pastors, elders, and members do not help those who need help. Sometimes people of another faith may be kinder toward people in the community than we are. We may talk about being kind; yet, others may meet the needs of people that we don't address. If our faith means anything, we must reach out and help those in need. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 61).

When the lesson says, "Sometimes people of another faith may be kinder toward people in the community than we are" what do they mean? They are primarily meaning people of another Christian denomination, not people who don't believe in God and who have faith in Buddha, or godless science.

But if people actually have a different "faith" than you and I do not mean a different denomination than you, but a different faith—what would that mean?

In Revelation chapter 7 it described the company of the saved at the end of time in these words:

- a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9 NIV84).

Do the people described in this verse have a different faith or the same faith? Don't they all have saving faith in Jesus as their Savior?

Does this describe people from one denomination?

So, how can people from more than one denominational or cultural group have the same saving faith?

Do we err when we change the definition of faith from what the saved experience in their relationship with Jesus, into a euphemism for a belief system, a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs, membership in a denomination?

The lesson rightly points out that if our faith means anything we are to help those in need, but that begs the question what does it mean to help those in need?

Consider this case of a man who came to Jesus seeking help to solve a family dispute—did Jesus help Him?

- Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" (Luke 12:13-14 NIV84)

Did Jesus help this man?

Was Paul refusing to help people who were hungry when he wrote:

- For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV84).

What does it mean to help people?

When we love others we do help—but we can only actually help if we understand reality, if we understand God's design laws of how He built life and health to operate. We cannot help people by allowing empathy, compassion, sympathy to lead us to do for others that which is their responsibility to do for self. For instance,

- We do not help people by solving life's problems for them, but by teaching them how to think and discern for themselves
- We do not help someone by doing their physical therapy exercises for them…even if they are crying because the exercises hurt
- We do not help someone by doing their psychotherapy for them, even if their psychological work is painful and causes them to cry
- We do not help people by insulating them from the consequences of destructive choices, but by opening avenues to heal and recover from those choices—but those avenues will always require their choice to actively engage and apply to their own lives—why? Because God's healing is not about simple relief of pain, but of healing the underlying pathology that is causing the pain. And that is sin-sickness of heart and mind, fear and selfishness, and that can only be removed by the choice of the sinner to exercise their trust in God, to confront the fear, the same, the guilt, and choose to stop running from it and instead to stand and face it by

trusting God with their lives, stop trying to protect self, and instead choosing to live the truth that God has convicted them to live.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Free Time-Limited Give Away:

As we enter this season of gratitude and thanksgiving Come and Reason Ministries would like to provide you with one of our special resources to share with someone else. We have just completed reprinting our popular resource *The Remedy of the Lord in Song The Psalms* with an embossed text and soft touch cover—beautiful for gift giving!

These books will be available 10/14/2023 until 11/17/2023 in quantities of 1, 2, or 5 per order. It's our way of showing our gratitude to you and hope you share with other the good news shared in the Psalms! The printed copy is available in the USA only. For our global audience you can access and share the Psalms through The Remedy app which is downloaded through your App Store.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 8
Mission to the Needy

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

- "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:40 NIV84).

In the parable these words are spoken to a certain group of people at a certain time in human history—who hears these words and when?

- "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." (Matthew 25:313-32 NIV84).

So when are these words being spoken? At the end of time, when Jesus comes, this is the final conclusion of what determines who is saved and who is lost, who is going to heaven and who is not.

And what did Jesus say makes the difference, what is the separating factor?

Jesus lists many specific items that separates the sheep from the goats. Note what Jesus recites:

- "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" (Matthew 25:34-36 NIV84).

What are the elements Jesus recites? Every element is an act of love, of beneficence, of giving to bless, heal, uplift, another person.

Did Jesus list any of the following as determining who is among the sheep or goats:

- You have had the right ceremonial baptism?
- You partook of the right ceremonial communion wafer?
- You engaged in ceremonial foot washing before taking the ceremonial wafer?
- You didn't wear any jewelry?
- You didn't eat flesh foods?

- You accepted the seventh day Sabbath and closed your business and started going to church on the Sabbath?
- You accepted the 28 fundamental beliefs and publicly declared me as your Savior?
- You were a member of X denominational church?

Why did Jesus list what Jesus' listed and why do so many Christians focus upon things like ceremonies, doctrinal correctness, diet, dress, or organizational membership?

Can everyone of the items I listed be done from fear and selfishness without being reborn, without love in the heart, without actually knowing God?

But do people genuinely sacrifice their time and energy to uplift others without love in their heart?

Again, Jesus reveals God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom, built by God upon design laws that are functional, that life itself is constructed to operate upon. God does not run His universe like a Roman dictator, like a creature, with made up rules requiring external infliction of punishment.

But because Christianity became Romanized when it accepted Rome's version of law, almost all of Christianity teaches that God's law is imposed and God's justice is legally enforce through His use of external power to punish sinners, and salvation is legal adjustment through external application of some blood payment to an account in heaven, and that we participate through a faith-based claim, but then must start keeping the rules—so Christianity becomes a doctrinal battle of various Bible scholars to analyze the Scripture and determine what are the true legal requirements that apply, what laws are still "on the books" and what laws has God rescinded, amended, or revoked.

It is really a sad state of affairs because it keeps Christianity divided into over 41,000 different groups arguing this text and that text, this requirement and that requirement, all focused on self, and fear of missing something, of not knowing some fact, remembering some sin, doing the ceremony the wrong way, or believing the wrong doctrine.

But when Jesus comes back—there are only two groups—the sheep and the goats, and all the saved are among the sheep, and all the sheep will not be from one earthly denominational church, all the sheep when Jesus comes will not have participated in communion in the same way, will not all have been baptized in the same way, will not all dress in the same way, or have eaten the same diet, or gone to church on the same day—but they will all have been reborn to live out God's law of truth, love, in freedom in how they treat others.

Jesus said,

- The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20, 21 NIV84).

I am suggesting that Satan's true end-time deception is not about a wrong doctrine it is in getting Christians to adopt his false methods and principles, regardless of doctrinal purity.

Consider those religious leaders who crucified Christ; their primary issue wasn't that they had a different Sabbath, Bible, feast days, diet, or dress code than Jesus. What was different was their methods and principles. They were driven by fear and survival drives and, thus, accepted the methods and principles of this fallen world, which is might makes right, survival of the fittest, the strongest survive, those with power win, so right is to impose one's will through law and law enforcement and justice is to punish rule breakers—and Jesus was a rule breaker.

And what did those religious leaders do? By their methods and motives, "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50 NIV84). The ends justify the means.

The Jewish leaders who rejected Christ did not do so because of a disagreement over a list of doctrines. They did so because they hated His methods of truth, love, and freedom. They hated Jesus' compassion, His grace, His forgiving of sinners, His healing of the unclean, His method of Sabbath observance, and His treating women and foreigners as having equal value as human beings. They hated His shift away from behavioral and doctrinal rules to character development based upon love for God and others.

As we approach the second coming of Christ, Satan will not limit his attacks upon the saints to false doctrines. It will not simply be a question of whether one claims faith in Jesus, observes a day of worship, or practices a certain method of religious ceremony. **The final test will be about whether we maintain loyalty to Jesus by being *like Jesus* in the methods we practice in how we live and treat others!** When at the second coming the King separates the sheep (saved) from the goats (lost), He specifically tells us what makes the difference—how they treated others!

Are we the type of people who, while claiming to be followers of Jesus, would use the power of our position to intimidate, coerce, or pressure people to violate their consciences—to do what we believe is right what they believe is wrong? What if it were to "save lives"—perhaps even an entire nation? Isn't it better for one man to die for the people than for the nation to be destroyed? Isn't it better for a few healthy, symptom-free employees to be forced to take a medicine they don't want than for the business to be fined, closed, or for people to die?

Satan's final deception will be along these lines: Attacking the saints with a false allegation that threatens our reputations, livelihoods, status, or income—all designed to incite fear and our desire to survive, to protect ourselves, to protect our reputations, to lash back, to attack and destroy the enemy who is falsely accusing us. We will be tempted with anger, resentment, and a desire to take revenge, to "punish" our enemies. However, if we do that—even when the other party is in the wrong—whose methods are we practicing, whose kingdom are we advancing, whose character are we forming? Thus, Paul advised:

- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. … If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14, 20, 21 NIV84).

And Jesus said:

- You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:43–48 NIV84).

When we are wronged, we have to decide how we will respond, whose method, law, principle will we apply to ourselves in our response to injustice? Will we apply to our own hearts and minds faith/trust in Jesus, choose to love our enemies and trust Jesus with righting the wrongs, closing the lions' mouths, shielding us from the flames of persecution, or do we seek to use the methods of the world kill or be killed?

What happens in our hearts and minds if we retain resentment, bitterness, anger, or a desire for payback against those who have wronged us? And what happens if we justify those desires by seeking payback through human law and human justice? Have you seen the various groups fighting around the world for greater political power in order to enforce their version of what is right upon others? And what is happening to the people who do this? What is happening in such communities? Do you see the destruction that comes when we seek to achieve our understanding of righteousness through the methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement?

But what happens to our characters if we choose to accept Jesus, choose to reject fear and survival drives, and, instead, choose to bless those who persecute us and to love our enemies?

The final deceptions will be how do we treat those who we believe are wrong, who worship on the wrong day, who believe in the wrong god, who don't eat the right foods, who are not part of our community—it will not be proving our position right, but loving people who we believe are wrong.

For it is about whether we have had God's character, His living law restored within us and whether we love like God loves in how we govern ourselves, and this determines which law is written upon our hearts.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the story of friends bringing the paralytic man to Jesus and lowering him down through the roof. Read second paragraph,

- By bringing their friend to Jesus, these men took on the responsibility to care for him. God is calling us to be like this man's friends—to lead the needy to Jesus Christ. This work requires faith, action, patience, and a willingness, if need be, to be unconventional. The men came to Jesus but encountered barriers. They could not bring their helpless friend to Jesus through traditional means. They did not give up; instead they found an innovative way of getting the man to Jesus Christ. Dropping their friend down from the roof! Yet, according to Luke, Jesus approved of what they did (see Luke 5:20). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 65).

I am not sure what the lesson means by the first sentence, "By bringing their friend to Jesus, these men took on the responsibility to care for him."

What do you think they mean by this? It seems confusing to me? Are they saying that if Jesus didn't heal the man that they were taking responsibility for his lifelong care? That his family were not going to care for him, or only that they took the responsibility to get him to Jesus? But that seems like a weird way to say it, why not say, they took the responsibility to get him help, to get him to Jesus?

Are they suggesting that if we help someone who is wheelchair bound by giving them a ride to the doctor that we take on the responsibility to care for them from that point onward?

I am not understanding what they are saying, it must mean something else?

If they mean that they took the responsibility to get him to Jesus—okay that makes sense, in that context, because Jesus was physically right there and it was within their power to bring the man physically into Jesus' presence. And the lesson highlights the creative way they did it.

If that is what they mean, how do we apply those insights to our lives today?

Do we have a responsibility to share Jesus with people, to creatively do things to place the gospel, the truth about Jesus, within the reach of people, and to invite people to meet and know Jesus by sharing our experiences with Jesus, the lessons we have learned in nature and Scripture, valuable resources etc.?

What are ways you have found effective in leading people to Jesus?

Read the third paragraph,

- Jesus' desire is for us to bring our helpless friends to Him. The Bible refers to Jesus as the Great Physician who longs to forgive and heal those who are suffering, whoever they are. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 65).

Does Jesus forgive only those who come to Him, or does Jesus forgive everyone, but only those who come to Him receive the forgiveness that He has already chosen and enacted from His heart? And it is only by receiving into our hearts the love, grace, forgiveness of God through Jesus that we are won to trust and open the heart for healing.

So, yes Jesus does long to heal everyone, and Jesus actually forgives everyone—but not everyone accepts and experiences His forgiveness and thus even though forgiven by Him, they remain in fear, selfishness, rebellion, and dying from the terminal sin condition.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the methods of Jesus in reaching people and highlights four steps or actions that Jesus took that we are to employ in our mission to others:

- He mingle, socialized, and got out with people actually connecting and meeting them
- He showed sympathy
- He ministered to their needs
- He won their confidence

This certainly makes sense, it is hard to help people if we never connect with them in some way, and it is hard to help people if we don't sympathize or care about them, and people will often reject any helpful intervention if they don't trust or have confidence in the one offering to help.

So it makes sense that we need to connect with people, care about them, sympathize with their situation, and build some basis for them to have confidence in us enough to consider and try whatever we are offering to help them.

But that begs the question—what does it mean to help someone?

It is enough to meet them, sympathize with them, and truly and genuinely want their best interest, and therefore win their trust in order to be able to actually help them, or is something more needed?

Well on a purely emotionally relational level if you meet someone, care about them, and empathize with them—there is a benefit to doing that and nothing more. So it is helpful for people to know they are valued, cared about, loved as the person they are, so that will always be helpful. But does that mean the specific need or problem will be resolved by our connecting, sympathizing and engendering trust?

What else is needed to move beyond the human connection compassion benefit?

Possessing and administering truth—it requires that we understand God's design laws for life and health, and we examine the individual and their circumstance through the lens of how God built life and health to operate and that we diagnose accurately what is the cause of the problem, and then we bring to bear—as we are able—interventions that are in harmony with God's design laws to restore the person to wellness.

In other words, we meet, we care for (love), we are genuine and honest i.e. trustworthy—thus build rapport, build a therapeutic alliance, but we must also have something to offer that is objectively, factually, true—reality based and not fantasy, false, mythical, magical, fake, wrong, or in any other way violating the protocols life and health are built upon.

Like the doctors who treated George Washington's pneumonia—they met him, sympathized with him, won his confidence, and then bled him and leeched him to bleed out the evil humors. Were they trying to harm him? No! They were trying to help, their consciences were clear, they did not seek to harm, or exploit, or abuse. They were acting in love, but they were not acting with truth and thus they harmed him.

Can this be done on a spiritual level, people meet others, sympathize with them, win their trust and then intervene with some spiritual intervention that harms rather than heals? How? Because they introduce something that violates some aspect of God's design law for life and health.

Can you think of any examples?

Jesus said to the Jewish evangelists of His day,

- "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." (Matthew 23:15 NIV84).

Winning people to false systems of theology, views of God that are wrong, that incite fear, that crush love do not bring healing, such falsehoods damage and destroy.

The methods of mingling, showing sympathy, ministering to real needs, and engendering trust can not only be done by good hearted and innocent people who love but are ignorant of the truth like the doctors who treated George Washington, but these same methods can be used by people who do not love, cult leaders, fanatics, and purveyors of evil. The difference between the good and evil is that the good not only love but they also possess and advance truth.

So the point is that what Jesus did is absolutely right—but Jesus also brought truth to bear as well as healing the person physically, he told the man after healing him:

- “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” (John 5:14 NIV84).

This particular man’s condition was a result of his lifestyle choices; we are not told specifically what his sin was, but there are sinful choices that can result in paralysis. Jesus is saying, now that the consequences of sinful living have been removed, stop choosing to injure yourself in this way.

It would be like an alcoholic in liver failure getting a liver transplant—and if they want to avoid liver failure again, then they need to stop drinking and live in harmony with the laws of health. If the alcoholic doesn’t stop drinking no legal or medical authority will impose punishment on them, but they will destroy their health again.

Likewise, if this man that Jesus healed went back into sinful living, God would not impose legal punishment upon him, but he would again destroy himself, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about refugees and immigrants—any thoughts about this?

In God’s universe, in the way God looks down on earth—there is only one human race all descended from Adam and Eve, and every single person born into this world is born as a part of that biological family tree.

And every single person is born with a terminal sin condition and is destined to eternal death from what we inherit from Adam…but God loved the world too much to let us die, so He sent Jesus to be born into this very same sick and dying family tree and to open a new door, a new path, a new branch of the human family tree that leads to eternal life with a new head a second Adam. And because of Jesus there are now two human family trees—the family born of Adam, born in sin, conceived in iniquity, and the family reborn of God, born of Jesus, restored, recreated, and renewed in righteousness.

The human beings born of Adam have the law of sin and death written upon their heart. The human beings reborn of God have the law of God, the law of life written upon their hearts.

Thus, on Earth today there are only two human races—the saved and the lost, the healed and the terminal, the sheep and the goats—those who have been reborn with Jesus as their head and those who have rejected that opportunity and retained fear, selfishness, rebellion, sin as the inheritance from Adam.

The two antagonistic principles, God’s principles of truth, love, freedom are at war against lies, fear based selfishness, and coercion. It is like two different operating systems driving the function of people. And it is these two systems, methods, motives, that divide society.

The first set of brothers, Cain and Abel, were not united in godly love but were divided in sin—in fear and selfishness—which inflamed envy and jealousy in Cain, who murdered his righteous brother (Genesis 4:8).

There has been a division in the human family ever since—a division between those who, despite being born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5), have been won back to trust in God and reborn with righteous hearts and those who have hardened their hearts against God and become solidified in selfishness and sin.

At the time of the Flood, only one righteous man remained on the earth with his family. The rest of the human population had solidified into a worldwide rebellion against God. In mercy, in love, as a therapeutic act to keep open the avenue for the Messiah and fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15, God put that rebellious world to sleep in death.

But shortly thereafter, the rejectors of God's mercy began to unite again in a unified rebellion against God, seeking to build a tower into heaven. So, once again, God therapeutically intervened by confusing the languages and scattering the people around the world (leading to the distinct racial divisions we see today), steps designed by God to slow the lies of Satan and impede humanity's rebellion against heaven and, thereby, allow the plan of salvation to be completed (Genesis 11:8, 9).

These language, tribal, racial, national, and ethnic differences are not evil; these differences are not sinful—they have no bearing on our worth as human beings, they have no value in determining good or evil, but God did foresee that these differences along superficial characteristics would work to keep the sinful human race from uniting in a worldwide rebellion against Him and heaven, like the people did at the time of the Flood.

In God's kingdom we do not divide ourselves based on race, tribe, language, national or ethnic differences.

But there is to be an intelligent and purposeful division that we as Christians actively seek to create and promote among all people.

The Bible recognizes this division as the only one that righteous people are to act upon—the division between good and evil. The Bible describes this division between the righteous and the unrighteous in these terms:

- The sheep and the goats
- The wheat and the tares
- The fruitful vine and withered vine
- The pure woman and the harlot
- The faithful and unfaithful
- The holy and the unholy
- The saved and the lost

Dividing along these lines is godly. Differentiating the righteous from the unrighteous in order to wisely discriminate regarding whom to associate with, date, marry, hire, place on our boards, and allow to be our friends is a very godly approach to life.

- Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NIV84).

We are called to discriminate the honest from the dishonest, the loyal from the disloyal, those who love others from those who are selfish and exploit others. We are to actively discern the wise from the foolish, the kind from the cruel, and the merciful from the vengeful.

The apostle Paul taught that as we approach the second coming of Christ, we are to be purposeful in disassociating ourselves from certain people:

- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. **Have nothing to do with them** (2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We are to be discriminating in our associations, relationships, hiring, and friends because, as Paul also wrote, "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV84).

God created human beings to be united in love and trust, but humanity became divided when Adam and Eve sinned. The natural state of this sinful world is selfishness, and Jesus did not come to unite with sin and selfishness but to set people free from sin and restore them to righteousness and eternal life. This necessarily means separating people from all that is unholy and ungodly.
Jesus cannot provide eternal life to people who refuse to leave sinfulness behind.

Therefore, Jesus seeks to separate people from sin—and all associations that keep sin active in their lives!

But Satan works to get people to embrace the fear, selfishness and sin and to divide society based on race, ethnicity, language, national origin and other innocuous differences.

Satan knows he cannot win if Jesus is uplifted, if the gospel is made central. Therefore, he actively opposes it. The evil one does not want people to focus upon Jesus and then recognize the righteous divide between truth and lies, love and selfishness, good and evil, so he has a two-step trap to keep people from turning to Jesus and thereby inflame evil divisions.

Step One: Satan replaces the godly dividing line between moral and characterological good and evil with some other superficial difference occurring among people groups—race, gender, language, ethnicity, national origin, etc.—and causes people to attribute value, privilege, and superiority/inferiority to those differences, thereby inflaming fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, hate, and violence and inciting acts of injustice against those deemed inferior.

In step one, he deceives some people into believing the lie that skin color or gender or national origin makes some people inferior or less valuable or worthy. This lie leads to the creation of various caste systems (including the historical notion of "divine right" of rulers and the lie that there is an actual difference between people in the royal class and commoners). And these false divisions cause people to inflict real injustice upon the innocent—slavery, Jim Crow, aristocratic oppression of the commoner, and many other forms of exploitation, abuse, and restrictions of human freedom.

His step-one lie has divided society for millennia—and people still fight over this lie today. But as evil as Satan's step-one deception is, his step-two lie is even more diabolical.

Step Two: Satan's second step to ensnare people into becoming like him and dividing society is by tricking good people who recognize his step-one lie into seeking to rectify the step-one injustices by ***using Satan's methods***.

This means that rather than pursuing justice by advancing the gospel and placing Jesus and God's methods of doing right at the center, Satan tricks people into placing the various injustices of the wicked at the center. Racism, sexism, and various other wrongs are focused upon, which inflames anger, outrage, and our sense of injustice—and then Satan offers his solution, "social justice," by the application of law, coercion, and external power to force behavior change, rather than winning people to love and trust. This two-step deceit keeps society divided, inflicts more layers of injustice upon more innocents, and actively keeps Jesus out of heart and mind, obstructing the only solution to racism and all other forms of human injustice.

What makes this so diabolical is that this method of seeking "social justice" causes people to feel good, to feel they are doing right, to even believe they are advancing God's kingdom—after all, they are opposing evil—but all the while, they are advancing Satan's kingdom, practicing his methods, spreading more evil, corrupting their own character, obstructing the gospel, and inciting greater societal division.

The only solution for division is to cut fear, selfishness, and sin out of human hearts. And the only way that can happen is to place Jesus Christ at the center. We must advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and practice His principles of truth, love, and freedom in how we treat others.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on helping the hurting…what does it mean to help?

If the government shows up and says they are here to help—do you feel immediate relief?

What is genuine help?

I have patients say all the time about some loved one, "I just want to help them."

But, what often happens is that the person seeking to help actually interferes with the health of the one they claim they want to help. Why and how?

Because many people are motivated by sympathy and empathy—they see someone they love hurting, struggling, in some form of pain—and they seek to help—by relieving the pain, the suffering, the immediate distress—but not the cause and often that action removes the impetus for the hurting one to get well.

Like removing the pain of someone with a cavity, but not filling the cavity. It is the pain that motivates the person to go to the dentist. Without the pain the cavity will grow.

What about a person doing physical therapy and they cry because it hurts—do you help them by doing the exercises for them?

What if it isn't physical therapy but psychotherapy, working through some past trauma—can you do that work for another? And do we help by focusing only on relieving the pain?

What about if a child is really struggling to learn math, they are angry, frustrated, throwing a temper tantrum—do we help the child by sitting down and basically doing their homework for them?

How much help is helping with a child writing a paper for school or doing other projects?

Where is the line between helping and infantilizing?

Remember God's design laws, if we want any ability to get stronger we must exercise it. If we want our children to develop skills we must give them opportunities to exercise those skills without us intervening to do it "better."

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 9
Mission to the Powerful

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think of the title?

The lesson points out that God loves the rich and powerful just as much as He loves the poor and powerless—and this is absolutely true.

But are there obstacles that obstruct the rich and powerful from receiving Jesus that the poor and powerless don't have? What are some of those?

- A diminished awareness of need? Can fame, power, and wealth deceive people into thinking that they are good, that they don't need God, or that they are already right with Him, whereas sickness, poverty, and powerlessness leads people to seek help from God?
- Can the rich and powerful be pursued by people wanting something from them—money, favors, (including from church organizations) so much so that they put barriers up (security, gated communities, staff and employee screeners) so that it is more difficult to reach them individually and also difficult to get materials into their hands?
- Can the rich and powerful have more distractions from whatever real life problems they struggle with—such as travel, entertainments, new and worldly exciting adventures that prevent them from considering the important questions of life?

Any suggestions on reaching the rich and powerful with the gospel?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Daniel chapter four, which is the dream of Nebuchadnezzar about a great tree that is cut down. That dream prophesied the coming 7 years in which Nebuchadnezzar would be in a psychotic state, living among the animals, and that when he acknowledges the God of heaven his sanity would be restored and he would be restored to the throne of his kingdom.

All of this came to pass and Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledge the God of heaven.

Read second paragraph,

- A striking example in the Bible of how God reaches powerful unbelievers is the story of King Nebuchadnezzar. God's judgment was executed on him in a way similar to some Israelite kings (see, for example, 2 Chron. 32:25, 26; 1 Kings 14:21–31; 1 Samuel 28). The biblical account of

> Nebuchadnezzar, who came to his senses and acknowledged the Creator God, shows that God cares about the wealthy and powerful, as well as the weak and needy. In verse 37, the most powerful man on the earth declared, “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Dan. 4:37, NKJV). If only all the rich and powerful and haughty among us mortal beings understood this truth! (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 73).

Several lessons in this story, first the lesson points out that “God’s judgment was executed” on Nebuchadnezzar in a similar way to some kings of Israel.

What does this mean? How do you hear “judgment”? Was it punishment? Stories like this are sometimes used to suggest God is the source of punishment, the word judgment is understood judicially, is that what is happening here?

The author’s rightly connect God’s judgment against Nebuchadnezzar to His judgment’s against Israel in the past. The author of the book Patriarchs and Prophets writes the following, do you agree?

- "How great is the long-suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." (Patriarchs and Prophets 587).

What type of judgment is described here and what type of judgment was visited upon Nebuchadnezzar this?

In Scripture there are four judgments:

The First Judgment—is our judgment of God. We see this judgment in Eden when Adam and Eve had to make a judgment, is God trustworthy, or was the serpent right and God is untrustworthy? This same judgment is the one every single human must face—we must decide for ourselves, we must judge, is God trustworthy or not. We see this judgment throughout Scripture, at Mount Carmel, when Elijah confronts the 450 priests of Baal and challenges the people:

- If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him! (1 Kings 18:21 GNT).

The apostle Paul picks up this theme and states it explicitly in Roman 3:4:

- Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when **You are judged**" (NKJV).

Notice the capital "You." It is God being judged.

But this judgment of God is not a judicial judgment, it is not a courtroom; it is the judgment of reality, the choice every sentient being throughout the entire universe must make in the aftermath of Satan's rebellion. And this is the judgment the entire world enters before the second coming of Christ, the judgment we are to call the world to enter:

- I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment** has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:6, 7).

This means that we understand God's laws are design laws, the protocols that govern reality, and that they are not imperial imposed laws that He must enforce externally.

The first judgment is our judgment of God.

The Second Judgment—are God's therapeutic judgments to remedy the sin problem.

When we understand design law, we can see that Adam and Eve's sin did not create a legal problem; it created a lethal problem.

They were not loyal, faithful, and holy beings filled with godly love and trust who were now suddenly in legal trouble with God. No—their sin altered them in such a way that without direct intervention from God, they would die. Their condition was terminal, and every human being born since is born with this same terminal condition.

The Messiah, the Remedy to their terminal state, was promised in Genesis 3; the seed of the woman would come to crush the serpent's head. While Adam's sin introduced the death condition, the promised Messiah would bring the cure.

Thus, the entire Old Testament is a record of the battle for human salvation—God working through His agencies to bring Christ, for the purposes of overcoming sin and healing humanity, and Satan working to stop God's plan.

How could Satan prevent Jesus from being born as a human? By getting every human being to harden their heart so that there wouldn't be a single woman willing to be the mother of our Messiah. God would not force a woman against her will, and God would not have Jesus born to a vile, hate-filled woman like Jezebel.

The Bible tells us that at the time of the global flood, there was only *one* righteous man left on the earth. Think about it: An entire planet of people and only one person was still loyal to God. The avenue through which the Messiah would come was almost closed. So God made a "judgment." It was not a judicial judgment. It was a judgment of what was needed to save His precious creation. God decided—judged—that He must protect the family of the one man left loyal to Him so that the Messiah could come, lest every single human be lost. Thus, God sent the flood not as a legal punishment for sin, but as a therapeutic intervention for all humanity, for those who died before the flood (they still needed Jesus to come) and those who have lived since. And also for those who died in the flood.

Noah preached for 120 years, warning of the coming flood and proclaiming God's grace in providing the ark for anyone who was willing to get on board. No one else did. But think of the gracious opportunity the flood provided those rebellious people. The rains and rising waters were evidence that Noah had been telling the truth. Those evidences gave the rebellious people time to repent before their mortal lives were lost and to experience salvation and receive eternal life. They would be like the thief on the cross next to Christ; he had lived rebelliously but, at the end of his life, he accepted Jesus and received salvation even though his temporal death was unavoidable. The flood was a therapeutic act to keep open the avenue for Messiah to save the world, but it was also therapeutic for the people of that time, giving them one final opportunity to repent. What the flood was not was an infliction of judicial punishment for sin. Even for those who insist on believing the lie that God's law functions like Satan's law, I would remind them that even in their false narrative, the judgment for sin is a future event—and punishment for sin is not inflicted before judgment. Thus, the flood is not judicial in any shape or fashion. It is therapeutic.

We find God's "judgments" throughout history to fall into this category. God's "judgments" on Egypt were His therapeutic interventions to expose the Egyptian gods as false and to turn the hearts of the people—both Hebrew *and* Egyptian—to Him for salvation.

And here in Daniel we find God's judgment, His diagnosis and therapeutic judgment, intervention, on what was needed to eradicate selfishness and restore Nebuchadnezzar to love and trust.

This is the judgment of our heavenly physician both providing the Remedy to sin and applying that Remedy to our hearts and minds.

Malachi describes this judgment:

- "Suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. **"So I will come near to you for judgment"** (Malachi 3:1–5 NIV84).

This is the "judgment" of the Great Heavenly Physician, our Creator: examining us, diagnosing what is wrong in us, and determining what is the best therapeutic intervention to bring to bear to heal and restore us. This is the judgment of our High Priest going on in heaven as He examines the people and prepares them for His return, to complete His healing of them so that when He does come, we will be like Him—for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2 NIV84). This healing, this transformation, this final work of preparation is what Malachi describes above—the cleansing of our temples, the purifying of the Levites (His people today), is all taught metaphorically in the Day of Atonement rituals. (You can read more about this incredible truth in our *Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World* pamphlet.)

The first judgment is our judgment of God and the second judgment is God's therapeutic diagnosis of the problem and therapeutic intervention to treat the problem. Neither the first or second judgment is a judicial process.

The Third Judgment—is the judgment that the righteous render during the thousand years after they are taken to heaven and all the evidence of history is before them.

- I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge.** And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6 NIV84).

This is also not a judicial process; it is an answering of all the questions people have about the great controversy. It is the assessment, discerning, and settling of minds regarding how God's laws govern all reality. It is the confirmation of what sin does and how salvation occurs—and why some are saved and others are not when God loves all equally, wants all to be saved, and is all powerful.

This judgment by the saints includes more than judging why some of our friends and loved ones are not in heaven; it also includes judging what the angels did and how they possibly could have rebelled:

- "Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3 NIV84).

This is the judgment in which the saved exercise their God-given ability to think, reason, discern and settle all their questions so that sin will never arise again.

The third judgment is also not a judicial process but a review of reality, of actual history, of applying our understanding of the design laws of God and making the judgment that all who are lost are lost because that is what they prefer and that there was nothing more God could have done for them.

The Fourth and final Judgment—is the judgment that occurs at the end of the thousand years. It is often called the Great White Throne Judgment.

- I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

Surely this judgment must be judicial … right? No, it isn't.

What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

- Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned** (Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84).

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what the reality actually is. God is the God of reality, the builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols upon which life operates. There has never been a heavenly judicial law court like humans make; the idea that God is an arbitrary judge who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin is a lie from Satan.

The fourth and final judgment is not judicial; it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

- He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).

Another lesson from this story of Nebuchadnezzar is to contrast his response from the events in Daniel 3, when the three worthies were saved from the fiery furnace and his response here.

Let's contrast the two responses of the king identify what is different and decide if there is a lesson in that for us today:

- Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." (Daniel 3:28-29 NIV84).

- At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. (Daniel 4:34-37 NIV84).

First what are the similarities about the two events:

- In both God provided a dream of the future to the king, in the first in was the dream of the multi-metal man and in the second it was the dream of the tree
- In both God intervened with a miracle, the miracle of protecting the three worthies from the fiery furnace and the second the miracle of the restored sanity
- In both the king acknowledges the God of heaven

So God's actions are quite similar in both situations and Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the God of heaven in both. But there is a key difference in the second experience than the first what is it?

In the first situation the king responds with imperialism, with power, might, coercion. He acknowledges the God of heaven as a powerful being, but not as a righteous being and thus Nebuchadnezzar promotes falsehoods about God by creating a religious edict under threat of external punishment.

In the second experience Nebuchadnezzar also acknowledges God as the powerful God of heaven, but now also acknowledges God as righteous, as a being worthy of trust and does not impose laws for force others to worship, but instead gives his testimony, presenting the truth, but leaving others free to decide for themselves.

Is there a lesson for us in this?

MONDAY

The lesson is about Naaman the commander of the armies of Aram who had leprosy and whose slave girl was Jewish and told him about Elisha. How he went to Elisha and was told to wash 7 times in the Jordan. How he initially didn't want to do this, but was encouraged by his advisors and did so and was healed of the leprosy and in the aftermath became a worshiper of Yahweh.

When he meets with Elisha before returning to Aram, he makes two requests, read the second and third paragraphs:

- In 2 Kings 5:17–19, Naaman made two unusual requests after God healed him of leprosy. First, he asked to take two mule-loads of earth from Israel back to Syria for the purpose of worshiping the living God. He states, "For your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to the other gods, but to the Lord" (2 Kings 5:17, NKJV). Though Naaman is clearly now a believer in the only true God, his first request shows that pagan influences still held sway over his thinking to a degree. The Syrian commander regarded the God of Israel as a divinity who must be venerated on soil native to that land. Although Naaman acknowledged the reality that there was no God aside from the Lord of Israel, he had not wholly dispossessed himself of the notion that God was, by some particular means, connected to the land of Israel. Thus, in his own country he desired to worship God on Israelite soil.

  Naaman's second petition shows the sincerity of his faith. While he resolved to serve only the God of heaven, he realized carrying out such a resolution in his own idolatrous country wouldn't be easy. Moverover, the king of Syria still worshiped the god Rimmon, and in this occupation Naaman would serve as the king's escort. While Naaman had no intention of forsaking his duties to his earthly king, he did not wish to be deemed as bowing in worship to Rimmon. Having surrendered his heart to Jehovah, Naaman desired not to make any concessions to idolatry by worshiping the heathen god. Nor did he want word to get back to Elisha that he was doing so. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 74).

What do you think of Naaman, his conversion, and his requests?

First the request to take soil back to his homeland to in order to worship God—what is this about? Is this necessary? Why does Naaman do it? What is it evidence of? Limited understanding of God and the reality of our Creator and the universe He governs. Naaman is thinking with limited understanding, perhaps that God is a local god, or His power is connected to the local land in some way and without having some of that soil then Naaman will be disconnected from the power of God.

Would this be a form of superstition? Have superstitions and superstitious thinking ever entered into Christianity? Any examples?

- Veneration of relics
- Pilgrimages—the idea of going to a certain place in order to receive a blessing not obtainable without going to that place

- What about magical thinking regarding Christian ceremonies—like communion? Can superstitious ideas be attached to the communion ceremony? What about the wafer become the literal human flesh of Jesus? What about the wafers becoming somehow holy in a way that they cannot be donated for food to the needy but must be burned if not used in the ceremony?
- Certain types of dress that have religious value?
- Do we ever believe we have to go to certain geographical locations to worship God—perhaps a denominational building of some sort? If we, instead of going to a church building, instead went to someone's home for worship would it be as legitimate?

If some people do attach superstitious meanings to things like communion, or where one worships—does that mean there is no righteous, healthy, legitimate utility in going to a church to worship or participating in communion?

What about the second request—to not have to take a public stand and refuse to bow down to the idol of Rimmon? And who was Rimmon? It was another name for Baal—and who was Baal?

- The son of El
- The god of weather, thunder, lightning, and harvest
- The god who fought the great leviathan—the serpent
- The god who fought against Mot the god of death and in his battle with Mot died and rose again to bring new life and harvest to the land

This was the god previously confronted by Elijah at Mount Carmel—and what was wrong with this god? Baal required appeasement, payment, offerings be made to him to provide blessings.

Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people and Jesus Christ to all Christians who worship a god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice be offered to him on order for him to provide blessings.

Do we today want to act the part of Naaman, say to God, I believe in you the Creator. I know you are not like Baal, but let me be like Naaman, let me quietly bow down in my church where they present Baal in your place, where the people are worshiping a god of thunder, a god of wrath, a god that requires the blood payment of Jesus be presented in order for that god not to harm. You know I don't believe it, but forgive my compliance with the religious edits coming from church authority as I bow, for I might be called to account by the church board, I might be disfellowshipped, I might lose my job for I like Naaman work for those who worship Baal in your place.

Do we live in a different time than Naaman? Is God, at this time in human history, calling for a people to no longer bow down to the false views of Him presented by church leaders and for His people to take a stand for His true character of love, to stand up and worship Him as Creator, to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water, whose laws are design laws, to give glory to God for the hour has come for people to make a right judgment about God—the hour of HIS judgment has come!

TUESDAY

The title for the day's lesson is Witnessing to the Learned: Nicodemus

What is the key to witnessing to the learned, to those who are considered, by themselves and others, to be subject matter experts?

It requires a disruption in their current understanding, what we call cognitive dissonance. This can occur from:

- presenting something new and positive that intrigues them to study from a new angle and incorporate previously unconsidered evidence
- presenting evidence or questions that don't fit their current understanding, questions or facts important enough that they can't simply ignore them or brush them aside
- or life experiences, typically painful ones, that their current understanding don't explain and resolve
- others?

But if a person doesn't have any interest, if their minds are closed into a belief system that doesn't allow for questions, doesn't allow for growth and development, then truth is not received positively, it is received as a threat, as a challenge, typically to their authority, their security, their orthodoxy and new truth is often labeled heresy and the ones bringing it are called heretics and are exterminated—either literally or structurally—i.e. disfellowshipped, disavowed, removed from office, slandered, and ridiculed.

One of the primary beliefs that prevents the learned from accepting greater light and truth is the belief that "We have the truth" and that idea is typically set up as a system of orthodox doctrines, a creed, or a set of fundamental beliefs, and any new truth that either overthrows or expands or redefines the current belief is considered heresy. The fear is that if our current belief is not 100% accurate then we were wrong, led astray, deceived, and therefore our movement our system, our church is illegitimate. So we must resist any changes advancements and unfolding of truth for fear of being wrong.

But the true of heart recognize that we created beings are finite and God is infinite and His truth is unfolding and we never stop advancing in the truth, so we eagerly pursue new truth that will correct any actual error but often will simply redefine truths in deeper and more meaningful ways with greater insight and understanding toward ultimate reality.

Such as moving from metaphor, symbol, ritual to reality—a good example is sanctuary service of the Old Testament being moved toward the heavenly sanctuary with our heavenly High Priest in Hebrews and then moving from symbolic understandings of events happening in books, to the reality of the sanctuary being the living beings where God dwells by His Spirit and Jesus working to cleanse people, not records, from sin.

But some have difficulty in moving past the symbolic to the reality, of following the truth—the Jews had this problem and rejected Jesus and many Adventist have this problem and reject the healing understanding of salvation and continue to teach legal mechanics in heavenly courtrooms.

So how do we witness to the learned?

The lesson uses the example of Nicodemus—did Jesus pursue Nicodemus, seek him out, go to his house, send him literature, invite him to a Bible study, email him links to sermons? Or did Jesus go about revealing in the community the truth and allow the impact of Jesus' teaching to reach Nicodemus and the Holy Spirit flamed those truths into conviction which eventually led Nicodemus to search for answers himself, ultimately from Jesus?

Is there a lesson for us in this?

If we have a relationship with the learned, they are our friends or family members, then certainly engage them in conversation and share materials with them to try and lead them into truths you are convicted they need to understand. But has not been my experience that it is fruitful to seek out the professors and scholars to inform them of what they don't know if they are not seeking on their own.

One way, if you have a relationship with someone of learning, to get them to evaluate something new, is to ask them to read it and share their critique. However, this is likely to harden them from the truth rather than lead them into it, why? Because they are reading it not to learn truth, but to discover the errors in it, thus they read it with a bias seeking to confirm their preconceived understanding, rather than to expand their understanding.

Read bottom pink section:

- Why must we be careful of the trap of thinking that because "we have the truth" (which we do), then the knowledge of this truth alone is enough to save us? How many souls will be lost who had more than enough knowledge, even of the three angels' messages, to be saved? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 75).

Don't most people believe that they have truth? Does believing one has the truth mean one has the truth?

- Did Saul of Tarsus, before the Damascus road, believe he had the truth? Did he?
- What about Peter when Paul had to correct him, do you think Peter thought, "I know I am misrepresenting Christ and not presenting the truth" or do you think he thought he had the truth?
- What about in Luke 9:54 when James and John saw Jesus being rejected and asked if they should call fire down from heaven to destroy the people—do you think they believed their request was based on truth?

So, the lesson says that we have the truth and they specifically mention the truth of the three angels—but does our church present the truth of the three angels, or has the truth been replaced with a counterfeit?

EGW wrote:

- **It is a fact that we have the truth**, and we must hold with tenacity to the positions that cannot be shaken; but we must not look with suspicion upon any **new light which God may send**, and say, Really, we cannot see that we need any more light than the **old truth** which we have hitherto received, and in which we are settled. While we hold to this position, the testimony of the True Witness applies to our cases its rebuke, "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Those who feel rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, are in a condition of blindness as to their true condition before God, and they know it not. (The Review and Herald, August 7, 1894).

- **Greater light shines upon us than shone upon our fathers**. We cannot be accepted or honored of God in rendering the same service, or doing the same works, that our fathers did. In order to be accepted and blessed of God as they were, we must imitate their faithfulness and zeal,—**improve our light as they improved theirs**, and do as they would have done had they lived in our day. **We must walk in the light which shines upon us, otherwise that light will become darkness**. (Testimonies for the Church 1:262).

What do these statements mean? Do you agree with them?

How can light become darkness? Was it light in AD 5, when Jesus was two years old, that the Messiah was soon to be revealed in Israel? That the Savior of the world was coming to fulfill the promises made to Adam and Eve and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Absolutely! After AD 33, after Jesus' rejection and crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven—is it still light, still truth, that the Messiah is going to be born in Israel, that the Messiah is yet to come or has that truth now become darkness for those who do not advance in truth?

If you haven't read our magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels I would encourage you to do so, for we go into great detail revealing what we understand to be the truth of this message, and it is quite distinct from what we read in much of the SDA literature.

And the root cause of the difference is how one understands God's law. If one understands God's law to be imposed rules like humans make up, then the interpretation of Scripture including the 3 angels goes down a legal path, a path that creates a god that functions like a creature, a false god, the modern-day Baal worship.

But when we return to worshiping the Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then one reads the 3 angels as they are supposed to be read—God's final warning of how reality works and what happens to those who reject Him and His design laws.

The high points of the messages are:

- The central thread of the messages are about worship
- The first angel focuses on the eternal good news—which is the good news about God—that He is not like Satan alleged, He is the God of Creation, whose laws are design laws. We are called back to worship Him as Creator and not as a creature, and thus give Him glory in our lives for the hour in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God.
- When we recognize the truth about God then we realize the system of imposed law with a punishing god is the fallen system of Babylon of confusion with over 41,000 different groups arguing this text or that text and we leave that way of thinking and functioning behind and return to worship our Creator.
- But if we don't do that then, by the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, and we become like the false creature god we worship, and are marked in our characters (foreheads) and works (hands) to be like the beastly god we worship and
- Via the law of liberty we are set free to reap that which we have sown into our hearts, minds, and souls and God gives people freedom, and let's them go to reap the results of their own choice when He stops using His power to protect them from what sin does and this is know as God's wrath. And when God no longer shields people they reap the suffering unremedied sin brings when
- Via the law of love and truth they come into full awareness of their own selfishness, guilt, shame, when they can no longer hide from the reality of who they are by their own choice.

Nothing in the messages are imperial, legal, penal, they are all descriptions of God's character of love and design law methods being worked out.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson references the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, what lessons can we learn from that story?

- A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18 NIV84).

The story begins with the young man addressing Jesus as though Jesus were no different than any other Bible teacher, Rabbi, or theology professor. He does not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior, God in human form. Jesus will draw his attention to this shortly.

And upon what is the young man's primary focus, the central issue of his concern? On self, on securing for himself eternal life. He did not ask Jesus, "What must I do to bring honor to God?" Or "What must I do to fulfill God's purpose for my life?" Or "How can I serve God most fully?" Or "How can I know God's will for my life?"

How much of church tradition encourages this same self-centered focus? How much evangelism suggests that the gospel message is primarily about individual salvation? Certainly, Jesus came to save sinners—absolutely true:

- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIV84).

But the more important question in this wonderful promise is: What does it say about God that He would sacrifice Himself to save us? It is certainly good news that we can be saved from sin, but isn't the better news that God is love? After all, who would want to live forever with God if God was like Satan in character?

We are called to bring sinners to Christ for salvation. But is it possible that if Christianity takes the primary focus off of God and His character of love and places it on ourselves, it can become something selfish—something that burdens people, because it becomes about what they must do, focuses on their behavior, with the do's and don'ts of various lists of rules that all work to keep self at the center, preoccupied with a fear of sinning, ruminating on the memories of our past sins, and suffering with chronic guilt and shame and worries of not being good enough? And might we find that we end up like this young man, going to Jesus and saying, "What else must I do to be saved?"

Notice how Jesus responds:

- "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone (Luke 18:19 NIV84).
- "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matthew 19:17 NIV84).

Jesus does several things here. First, by pointing out that only God is good and asking why the young man called Him good, Jesus is seeking to help the man realize that Jesus is God in human form. But Jesus is also saying, *"If you don't recognize me as God, if you recognize me only as a teacher, then why are you calling me good—all goodness comes from God. Don't fall into the trap of attributing to human teachers or church leaders the admiration, respect, and trust that belong only to God."*

Jesus then turns the attention to the path of life, which is living in harmony with God's law, for God's law—of health, physics, and morality—is the protocol upon which life is constructed to operate. Life and health are only possible as one lives in harmony with the laws of health, and Jesus is trying to help this young man realize that by first drawing his attention to the commandments and then expanding their meaning to something far beyond rule-keeping. But the young ruler doesn't appear to comprehend.

- "Which ones?" the man inquired.
  Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

> "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" (Matthew 19:18–20 NIV84).

Here Jesus recites some of the Ten Commandments but then adds the meaning "love your neighbor as yourself." Love honors others; love doesn't seek to harm, exploit, or take advantage of others. Therefore, love doesn't murder, cheat, bear false witness, or steal; love doesn't even have the desire in the heart to harm; thus, love doesn't covet. Jesus is saying, *"If you want to have life, you must be restored to my kingdom of love, and then you will keep the commandments."*

Jesus was not reciting a list of rules for a legal religion; instead, He was describing what people look like when love is restored in the heart. Jesus is revealing that the commandments are not legal; they are not a code of conduct to be legally enforced; they are a description of how love functions and how people who love others live.

When we have God's love restored into our hearts, we affirmatively *do not* commit adultery, steal, murder, bear false witness, or covet *because* we love others and it would be disgusting and repulsive to do such things. Just consider how repulsive even the mere thought of abusing your child is. Those who are like Christ would rather die than harm those they love. This is what Jesus is describing—people who love simply do *not* do these things to others.
But notice that the young man did not respond with, "I have loved like this my entire life." Instead, he responded by focusing on rule-keeping without regard to a heart renewed to love, merely a legal performance of external behavior. Yet, he realized that such a legal performance lacked something, so he asked Jesus what was missing from his life.

All those who have a legal religion also experience the same lack of inner peace, and what kind of people do they become if they don't experience God's love transforming their heart? Pharisaical, legalists, judgmental, critical, controlling of others, imperial—just like those religious people who crucified Jesus.
So…

- Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21 NIV84).

Jesus is not setting up a new rule here to be obeyed if we want treasure in heaven. He is accurately pointing out to this young man that the man valued his riches and trusted in material things more than he loved and trusted Jesus. He trusted his wealth in part because it was taught that wealth was evidence of being right with God, while poverty meant one was cursed by God. But eternal life cannot be found in earthly wealth, power, position, or status—only in surrendering the heart fully to Christ.

- When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth (Matthew 19:22 NIV84).

Why did the young man leave sorrowful? Because he placed his security in earthly treasure rather than in Jesus. Contrast this man's response with that of

Zacchaeus:

- But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

  Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:8–10 NIV84).

Zacchaeus found something he valued more than money, and he suddenly found joy in using his money to help others. Sadly, the rich young ruler did not.

As we face the final events leading up to Christ’s return, many of us will be faced with a similar choice—do we, like Zacchaeus, value Jesus more than our material possessions, or do we, like the young ruler, value our wealth more than Christ? Do we cling to our possessions to make us feel safe? Do we love God and others more than self, or do we fear for ourselves so that we will join with the government to exploit others? Will we obey the government and join in coercing consciences so that we can keep our wealth so we can continue buying and selling, or will we stand firm for God’s kingdom and lose our earthly wealth and cling to Jesus and the treasures of heaven?
Jesus is coming soon—make Him your greatest treasure!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 10
Mission to the Unreached Part 1

by Tim Jennings

Before we start this week's lesson, I want to follow up with a point we didn't get to from lesson 9, Tuesday's lesson.

LESSON 9 - TUESDAY

The title for the day's lesson is Witnessing to the Learned: Nicodemus

What is the key to witnessing to the learned, to those who are considered, by themselves and others, to be subject matter experts?

It requires a disruption in their current understanding, what we call cognitive dissonance. This can occur from:

- presenting something new and positive that intrigues them to study from a new angle and incorporate previously unconsidered evidence
- presenting evidence or questions that doesn't fit their current understanding and unsettles them enough that they can't simply ignore the issue or brush them aside
- or life experiences, typically painful ones, that their current understanding doesn't explain or resolve
- others?

But if a person doesn't have an interest in learning, if their minds are closed into a belief system that doesn't allow for questions, doesn't allow for growth and development, then truth is not received positively; it is received as a threat, as a challenge to their authority, security, reputation, or orthodoxy and new truth is often labeled as heresy and the ones bringing it are called heretics and are exterminated—either literally or structurally—i.e. disfellowshipped, disavowed, removed from office, slandered, and ridiculed.

One of the primary beliefs that prevents the learned from accepting greater light and truth is the belief that "We have the truth" and that idea typically results in setting up doctrinal litmus tests, a system of orthodox doctrines, a creed, or a set of fundamental beliefs, and any new truth that overthrows, expands, or redefines the current belief is considered heresy. The fear is that if our current beliefs are not 100% accurate then we were wrong, mislead, deceived, and therefore our movement, our system, our church is illegitimate. So we must resist any changes, advancements, and unfolding truth for fear of being wrong.

But the pure of heart recognize that created beings are finite and only God is infinite and therefore we realize that His truth is unfolding and we never stop advancing in the truth, so we eagerly pursue new

truth that will correct any actual errors but or which will redefine our current truth with in deeper and more meaningful ways with greater insights and understandings toward ultimate reality.

An example would be moving away from metaphor, symbol, ritual to reality—a good example is the sanctuary service of the Old Testament being moved toward the heavenly sanctuary with our heavenly High Priest in Hebrews and then moving from symbolic understandings of events happening in books, to the reality of the sanctuary being the living beings where God dwells by His Spirit and Jesus working to cleanse people, not records, from sin.

But some have difficulty in moving past the symbolic to reality, of following the truth—the Jews had this problem and rejected Jesus and many Christians have this problem and reject the healing understanding of salvation and continue to teach legal mechanics in heavenly courtrooms.

So how do we witness to the learned?

The lesson uses the example of Nicodemus—did Jesus pursue Nicodemus, seek him out, go to his house, send him literature, invite him to a Bible study, email him links to sermons? Or did Jesus go about revealing, in the community, though His actions, the truth and allow that truth to reach Nicodemus and the Holy Spirit convict those truths in the man's heart which eventually led Nicodemus to search for answers himself, ultimately coming to Jesus?

Is there a lesson for us in this?

If we have a relationship with the learned, if they are our friends or family members, then certainly engage them in conversation and share materials with them and try and lead them into truths you are convicted they need to understand. But it has not been my experience that it is fruitful to seek out the professors and scholars to inform them of what they don't know if they are not seeking on their own.

With all of this in mind, let's read bottom pink section in lesson 9 Tuesday:

- Why must we be careful of the trap of thinking that because "we have the truth" (which we do), then the knowledge of this truth alone is enough to save us? How many souls will be lost who had more than enough knowledge, even of the three angels' messages, to be saved? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 75).

Don't most people believe that they have truth? Does believing one has the truth mean one has the truth?

- Did Saul of Tarsus, before the Damascus road, believe he had the truth? Did he?
- What about Peter when Paul had to correct him, do you think Peter thought, "I know I am misrepresenting Christ and not presenting the truth" or do you think he thought he had the truth?
- What about in Luke 9:54 when James and John saw Jesus being rejected and asked if they should call fire down from heaven to destroy the people—do you think they believed their request was based on truth?

So, the lesson says that we have the truth and they specifically mention the truth of the three angels—but does our church present the truth of the three angels, or has the truth been replaced with a counterfeit?

EGW wrote:

- **It is a fact that we have the truth**, and we must hold with tenacity to the positions that cannot be shaken; but we must not look with suspicion upon any **new light which God may send**, and say, Really, we cannot see that we need any more light than the **old truth** which we have hitherto received, and in which we are settled. While we hold to this position, the testimony of the True Witness applies to our cases its rebuke, "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Those who feel rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, are in a condition of blindness as to their true condition before God, and they know it not. (The Review and Herald, August 7, 1894).

- **Greater light shines upon us than shone upon our fathers**. We cannot be accepted or honored of God in rendering the same service, or doing the same works, that our fathers did. In order to be accepted and blessed of God as they were, we must imitate their faithfulness and zeal,—**improve our light as they improved theirs**, and do as they would have done had they lived in our day. **We must walk in the light which shines upon us, otherwise that light will become darkness**. (Testimonies for the Church 1:262).

What do these statements mean? Do you agree with them?

How can light become darkness? Was it light in AD 5, when Jesus was two years old, that the Messiah was soon to be revealed in Israel? That the Savior of the world was coming to fulfill the promises made to Adam and Eve and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Absolutely! Since AD 33, after Jesus' rejection and crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven—is it still light, still truth, that the Messiah is going to be born in Israel, that the Messiah is yet to come, or has that truth now become darkness for those who do not advance in truth?

If you haven't read our magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels I would encourage you to do so, for we go into great detail revealing what we understand to be the truth of this message, and it is quite distinct from what we have often heard.

And the root cause of the difference is how one understands God's law. If one understands God's law to be imposed rules like humans make up, then the interpretation of Scripture, including the 3 angels, goes down a legal path, a path that creates a god that functions like a creature, a false god, the modern-day Baal worship.

But when we return to worshiping the Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then one reads the 3 angels as they are supposed to be read—God's final warning of how reality works and what happens to those who reject Him and His design laws.

The high points of the messages are:

- The central thread of the messages is about worship
- The first angel focuses on the eternal good news—which is the good news about God—that He is not like Satan alleged, He is the God of Creation, whose laws are design laws. We are called back to worship Him as Creator and to stop worshiping a creature in place of the Creator, and thus give glory to God for the hour in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God.
- When we recognize the truth about God then we realize the system of imposed law with a punishing god is the fallen system of Babylon of confusion with over 41,000 different groups arguing this text or that text and come out of that way of thinking and functioning and return to worshiping our Creator by living in harmony with His designs for life.
- But if we don't do that then, by the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, and we become like the false creature-god we worship, and are marked in our characters (foreheads) and works (hands) to be like the beastly god we worship and
- Via the law of liberty we are set free to reap that which we have sown into our hearts, minds, and souls. As God gives people freedom and lets them go to reap the results of their own choices, He stops using His power to protect them from what sin does and this is know as God's wrath. And when God no longer shields people then they reap the suffering unremedied sin brings when
- Via the law of love and truth—when they stand in God's life-giving glory, the eternal fires of truth and love, they come into full awareness of their own selfishness, guilt, shame, when they can no longer hide from the reality of who they have chosen to become.

Nothing in these three messages are imperial, legal, or penal, they are all descriptions of God's character of love and His design law methods being worked out.

LESSON 10 - Mission to the Unreached Part 1 - SUNDAY

Read first two paragraphs,

- The city of Athens was "given over to idols" (Acts 17:16, NKJV). Knowing the history of his own people and their proclivity (despite the endless warnings) to idolatry, Paul was upset at all the idols he found in Athens, as well. No question, Paul was motivated by compassion for the Athenians, who would die in their sins if they did not learn of the true God.

  Today, our cities are still full of idols, even though they are less obvious than what Paul saw. And unfortunately, many believers are fully capable of walking through a city without reacting in the least to its idols. Paul, though, was tuned in to the Holy Spirit enough to respond. Out of step with some other believers, who still didn't grasp that the gospel was for all the world, Paul knew that God wanted the Athenians to be saved along with everyone else. He understood that the global mission concept was to take the gospel to those who were entirely unreached,

including idol-worshiping pagans, as well as the philosophers who filled the streets of Athens. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 81).

What idols fill our cities today?

What is the original sin—Lucifer's sin?

- Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. (Ezekiel 28:17 NIV84).

- How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn!.. You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. (or the north) I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:12-14 NIV84).

What was Lucifer's original sin? Pride, self-centeredness, narcissism, self-worship.

What do you think is the root of all idol worship? Is it possible that all idol worship is all a form of self worship—that we make gods in our own image to idolize the power, attributes, longings we want to procure or perhaps the negative attributes of self we want to deny so we place them in some false deity and try to appease it?

The law of worship—by beholding we become changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). We become like that which we admire, watch, read, esteem, and worship.

As Jeremiah wrote:

- They worshipped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. (Jeremiah 2:5 GNT).

What happens when people worship anything other than God, including self?

Let's read Romans 1:18-32 and see if what Paul described there is happening today and see if we can understand the design laws involved:

- The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20 NIV84).

What is described in this first paragraph?

The truth about God, His character, His methods, His design laws are evident in nature because God is Creator and His laws are design laws. All one has to do is open their eyes to consider this evidence and they can learn truth, so no one has an excuse for not knowing it. But the wicked, those who don't love God or others, but who love self reject truth, deny it, do everything can to hide and suppress it and God surrenders them to their choices. They make gods in their own image, gods who make up rules and use power to inflict punishment on rule-breakers. He lets them go to reap what they choose, what they sow into their own hearts, minds, and characters, and this is known as God's wrath. Paul makes this clear in versus 24, 26, 28.

- For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. (Romans 1:21-23 NIV84).

What is described here? They make images with their own hands and worship this creature rather than the Creator and they become foolish, their thinking futile, they cannot figure things out because they don't know how reality works because they deny reality by replacing facts, truth, objective design laws with fantasy, make-believe, made up ideas, their own preferred way of understanding—like gender is a social construct. Purposeful and intentional choices to deny reality, facts, truth and lead people to live in a virtual world, a fake world, a world no longer governed by God but by the father of lies.

The Bible is making the case that idol worship corrupts the mind, perverts the character, makes one foolish, the thinking futile—why does idol worship do this? Because reality is replaced with fantasy, falsehood, imaginary virtual make-believe concepts and worldviews—and by the law of worship we are changed. Thus exchanging the truth for fantasy, for lies, minds become darkened, depraved, and futile.

We look at those who worship idols made of stone and metal as primitive, consider these words:

- Thousands have a **false conception of God and His attributes**. They are as **verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal**. Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in **His Word, in Christ, in nature**, or are we adoring some **philosophical idol** enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. (Faith I Live By 59).

Do you agree? What is being described? That the beliefs we hold exert power over us—if we believe lies, especially lies about God, we are damaged by those beliefs. And idol worship doesn't have to include physical idols, it can be conceptual ones, false ideas about God. And all who worship any false god, even if they call that god Jesus Christ, but believe lies, such that they actually are worshipping a god who is like Satan in character, then they become like that false god. Their mind becomes damaged, their thinking futile. They will be the worshipers who Jesus said would come to Him and

claim to have done all kinds of works in Jesus' name, but Jesus tells them, to go away, they worked iniquity and they were never His friends (Matthew 7:22-23).

Continuing on with Romans 1:

- Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. (Romans 1:24-25 NIV84).

What does God do to those who reject Him, those who reject the truth, prefer self and the lusts of this world? He gives them up or lets them go to do what they insist upon doing—and what happens when one breaks God's design laws for life? They damage themselves and they end up worshiping and serving a creature—the fallen angel known as Satan, even if they don't know it.

- Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women **exchanged** natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. (Romans 1:26-27 NIV84).

This is not talking about people born with various biological conditions that have occurred because of sin and cause same sex attraction. It is describing people who are born heterosexual but through lies, the rejection of God, false worship, including worshiping false philosophies, through porn, through propaganda, media influences, believing lies, and all forms of narcissistic adoration damage their natural desires and *exchange* their natural desires for unnatural ones, for desires they never had until they damaged themselves through perverted worship—through esteeming, valuing, choosing, and finding worthy of emulation that which is perverse.

Can a person with a blue shirt exchange it for a red shirt if they don't have a blue shirt? Paul is not describing the various conditions with which people are born but in which they had no choice—like the man born blind—neither he nor his parents sinned to cause the blindness. It was not sin for that man to be blind or live like a blind person. However, it would be sin to willfully choose to engage in activities that willfully caused blindness in those with good vision.

And this is what is happening in our society today. People are corrupting themselves by rejecting the truth about God and worshiping the created things, including self, and they are becoming inflamed with all kinds of destructive lusts. They deny the most obvious truths in nature such that there are males and females and men cannot become women and women cannot become men. They are so perverted in their thinking that some people now are seeking to become animals, what are called furries, others claim they are star people, people who are non-human entities living in human bodies. And this only happens as minds are disconnected from objective reality, truth, evidence, and facts. And what is happening in society? Listen to what Paul wrote:

- Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:18-32 NIV84).

Do we see this happening today? The rejection of God, the teaching of godless evolution, that the strongest, those with the most power, cunning, ability to exploit others are the gods of this world and all who worship such false gods become ever more self-centered and corrupt.

And society divides into ever more disunity, hostility, conflict, and hate. The claim is made that this is due to racism, sexism, transgenderism—but all of these allegations are distractions from the truth. All the conflict and division in society today is driven by one core root problem—unrestrained selfishness, narcissism, the lack of love for others.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics the rate of white-on-white violent crime (12.0 per 1,000 white persons) was about four times higher than black-on-white violent crime (3.1 per 1,000). The rate of black-on-black violent crime (16.5 per 1,000 black persons) was more than five times higher than white-on-black violent crime (2.8 per 1,000).[i]

Did you know that people of your same race are the ones most likely to commit crimes against you, 4-5 times more likely than a person from another race—yet this is not the feeling, belief, or attitude that most have. Why? Because of propaganda, lies, misinformation designed to divide the people who, if they worshiped Christ would instead experience ever greater unity. But because God is rejected and self is worshiped people fear that which is not like self and believe lies that those different from them are their enemies. **We do not have a race problem in this country—we have a sin problem in this country and the world.**

Jesus, speaking about this time in human history, said:

- Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:12 NLT).

The apostle Paul said:

- There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:1–4 NIV84).

Recent studies have demonstrated that narcissism has steadily increased in the United States since the 1970s, with each subsequent class of college freshmen scoring higher on narcissism rating scales than

the class before.[ii] This rise in selfishness, this "me-first" mentality, is rife in society today and heralds the death of love for our fellow human beings.

So what is destroying love and increasing selfishness?

The Bible teaches that:

- There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18 NIV84).

Love and fear are inversely proportional; as love increases, fear decreases—and as fear increases, love decreases. The more fear we experience, the more quickly we see threats, real or imagined, and take actions designed to make us feel safe. Rather than searching ourselves to identify and overcome our deficiencies in character, fear focuses our minds on self-protection, making us look outward to identify potential threats. This can lead to the projection of one's own shortcomings onto others and can cause greater division and loss of love for our fellow human beings.

Why is fear and selfishness rising and love declining, with its subsequent increase in violence? I would like to suggest several factors.

Historically, in America, the national consciousness focused on three other-than-self objects; these virtues were considered so vital that it was worth sacrificing self to defend. These big three were love for God, love for family, and love for country. These three objects—God, family, country—were promoted as being greater than self and worthy of our sacrifice to support.

But in society today, it is taught that there is no God; all families are dysfunctional and not to be trusted to raise children—it takes a village to raise children is the godless mantra and therefore the school system should decide for parents what is best; and our country, being an evil exploiter of minorities and the poor, cannot be trusted. Thus, a mindset of altruism, of love, of higher purpose is replaced with a sense of fear and isolation; when there is nothing greater than the self, and no higher power or institution can be trusted, fear increases and each person becomes an island to themselves, seeing threats all around them, frantically struggling to survive and breaking up from a united people living on common principles of civil and religious liberty, to racial, religious, political, and ethnic factions fighting against those different than they are.

This is further inflamed by social media isolation, fear-inducing propaganda, and the constant manipulation of events to incite fear—like manipulating energy prices, food prices and production, wars, creating man-made diseases, the made-up climate crisis, restrictions on various liberties and the list goes on and on.

When selfishness reigns and love dies, people exploit those around them.

So, understanding this, how do we reach people? What method can we use that will help us present the gospel?

This is where the truth about God and His design laws come in, teaching people how reality works, why things happen, and the predictable laws upon which life and health are based. God's designs are the only path to life, health, safety, and security. Being able to present a coherent, reality-based understanding of the world and God's design draws people. But if we go to the world trying to replace their fantasy world with a different fantasy it won't work.

What happens when we present a god that has a law that works like the laws of every government of the world, who is the source of inflicted pain, a god that one must appease with the blood of a human sacrifice? Do such false god concepts result in the eradication of fear and the reduction in selfishness? No! Such religion incites fear and spreads selfishness. This is the problem with most religions of the world. Only the true gospel of Jesus Christ presents the truth of God's character of love and His design laws for life and health.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Acts 17:18-21:

- Certain Epicurean and Stoic teachers also debated with him. Some of them asked, "What is this ignorant show-off trying to say?" Others answered, "He seems to be talking about foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection. So they took Paul, brought him before the city council, the Areopagus, and said, "We would like to know what this new teaching is that you are talking about. Some of the things we hear you say sound strange to us, and we would like to know what they mean." (For all the citizens of Athens and the foreigners who lived there liked to spend all their time telling and hearing the latest new thing.) (Acts 17:18-21 GNT).

Epicureanism is a system of philosophy founded around 307 BCE based upon the teachings of Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher. It is a philosophy based on materialism and is reductionistic, all things being caused naturally. It's primary motivation was the avoidance of pain and fear which is supposed to result in the experience of the greatest pleasure. It advocated for a simple life removed from politics and many societal struggles, seeking tranquility and avoidance of mental stress and bodily pain.

Stoicism is the philosophy which taught that virtue is the highest good and the practice of virtue is the means to experience a well ordered, healthy, and happy life. Stoics advocated for virtues such as courage and temperance and living in harmony with nature. Such things as wealth, health, power, position were only means upon which virtue could act to impact the world.

These were the two main mindsets Paul was facing in Athens—what obstacles might Paul face? Which group would naturally find more in common with Paul and which would be more likely to oppose him?

Wouldn't Paul's life, practices, and teachings be more closely aligned with the Stoics than the Epicureans?

But what would be the greatest obstacle for both groups? Moving away from self to surrendering self to an intelligence higher than their own. The obstacle being human pride and self-sufficiency.

When we face people of another belief system, what are effective ways to introduce the gospel?

Is it helpful if we get to know people first, to understand their current beliefs, perspectives, biases, assumptions so that we know what truths they currently hold, and what natural struggles they are having in living or understanding the world? If we know some of this, might we be able to offer ideas that interest them?

Another methods is seen in how Jesus often appealed to everyday life experiences and the natural world, which operates upon design law. Common understood experiences that evidenced the principles of God's kingdom.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Notice that Paul did not disparage the false religion or false gods of the Athenians. He gathered whatever points of good he could find, few as they were, and capitalized on them. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 83).

Did Paul use this method in all his interactions with others who held to different religious beliefs, or only with those unfamiliar with Scripture?

When dealing with those who were trying to introduce legalism into Christianity Paul wrote:

- I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:6-9 NIV84).

And Paul had religious critics who were not only misrepresenting him and what he taught but were teaching legalism and lies about the need for bodily circumcision, and Paul wrote:

- I wish that the people who are upsetting you would go all the way; let them go on and castrate themselves! (Galatians 5:12 GNT).

So while Paul did seek to avoid offending these pagans, did he avoid direct confrontation of the lies being circulated among the believers? Is there a difference between attacking a person and attacking the lies that are presented?

Read bottom pink section,

- What bridges and points of contact can you think of that would open opportunities for deeper conversation with others with whom you come in contact? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 83).

I have found discussing the design laws that are applicable to a person's life to be helpful, law of liberty, exertion, worship, love—how reality works and connecting it to their current struggles and then lead them to the Creator who built reality.

What methods have you found helpful?

THURSDAY

After Paul does all that he can to build bridges and establish common ground, there comes the point when he introduces new ideas, truth, to lead them out of their current understanding into greater light.

However, that didn't happen, they rejected what he presented. Read the third paragraph,

- We know that some people will reject the gospel, but we must do everything possible to ensure that before they reject it, they understand what they are rejecting. Paul, by his method of working among the Athenians and his strategic use of what he had studied and learned of them, ensured that they heard with open minds that a God existed whom they did not know but who had created them. This God loved them and wanted to be known by them. He had been merciful to them in spite of their ignorance. But Judgment Day was coming. And if all of this sounded too unbelievable, there was verifiable evidence for it in the resurrection of Christ. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 85).

It is interesting how the lesson focuses upon judgment, but the protestations of the audience were about the resurrection of Jesus.

Let's read Paul's presentation as recorded in Acts 17, from The Remedy:

- So Paul took the stage at the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that you are very conscientious people who take your religious beliefs seriously. As I walked

through your city, I noted your points of worship, and I found an altar with this inscription: 'To an Unknown God.' It is this unknown God that I am here to tell you about. "The God who built the fabric of the cosmos, including this world and everything in it, is Master of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines built by created beings. Human beings do not provide for him–as if there was anything he needed. No! He is the source of all and gives of himself for our good. From him come life, health, and everything else. He created the human species in one individual, and from that one man, all human beings from all the nations in the world have descended. He provided the entire earth for us to inhabit, and created time and space for us to live within. He did all of this so that human beings would experience the joy of discovering him–actually reaching out and connecting with him, for he is near to each one of us. As some of your own poets have said, 'In union with him we live and move, and have existence. We are his offspring.' "So, since we are the offspring of God, how can God be an inanimate, lifeless object made by human beings out of gold, silver or stone? God didn't expect any better when you didn't know any better, but now God has provided the evidence — so you do know better — and calls all humanity to a renewed mind and unity with him. For he has set a time when all humanity will be accurately diagnosed, defects from his design will be permanently eliminated, and all creation will be set right by the Man whom he has selected to be the Remedy. He has proven it by raising this Man from the dead." When they heard him mention the resurrection, some scoffed, but others said, "We would like to hear more about this." With that, Paul left the meeting. A few people, including Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and a number of others accepted what Paul taught, partook of the Remedy, and trusted Jesus. (Acts 17:22-34 REM).

Why did they protest the resurrection? Why does the lesson focus on judgment?

[i] https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rhovo1215_sum.pdf

[ii] Twenge, JM, et al, Egos inflating over time: a cross-temporal meta-analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. J Pers. 2008 Jul;76(4):875-902; discussion 903-28. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00507.x. Epub 2008 May 23.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Billboards are now available on our website!

You can find them all at https://comeandreason.com/?s=billboards

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 11
Mission to the Unreached Part 2

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph:

- From the beginning, a loving God sought His lost children (Gen. 3:9); and, to our day, this same loving God is still seeking to reach the lost (see Rev. 14:6–12), including the lost in the cities. In 2018, the United Nations published its latest findings, which say that 55 percent of the planet's population lives in urban areas, and this will grow (if time should last) to 68 percent by 2050. We have no choice: we must witness to those in the cities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 88).

Has anyone done ministry or mission in the cities? Any thoughts on what this entails? What might it look like? The ministries in the cities that I am most familiar with are for the most vulnerable populations, which represent a very small percentage of the population of cities. Such things as:

- Homeless shelters
- Food kitchens
- Battered women's shelters
- Goodwill
- Toys for tots
- Free medical clinics

All of these are worthy and righteous ministries—yet is the majority of a city's population reached with these services?

How do we reach those who do not needs such services?

- I have seen street preachers standing on the street shouting about the end of days or some other issue they are passionate about—do you think this would be an effective means to reach people in the cities?
- I have seen people standing on streets or subway stations handing out literature to anyone walking by—do you think this is effective?
- What about door to door canvasing by literature evangelists seeking to sell various books?
- What about door to door ingathering, asking people to donate to our missions, is this likely to be an effective way to reach them with the truth?
- What about TV, radio, internet, social media programming that contains the truth?
- What about advertising of websites that contain the truth?

- What about moving to the city and living in a community and seeking to meet your neighbors and inviting them to your church?
- Other ideas?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Judges 3:1-6:

- These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Leboc Hamath. They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses.

  The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. (Judges 3:1-6 NIV84).

What do you understand these verses to mean?
- What law lens do you read them through?
- What is the overall context of Scripture, the grand central theme?
- What is the purpose of God in having the Scriptures written and inspiring which stories are recorded?

When the Lord puts someone to the test—what is He testing? It is always the same ultimate test—will they trust God or not, will they choose to exercise faith/trust/confidence in God or not?

And when they do then their faith/trust/confidence grows beyond the belief of devils who tremble, to the faith that is a living faith that results in loyalty to God.

We cannot grow in faith, in trust, unless we are placed in position where we are required to exercise our faith, where our faith is tried or tested and we choose to say no to the fear, the insecurity, the doubts, the temptations to act to save self and instead choose the truth and choose to do what is right in governance of ourselves while we trust God with the outcome.

This is the issue, it has always been the issue—are we faithful, loyal friends of God who actually trust Him? Not people who believe in Him but distrust Him and do things the world's way, the devil's way, the way of fear and selfishness while claiming to be friends of God.

Jesus asked this very question about the second coming:

- When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8 NIV84).

When Jesus comes again will He find people who trust Him, who are faithful to Him, who have chosen to trust Him with their lives, future, fortunes, and families. Or will He only find people who claim to believe in Him, but who have put their trust in their rules, rituals, ceremonies, blood payments, wealth, institutions, and the power they can wield over others?

Paul said,

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

God wants us to return to a living confidence, trust, faith in Him and He allows events to come upon us that will test our faith, put us into positions where we have to decide, do we scheme, calculate, plot, plan, connive, manipulate, bend the rules, make excuses, cheat in order to save self, or do we stand for what we know is right and trust God with how things turns out.

David, when he was dedicating materials and his son for the building of the temple, prayed:

- I know, my God, that you **test the heart and are pleased with integrity**. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and **keep their hearts loyal to you**. (1 Chronicles 29:17-18 NIV84).

Examples of testing faith throughout human history?

- The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
- Abraham when he was told to sacrifice Isaac—
    - Some time later God **tested** Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
      "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Genesis 22:1-2 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Why does God "test" like this? Is it a test to trip people up, to trap them, to get them to fall, or is it some aspect of the outworking of design law?

These are the laws of truth, love, liberty, and exertion—what God wants cannot be created by Him nor chosen by Him. God wants our love, devotion, trust, friendship, and loyalty—He wants us to internalize and live out His living laws and thus develop Christlike character.

Loyalty, trust, devotion, friendship cannot be created—it is developed between two intelligent and free beings based on their mutual trustworthiness and righteousness of character and then the experiences they have with each other over time.

God provides everything for our healing, our salvation, and our deliverance from sin—fear and selfishness.

- He provides the truth that destroys lies and wins us to trust
- He provides the love that casts out the fear
- He provides the Savior, His Son, who became a real human and as a human, using only human abilities, chose to love and trust His Father in all things and received as a human the empowering of the Holy Spirit to succeed in all things. And as a human, Jesus developed a perfect righteous and mature human character and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that Adam introduced into humanity when he broke trust with God. Thus Jesus became the new head of humanity, the second Adam.
- He provides the Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to our hearts and minds, to convict of sin, to convict of duty, and then
- He provides freedom, real freedom to accept and choose the truth or reject it and when we choose the truth
- He provides the opportunity to test our faith, situations that require us to choose—do we trust God? Do we choose what we know is in harmony with His will, purposes, instructions, guidance, design laws for life and trust Him with outcomes, or do we choose to break trust with Him and seek to advance and save ourselves and
- When we choose to trust Him, then He provides divine power, the indwelling Holy Spirit to give us the ability to carry out the truth, to stand firm in the face of fear, threat, selfish temptations with a peace that passes understanding, with love for our enemies, with a vision of eternity as we choose to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our hearts loyal to Him.

So what was the test that God wanted the Israelites to face and pass?

The lesson asks us to read 1 Kings 11:1-6:

- King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. (1 Kings 11:1-6 NIV84)

What was the test they were to pass? Was it about killing enemies? Was it about being friendly? Was it about marrying people of foreign descent? If we say yes, then what about Moses marrying Zipporah or Salmon marrying Rahab who had a son Boaz who married Ruth, and both Rahab and Ruth are in the genealogy of Jesus?

So was it that they broke a rule not to marry non-Israeli women, or was it something else? What was the true test about? It was about not being loyal to God—about giving one's heart to other gods. The marrying of other women did not have to do with genetics, ethnicity, or race, it had to do with character, with loyalty to God. When the women of foreign nations chose to give their hearts to God then they were perfectly fine to marry—but when the women of other nations remained loyal to their false gods, then they were not suitable to marry. Why?

Read the fifth paragraph,

- Yet, despite the history of paganism and idolatry, and their negative influence on the chosen nation, Jesus still brought His disciples to these places. In this way He initiated them in cross-cultural urban mission, confronting their bias and bigotry, and modeled for His followers wholistic urban mission to all cultures and nationalities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 89).

Why did Jesus seek out these people who had been a source of temptation, false god worship and interference with God's purpose for Israel?

Because there is only one human race all descended from Adam, and every single human being is infected with the same terminal sin condition, and every single human being needs the same remedy of Jesus Christ, and God's plan for Israel was for them to be the branch of the human family through whom He would come to provide that remedy, and they were to share the light, the truth, with all other peoples to bring them to salvation. So His going to visit these other groups was the exact working out of the plan of salvation—bringing the only healing solution to every single son and daughter of Adam and Eve.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 9:35-38:

- Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:35-38 NIV84).

We at Come and Reason Ministries have resonated with this passage, we look around and see so many people both in the organized churches and outside of them in need of the gospel, the eternal gospel, the truth about God and His design law methods of truth, love, and freedom. And we see how limited we are and how we need workers to come and join us in sharing this. We have been praying for years for more people around the world to take up this message and share it in their communities. And we have seen a steady growth in people embracing and supporting this eternal good news about God from all different denominational backgrounds, why? Because the truth about God is not restricted by

denomination, it is not restricted by race, by national original, or by any other human division. It is restricted only when people refuse the truth and cling to lies, but when the truth is embraced it is unifying, people from all backgrounds find common purpose, common understanding, common principles for life and health, and common respect for the individuality of others.

What suggestions do you have on how we could be more effective in reaching the multitudes?

What have you found to be helpful?

TUESDAY

The lessons asks us to read Matthew 15:22-28:

- A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matthew 15:22-28 NIV84).

What do you think of this story?

Did Jesus not care about this woman? Did Jesus have any less love for her than the Jews? What is going on here?

The lesson cites commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages:*

- "Christ did not immediately reply to the woman's request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case, as evinced by His reception of the woman, and the compassionate manner in which He would have them deal with such distress, as manifested by His subsequent granting of her petition." (The Desire of Ages, p. 400).

Do you agree with this understanding? This is an interpretation for the Bible itself doesn't give us these motives for the action. Much of the Bible is like this, it provides historical events, describes what happened, but doesn't always explain why, the motives, or other contextual details that make the story understandable—like the woman caught in adultery and cast before Jesus.

So why should we accept this interpretation of why Jesus did what He did here? I have had others who reject the Bible use this story to prove that Jesus was just as prejudiced as the other Jews and was demeaning to this woman calling her a dog.

Because the rest of Scripture, the record of Jesus' life shows that He never went around hurting others, seeking for self, but was always living out love and seeking to save people. So the action here was the outworking of love and truth for the saving of others because Jesus has proven that is what He does.

Who are the primary recipients of Jesus' work, activity, concern in this text? Isn't it the disciples? Hasn't he chosen them to invest in, to spend extra time and energy upon them to train, teach, and equip them to be His agents to spread the gospel to others?

So, in this story, while He loves this woman, Christ's way of dealing with the situation was a teaching moment for the disciples. But what enabled Christ to have this opportunity? It was not only the need of the woman's child—but the strength of the woman's faith. Because her faith was strong enough, Jesus could work through the event to expose bigotry in the disciples. But had this woman's faith been weak such that His initial response would have discouraged her and caused her to turn away in depression, then Jesus could not have used that moment as an opportunity to teach His disciples.

This is similar to how Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego's faith was of such a quality that God could use the circumstance of the fiery furnace to reach Nebuchadnezzar.

God longs for people to trust Him enough to allow Him to work through their real life circumstances to reach others who would not be reached without those circumstances, or to enlighten and improve the faith of those who already are followers of Jesus.

The lesson points in the bottom pink section to 1 John 2:2, let's read 1 John 2:1-2:

- My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2 NIV84).

The NIV in the footnote says:

- Or He is the one who turns aside God's wrath, taking away our sins, and not only ours but also but the sins of the whole world.

What law lens are you hearing this through? What law lens are these translators translating through? This is a great example of the bias people can have when they translate—I want to say this translation is an honest, linguistically legitimate translation—yet it connotes the imposed law view and thus misrepresents the true meaning.

Here is the Good News translation:

- I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone. (1 John 2:1-2 GNT).

A little better as the "pleads with" is ambivalent, can be pleading to the Father or can be pleading along side in harmony with the Father, in other words both the Father and Jesus are pleading together for a common cause.

If we believe Jesus is pleading to the Father then that would contradict Jesus' own testimony in John 16:26 where He said He would not pray the Father for us. So harmonizing those two texts leads us to consider that Jesus is pleading along with the Father, not to the Father.

The Greek word translated intercessor, or one who pleads in our behalf, is the word: parakletos /par·ak·lay·tos—which is the word translated in other places as counselor or comforter and refers to the Holy Spirit, the one who walks along side, the helper, the comforter, the advocate, the one who pleads to another.

So if we accepts the imposed law lie, the belief that God's law works like human law, then we believe God is required by law to use His power to inflict punishment for sin and thus the pleading must be done by Jesus to God to get God to accept His blood as payment and offer us forgiveness. This is Satan's view, it is pagan, and it is not what the Bible is teaching.

Jesus said in John 14:16:

- I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever. (John 14:16 NIV84)

The word "Helper" is parakletos /par·ak·lay·tos. Jesus is saying that *another* Helper, *another*, Counselor, *another,* Advocate, *another* Intercessor—the Holy Spirit is the new other, so who is the first Helper, Counselor, Advocate, Intercessor?

Jesus Himself:

- For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NKVJ).

Jesus is our Helper, Intercessor, Advocate—the question is to whom and for what?

But Jesus is already working with *another* for our good, so Jesus said to His Father, I will ask for *another,* one in addition to you and I Father. Notice what Paul wrote in Romans 8:

- What, then, shall we say in response to this? If **God is for us**, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom **God has chosen**? It is **God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is **also** interceding for us. (Romans 8:31-34 NIV84).

What does "also" mean? In addition to, Jesus is interceding in addition to the Father, NOT to the Father. So the Father is interceding for us, or helping us, or working for our good and thus He sent His Son Jesus because He loved the world so much, and the fullness of the Godhead dwelled in Jesus, and God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself. And Jesus said to His disciples, even though the Father and I are already interceding for you, I will ask the Father to send a Third intercessor, another counselor, comforter to come to you the Holy Spirit who will not speak on His own but will take what I mine and make it known to you.

This is the reality of our human sin situation, as soon as Adam and Eve sinned the entire Godhead began interceding for us. And they intercede in three places. They intercede:

- In our hearts and minds to convict of sin, to put a desire for healing and reconciliation, to break up an alignment and unity with Satan. God did this in Eden when speaking to the serpent God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman between you offspring and hers." This desire for good instead of evil is a result of God interceding in sinful hearts.
- With the principalities and powers of darkness holding at bay the winds of strife and demonic powers to allow the plan of salvation to be worked out in our individual lives and throughout human history.
- With the natural course of sin itself when Jesus who knew no sin became sin in order to destroy death and bring life and immortality to life and open a new path, a new way back into unity with God and eternal life.

God has never had a member of the Godhead interceding with Him, we have had God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit interceding for and with us.

This historical description makes it very clear what the issues are, who is pleading with who when one returns to design law understanding:

- **As Satan accused Joshua** and his people, **so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the "accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins**. He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ**. **Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. All the hatred and

malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation**. (5 Testimonies 470.1) [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

He [Satan] leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations and restore their confidence?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it**; **therefore he presents their sins before *them* ***<u>to discourage them</u>***. [Notice the dynamic here. The author doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them and gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. So Satan accuses the sinner to the sinner to discourage the repentant sinner tempting them to give up and let go of their faith in Jesus. So, again, where is Christ plea directed?] He [Satan] is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt**. [To whom is Satan seeking to make our best seem corrupt? To the repentant sinner in order to discourage and dishearten them so THEY GIVE UP. So, to whom would Christ be pleading for them not to listen to the accusations of Satan?] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he [Satan] endeavors to secure their condemnation**. [By whom? From whom is Satan seeking to get the sinner condemned? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself**. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sinned, I am righteous in my own strength." NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose this condition and I have had many symptoms along the way many sins and shortcomings from your glorious ideal. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin. I am only here before you because Jesus overcame where I cannot and Jesus has gifted me His victory, His mind, His heart, His love, His motives, His character and it is no longer I that live but Jesus lives in me through the indwelling Spirit." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and**

vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan that we are too sinful to be saved are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you and to me!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man**. [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us. God doesn't win God's mercy, or beg God to be merciful, He claims the mercy that is God's, because of God's mercy Jesus was sent and became our Remedy to sin.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.**' These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] **Those who rely upon Him** in faith receive the comforting assurance: "**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment**." [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. His word is pledged: "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." The promise given to Joshua is made to all: "If thou wilt keep My charge, ... I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. (5 Testimonies 470.2)

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves**. [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and the investigating the truth about God to experience the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own**. (5 Testimonies 471.1)

So this is how I paraphrased 1 John 2:1-2:

- My precious children, I am writing to you so that you will realize the power of God's love to free you from selfishness; and therefore experience God's healing and no longer live selfishly. But if relapses into selfishness occur during the healing process, don't be discouraged: Jesus Christ stands at the helm of all power, right next to God, and is pouring his love into our hearts to complete his restoring and healing work. He is the reconciling Remedy to the infection of selfishness and fear, and not just for our terminal condition: he is also the Remedy–freely available–to heal the entire world. (1 John 2:1-2 REM).

WEDNESDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- While waiting for lunch, Peter was given a vision of a rooftop buffet complete with a tablecloth filled with unclean animals and birds. Three times he was told in this vision to get up and eat. God used these visions to confront Peter's religious pride and bigotry against the Gentiles. Peter eventually understood this truth: "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him' " (Acts 10:34, 35, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 92).

Then in the last paragraph the lesson states,

- Jesus patiently taught His disciples, who did not yet fully understand that God's great plan of salvation was for the entire human family, not just one nation or rural ethnic group. The Holy Spirit can help us to overcome our prejudice and bias in order to complete our mission to the cities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 92).

Why is there division of human beings in the world—why are we not one as Jesus prayed that His followers would be?

Did God create human beings to be divided into different antagonistic groups that do not love and trust each other?

When did humanity divide like this? In Eden when Adam and Eve sinned they immediately divided and Adam blamed Eve for his sin.

Cain and Abel were divided by sin, by fear, envy, and jealousy.

But the world seemed to be on the verge of almost uniting against heaven at the time of the Flood. At that time there was only one righteous man left and his family so God put that hardened rebellious generation to sleep in order to keep the avenue for Messiah open. And after the Flood what did the people do?

The rejectors of God's mercy began to unite again in a unified rebellion against God, seeking to build a tower into heaven. And what did God do?

God therapeutically intervened by confusing the languages and scattering the people around the world (leading to the distinct racial divisions we see today), steps designed by God to slow the lies of Satan and impede humanity's rebellion against heaven and, thereby, allow the plan of salvation to be completed (Genesis 11:8, 9).

The language, tribal, racial, national, and ethnic differences we see in the world are not evil; these differences are not sinful—they have no bearing on our worth as human beings, they have no value in determining good or evil, but God did foresee that these differences along superficial characteristics would work to keep the sinful human race from uniting in a worldwide rebellion against Him and heaven, like the people did at the time of the Flood.

But there is evil in this world, and we are to recognize it and separate from it. There is to be an intelligent and purposeful division that we actively seek to create and promote among all people, without regard to their language, tribe, race, nationality, or ethnicity, for God loves all people equally. The Bible recognizes this division as the only one that righteous people are to act upon—the division between good and evil. The Bible describes this division between the righteous and the unrighteous in these terms:

The sheep and the goats
The wheat and the tares
The fruitful vine and withered vine
The pure woman and the harlot
The faithful and unfaithful
The holy and the unholy
The saved and the lost

Dividing along these lines is godly. Differentiating the righteous from the unrighteous in order to wisely discriminate regarding whom to associate with, date, marry, hire, place on our boards, and allow to be our friends is a very godly approach to life.

- Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NIV84).

We are called to discriminate the honest from the dishonest, the loyal from the disloyal, those who love others from those who are selfish and exploit others. We are to actively discern the wise from the foolish, the kind from the cruel, and the merciful from the vengeful. The apostle Paul taught that as we

approach the second coming of Christ, we are to be purposeful in disassociating ourselves from certain people:

- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them (2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We are to be discriminating in our associations, relationships, hiring, and friends because, as Paul also wrote, "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV84).

Jesus Himself said that He came to divide society:

- I have come to ignite the fire of truth and love upon the earth, and oh how I wish it were already an inferno! But I have a mission to complete, and the pressure on me to complete it is overwhelming. Do you think I have come to make peace with this selfish world? Absolutely not! I have not come to make peace with selfishness but to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. From now on, those who choose the Remedy will cut dysfunctional family ties, and a family of five will be divided — two against three and three against two. Love will free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, and a father from the selfish exploits of his son; love will sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, and a mother from the selfish demands of her daughter; love will cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law, and mother-in-law toward daughter-in-law (Luke 12:49–53 REM).

God created human beings to be united in love and trust, but humanity became divided when Adam and Eve sinned. The natural state of this sinful world is selfishness, and Jesus did not come to unite with sin and selfishness but to set people free from sin and restore them to righteousness and eternal life. This necessarily means separating people from all that is unholy and ungodly.

Jesus cannot provide eternal life to people who refuse to leave sinfulness behind.

Therefore, Jesus seeks to separate people from sin—and all associations that keep sin active in their lives!

Yes, there is a real division in the world; it is a division between God and Satan, between holiness and vileness, between good and evil, between love and selfishness, truth and lies, freedom and coercion. And as Jesus is uplifted, as the gospel advances, as people surrender to Him and draw closer to Him, then fear and selfishness are replaced with love and trust and we are drawn together as a united people (Ephesians 4:13), just as Jesus prayed:

- I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20–23 NIV84).

The Bible describes this end-time unity, when the gospel is advanced, as the reversal of the scattering God initiated at Babel. The Bible describes

- "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They [are] wearing white robes," (Revelation 7:9 NIV84) which represent their characters having been purified to be like Jesus.

These diverse people come together in love, loyalty, and devotion to God, a united human family woven together in the bonds of godly love and trust, practicing the principles of Jesus in how they live and treat others. But this restoration into one united human family is only possible when Jesus is placed at the center.

Satan knows he cannot win if Jesus is uplifted, if the gospel is made central. Therefore, he actively opposes it. The evil one does not want people to focus upon Jesus and then recognize the righteous divide between truth and lies, love and selfishness, good and evil, so he has a two-step trap to keep people from turning to Jesus and thereby inflame evil divisions.

Step One: Satan replaces the godly dividing line between moral and characterological good and evil with some other superficial difference occurring among people groups—race, gender, language, ethnicity, national origin, etc.—and causes people to attribute value, privilege, and superiority/inferiority to those differences, thereby inflaming fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, hate, and violence and inciting acts of injustice against those deemed inferior.

In step one, he deceives some people into believing the lie that skin color or gender or national origin makes some people inferior or less valuable or worthy. This lie leads to the creation of various caste systems (including the historical notion of "divine right" of rulers and the lie that there is an actual difference between people in the royal class and commoners). And these false divisions cause people to inflict real injustice upon the innocent—slavery, Jim Crow, aristocratic oppression of the commoner, and many other forms of exploitation, abuse, and restrictions of human freedom.

His step-one lie has divided society for millennia—and people still fight over this lie today. But as evil as Satan's step-one deception is, his step-two lie is even more diabolical.

Step Two: Satan's second step to ensnare people into becoming like him and dividing society is by tricking good people who recognize his step-one lie into seeking to rectify the step-one injustices by using Satan's methods.

This means that rather than pursuing justice by advancing the gospel and placing Jesus and God's methods of doing right at the center, Satan tricks people into placing the various injustices of the wicked at the center. Racism, sexism, and various other wrongs are focused upon, which inflames anger, outrage, and our sense of injustice—and then he offers his solution, "social justice," by the application of law, coercion, and external power to force behavior change, rather than winning people to love and trust. This two-step deceit keeps society divided, inflicts more layers of injustice upon more innocents, and actively keeps Jesus out of heart and mind, obstructing the only solution to racism and all other forms of human injustice.

What makes this so diabolical is that this method of seeking "justice" causes people to feel good, to feel they are doing right, to even believe they are advancing God's kingdom—after all, they are opposing evil—but all the while, they are advancing Satan's kingdom, practicing his methods, spreading more evil, corrupting their own character, obstructing the gospel, and inciting greater societal division.

The only solution for division is to cut fear, selfishness, and sin out of human hearts. And the only way that can happen is to place Jesus Christ at the center. We must advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. As people open their hearts to Him, focus upon Him, make Christ their supreme Lord, the One whom they long to be close to and to emulate in all things, they draw closer to Him and, simultaneously, to each other. We become unified in love, just as Jesus prayed, and experience the unity that inherent in our faith (Ephesians 4:13).

THURSDAY

The lesson brings us full circle back to Luke 18 where Jesus asks when He returns if He will find faith on the earth. Let's read the fuller context from The Remedy:

- Then Jesus told a parable to his interns to help them understand the importance of regular conversations with God and not quit talking with him. He said: "There was a judge who didn't believe in God or care about the welfare of people. And a widow, who had been exploited, kept petitioning the judge to do what was right and restore what her adversary had taken.

  "The judge refused for a long time, but he finally said to himself, 'Even though I don't believe in God or care about people, I am tired of this woman bothering me, so I will do what is right and she will finally leave me alone!' "

  Then the Lord explained: "Take a lesson from this unjust and godless judge: If he — not caring about anyone but himself — finally did the right thing, won't God set all things right for his children who cry out to him constantly? Will he ignore them? I tell you truly, he will set all things right, and quickly. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any on earth who trust him to set things right?" (Luke 18:1-8 REM).

- Do we trust Jesus to set things right or do we get drawn in by the injustice to use Satan's methods to set things right?

- Do we join forces with various political groups to seek to pass laws that coerce others to conform to our way of living?
- Do we believe that the injustices of this world can be solved by law and law enforcement?
- Do we believe that the injustices will be solved by God using the exact same methods of this world, a legal tribunal followed by inflicted punishments?

The only way for their to be eternal peace, health, harmony, happiness is to restore God's living law of love into the hearts and minds of people—to win people to loving loyal trust, i.e. faith, so that they trust God with outcomes and are willing to lay down their lives for Him and others.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 12
Esther and Mordecai

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 12
Esther and Mordecai

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

- I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6 NIV84).

What does this text mean?

I want to be very respectful and careful lest someone misconstrue my following comments. I want to recognize how special, blessed, and chosen were the children of Israel—blessed by God, chosen by God, they received the prophets and the inspired writings, the object lessons and teaching tools of the ceremonial system, and the Messiah, God Himself in human form was born into their family tree. What incredible privilege and blessing. And because of this Satan has targeted this people throughout human history and they have suffered terrible persecution—first and foremost, as the Bible prophets write, because they kept betraying God and going after false gods and thus leaving God's protective care and opening themselves up for satanic attack—and Satan has used the ungodly of the world to attack and persecute this people throughout history.

So I have great admiration and respect for the Jewish people through history for they were called by God, as Isaiah has written, to be a light to the entire world and bring salvation to all peoples of the world.

But as a nation today, are they still fulfilling God's purpose? If we want to find God's truth for this time in human history, will we find it in the nation-state of Israel—is that where God is actively working to reveal the final message of mercy to the world?

Jesus said,

- "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36 NIV84).

The Jewish people still existed under Roman occupation—they still had kings—remember King Herod. They still had their legal code and police force—the temple guards. In other words, their government was still in existence at that time. But Jesus said that that Jewish government was not His.

Satan claimed that Jewish government for his own along with all the rest of the kingdoms of the world that he offered to Jesus:

- Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:8-9 NIV84)

The Bible writers didn’t write that Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms except Israel/Judah, no Judah was part of this fallen, rebellious, sinful world and was led by the same unrighteous leaders as the rest of the world and used the same imposed laws that are easily manipulated for selfish purposes as the rest of the world—the nation, while used by God to protect the Scriptures and to be the branch of the human family through whom Messiah would come, was not God’s kingdom and did not function upon heavenly law.

What about today, having rejected Jesus as Messiah, does the nation state of Israel today possess the gospel, function as God’s true church, and contain the heavenly light the world needs?

The first point, from our memory text, is that God called Israel for a mission—and that mission was to be a light to the entire world of the truth about God, the coming Messiah, and the plan of salvation. They were to call all people to repentance and trust in the true God. But they instead rejected the truth and rejected the Savior and the purpose of God in their calling was only partially fulfilled. They did bring the Scriptures down through time for the world to access and we have the Old Testament because of them, and Jesus was born descended from them. But they as a nation, as an organized religious system, did not accept Jesus as the Messiah; and all those symbols, ceremonies, object lessons that when connected to Jesus and objective reality become powerful tools to enlighten the mind, when they are disconnected from Jesus and objective reality they become powerful tools to keep people from seeing the truth. There is no salvation, path to heaven, eternal life other than that which God has provided in and through Jesus. The Jewish people have been so blessed to be the family through whom God has worked and sent the Messiah—incredible privilege. But sadly, it will do them no good if they reject the very remedy to our human sin condition that they were integral in bringing into the world.

Read the second paragraph,

- Esther and Mordecai, her cousin, were Jews living in the capital of the Persian Empire, Susa. For whatever reason, unlike other Jews who had returned to Judah, they, along with others, remained in the land of their captivity. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 96).

What lessons can we draw from this fact?

Where had God called the Jews to be at this time in history? They were to return to Palestine and rebuild the temple. Where were Esther and Mordecai? In Persia, so this means, according to the

evidence we have, that Esther and Mordecai were not where God called them to be. And they ended up in trouble—did God abandon them because they weren't where they were supposed to be?

Have you ever heard the idea that if you go into a movie theater your guardian angel will stay outside? This story about Esther refutes that idea. God did not abandon them even though they were not where He instructed them to be.

But does that mean they didn't suffer hardship because of their choice not to go back to Jerusalem?

If they had been back in Jerusalem Mordecai would not have been in the situation where he refused to bow to Haman. Without that perceived slight Haman may not have had his attention drawn to the Jews and he may not have plotted to kill them. Had they returned to Jerusalem Esther would not have become queen and she wouldn't have had to risk her life going into the king.

So, one possibility is that the very problems, trials, and tribulation we see in this book is the result of their choice not to listen to God and not go where He wanted them to be and had they done so they may have avoided these problems. But, we also learn that despite their choice not to go, God did not abandon them but instead worked through them to protect the line for the Messiah, which Satan was actively seeking to destroy.

This process is a recurring theme we see in the lives of every person who seeks to follow God. God will give us various insights, truths, directions, callings, and we are left free to follow or not. If we choose not to listen right away, we may experience struggles, problems, conflicts, trials that God was trying to protect us from. When we find ourselves in such straights and call out to God, like Esther did, God always intervenes to heal and save—and I mean eternal salvation, not necessarily temporal salvation.

- Jacob—we can make the case that Jacob deceiving his brother goes against God's calling to live an honest and righteous life—and that act resulted in his many trials, but God did not abandon him and when Jacob turns to God God is there every time to help him and ultimately transform him giving him a new name Israel. Had Jacob not deceived Esau God would have given Jacob the blessing in God's way and Jacob would have avoided many trials.
- Jonah—called by God to go to Nineveh but runs, and experiences trials and tribulations he would not otherwise experience, and calls out to God and is delivered. Had he followed God's direction he would have avoided the storm and being swallowed by the fish.
- Samson didn't listen to God's instructions and suffered the results, but when he finally repented and turned back to God, God poured out His Spirit upon him and saved him eternally even though Samson died at that time. Had Samson stayed faithful he would have avoided such suffering. Samson ended up where God did not want him to be, but God did not abandon him; God waited for Samson to open his heart for God to heal and deliver.
- David didn't listen to what he knew was right in his affair with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah and he suffered consequence, but when he turned back to God in repentance he experienced a new heart and right spirit. He was saved eternally, but still had family and political problems as

a result of his actions. David ended up in a situation where God did not want him to be, but God did not abandon him, but sent a message to lead David to repentance.

Do you see this process over and again throughout history and your own life?

These stories are given to use to reveal reality, how we thrive when we trust and follow God and choose His methods, principles, design laws and instructions. But we cause ourselves injury, hardship, burdens, trials when we do things our own way—but God does not abandon us, He keeps watch over us, letting us experience what we have chosen, but waiting but us to learn from reality and to call out to Him and then He always steps in to save, deliver, and heal.

We see this same pattern in the story of Esther, and her story raises all kinds of questions and concerns.

Let's review the setting:

- Xerxes is having a great banquet with a lot of alcohol being served. He calls for his queen, Vashti, to come so he can show her off. She refuses. The counselors counsel Xerxes to strip her of her position, forbid her to ever enter his presence again, and replace her with another queen. So Xerxes removes Vashti and starts the search for her replacement
- The most beautiful virgins throughout the empire were brought to the palace and placed in Xerxes harem. The women underwent 12 months of beauty treatments and then one by one they went into the king, after they left the king they went to where the concubines were kept under the care of one of the eunuchs.
    - What is likely the reason they became concubines at this point?
    - Then what did the interview likely entail?
- What would you have advised your daughter to do?
- Hmmm…would this be adultery?
- Would it be adultery for Esther to participate in a premarital tryout? Would it be adultery for her to marry a man who put away his first wife for political reasons?
    - Jesus said, "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5:31-32 NIV84).
    - Are Jesus' words true only after He spoke them, or were they true before He said them? Were Jesus' words true in Esther's day?
    - If it is adultery how can God bless her if she is actively sinning?
    - Or do these apparent exceptions to the rules give insight into design law principles?
    - What is sin? Lawlessness—breaking trust with God and acting in selfishness, exploiting, abusing others.
    - And are people responsible for what they did not choose?
    - In that culture what were women raised to believe and what authority were they given in governance of self?

- Women didn't have the same freedom to choose to initiate these marriage or divorce in that culture that they have in our culture. Women didn't get to choose their husbands, they were treated as property and often traded by their fathers. They couldn't initiate a divorce, only the husband could.
- So, is adultery about the act, or the heart attitude? Adultery is betrayal of trust, the heart attitude. When Mordecai instructed her to do this, she was fulfilling her duties to her family, people, culture and would have engaged in this activity with a clear conscience. She was not seeking to betray anyone, or exploit anyone and thus her conscience was clear and God could work through her.

SUNDAY

Read second and third paragraph,

- None of us, for instance, lives in an Adventist country where the principles of our faith are, to some degree, the law of the land. But before being deported, the Jewish people had been living in their own country, where the principles of their faith were also enshrined in the law of the land.

  On one level, think how easy that should have made it to be faithful to God. After all, how much easier would it be to keep the seventh-day Sabbath if, in fact, keeping the seventh-day Sabbath were enshrined in the legal codes of the nation? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 97).

Hmmm…why were the Jewish people at the time of Esther in this foreign land? Because they had been taken captive by Babylon some 70 years or so before, and why were they taken captive? Because they had been unfaithful, rebellious, disloyal to God. But how could that happen if they had the principles of their faith enshrined into the legal code making is so much easier for them to obey?

This is what happens when one accepts Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law—an inability to see objective reality and what it means, minds clouded by rules and rule-keeping.

Did anyone read my blog for this week? This is a perfect opportunity to explore a question that comes up often by those who value the imposed law view and even those who don't but who struggle with the many verses in the Bible where God did give rules, laws, with imposed penalties. If God's kingdom and government do not function like human law and governments, how do we explain the many laws given, often with what appears to be harsh penalties, like stoning someone who picks up sticks on Sabbath.

How we understand the Bible often depends on the presuppositions we hold as we read it. Do we understand the setting in which the inspired message was given? What do we understand the problem being addressed to be? How do we understand God's law—do we believe it is imposed, like human law, or is it design law? What do we understand the central theme of Scripture to be? What is God's

intention, preference, and desire, and are God's actions His preferred way or what the people He is dealing with require for their current situation, needs, or understanding?

So why did God use such laws if His kingdom doesn't function in this way?

The answer is simple and straightforward: The rules given to Israel were for the setting up of a civil government in a sinful world to bring order and stability to a rebellious, unrighteous, self-centered, and sinful people who did not have hearts reborn to love God and others, people who had not experienced the new covenant of having design law written upon their hearts, a people who functioned upon the same me-first, fear-based, survival-of-the-fittest principles as the godless world around them, people who were just freed from being slaves to pagans.

The imposed rules were not intended to represent how God's government works; rather, they were intended to establish societal order among this sinful people to protect them from decaying into infighting, political intrigue, and tribal wars, which was already starting to occur with Korah and his rebellion, so that they could accomplish the mission for which they were called—to be the human avenue through whom the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15 would come and to preserve the inspired writings.

In Romans 13 the apostle Paul describes how God uses human imposed law via civil governments to provide order in a sinful world but contrasts it with the law of love—God's design to love our neighbors which must be written upon the heart. And to help people realize the need to have the law of love written upon their hearts God added laws, both ceremonial *and* the Ten Commandments (Galatians 3). The Ten Commandments did not exist in heaven when Lucifer rebelled; it is a written code specifically tailored for sinful humans. Angels don't have a law to honor their mothers (because they don't have mothers), that sins pass down their generations (because they don't reproduce), or not to commit adultery (because they don't marry).

But God was the one who gave Israel its imposed laws—why?

To provide both a protective hedge and a diagnostic instrument to convict the people of their terminal sin condition, which was designed to lead them to surrender their hearts to God so they would experience the new covenant, recreating them and restoring His living design law of love into their hearts and minds (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10). David understood this when he prayed,

> Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. … Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me (Psalm 51:6, 10 NIV84).

When Adam and Eve sinned, they changed themselves, took themselves out of harmony with life, and infected themselves with death. And because we are all descended from Adam and Eve, we are all born in sin, conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5)—we are all born with a terminal condition.

But God loves us too much to let us die (John 3:16), so immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, He promised to send the Messiah to save humanity from its terminal condition (Genesis 3:15). The entire

Old Testament narrative is the story of God fulfilling that promise and Satan working to stop it. Satan nearly succeeded in preventing the plan when he deceived the entire pre-Flood population of the world into hardening their hearts permanently against God—all except one man and his family. But God acted in love, in mercy, therapeutically, to keep open the avenue for the Messiah in order to save humanity. (You can read more about this in our blogs The Flood and Questions of Whether God Kills, Part 1 and Part 2.)

After the Flood, the Bible shifts from a global focus to the family of Abraham, which was further narrowed down through Isaac and then Jacob, because it is through their descendants that the promised Messiah would come.

At the time when the various laws were given to Israel, God was establishing them as a nation, an organized group of sinful humans who had not become His friends, like Abraham had become, but whom He wanted to be His friends. But because they were not reborn with new hearts, because they were still unconverted and, therefore, ruled by fear and selfishness and were untrustworthy, God intervened to establish a society that would function and survive in this world of sin, a society that would be made up of a few of His loyal friends (who didn't need the written law because God's design law was written upon their hearts) but also many more rebels and unrighteous idol worshipers (who did need the written law to diagnose and provide order—1Timothy 1:8-11). Thus, God established a code of civil conduct to restrain evil and prevent societal decay in a world of sin—which included the laws and penalties referenced in the emails above.

However, God's establishment of the rule of law in this world of sin does not represent the eternal government of God but is part of His condescension, part of His grace, mercy, and love, demonstrating how God is willing to step down and meet sinful humans where we are and provide what we need in order to keep open the avenue for the Messiah, who taught about a new kingdom with a new law and new methods that are written upon hearts and minds and not stone tablets or legal registries.

As Jesus said:

> The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20, 21 NIV84).

In order to save humanity, God must eradicate fear and selfishness from our hearts and write into our hearts and minds His living law of love (Hebrews 8:10). This cannot be done through imposed law, which is legal enforcement with threats of punishment. It can only be done through truth and love while leaving beings free—the eternal attributes, powers, and laws of God. It is why Paul wrote "that God's kindness leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4 NET).

And when we are won back to trust in God, when we repent, we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts as our Friend and Savior. And Jesus applies His remedy, which He achieved as our human substitute. But for Jesus to become our Savior, He had to be born as a human—He had to become part of the species descended from Adam. He had to partake of this fallen humanity to cure this fallen humanity. And Jesus did this for us. But in order for Jesus to do this, God had to preserve a branch of the human

family through whom He would be born—along with the inspired record through which Jesus, as a human child, would learn, just as we learn about heaven's revelations.

Thus, God provided civil laws with civil penalties to create a human society of some order to prevent the destruction and dissolution of the descendants through whom the Messiah would come.

God cannot get what He wants through imposed law—He can only restrain the unrepentant in some semblance of order to prevent anarchy and chaos for the purpose of allowing the gospel to heal hearts and minds.

This is also demonstrated throughout the biblical record—every time God uses might and power He restrains immediate evil but does not get more love and loyalty, he gets more rebellion, because force leads to rebellion:

- God sent the flood to keep open the avenue for Messiah, but after that great display of power the people began building a tower, why? Because they trusted God or didn't trust Him?
- After the 10 plagues of Egypt and thundering at Sinai what did the people do? More love and loyalty or rebellion after rebellion?
- After Mount Carmel when the great display of power of fire raining down did Israel remain faithful and loyal or back into idolatry?

One of the founders of the SDA church understood this and wrote:

- The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of **obligation** merely--because he is **required to do so**--will never enter into the joy of obedience. **He does not obey**. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. **True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.** The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. Christ's Object Lessons 97, emphasis mine)

- **A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel**. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. **If he dared, such a one would disobey**. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. (Signs of the Times, July 22, 1897, emphasis mine).

This is why, regarding Sabbath observance, God through Isaiah said that we are only keeping it if we enjoy it, if it is a delight to us.

Can you use threat, power, coercion to intimidate your children into eating spinach? Can you make them enjoy it?

The use of law coerces behavior but it does not transform hearts and true obedience only comes from converted hearts, this is design law. We must stop teaching Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law. We must understand that God's use of various imposed laws in Bible times was not for the setting up of His eternal government but because He was dealing with unconverted sinners who needed restraint.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Mordecai's instruction to Esther to hide her Jewish heritage.

What are your thoughts about this?

Is there a difference between withholding information and breaking the 9th commandment?

What is the 9th commandment?

- "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16 NIV84)

Is withholding information the same as giving false testimony against someone?

Well if one is in court and are asked a specific question that would enlighten the issues and you withhold exculpatory information for the purpose of allowing people to draw a false conclusion then, yes, in that circumstance withholding information would be bearing false witness.

However, in day-to-day conversations, if you keep certain things about yourself private is that the same as bearing false witness against your neighbor?

Notice the motive of the commandment, it is prohibiting evil, and what is evil?

In every culture of the world the root definition of evil is the same—exploitation of others. So the commandment is prohibiting actions designed to exploit, injure, harm, take advantage of another. In other words, it prohibits selfishness, it prohibits anti-love.

But withholding information may very well be an act of love. Jesus said

- "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear." (John 16:12 NIV84).

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- In Esther 3, we learn that King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) honored Haman and gave him a high position full of power. Everyone was told they must bow down before Haman. But we read: "Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor" (Esther 3:2, NIV). The Bible does not give the reason that Mordecai did not kneel before this man. But we know why. He is a faithful Jew. Mordecai is not willing to pay homage to a descendant of Agag, an Amalekite, enemies of his people since the Exodus (Deut. 25:19). How could a faithful Jew kneel down before an Amalekite? Or, for that matter, worship anyone but the Lord? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 99).

To the degree this was about worship, then certainly a person who is faithful to God cannot worship another, whether a person, angel, or idol. So, if this is about worship then well done Mordecai.

But is worship the only possibility here?

In Eastern cultures is there bowing that does not have to do with worship, but with respect and greeting?

Is it likely that Xerxes would have given an order for Haman to be worshiped as a god and be revered above Xerxes himself?

Is it possible that this is about authority, about position, about bending the knee not in religious worship but in submission to authority with cultural overlay of bowing to show one's respect and willingness to submit to the authority and leadership of the one to whom they are bowing? And could Mordecai object to this because he first, didn't respect Haman as a person, second discerned the hatred and selfishness in his heart, and third recognized him as coming from a long-standing enemy of his people? And perhaps as an official of the government there may have been aspects of the officials representing the pagan gods of the government and bowing had some element of reverence for the gods—but if that were the primary issue here wouldn't Mordecai have already refused to bow to Xerxes at some point and been in trouble?

The author of the book *Prophets and Kings,* seems to blend the various motives:

- Through Haman the Agagite, an **unscrupulous man high in authority** in Medo-Persia, **Satan worked at this time to counterwork** the purposes of God. Haman **cherished bitter malice** against Mordecai, a Jew. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him **worshipful reverence**. Scorning to "lay hands on Mordecai alone," Haman plotted "to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." Esther 3:6. (Prophets and Kings 600, emphasis mine).

Mordecai certainly would not worship this man, but he also would not give this man the idea that he would submit to his unscrupulous abuse of authority that was being used by Satan to work against God.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Esther 4:13-14 perhaps the most important and often quoted portion of the book:

- And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13-14 NKJV).

Can this sentiment, this idea, "who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" be true for each of us? That we might find ourselves in circumstances that God specifically called us to?

Has God, in fact, made a call for His people who are living today, at this time in human history? What is that call?

Here is an historical quotation from one of the founders of the SDA church that suggests a purpose for God's people at this time in human history. Do you agree or disagree?

- It is God's design to manifest through His people **the principles of His kingdom**. [which are what? Truth, love, freedom, the design laws that life is created by God to operate upon. And when we live in harmony with God's design laws what happens in us? We become healthier, happier, holier, and reveal more fully the truth by our very being. Notice what comes next] **That in life and character they may reveal these principles**. He desires to separate them from **the customs, habits and practices of the world.** [Does this mean only villainy, perversion, crime, abuse, or does it also include the pursuit of justice through the customs, habits, and practices of the world?] He seeks to bring them near to Him that He may make known to them His will… (Kress Collection 12).

  To the same work **He has called His people in this generation**. To them He has revealed His will, and of them He requires obedience. In the last days of this earth's history the voice that spoke from Sinai is still saying to men, **"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."** Exodus 20:3. [What does this mean? Is it restricted to godlessness or pagan idols? Or do we recognize that when we replace the truth of God's design law with human imposed laws that we replace the God of heaven with a creature in our worship? If we worship a god who functions like a human we are not worshiping the Creator.] Man has set his will against the will of God, but He cannot silence this word of command. The human mind can never fully comprehend its obligation to the higher power, but it cannot evade the obligation. Profound theories and speculations may abound, **may try to set science in opposition to revelation, and thus do away with the law of God**: but stronger and still stronger will the Holy Spirit bring before them the command, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10. (Kress Collection 12.3) [Consider the generations that have been taught the lie

of godless evolution—but their false theories do not change objective reality. Look at what is happening all over the world where godlessness is taught, decay and disintegration of common decency.]

How is the world treating the law of God? **Everywhere men are working against the divine precepts. Even the churches are taking sides with the great apostate**. [How by teaching God's law is imposed law. That justice is through punishment and legal payments. That it is right and good to coerce consciences of people if it is for a greater good, like saving lives.] Men in their blindness boast of wonderful progress and enlightenment, but **the heavenly see the earth filled with corruption and violence. Because of sin the atmosphere of our world has become as the atmosphere of a pesthouse**. (Kress Collection 12.4) [Do you see the degradation of the human condition wherever these godless policies are taking hold? Look at the homelessness, drug abuse, rioting, open violence, gang shoplifting, hatred of the truth, hatred of virtue, rejection of objective reality, rejection of God's design for families, devaluing of human life).

A great work is to be accomplished in saying before men the saving truths of the gospel. This is the **means ordained by God to stem the tide of moral corruption**. This is **His means of restoring His moral image in man**. It is His **remedy** for universal disorganization. It is the power that draws men together in unity. (Kress Collection 12.5) [What is God's means? The presentation of the gospel, the truth, presented in love, while leaving people free. What is NOT the means? It is not the method of law, of force, of coercion, of threat, of imprisonment, of physical war, of intimidation, of politics, of control of consciences, of economic sanction. Why is the means that God uses that of the gospel? Because what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship and this can only be achieved through our conversion, our freewill agreement, our choice to surrender. And the methods of Satan, the methods of this world destroy individuality, destroy love, incite fear, stoke selfishness, inflame violence, and efface the image of God in people and instead make people to be like Satan.]

To present these truths is the work of the third angel's message. [This is the message of design law, of returning to worship God as Creator. To present the 3 angels through imposed law with rules that must be kept and a god who inflicts punishments for rule breaking is to present the Satan's false version of God and obstructs the final message, delays the second coming, hardens hearts and minds against heaven.] The Lord designs that the presentation of this message shall be the highest, greatest work carried on in our world at this time. That this work may be carried forward on correct lines, He has directed the establishment of schools, sanitariums, publishing houses, and other institutions. In these institutions the attributes of God are to be unfolded, and the glory and excellence of the truth is to be made to appear more vivid. (Kress Collection 13.1) [But instead our institutions have become infected with imposed law and the pagan punishing god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice in order not to kill us. If we want to accomplish the mission, if we want to hasten the day, we must reject the imposed law lie and reset our message in the design law reality of God's kingdom and character of love.]

> The Lord years ago gave me special light in regard to the establishment of a health institution where the sick could be treated on altogether different lines from those followed in any other institution in our world. It was to be founded and conducted on **Bible principles** as the Lord's instrumentality. Those who had any connection with this institution were to be educated in **health restoring principles**. (Kress Collection 13.2) [The laws of health are what kind of laws? Design laws, and these principles are to be what our institutions operate upon. When she began this health reform the world leaders were practicing various superstitious treatments, bleeding, leaching, and using various poisons to treat diseases.]
>
> **The human family is suffering because of the transgression of the laws of God**. [Why? Because breaking rules gets one in trouble and God uses power to inflict punishments? No! because God's laws are like the laws of health and breaking them causes us injury and harm, physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and socially] **Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles,** and thus he is seeking to counterwork the work of God. [Like using coercion to force people against their will to take an experimental injection with no evidence of safety, like colluding with governments to shut down worship centers and ministries—for what? Fear without respect to conscience.] He is constantly presenting the chosen people of God as a deluded people. **He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousnes**s. The Lord desires through his people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles… (Kress Collection 13.3) [Have you not seen this over the last several years the constant accusations against anyone with truth, accusations of racism, sexism, transgenderism against anyone who advances principles of equality rather than equity
>
> **Still greater truths are unfolding for this people as we draw near the close of time**, and God designs that we shall everywhere establish institutions where those who are in darkness in regard to the needs of the human organism may be educated, that they in turn may lead others into the light of health reform. The blind leaders of the blind must learn the truth in regard to healthful living as taught in the Scriptures. (Kress Collection 13.5)

The Christian leaders and staff at Honey Lake Clinic are fully on board with these principles, with making decisions to heal the whole person through the application of biblical truth—which are design laws. The truth of God is not restricted by denominational boundaries, God's truth is for all people and any person who loves the truth will find the Holy Spirit leading them into ever increasing truth. I pray for God to send more lovers of His truth to the field to help us share this message and win more people out of the pagan system of imposed laws with its punishing god.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 13
The End of God's Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse:

- Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God… (2 Peter 3:11-12 NKJV)

I love this verse, the inspiration and hope that we can hasten or speed the coming of Jesus. Have you ever thought about that? And have you considered what we could do to make that happen? Ideas?

- First and foremost is for us individually to prepare ourselves—God waits patiently for all savable people to settle into the truth of salvation. So, if there are choices that we need to make in governance of self to settle us into our loyalty, devotion, and friendship with God then that is our first duty—to cooperate with God for our own sealing.
- Then, second, we are to use our abilities to advance God's kingdom—to take actions that help others come to salvation—what might those be? How would you describe it?
- Take the gospel to the world—but isn't that the mission of every Christian? And if all Christians are doing that why hasn't Jesus come? Is it possible the gospel that has been taken to the world is incomplete, is missing some vital element, has been altered through history in some way such that it is not the message God wants taken?
- Take the 3 Angels messages—which starts with the eternal gospel, the gospel that is the same through all eternity both past and future. Do we have a gospel—good news—that is eternally true and contains truth that has been lost to Christianity over the millennia and until this truth is returned to the gospel then what is being presented by the majority of Christianity remains incomplete?
- What is the missing piece?
- The truth about God's law which determines the way we understand God's character, government, methods, the problem of what sin is and the plan of salvation.

We believe that Christ has not yet returned because the true gospel is yet to be presented in its full light. That the gospel has only been presented in a partial light, but that eternal truth that is essential to not only save sinners from sin, but to settle the loyal angels into eternal loyalty, truth that is necessary to insure sin never arises again is yet to be included in the final message to the world.

We believe this centers on the truth about God's law, His law being design law and the belief about God's law directly determines how one understands God's character and thereby determines what kind of people we become. Are we transformed into people who bear the image of God because we are

fixing our eyes on Christ and seeing Him in His true light and by beholding we are changed, or do we hold to traditional teachings that misrepresent God and Christ and while we still worship a being called Jesus and our Heavenly Father, we attribute to them traits that make them like Satan in character and by beholding and worshiping this distorted god we become marked beastly?

We have a new magazine coming out in a few weeks entitled *The Lie—That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ.* In this magazine we start by describing our motive—to hasten the coming of the Lord, and then make the case that the Lord delays because He is waiting for the eternal gospel, the truth about His design law to be recovered and returned to the presentation of the gospel because in order God to win the war for hearts and minds He has to do more than destroy Satan, He has to destroy Satan's lies that infect hearts and minds. And lies cannot be destroyed by force and might, but only by truth and love.

In this magazine we describe this battle through history and how Adventist Reformers brought this larger view over God's law to Christianity and in 1888 the legalists rejected it and the SDA organization joined the rest of Christianity in advancing a Romanized version of Christianity in which it is taught that God's law functions like Roman law, with imposed rules that require the supreme dictator to impose penalties. God is then presented as the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death that require Him to be appeased by the blood of an innocent sacrifice.

We document, from the published materials of a wide variety of Christian denominations, that this lie about God's law infects them all, including the SDA church, yet the message given to the SDA Reformers overthrows this Romanized human distortion of the gospel.

We will let you know when it is available so you can get copies, read it, and then when you are persuaded in your own mind, share it with as many people as you can.

Read first paragraph,

- The book of Revelation fills the mind with scenes of the end. The epicenter of the book deals with the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. Satan has lost his legal hold over the earth, and now he pursues those who remain loyal to God. The book climaxes with Jesus' return to deliver His children, both the living righteous and those faithful ones who have died since the fall of Adam and Eve. The book shows us, too, the destruction of Satan and the wicked by fire, and Jesus' establishment of His eternal kingdom on the earth made new. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 104).

What do you think of this sentence "Satan has lost his legal hold over the earth, and now he pursues those who remain loyal to God"?

Has Satan ever had a legal hold over the earth? What legal hold does Satan have? If one must use legal language has Satan done anything legally or are all of his actions illegal? Can someone do illegal acts to obtain a legal hold?

What does it mean that the lesson uses such language? It is evidence that the authors have accepted the Romanized version of the Bible and Christianity, the lie that God's law functions like human law, a system of imposed rules with legally imposed consequences.

But this is all false—Satan never had a legal hold. His hold has always been through deception, through lies, through falsehood, and the hold has been on the hearts and minds of intelligent beings, not upon territory.

And his hold upon sinners is an illegitimate and illegal hold—we are slaves to sin—but Satan doesn't hold us as slaves to sin legally, it is against the law of God and heaven. It is so sad, but this type of thinking, this distortion in the presentation of the gospel is exactly why the church has not finished its mission to give the gospel to the world and why Christ delays. And it is exactly how we can hasten the day of Christ's return by rejecting the Romanized view of God's law and presenting the eternal gospel to the world.

Consider this commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages* in regard to Satan's legal hold, do you agree?

- When Satan declared to Christ, The kingdom and glory of the world are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, he stated what was true only in part, and he declared it to serve his own purpose of deception. Satan's dominion was that wrested from Adam, **but Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator**. His was not an independent rule. The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. **Adam was to reign subject to Christ**. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, **Christ still remained the rightful King**. Thus the Lord had said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "**The Most High rules in the kingdom of men,** and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Daniel 4:17. Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits. (The Desire of Ages 129).

Do you see how deeply the lie is in Adventism that despite having commentary like this, they still claim that Satan had a legal hold on earth—he did not.

What do you think of the last sentence, "The book shows us, too, the destruction of Satan and the wicked by fire, and Jesus' establishment of His eternal kingdom on the earth made new"?

Does the way one understands God's law impact how one understands the destruction of the wicked, including Satan, in the end?

How is the destruction of the wicked taught by those who accept Rome's view of God's law? That sin is lawbreaking and justice requires the infliction of punishment and therefore in the end, God uses His power to not just kill the wicked for their sin-crimes, but to torture them the appropriate amount of time before He kills them. But these same people turn around and say that God is love and that all He wants for us is our love and loyalty. In this they reveal that they are exactly like the blind religious leaders Christ confronted, people who do not comprehend how reality works for they do not understand God's design law, character, government, or methods.

They are blind because they think they are presenting ideas that will advance God's kingdom and eradicate sin, but instead the lie that God's is the source of inflicted punishment for sin violates God's law of liberty and incites more rebellion, distrust, and sin.

This is Satan's goal to have the very people who claim to worship God teach lies that result in the destruction of love, increase rebellion, and for those who stay in this system of belief to destroy their individuality and make them into mindless pawns who merely look to authority to tell them what to do—very much like the Dark Ages church, and more recently mindlessly going along with the coercion of consciences in promoting experimental medical treatments.

Consider these historical quotes documenting a different message was part of the founding of the Adventist church, but that message has been suppressed and replaced with the Roman version ever since 1888. As I read these comments I want you to specifically ask yourself, do these comments harmonize with the Roman imposed law lie or with Design law?

- The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's **deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force.** The **exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** He desires only the service of love; and **love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority**. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan**. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2. (The Desire of Ages 22).

What law is described? What is Satan's power? Lies about God, and can the lie that God's law is imposed requiring God to use power to punish lawbreakers by hurting and killing them be refuted by using power to force compliance? What is required to destroy this lie? The truth—and does that mean simply the declaration of the truth or the objective demonstration of the truth lived out for all to see? And do you see in Jesus' life, when Peter pulled out a sword to use physical power, Jesus told him to put it away and said:

- "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:53-54 NIV84).

And Jesus said to Pilate:

- "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36 NIV84).

Jesus, God in human form, demonstrates that He does not use physical might and power to advance His kingdom. He could have used such methods, but they are not part of God's kingdom, for they are

contrary to His character of love, they are the actions of a creature, not the Creator. God is waiting for His people to fully throw of all this creature worship that stems from believing God's law functions like human law, and return to worshiping Him in His true light, to make a right judgment about Him, to glorify Him in our lives and we can only do this in the fullness of God's design by rejecting Roman imposed law and all the penal legal lies that come with it and embrace the truth that God's laws are design laws.

Consider this historical quote:

- In the work of redemption **there is no compulsion**. **No external force is employed**. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the **highest sense of freedom**. (The Desire of Ages 466).

If the Roman view of God's law is correct and that God is required by law and justice to use His power to punish law breakers, then are we left free or is there compulsion, pressure, external force being applied?

Consider this quote:

- We are **not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself**. His own actions start a train of **circumstances that bring the sure result**. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, **men separate themselves from God**, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and **the sure result is ruin and death.** (Selected Messages volume 1, p. 235).

Can this be true if God's law functions like human law? This quote is describing Galatians 6:8, those who sow to the carnal nature, from that nature reap destruction. Or James 1:15, sin when full grown brings forth death. Or Romans 6:23 the wages of sin is death. But in case this quotation is not clear enough on the describing these Bible texts, there is one even more explicity in the book *The Great Controversy:*

- **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but he leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown**. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown, which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. (The Great Controversy 36)

And so there can be no doubt as to the message that the Adventist Reformers believed was to be the message that is lighten the world for Christ return, which when given in its full light will hasten the

coming of Jesus, because what is needed requires more than mere destruction of Satan, but the destruction of his lies also, consider this quote:

- **God could have destroyed Satan** and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order**. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and **love are to be the prevailing power**. (The Desire of Ages 759).

  It was **God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security**, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for **Satan to develop the principles** which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. **Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe**. (The Desire of Ages 759).

What does this mean? What are the principles of Satan which is the foundation of his government? Lies, fear, selfishness, power over, made up rules, inflicted punishments—in other words all the governments of this world that Satan claims as his and which Jesus affirmed are not part of the heavenly government.

Why must time be given? Because a mere claim cannot reveal how things work, truth, based in reality, must be demonstrated by cause and effect. Thus to return the universe to universal peace and eternal security, not only must Satan and his agents be eliminated, but their lies must be eliminated from all minds—which requires all the saved to be fully persuaded in their own minds of the truth of God's character, methods, principles and design laws.

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

- After revealing in the first verses that Jesus is the source and focus of Revelation, Revelation 1:4, 5 alludes to all Three Members of the Godhead, who are working unitedly to save human beings. The Father is the eternal one who was and is and is to come. The Holy Spirit, who is working powerfully among the first-century churches, is named. Then John recalls the status of Jesus Christ—the "faithful witness," "the firstborn of the dead" (Rev. 1:5, NRSV), who possesses legal ownership of this planet. Satan's attempt to use this earth to establish his kingdom is ruined. In addition to God's victory over Satan, our Creator's shed blood washes away our guilt and shame. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 105).

If we must use legal language, then it is true that Jesus has legal ownership of this planet—when did Jesus obtain His legal ownership? At creation—He is the Creator—all things were made by Him and through Him all things hold together. Jesus has always been the legal owner and there has never been

another legal owner of this planet. Satan's claim to be the legal owner does not make Satan the legal owner.

What about the last sentence which says, "In addition to God's victory over Satan, our Creator's shed blood washes away our guilt and shame," what does this mean?

The talk of the blood of Jesus is precious language, we have songs about being cleansed by the blood, and the power of the blood—but what does it actually mean? Are we cleansed by red corpuscles? How does the "blood" of Jesus wash away our guilt and shame?

The use of blood as a metaphor to describe the saving truth is from Jesus who said,

- "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58 NIV84).

What does this mean? The Jewish religious leaders of His day did not like these words, even some of His own followers didn't like these words. The Bible says that:

- On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60 NIV84).

Why were they having a hard time accepting these words? Because they were thinking literally, not figuratively. Do we do the same thing when we sing there is power in the blood, or write that we are cleansed from guilt and shame by the blood?

Do we ever teach that Jesus presents His blood to the Father to pay for our sins?

What is the reality that the metaphor is teaching?

What does Scripture say about the blood?

Does blood represent the death of the animal sacrifice or its life?

According to the penal view, the legal view, the blood represents the death, the price paid—thus we are forgiven or legally pardoned by Jesus dying to pay the legal penalty.

But the Bible doesn't teach this, notice what the Bible actually says about the blood:

- For the **life of a creature is in the blood**, and I have given **it** to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; **it is the blood** that makes atonement for one's life. (Leviticus 17:11 NIV84).

So what does this mean? Does it say the death of the animal is in the blood and that the death penalty paid provides legal pardon? No! It says that the life is the blood and the life cleanses from sin and by being cleansed from sin we are restored to being at-one with God again.

The NIV leans toward a forensic or legal interpretation, so consider this same verse from the Good News Translation:

- The **life of every living thing is in the blood**, and that is why the LORD has commanded that all blood be poured out on the altar to take away the people's sins. **Blood, which is life, takes away sins** (Leviticus 17:11 GNT).

So, if we understand that the blood represents the life, not the death, what was Jesus saying when He said that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood?

The flesh and blood were replaced with new symbols, bread and wine, but they represent the same thing—which is what?

Jesus is the Word made flesh—thus the flesh represents the Word, the truth of God as embodied in, lived out through, and taught by Jesus. To partake of the flesh of Jesus means we ingest into our minds and hearts the truth of God that Jesus embodied and lived out—that God is not the kind of person Satan has represented Him to be; that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father; that no one needed to intercede with Jesus to wash Judas' feet; that no one had to pay Jesus to forgive His crucifiers; and that all we see in Jesus is true of God!

When we partake of the flesh, the bread, the truth that Jesus brought, it becomes building blocks of our beliefs and understanding displacing the lies and leads us back to trust. Then when, based on the truth, having been fully convinced in our own minds, having partaken of Jesus, we open our heart's door and invite Him in and we receive the life of Jesus, we receive new motives, desires, longings, and the old fear-based, guilt ridden, shame oppressed self dies and we arise to a new life, new beings, who like Paul can say, "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." We receive a new life gifted to us by Jesus and instilled in us via the Holy Spirit.

We are still ourselves, with our own individuality, our own personhood, our own histories. The history of Jesus' earthly life does not become ours. What becomes ours is the pure, holy, righteous, loving, godly character that He developed. It becomes ours as we ingest Jesus, as we internalize into our being the truth He brought and then in trust we choose to apply His methods, principles, design laws to how we live and treat others, trusting God moment by moment with how things turn out. In so doing, our hearts affections, desires, motives, longings are changed and we become like Jesus in heart, motive, and character. And then when the Father looks upon us He does not see our previous unhealed, fear-

ridden, selfish, vile old selves, He sees our healed, renewed, reborn, Christlike selves—and this is what it means to be clothed in the robes of Christ's righteousness.

So how does the blood of Jesus wash away our guilt and shame? By healing and transforming us as we partake of the life of Christ through our trust in Him.

So the only way to take the blood of Jesus to our heavenly Father—is by ingesting Christ into our inmost beings and taking the life of Jesus within us to the Father when we meet Him face to face.

Read third paragraph,

- The focus of God's mission is not simply to drag perishing people to safety. God's salvation offers a new and honorable status, because God's image is restored in us. The redeemed become royalty (kings) because we are blood-related to the King of the universe through Jesus' shed blood. Now, as royal family members, we join the mission of the royal family in the salvation of other human beings. This makes us priests! Christ had constituted His church a "kingdom" and its individual members "priests." To be a member of the kingdom is to be a priest. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 105).

What do you think of the sentence, "The redeemed become royalty (kings) because we are blood-related to the King of the universe through Jesus' shed blood"?

Are they explaining the metaphor and teaching the reality that the blood of Jesus is His life, and we are blood related because we are renewed in heart and mind to be like Jesus in character and thus we again bear the image of our Creator, i.e. look like Jesus and are thus part of His heavenly family, or are they making this more legal, more literal, concrete in some way?

Didn't the Jews in Christ's day make an argument about right to heaven based on blood relationship and not character? Notice the logic and progression of thought here:

- To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

  They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

  Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."

  "Abraham is our father," they answered.

> "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does."
>
> "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." (John 8:31-41 NIV84).

What are the Jews doing? Claiming rights, status as children of God by blood relationship, by genetics. What did Jesus do? He refuted this, and stated that only those who have faith like Abraham are His children—why? Because when we trust Him, we open the heart and we become partakers of the divine nature and the image of God is restored in us. If we do not trust Him then we have the image of Satan formed in us.

So the blood is only symbolic of the life, the character, of Christ, not the genetics of Christ. And we are joint heirs with Christ and considered royalty only if we are partakers of His nature in heart, mind, character.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The book of Revelation gives us a powerful and graphic representation of the great controversy theme, perhaps most dramatically depicted in Revelation 12:12: " 'Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time' " (NKJV). It's hard to imagine how anyone can understand anything in Scripture apart from the great controversy motif, which will climax in the last days. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 106).

What is the difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath?

- If Satan's wrath is able to have its way, if we are not shielded or delivered from Satan's wrath what is the result—are we blessed or harmed?
- If God's wrath is poured out without mixture, if we are not shielded or delivered from God's wrath what is the result—are we blessed or harmed?
- Does that mean Satan's wrath and God's wrath are manifestations of the same power, methods, actions but merely with different motives? In other words, both Satan and God use power to harm people but Satan does it from a position of envy, selfishness, hatred, and evil, while God uses power to torture and kill only from a position of judicial requirement because the law and justice require it—but both use power to harm others? No—this is Satan's lie to project his character, methods, and principles upon God so that we interpret God's actions as being satanic in nature and character.

- While it is true that if we experience unshielded wrath from either Satan or God that we will be harmed—what their wrath actually is, are opposites, while the impact upon us is harm, the actions of both God and Satan are opposite. And we can only understand this if we understand reality, God's design law.
- Satan's system of government, as a creature who cannot create reality, is that of made-up rules enforced through the application of external force. Thus Satan's wrath is the use of power to punish, to inflict harm upon those whom he is wrathful toward. God's agencies shield us from Satan's use of power, restraining and holding Satan at bay. We see this all through Scripture.
- God, however, is the Creator, the builder of reality and His laws are the laws that life and health operate upon. If we break God's laws we take ourselves out of harmony with life and automatically suffer pain, injury, and eventual death if not healed and restored into harmony with God's law by our Creator.
- While Satan uses power to inflict harm, God uses power to heal, restore, recreate, renew, and rebuild.
- While Satan's wrath is the active use of power, God's wrath is the cessation of the use of His power that He has been expending which has been mercifully shielding us from the full consequences of what sin would do to us without His power, presence, mercy and grace holding that destruction at bay. But when the wicked harden themselves and permanently reject God's mercy, He, in harmony with His character, His methods, His law of love and liberty, sets them free to reap what they have chosen, to be separate from Him—He stops using power and that is God's wrath—and they suffer terribly and die as a result of God's letting them go to experience what they have insisted upon.

So, both God's wrath and Satan's wrath result in harm to us, but Satan's is the active use of energy and power to inflict harm, while God's wrath is the cessation of the use of power, the setting of people free to reap what they have sown.

This is exactly what Paul describes in Romans chapter one:

- The **wrath of God is being revealed** from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men **who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, since what may be **known about God** is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities**—his eternal power and divine nature—have been **clearly seen**, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

  For although they **knew God**, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their **thinking became futile** and their foolish **hearts were darkened**. Although they claimed to be wise, they **became fools** and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images** made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

  Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires... They **exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts…

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity… (Romans 1:18–29 NIV84).

Commenting on these verses, scholars from the book *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, published by Intervarsity Press, write:

- In some sense, **God's wrath is built into** the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, **we cause or own disintegration**.

  The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, **is not something caused by God**. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the **inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated**. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32).

  The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, **is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves**.

  In light of these reflections, **the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained**… God loves us with an everlasting love. **But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death.** (Hard Sayings of the Bible p. 543).

This is from a non-Adventist Christian commentary—and it describes truth, universal truth of God's kingdom that is the outworking of design law. Now, consider what EGW wrote commenting on the final plagues, which are the outpouring of God's wrath, the seven bowls of wrath, which is the message given to the SDA church, which leadership rejected in 1888 and because of that rejection the organized church has not yet completed its mission to lighten the world with the eternal gospel because it continues to take the imperial dictator version of God to the world.

- "I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way; **They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated

warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

"**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress**, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." (Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3)

Now what about Jesus as our Savior and substitute—did Jesus experience God's wrath and is what Jesus experienced different than what the wicked in the end experience or the same?

If God's wrath is giving up and letting go, do we have Scripture to confirm that God did this to His Son at the cross? Jesus' own testimony

- "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?" (Matthew 27:46 GNT).

Paul uses the exact same Greek words he used in Romans 1:24,26,28 about God's wrath when describing Jesus' experience on the cross in Romans 4:25, the problem is the translators use different English words making it difficult for people to realize that Jesus was not punished by His Father, He was let go by His Father:

- Because of our sins he was handed over to die, and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God. (Romans 4:25 GNT).

And what does God do to the wicked in the end? He lets them go to reap what they have chosen. God stops using His power to protect and shield them and they reap the full weight of what sin does.

Does God treat the sinners in the end differently that He treated Jesus on the cross? No! God treats them the same, God's action toward both is the same. Then why did Jesus rise again and the wicked die eternally?

Because of the actual, objective, reality-based difference between the condition of Jesus' heart, mind, character and that of the wicked in the end.

Jesus died when love overcame fear, selfishness, and sin and by His death he destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light, by His death He destroyed the devil and the power of death, by His death He destroyed the lies of the devil, the infection of fear and selfishness and the actual cause of death—which is the break from God and His design law for life. In Jesus, the law of God, the living law of love and truth was fully and perfectly restored in the humanity that He assumed and Jesus exercised His human faculties fully and perfectly to live out God's living law and died to reveal the truth about God, what sin does, and to destroy the infection of sin that Adam brought into the species and establish a purified and holy branch of the human family that we can be grafted into through faith.

The wicked die in the end when God treats them exactly the same, He lets them go to reap what they have chosen. But they have chosen to reject truth, despise love, and solidify into their hearts, minds, and characters fear, selfishness, and all villainy and thus they reap what they have chosen when God no longer uses His power to artificially sustain their existence and they pass from existence into eternal death.

With all of this in mind then, how do we present the 3 Angels' Messages?

If you haven't read our Magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels I encourage you to do so.

- What is the eternal gospel?
- What is the hour of God's judgment? What law lens do you understand judgment through? Who is being judged? Who is doing the judgment?
- What does it mean to fear God?
- What does it mean to give God glory?
- Why does God need us to give Him glory? Does our glorifying God have some role in the judgment?
- What does it mean that we are called to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water?
- What is represented by Babylon and who are to come out?
- What does it mean to come out of Babylon?
- What is the central issue of these three messages?
- What if we reject the first and second angels' messages and continue to worship a dictator instead of the Creator, and thereby we don't give God glory, we misjudge God to be like Satan, a creature who makes up rules and inflicts penalties and we thus remain in Babylon and refuse to come out?
- Then God sets them free to reap what they have chosen—by the law of worship they become like the false god they worship and mark themselves in their characters (foreheads) and hands (works) to be beastly
- Through the law of liberty they are set free to reap the full weight of what sin does when God's wrath is poured out without mixture—in other words when God stops using power to protect them from what sin has done and is doing to them
- Through the law of love and truth they are tormented in their being when infinite truth and love burn free when God unveils His life-giving glory and they become fully aware of their own corruption, the pain, suffering, and harm they have inflicted on others when their denial, lies, distortions and blame can no longer hide them from objective reality—the truth itself. And this happens in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb.

Have we presented the three angels in the true light of God's character of love and He design laws? Or have we presented these messages through the Roman imperial law perversion of Christianity?

Consider this quote from one of the founders of the SDA church about how the messages are to be presented:

- **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God.** Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being. All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of the laws that He has established. And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. He **publishes His law** and **the penalty that will follow** the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it if they will. … **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord** (emphasis mine). (White, E. G. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3. Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1872, p. 161).

TUESDAY

Read fourth paragraph,

- Since the beginning, human beings have had evidence of who God is and of His way of righteousness and love (Rom. 1:18–21). Therefore, all human beings from ages past will be judged based on how they cooperated with God and how they lived—regardless of how much they did or didn't understand (Rom. 2:11–16). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 107).

How do you understand this paragraph, particularly the idea of being judged based on how we cooperate with God and live?

Is this a judicial, legal, judgment or is this a diagnosis—judging the actual condition of heart and mind, the state of being? Have people been restored to love and trust in God or remained in fear, selfishness and sin?

Read the bottom pink section:

- Dwell on the fact that Christ has died for you personally. What could possibly make you think that anything you have done, no matter how bad, could not have been sufficiently paid for by the death of Christ on the cross? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 107).

Thoughts? Is this question helpful to you? What elements or ideas of this question are a blessing to you? Are there any ideas expressed that are troublesome to you or confusing?

What about the idea that Jesus died to pay for our sins—does that idea raise any questions? Such as:

- To whom is the payment made?
- Why is a payment necessary, who requires it?
- What if Jesus doesn't make the payment?
- What if we don't accept the payment?
- If the payment is made to God what will God do to us if He doesn't get it?
- Is the payment related to forgiveness if so how does that work? Does God forgive us our sins, or do we get our sins paid for?
    - If you owed someone 1 million dollars and couldn't pay it back and your brother steps up and pays off your entire debt, does the person who receives the full payment get to turn around and say to you—now that I have received payment for your debt I forgive your debt?
    - Do some people in Christianity teach that Jesus paid our sin debt but God also forgives our sin debt—do you see any conflict in these ideas?
    - These are the problems that the false imposed law view creates.

When we return to worshiping the Creator and understand His law is design law, and sin is not a legal problem but an actual problem, defect, in our being that needs healing, then we can understand all of this.

If you child was dying of kidney failure and you donate a kidney to save them, could we say "you paid a high price to save your child?" Certainly, but is the price a legal price or a price the condition requires in order to save your dying child? And who receives the payment of your kidney—the dying child. And what happens if you refuse to pay this price? What happens if the child refuses to receive it?

The price Jesus paid He referred to as a ransom price, Jesus said,

- The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28 NIV84).

A ransom is the price necessary to free someone held in captivity or bondage. The question is, what holds us sinners in bondage?

- The lies about God that we believe that keep us from trusting Him and
- Our own fallen, carnal, fear-driven, selfish nature that we inherited from Adam

What is the price to set us free? The truth that destroys lies and restores us to trust in God sets us free and in that trust we receive a new nature worked out by Jesus.

Thus the ransom price is paid to us—and it cost Jesus an infinite amount to provide us this truth and a new human nature.

WEDNESDAY

How would you describe our mission for God at this time in human history?
What would you like to see us do that would advance that mission?
What obstacles do you see in the way of that mission?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the New Heaven and earth when the mission is complete and “Death and sin will be gone, Satan and wickedness destroyed.” How does God eliminate death and Satan so that sin never arises again?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q1 Psalms Lesson 1

by Tim Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

END OF YEAR DONATIONS—Just a reminder for those who wish to make a tax deductible donation for 2023 that all donations must be either received or post-marked by December 31, 2023 to be included in the 2023 tax year.

New Billboards are now available on our website!

You can find them all at https://comeandreason.com/?s=billboards

SABBATH

When you consider the Psalms, what comes to mind?

The title for Sabbath's lesson is "How to Read the Psalms" –thoughts?

Read the last paragraph,

- The Psalms have been written in Hebrew poetry by different authors from ancient Israel, and so, the Psalms reflect their particular world, however universal their messages. Accepting the Psalms as God's Word and paying close attention to the Psalms' poetic features, as well as their historical, theological, and liturgical contexts, is fundamental for understanding their messages, which reach across thousands of years to our time today. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 4).

What is this paragraph telling us?

When we read any Scripture what is the most important aspect—the specific words or the meaning that is conveyed? It is the meaning that is the important part, not the specific words.

So, when translators translate the goal is to bring the meaning across, but there are obstacles to bringing the meaning across accurately, and these include:

- There is no such thing as a word for word translation. Essentially every word has more than one meaning and the translators have to determine which is the best new language word to convey that meaning of the old language word while keeping in mind that the new language word chosen also has multiple meanings.

- Translating idioms, ideas, references from one culture to the next can introduce error if the original use isn't understood. If you were going to translate to ancient Hebrew the following, "If you don't know the answer, just Google it." How would you translate that? Can you do a word for word translation? What about translating, "We will not go to work on President's day," into ancient Hebrew? If you translate "We will not go to work on the King's birthday"—have you introduced the idea of an aristocracy? Or, if someone today reads a letter from a person written in 1900 and they say they are in London having a "gay" time.
- Further complicating translation is the use of metaphors, symbols, allegories, parables which can be easily misconstrued
- In the psalms we have the added complexity poetry and poetic license
- Finally we always have the biases, assumptions, presuppositions of the translators

With all of this in mind, I thought it might be beneficial to read the Preface to *The Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms*:

> In 2016, The Remedy New Testament Expanded Paraphrase was released. In the Preface of that volume, I documented the process of Christian thought being infected by the idea that God governs like Caesar—imposing rules enforced by punishment. The traditional view has been that God's law functions in the same way as imposed human laws—which would require God to punish the perpetrator for breaking His rules—rather than recognizing God's laws as design laws—the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate. This view has led to the penal/legal theological constructs of Christianity, giving birth to the notion of a punishing god requiring legal appeasement. When translators—despite all innocence of motive—approach the text with this worldview in mind, they all too often bring this legal distortion of a punishing god into the translation.
>
> Additionally, a single Hebrew word can be translated into multiple various English terms, frequently over one hundred, leaving the decision as to which is the most suitable one, to the translator's discretion. This practice opens itself to the biases of the translator.
>
> While paraphrasing the Psalms, I have discovered that the Hebrew language is much more susceptible to the biases of the translators than the Greek. This is because the Hebrew is much more removed from our modern language, and there are many words in the ancient text that scholars have little or no understanding of. Repeatedly, the lexicons note, "Hebrew unknown" or "Hebrew not clear."
>
> Please understand that I believe that the various standard Bible translations are done by good-hearted people giving their honest best to deliver the most accurate translation possible. Unfortunately, they are still subject to their own biases, preconceived ideas and premises—just as I am. My premise is that God is the Creator, operating upon the principles of His grand law of love and expressing His love to all creation by establishing and putting into practice

natural/design laws, upon which reality is constructed to operate. Because of Adam's choice, humankind is out of harmony with God's design and is therefore in a terminal state—"dead in trespass and sin." Nevertheless, God, through Christ, has been working to heal and restore all who trust Him, back into unity with Him; back into harmony with His design laws—His original design for human life.

Finally, in the Psalms, poetic license is taken by the original author. Many Hebrew words are used poetically (symbolically or metaphorically), thus adding another layer of interpretive license.

Consequently, within the Psalms, even among non-controversial translations, there are wide differences in translation. Here are a couple of examples:

Psalm 29:9

The Good News Bible: *The Lord's voice shakes the oaks and strips the leaves from the trees while everyone in his Temple shouts, "Glory to God!"*

English Standard Version: *The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"*

Psalm 32:3,4

The Good News Bible: *When I did not confess my sins, I was worn out from crying all day long. Day and night you punished me, Lord; my strength was completely drained, as moisture is dried up by the summer heat.*

English Standard Version: *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

King James Version: *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.*

The Remedy: *When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God, I stressed myself and my body decayed, because every day I screamed, "no!" denying the truth. But day and night your healing hand pressed firmly upon me; my resistance evaporated like water in the summer heat.*

In the process of creating a paraphrase, the importance is not so much on being a language expert (as many lexicons and language databases are readily available) but on understanding the subjects of the nature of the war between Christ and Satan (2Cor 10:3-5), God's design laws, and His character of love.

> Without understanding these essential truths, the bias of human law (based on imposed rules) and the subsequent distortion of God (portraying Him as a dictator) get artificially woven into the translation, and thus misunderstanding is perpetuated.
>
> The foremost intention of this paraphrase is to make the concepts of God's design law, His character of love and His healing truth more accessible to people, in the hope that everyone may come into a personal, saving relationship with our amazing Creator God!

The Psalms are a collection of songs and prayer, what impact have they had on your life?

Paul wrote,

- May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NIV84).

Have you ever considered that the Scripture provides resources to "sanctify" us in spirit, soul, and body?

Have you considered the three parts of our being and all three parts need healing?

Remember the Greek for body is *soma*—the physical structure of our being which is the easiest for us to identify and differentiate from soul and spirit. And the Bible is filled with many instructions for the health of the body, guidance on hygiene, on diet, on exercise and rest.

Soul—the Greek is *psyche,* from which we get psychiatry and psychology and means our individuality, character, unique personhood and would correspond to the software of a computer and encompasses all the things we believe, learn, hold to be true.

Spirit—the Greek is *pneuma*—and is translated into a variety of English words, wind, breath, spirit, ghost… and corresponds to the energy of our being—the first and foremost is the life-giving energy from God, the breath of life. But we also have an energy of our being that we develop based on our experiences. Paul is telling us that our energies need to be sanctified, and I want to talk about that process today.

The Bible contains truth for the soul/mind, to provide us understanding in who we are, where we came from, why we are here, what the problem of sin is, the truth about God, the plan of salvation—truths that give us a framework to orient us and through which we can filter life experiences and controversial ideas. A system of truth that as we grow and advance in it heals our minds.

But the Bible also contains guidance/resources for our spirits, and I believe the Psalms are specifically intended to benefit our spirits, but of course they also benefit our minds and that has a beneficial impact upon our bodies because we are integrated beings.

So let's explore this idea of our spirit. The spirit is the part of our being that connects with the Spirit of God, and is the means whereby God inspires, energizes, encourages, motivates, convicts—the healing harmonics, the vitalizing power of God.

The spirit is the wellspring, the energy source, the life giving power that fuels our being; it is our—affection, attitude of the heart— and where God works via His Spirit to cause us to be dissatisfied with sin, to give us a longing for something more, to create a conviction, an uneasy restlessness when we are departing from Him and His path for our lives. The spirit is our inner most heart's affections attitudes and desires. Think of your closest loved one, a child or spouse going on a dangerous trip, perhaps going off to a war zone and with tears you say to them, "I will be with you in spirit." What do you mean?

- Are you saying you will go along with them bodily, in person? No, you will not be with them physically when you are with them in spirit.
- Are you saying that you are going to have an out of body experience and float along beside them in some ghost-like apparition? No,
- You are saying you will be with them in heart, sympathy, compassion, attitude, desire for their good, sharing in their struggles, hurts, rejoicing in their triumphs, celebrating their success. You have your heart's energies oriented toward them for their good. To be with your child in spirit is to be in harmony of the inmost being, resonating and connecting along unseen energy bonds of the quantum universe that God has created. It is the alignment of one's heart, affection, good will, intentions for their health and happiness.

Likewise, when we are filled with God's Spirit we are filled with the presence of God, His life, His energy, His love, His affection, kindness, goodness, grace, truth, and power.

Our spirit is our life energy—God's Spirit is the living divine third Person of the Godhead who unites with us with the full power of the Godhead bringing us the "Spirit" of the Lord—the new attitude of love rather than fear, selfishness, and hate.

Consider this historical quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, describing what physicists would more than a half a century later describe as quantum mechanics, do you agree?

- The striking feature of **divine operations** is the accomplishment of the greatest work that can be done in our world by very simple means. It is **God's plan** that every part of His government shall depend on every other part, the whole as a wheel within a wheel, working with entire **harmony**. He moves upon human forces, causing **His Spirit to touch invisible chords, and the vibration rings to the extremity of the universe**.—(Evangelism 93).

Now consider this quote from the same author from The Ministry of Healing:

- From age to age the Lord has been seeking to awaken in the souls of men a sense of their **divine brotherhood**. Be co-workers with Him. While distrust and alienation are pervading the world, Christ's disciples are to **reveal the spirit that reigns in heaven**.

> Speak as He would speak, act as He would act. Constantly reveal the **sweetness of His character**. Reveal that wealth of **love** which underlies all His teachings and all His dealings with men. The humblest workers, in co-operation with Christ, **may touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth and make melody throughout eternal ages.** (The Ministry of Healing 159).

What is being described with the phrase "reveal the spirit that reigns in heaven" and "touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth and make melody throughout eternal ages"?

When our spirit is renewed in the purity of heavenly love and truth, we get new desires, new attitudes, new longings that do not originate in us, but are gifted to us from Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We then must **choose to apply** these new attitudes that are the pure energies resonating in our spirits to our souls, our beliefs, our understandings, our minds, our characters, our choices which purge the lies, resolve the guilt, remove the shame, eradicate the resentment, and live the love.

As Paul wrote to Timothy:

- For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

Our spirit is our life energy and if we foster a negative spirit, allowing ourselves to be filled with hate, resentment, fear—fear of rejection, fear of financial loss, fear of failure, fear of condemnation by God and others, the negative spirit with its fear, guilt, shame, doubt, and worry corrupts our minds. The negative spirit leads to the formation of negative beliefs about ourselves—I am no good, everything I do I mess up, I don't deserve love, I have ruined everything, everyone hates me, I have sinned beyond forgiveness, I deserve punishment, those people are racists, the church doesn't care and on the list goes. The negative spirit corrupts our thinking infecting our beliefs which impact our life choices and relationships increasing stress and undermining our health as our bodies respond with increased inflammation and stress.

Salvation starts with the spirit—as the Holy Spirit moves upon our spirit to instill a desire for love, holiness, purity, peace, acceptance, goodness, reconciliation with God and heaven and convicts us of areas where we are out of harmony with what is good and healthy. When we are convicted in our spirits we must then choose how to respond—do we deny, distort, avoid the truth, double down on the sin, justify rebellion, numb ourselves with substances, find others who will endorse and support our destructive ways or do we embrace the leading of the Holy Spirit and choose to apply to ourselves the new desires and move these desires into the soul, our minds, our beliefs, our perspectives, as we choose to apply God's principles as we comprehend them? Do we choose to love and forgive or resent and hate and seek vengeance? If we choose to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit working upon our spirit then we experience rebirth, renewal, healing, recreation and restoration from the damage and infection of sin, of fear and selfishness. And our salvation ends with the second coming when this

mortal body is replaced with a glorified body. But only those who have experienced the cleansing of their spirit and the healing of their souls will receive a glorified body.

And this cleansing of the spirit and soul is called the seal of God—and what is the seal of God? Here is one Bible commentary on what the seal is, written by one of the founders of the SDA church—do you agree?

- Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a **settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved**—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already.—(The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 4:1161 1902. Last Day Events 219, emphasis mine).

Intellectually would be healing our minds/beliefs/understandings our souls and spiritually would be healing our spirits—our affections, longings, desires, energies that drive us.

With all of this in mind, I would like to suggest that the Psalms are particularly designed to cleanse our spirits—to invigorate us with inspiring truths that bring us into awe, admiration, amazement of our incredible God, to win us to trust, to look beyond the fears to an abiding confidence in our Creator, Redeemer, Protector, and Savior.

Do you have a favorite Psalm that has been healing to your spirit?

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

- In the Hebrew Bible, the title of the book of Psalms, tehilim, “praises,” reflects its main purpose—that is, the praise of God. The English title Book of Psalms is derived from the Greek psalmoi, found in the Septuagint, an early (second and third century B.C.) Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 5).

Do you see a connection between praising God and the attitude of your heart, do praises to God have a sanctifying effect upon your spirit?

Read the bottom green section,

- Though we, of course, do not worship God in an earthly sanctuary like the temple, how can we use the Psalms in our own worship, whether in a private or in a corporate setting? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 5).

What was the purpose of the earthly sanctuary? Was there anything in the OT sanctuary rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices that had any ability to save from sin? Or was it all educational, designed to teach the true plan of salvation?

- The gifts and sacrifices being offered were **not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.** They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order… But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** (Hebrews 9:9.10, 10:3,4)

- "The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats… wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:11,16,17).

- "I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me." (Hosea 6:6 GNT).

What was the purpose of the OT sanctuary—theater, object lesson, a teaching platform—to teach reality. And what is the reality that the sanctuary theater was intended by God to teach?

Consider this commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages,* do you agree or see it differently?

- "In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an **object lesson** for Israel and for the world. [What is an object lesson? Is the object lesson reality or does it illustrate reality? Is the object lesson required for salvation? Is the reality to which the object lesson is teaching required for salvation?] From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being**, from the bright and holy seraph to **man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator**. [What kind of a temple is this? Is the temple that is suggested here, that is composed of living beings, one built by human hands or by God? And is this the temple that Jesus is working to cleanse? Before we look at more evidence, just consider—in reality, if God wants to eliminate sin from His universe where is the place cleansing needs to happen—in the library of heaven, in court records, or in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings? So if this cleansing of the sanctuary is teaching us something about the plan of salvation, shouldn't it be connecting our minds to reality—the reality of where sin happens and where it needs to be removed? And sin does not happen in record books and erasing historical records does not remove sin. This alone should cause many SDAs to rethink their assumptions and reevaluate the evidence. The entire legal records idea is based on Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law.] **Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God.** Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, **the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled**. [What is God's purpose for humanity? And what was God's purpose in the incarnation of

Jesus? God's purpose for humanity is that human beings are living temples where God dwells by His Spirit that we bear His image. Sin effaced the image of God and man placed Satan's image, methods, principles into the heart of human beings. In Jesus the principles, character, image of Satan was purged from humanity and the fullness of God dwelt bodily and the image of God was restored into the species human for Jesus was fully human. In Jesus the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled!] God dwells in humanity, and **through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple**. [What does this mean? And if the heart of a sinner is to become again the temple where God dwells would that require some type of cleansing work to be done? Where is that cleansing taking place? Could we call that purification the cleansing of the temple?] God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high **destiny open to every soul**. **But the Jews had not understood** the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. [How about Christians today, have we understood? How about SDA Christians have we understood despite various founders of the church writing things like this?] They did not **yield themselves as holy temples** for the Divine Spirit. [How about Christians today? How about SDA Christians today?] The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the **temple of the heart**, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul**. [Where is the cleansing taking place? Now notice what this author cites next.] "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver**." Mal. 3:1-3. (The Desire of Ages 161).

What is described as being the temple which Jesus cleanses?

Now what is interesting is that this author, who is a central figure in the SDA church developing its doctrine of the Investigative Judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary, describes the cleansing of the sanctuary as the cleansing of people and ends this description with the application of Malachi 3:1-3. Do you agree that this author applies Malachi 3:1-3 to the cleansing of sinful hearts and minds and not to a building or records in heaven?

Then, notice what this same author says about Malachi 3:1-3:

- The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the **cleansing of the sanctuary**, brought to view **in Daniel 8:14**; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple**, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event**… (The Great Controversy 426).

So, if you agree with the author that the verses in Malachi describe as Jesus cleansing the spirit temple to prepare us to meet Jesus, then do you agree when the same author asserts that this cleansing of

people is the same event as that of Daniel 8:14—which means that the cleansing of the sanctuary which began in 1844 is not cleansing a building in heaven or legal documents but it is the exact same cleansing as that which Malachi describes, the cleansing of the Levites, the priesthood of believers.

Is the author correct and the cleansing is the cleansing of people and not books in a courtroom in heaven? Yes, why? Because God is the God of reality, not make-believe, and human-like court systems are made up based on made up laws, they are not the laws reality operates upon. God operates upon reality and He is healing creation itself, including human beings who are part of that creation and in order to do that He has to cleanse us, His creatures, from the infection of sin, not erase facts from books.

Thus the cleansing that occurs before Jesus comes again, which is prophesied in a variety of places and symbolically taught in the sanctuary, is the removing from us of our fear, guilt, shame, selfishness, and all elements of our old selves and renewing us in the gold of Christlikeness, settling and sealing us so that we cannot be moved.

This is not a legal process happening in court rooms. It is an actual process happening in hearts and minds. And in fact, the legal description is a barrier that obstructs the work of God in healing hearts and minds.

Then someone may ask what is the significance of 1844? Wasn't Jesus working to do this for every repentant sinner throughout all human history, didn't Enoch, Moses, and Elijah already experience this, so what is special about 1844?

The symbolism of the sanctuary theater answers this—and the answer is yes—God has been working through Jesus to heal every human mind throughout all human history and Enoch, Moses, and Elijah did experience all of this. And this is represented as the daily sacrifices that occurred all year long.

The difficulty people have in understanding these things is that they mix. metaphors or symbols. This happens all the time with first death and second death—people using first death events in Scripture to make conclusions about the second death. In other words, people identifying places in Scripture where God puts some people to sleep (first death—Flood, Sodom etc.) and then concluding God will use power to eternally destroy and kill the wicked in the end. That is a false conclusion because the events are not the same, the deaths are not the same, so mixing the two together causes error.

The same happens when people mix the daily sacrificial symbolic teachings with the annual feasts.

The annual feasts are intended to teach the larger landscape of the plan of salvation being worked out through history, from Adam's fall all the way to the earth made new. These feasts were to be held in a recurring annual cycle to teach the larger plan of salvation of the entire universe, the elimination of sin. The daily sacrifices taught the salvation of individuals.

All of this is described in detail in our Magazine The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming.

Each of the seven major feasts had a real-life fulfillment and covered a portion of human history from Adam's fall all the way to the earth made new:

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

  This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to "passover" our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

  The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.
- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks** (Pentecost): The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from AD 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.

- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!
- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

So what is the point of 1844? It is a prophecy given by God to Daniel. God, looking down the corridors of time tells Daniel that 70 prophetic weeks are left for the Jews to fulfill their mission and for the Messiah to come and fulfill His mission. But after Jesus comes and completes His mission, there will be an attack upon truth, upon the saints by the little horn power, also represented by the man of sin in Thessalonians. This man of sin sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God. He does this be infecting Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law and the Creator is replaced in the hearts and minds of Christians with a creature who is the source of inflicted pain and suffering. God tells Daniel that in this spiritual war it will be 2300 years, all the way down to 1844 until enough truth is recovered to destroy the lies that have taken root in the spirit temples of people in order to cleanse them of these lies and prepare the entire world all at one time for the second coming. This is the end time message that we have been given, and this is the significance of 1844—the time of the end has come, the final message of mercy has been revealed, the truth of God's character of love has been recovered, because we have rejected the Romanization of Christianity and returned to worshiping God as Creator by rejecting the lie that God's law is imposed and embraced the truth that God's laws are design laws.

MONDAY

The lesson points out that the psalms were authored by at least 8 individuals:

- King David, whose name appears in the titles of most psalms, Asaph, Korah, Heman, Ethan, Solomon, Moses and Jeduthun.

And these individuals wrote psalms about real life events, not fantasy. Such as Psalm 88:1-8, from The Remedy:

Lord God, you are my Savior; it is to you that I cry out—day and night.
2 May my prayer touch your heart—listen tenderly to my plea,
3 for my troubles overwhelm me; I feel like I'm about to die.
4 To my friends I'm useless, like one already dead—I'm so weak and worn out.
5 I'm abandoned among the lifeless; I feel like those already in the grave,
like one you have forgotten—whose life is beyond your care.
6 You have let me sink so deep that I am close to death; I am in the darkest pits of despair.

7 I feel like you are angry with me; I am drowning in waves of discouragement.
8 My friends have abandoned me—they find me repulsive;
I feel trapped with no way out.
9 My eyes are swollen from crying. Lord, to you I cry out all day long;
I reach out my hands to you. (Psalm 88:1-9 REM)

Can you relate to this Psalm?

What does it mean to you to know that these God-inspired Bible writers struggled with the same problems that we do?

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Psalms 2, from The Remedy:

Why are the nations of this selfish world angry at God's character of love?
Why do their people plot in vain against God's design? [thoughts? Why? Could it be they don't even know about God and His design for life and health? Could it be they believe the lie that there is no God and that the way to succeed is by the survival of the fittest method, do whatever it takes to advantage oneself? But is objective reality, how things work, demonstrating that the ways of the world do not bring health and wellbeing?]
2 World leaders take their stand
and the rulers unite together
against the Creator and his design for life
and against the One anointed to be our Remedy. [Do we see world leaders forming a new world order organizing themselves to oppose Christianity and the principles of liberty, autonomy, and seeking to make people into mindless drones to be herded and exploited like cattle?]
3 They say, "Let us break free from God's design
and reject God's protocols for life and health." [Do you see the godless policies being employed and enforced, not just in communist countries like China, but in Canada and in various states in America? And what is the result?]
4 The Creator, who from heaven sustains reality,
hates their foolishness; [Why does God hate their foolishness? Because they are insolent and rude to Him and He gets offended? No! Because breaking away from God's design destroys them and God loves them. It would be like a parent hating their childing doing drugs—they don't hate their child, they hate their child doing something that destroys them]
the Lord knows that their words don't change reality—
they're just meaningless noise. [Do you also know that the theories of the worldly don't change reality? What about when those same theories are Christianized and taught by theology professors—the idea that justice is using force to inflict punishment upon people? Do we recognize the foolishness in such teachings, that such methods cannot win people to trust, cannot instill love, cannot eradicate sin, fear, and rebellion from hearts and minds, but rather perpetuates it?]

5 He fiercely corrects their misunderstanding
and persistently assails their false perspectives,
instructing them,
6 "I have chosen who will reign in Zion;
my King will rule in sinless perfection." [who is this King? It is Jesus—and how did Jesus rule when He was here? What did Jesus say about His kingdom? What did He say about the use of might and power to physically fight? Jesus explicitly stated that His kingdom is not of this world, if it were His followers would fight. His kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom and is the foundation of all reality. But the religions of the world, including Christianity reject Jesus' own testimony and teach that He is coming back to rule just like every other dictator by force and power to inflict death upon those who refuse to love Him. This is why Jesus waits, because such a teaching incites rebellion.
7 The King will make God's healing plan known:
God said to me, "You are my Son;
today my fatherhood to you has become known.
8 Ask me, and I will give you all the nations—
the entire world will be yours.
9 You will govern them with an unbreakable shepherd's rod of truth and love;
you will destroy selfishness and crush their ability to coerce and deceive
like iron crushes pottery." [How does this happen if Jesus doesn't use might and power? How can one destroy fear and selfishness?]
10 Therefore, worldly rulers, wise up!
You, who govern the earth, have been warned as to how reality works.
11 So, with humble admiration, live in harmony with God and his designs,
celebrate him with fervor.
12 Accept the Son with a loving heart lest he let you go
to die from your terminal condition,
for he may release you to your choice at any moment.
Happy and healthy are they who abide in him.

Let's do a comparison between a Psalm from the NIV and the Remedy.

What is the most important aspect of what is recorded in the Bible—the words, or the meaning contained in the words?

Is it legitimate to replace Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic words with English ones as long as the meaning is retained?

What about a translation in which the words are accurate but the meaning is wrong?

For instance, there is a culture in which only thieves knock on doors, when friends come they stand at the door and call out. So, when the translators translated Revelation 3:20 where Jesus says He stands at the door and knocks, they translated it as He stands at the door and shouts.

Now, which is the more accurate translation—the one which clearly substitutes a word with actions that were not described, Jesus shouting rather than knocking, yet has Him approaching as a friend, OR the one which translates knocking as knocking but communicates to the people that Jesus comes with the character of a thief and not a friend?

So, let's compare Psalm 32 from the NIV and the Remedy, and see if they impact you the same and which do you think is conveying the inspired message more accurately for our time?

Verse 1:

- Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. (NIV84).

How do you hear this verse? What does it mean? If we have a legal model is the forgiving of sin what blesses, is covering over the record what matters? If Jeffrey Dahmer were still alive and the governor pardons him and they erase his legal records—would you want him as your neighbor? And do you think a person who lives in sin, whether murder, or a thief, or simply in chronic fear and guilt and shame is happy? Legal forgiveness doesn't provide God's blessing to anyone—what is the true blessing of God? It is being sanctified, made righteous, restored to perfection, harmony with God, having God's law written upon the heart and mind. Thus from the Remedy:

- Happy are they whose wicked minds are restored to perfect purity, whose selfishness is eradicated. (REM)

God's forgiveness is not legal, it is transformational, healing, restorative, and the covering of God is not covering over, but covering for, taking over the responsibility to cure the condition and eradicate the infection of sin and selfishness.

Verse 2:

- Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. (NIV84)

What does this mean? Does God count people's sins against them? If you believe this then what does 1 Corinthians 13:

- Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, **it keeps no record of wrongs**. (1 Corinthians 13:4–5 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, **not counting men's sins against them.** (2 Corinthians 5:19 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Does God count anyone's sins against them? This is Satan's lie of imposed law, that God's government and law works like human law, it is the penal legal way of doing things. But when we return to worshiping the Creator whose laws are design laws we realize the law giver doesn't have to keep score, if God doesn't heal the devastation from unremedied sin will destroy.

So God is removing the disease of sin and restoring the sinner to righteousness and when this happens God doesn't find any sin in the sinner because it has been eradicated from their hearts, minds, and characters. So from the Remedy:

- Happy is the person whose infected heart the Lord transforms to perfection, in whose mind there is no deceit. (REM)

Verse 3:

- When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. (NIV84)

What does this mean? What is going one?

- When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God, I stressed myself and my body decayed because every day I screamed, "no!" denying the truth. (REM)

This is reality—this is what happens when we hold onto guilt and shame, we activate inflammatory cascades in our bodies which ruin our health and actually turn on osteoclasts the decay our bones.

Verse 4:

- For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. (NIV84).

What is described here? How is it typically read? God's hand is inflicting harm, causing pain, punishing for sin?

- But day and night your healing hand pressed firmly upon me; my resistance evaporated like water in the summer heat. (REM)

But in reality God is the source of truth and love and He loves us too much to let us go our own self-destructive way. So His Spirit bears down upon our consciences, convicts us of our sins, He disciplines us to lead us back into the path of healing and salvation and away from the destruction that breaking away from His designs for life bring. Thus, His hand is a healing hand and it bears down upon us not to punish, but to save, ultimately leading us out of fighting God and our resistance to the truth evaporates and we surrender to Him and are healed.

Verse 5:

- Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin. (NIV84).

When does God forgive, before or after we confess? When do we experience the forgiveness God gives before or after we confess? God's forgiveness comes first—For God so loved the world He sent His only Son… and While we were still sinners Christ died for us. Because God is forgiveness, He forgives, but we don't benefit from His forgiveness in a saving way until we surrender, confess, repent then we experience in our being His forgiveness which transforms and heals us.

- Then I admitted my sin-sickness to you and did not hide my character-deformity. I said, "I will confess my selfishness to the Lord"—and you healed me and freed me from guilt. (REM)

This is the reality—opening our hearts and minds to our Creator for Him to heal and transform.

Verse 6:

- Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. (NIV84).

What does this mean? Does there come a time when God says, the saving shop is closed, I am no longer available? Or does this mean something else? Does God ever close Himself off from anyone who wants to be saved? And is it that when problems arise, when floods come we will be unable to reach God? Is that the message? Or is there a different message of hope from God lost in translation?

- Therefore let all the faithful ask you for this same healing while healing is still possible; then when the guilt, shame and regrets of life come flooding in, the faithful will not drown in them. (REM)

What is it that cuts us off from God—is it God's impatience, fatigue, time-limit, or is it that our own hardness of heart, fear, guilt, shame, that we refuse to let go off cuts us off from God. So those who are healed will never drown in sorrow guilt and shame but the unhealed will.

Verse 7:

- You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. (NIV84).

From what are we being delivered? God's punishment for sin? Temporal enemies? Sin within us?

- You are my safe harbor; you protect me from the storms of life and turn my life into a song of deliverance. (REM)

Verse 8:

- I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. (NIV84).

What does this mean? What job to take, what city to live in, whom to marry? Or is it talking about how to live in harmony with God's methods, will, and purposes?

- The Lord says, "I will teach you my methods and how to live in harmony with my designs; I will guide you and watch over you. (REM)

Verse 9:

- Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. (NIV84).

How do servants function? How do those who advance the penal legal imposed law model approach things? What does God want from us, to simply do what we are told for fear of punishment, to be lead around like mule with rules and threats of punishments, or does God want us to be His friends who agree with Him?

- Don't be like the unthinking horse or mule that do not reason or understand and must be forced by bit and bridle to follow the simplest instructions." (REM).

Verse 10:

- Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. (NIV84).

Why do the wicked have many woes?

It is the only possible outcome for breaking the laws of health. Thus in Matthew 23 where Jesus gives a long list of woes to the pharisees and teachers of the law, I paraphrase the woe as "misery is yours" because misery, hurt, heartache, suffering, pain, and ultimately death is the only outcome possible for those who won't have the laws of life restored within them. But God's love heals those who trust Him.

- Many are the sufferings of those who defy your designs, but those who trust the Lord are healed by his never-failing love. (REM)

Verse 11:

- Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart! (NIV84)

- Celebrate God's goodness and be happy, you spiritually-healthy; sing for joy, all you with hearts like God's! (REM)

What do you think of the Remedy Paraphrase? Does it make the meaning more clear?

Let's do one more, Psalms 137:1-3:

- By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" (NIV84).

- By the rivers of Babylon, as captives in this selfish world, we wept when we remembered Zion — God's fortress of spiritual health and wellness. There on the willows we hung our harps while our captors told us to sing: they demanded songs of happiness and joy; they said, "Sing us a song of health about Zion!" (REM).

Verses 4-6:

- How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. (NIV84)

- How can our lives be songs revealing God's character of love while our hearts are held captive to this selfish world? If I forget the truth about you, O Jerusalem—the center of God's healing plan—may I write no more music. May I sing no more songs, if they are not about you; if they do not teach God's healing plan centered in you, O Jerusalem, as my highest joy. (REM)

Verses 7-9:

- Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!" O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us—he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks. (NIV84).

- Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did the day Jerusalem — your spiritual treatment center — fell? They shouted, "Tear it down, tear it down to the ground!" O people of Babylon, who cling to selfishness, you are doomed to destruction! Happy are those who are finished with you, just as you deserve; who have weaned themselves from you. Happy are they who take your children to fall upon the Rock and be broken

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Psalms Lesson 2
Teach Us to Pray

by Tim jennings

SABBATH

The First paragraph states,

> A simple way of introducing the Psalms into daily life is to devote time each day to the reading of psalm, beginning with Psalm 1, and following the order given in the psalter. Another way is to read the psalms that correspond to your present situation, whatever it happens to be… (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 13).

I have personally benefited from meditating on the Psalms each morning. Sometimes I go through them in order, sometimes I pick one randomly, sometimes I pick one based on subject matter. But the idea of having a morning devotional from the Psalms is a good one.

At a conference I attended April 2023 one of the speakers, Gary Oliver, ThM, PhD, led the group in a form of Christian meditation called *Lectio Divina*. He gave each attendee a handout that included a brief history of *Lectio Divina*, some instructions, and a copy of Psalm 1:1–3 from four different versions: King James, New Living Translation, The Message, and The Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms.

I did not know that Dr. Oliver was going to speak or that he was going to lead the entire group in a thoughtful, hour-long reflection of one of the psalms, especially not one that included The Remedy paraphrase. But it just so happened that Come and Reason Ministries was offering free copies of The Remedy of the Lord in Song: The Psalms for the participants, and many attendees, who came from all over the country, took one. Many personally thanked me for the paraphrase, telling me how much they were blessed from meditating upon The Remedy version.

In the aftermath of that meeting, I decided to research *Lectio Divina* and in May I wrote a blog on it. *Lectio Divina* means “divine reading.” It is an ancient Christian practice that goes all the way back to Origen of Alexandria in the third century. The intention of the practice is to help the Christian internalize the Scripture beyond mere fact or head knowledge to a deep experience, heart appreciation, and practical living out of the things of God. As we discussed last week, to allow the Psalms to be part of our spiritual healing.

Lectio Divina has four distinct actions or steps:

- Bible reading
- Meditation upon the passage read, which means reflecting on its meaning
- Prayer (conversation with God) about the passage

- Contemplation or experiencing its application to the inner workings of one's heart, attitudes, motives, and affections—i.e., abiding in and experiencing the Holy Spirit applying the truth to the heart.

A couple of important points about *Lectio Divina*: First, this form of meditation always starts with the inspired Word of God. If one replaces Scripture with other writings, then the meditation will serve to strengthen those writings' ideas into one's being rather than God's Word.

A second point is that this form of meditation requires deep thinking, reflection, active thought, and communion/prayer with God. It is *not* an emptying of the mind, nor is it a repetitive mantra. The goal is to expand our finite awareness, both cognitively and experientially (intellectually and spiritually), of our knowledge of God, so that we may *know* God for ourselves just as Jesus prayed that we would (John 17:3).

As we engage with God, actively connecting with Him and applying His methods to our lives, we experience healing, cleansing, recreation, renewal, transformation, which is also known as sanctification:

- May God himself, the God of peace, **sanctify you** through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NIV84).

God wants to sanctify, heal, make us holy in spirit, soul, and body.
Lectio Divina meditation engages all aspects of our being. We engage our body when we disengage from the daily activities of life, put down the digital devices, and sit quietly with God, often in nature—breathing in the fragrance of the flowers, hearing the songs of the birds, appreciating the beautiful rainbow, feeling the warmth of the sunshine, being caressed by the gentle breeze. Our experience in the natural world that God has created stimulates our senses and turns our minds toward our Creator in awe and appreciation.

In such a state of reverence, we turn our attention to the written word, focusing upon a specific passage of Scripture, and in that place of natural quiet, we meditate deeply upon the message of God. We reach out to God with our heart, reflecting upon the meaning, asking Him for greater insight, understanding, and wisdom. We praise God for His providence, presence, faithfulness, and goodness and for connecting the truths in Scripture in our minds and for its application to our life at that moment in time.

And then we pour out our affection, love, appreciation, and adoration to God, inviting His Spirit to cleanse and purify our attitudes, feelings, and longings to be ever more united with His so that we experience the joy, love, and presence of God in our inmost being.

I hadn't heard the term *Lectio Divina* before Dr. Gary Oliver introduced me to it. But as I studied out what this method of meditation was functionally doing, I realized that its steps are the very practices I

had been doing throughout my Christian journey because I had read other Christian writers who described these very things without using that Latin term.

Most interesting, I found that one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church advocated these very same practices, also without ever using the term *Lectio Divina.* Consider the following historical quotes, keeping in mind the four components of *Lectio Divina*: Bible reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

- Merely to hear or to **read the word** is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures **must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him.** By earnest attention and **prayerful** thought he **must learn the meaning of the words of truth,** and **drink deep of the spirit** [contemplation] of the holy oracles (Christ's Object Lessons, 59).

- It would be well for us to spend **a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ.** We should take it point by point, and **let the imagination grasp each scene,** especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, **our confidence** in Him will be more constant, **our love** will be quickened, and we shall be more **deeply imbued with His spirit.** If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross (*The Desire of Ages,* 83).

Regardless of what you call it, I encourage you to take time daily to be apart from this busy world in order to spend time with God, to read His Word, meditate deeply upon its meaning, talk to God about it, and invite the Holy Spirit into your heart to bring the truths home to your inmost experience.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- All Christians know, and have experienced, times of despair and suffering, times when they have wondered what the Lord is doing, or why the Lord is allowing these things to happen to them. The psalmists themselves went through similar things. And, through divine inspiration, they recorded what they had experienced. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 14).

If a person feels discouraged, feels down, feels so despondent that they actually wish they could die, does that mean they are out of favor with God?
Could a person be in despair, even to the point they want to die and still be in a saving relationship with God?

Consider Elijah, would we consider him one of the faithful, a person who succeeded? He was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot and never died. He was sent to encourage Jesus along with Moses at the transfiguration. Yet, after Jezebel threatened to kill him, we read the following about Elijah:

- He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” (1 Kings 19:4 NIV84).

Was Elijah no longer in good standing with God? Or did Elijah struggle with human emotions that discouraged him? Were Elijah’s feelings of depression and despair an accurate indicator of how God felt toward him?

Commenting on Elijah’s experience, the author of the book *Prophets and Kings,* writes the following:

- **Into the experience of all** there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, **till death seems preferable to life**. It is **then that many lose their hold on God** and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief. **Could we at such times discern** with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences **we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves**, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being. (Prophets and Kings 162).

The Bible stories are there not just as historical records, but as lessons for us, to show us God’s dealing with people. When Elijah became discouraged by his human emotions, God did not abandon him, God did not look down on him, condemn him, reject him, but God moved in love, in sympathy, in compassion, with grace and truth to save Elijah from his own discouragement. And God works for every single person in the same way, the difference is that not every person responds to God’s love, grace, and truth the way Elijah did. Not everyone when discouraged turns to God and prays as Elijah did—some instead turn to destructive things. But God is still there working to reach them, to save them from their own feelings of discouragement.

In my own life I have had moments of despair, weakness, discouragement, depressed mood and feelings of hopelessness where the feelings tempted me to think that it would be better if God were just to take me, to just die. But at those times, I remembered Elijah, and I remembered this quotation from *Prophets and Kings* and realized those emotions that were tempting me were not from God, but from my own fears and insecurities and I turned my mind, my heart to Jesus and cried out to Him to send His angels and deliver me from my own self—and in each and every time He did and my spirit was imbued with hope, and after each experience my faith in God increased.

This is part of the journey for every person, and the Psalms are filled with helpful songs. Consider Psalms 143:

- Lord, respond favorably to my prayer, intervene mercifully to my plea!

Because you are faithful and always do what is right, come to my relief.
Do not judge me responsible for my sin-condition, for no one living can set themselves right with you.
The enemy hounds me, crushing my joy for life into the dirt, driving me into darkness with no zest for living — like those already long dead.

I am tired of living, I am discouraged and ready to give up, but then I remember what happened in the past — I focus upon your design and all you have done and think about your plan and all you have made.
I surrender myself to you; my inmost being thirsts for your life-giving presence like dry land thirsts for rain.
Respond to me quickly, O Lord; I am dying inside. Do not keep your life-giving presence from me or I will surely die and join those in the grave.
Let each day start with your love filling my heart, for I have put my trust in you. Teach me the way to live, for I surrender myself to you.
Rescue me from my enemies, O Lord, for I place myself under your protection.
Teach me to fulfill your purposes, for you are my God; may your Spirit of truth and love lead me to the world recreated to your design.
Heal me, O Lord, to magnify your character of love; cleanse my soul from sinfulness, because you always do right.
Show mercy to my enemies and let them go; let perish all those who reject healing and persist in attacking me, for I am your faithful follower. (Psalm 143:1-12 REM).

We find the psalmist and others in Scripture going through the same struggles with painful human emotions, whether from grief, fear, threats, guilt, shame or something else. But in all situations and circumstance, Jesus has a solution, a remedy to heal our hearts and minds and place us back on a solid foundation if we will turn to Him and trust Him.

TUESDAY

The lesson points us to Psalm 22:

Verse 1:

- My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? (Psalm 22:1 NIV84).

The lesson notes that these words are famous because Jesus quoted them while on the cross.

What do these words of Jesus reveal? Did God reject Jesus? Did God become angry, upset, mad at Jesus? Did God use power to harm Jesus at the cross?

What happened at the cross? Why did Jesus die? What kind of death did Jesus die? What was the necessity of Jesus' death in the plan of salvation? What did the Father do to Jesus at the cross?

What law lens do you understand all of this through?

Do we agree that the plan of salvation centers upon Jesus, His sinless life, His voluntary sacrificial and substitutionary death, His victory over death and resurrection?

So, Jesus is the solution! The plan of salvation is God's plan to resolve the sin problem; it is the treatment to the sin problem—then what we understand about the healing plan, the solution, the remedy, the treatment, the fix to the sin problem is *determined* by what we think the sin problem is?

What is the problem that sin caused that the plan of salvation fixes? And our answer to this question is *determined* by how we understand God's law.

If we believe that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require the rule-giver to inflict punishment, then we falsely conclude that the sin problem is a legal problem and the just solution is the infliction of punishment, the minimum punishment being death. Then we falsely conclude that Jesus' mission was to come, live a sinless life so that He personally did not break any rules and thus did not personally deserve any inflicted punishment so that God could place all our rule-breaking deeds (sins) on Him and do make-believe, pretend trick and treat the innocent Jesus *as if* Jesus was the one who did all the bad stuff and broke all the rules and then make a claim not actually true in reality, that it is right and just to punish an innocent person for the crimes of the guilty—and then teach that God used His divine power to inflict death upon Jesus so that He won't have to kill us—and then we claim, again contrary to all reality, that it is just, reasonable and true to declare a guilty person to be innocent if an innocent person is punished in place of the guilty.

This is all pagan, false, a lie, and stems directly from the lie that God's law functions like human law. It contradicts Scripture, it contradicts reason, it contradicts how God's design law of love and liberty works.

Can you get people to love you and trust you by threatening to kill them if they don't?

And this pagan lie is what is being taught actively in our church today. The following quote is from the Review December 8, 2023:

- "To spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26**). In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead. … Or, to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn't have to kill us"** (emphasis mine). (Goldstein, C. "Law, Freedom, Love." Adventist Review online edition, Dec 8, 2023, https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAlHxfD47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0)

Can you find anywhere in Scripture where the Bible shows God using power to harm Jesus? No! What you find is God stops using power and let's go of Jesus allowing Jesus to experience what Jesus chose, which was to be our Savior, to take up the responsibility to confront Satan and "destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

Who does Scripture say holds the power of death? Satan does! Jesus holds the keys to life, the power over death, Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light (2 Timothy 1:10). In the

quote I just cited from the Review, place who is placed in the role of inflicting death? God, thus they are teaching that God wields Satan's power—in other words the man of sin has set himself up on God's temple, the spirit temple, proclaiming himself to be God. People are worshiping a god who has the attributes of Satan. This is why we have been given an end-time message that calls people to make a right judgment about God, for the hour of God's judgment has come.

But people persistently make the wrong judgment about God if they believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, and they conclude that God is the source of death, that God uses power to inflict death, that God is the one from whom we need to be protected.

But when we return to design law all the confusion resolves and we can answer all the questions.

What happened at the cross?

- Jesus completed the mission that He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit were jointly carrying out—for Jesus to destroy death (2 Timothy 1:10), Satan and his power (Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 1:20), the work of Satan (1 John 3:8), and fulfill God's purpose for humanity (Genesis 1:26,27), and redeemed Adam's fall becoming the new head of humanity the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:47) and thereby restoring the species human back into perfection and at-one-ment with God.

- God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19 NKJV)

Why did Jesus die?

To destroy death and fear and selfishness from within humanity and replace it with the divine nature, God's design law of love. He did this when, as a human, He was tempted by human emotions to save self (Gethsemane) but with each temptation, as a human, with human powers and human abilities, He chose to love perfectly and trust completely in His Father.

- Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 NIV84).

Thus He not only *demonstrated* the truth about God, but also *developed* a new sinless perfected and sealed human character, human being by restoring God's perfect living law into humanity. As Scripture says,

- once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:9 NIV84).

What was the necessity of Jesus' death in the plan of salvation?

It was the only means whereby God could destroy sin—not just Satan, but sin itself, the roots of sin, the lies that broke trust in sinless beings, and destroy the carnal nature, the fear-driven, me-first, anti-

love, rebellious survival driven motives of sin out of the human species, thereby destroying the death causing principle out of humanity.

What kind of death did Jesus die? Did Jesus die the first death—the sleep death? No, did Jesus die the second death?

Before we can answer that we need to define what we mean by the term, "second death." So, what is the second death? Do we have any inspired references to inform us of what that death is?

- He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death. (Revelation 2:11 NIV84).
    - This text doesn't tell us what the second death is, but does inform us that those who overcome won't be hurt by it.
    - What about Jesus, did He overcome? Then was Jesus hurt by the second death or not hurt by the second death?
- Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6 NIV84).
    - This text also doesn't tell us what the second death is, only that the second death has no power over those who arise in the first resurrection, and that they will be priests of God.
    - Again, what about Jesus, does the second death, whatever it is have power over Him? And is Jesus a priest—in fact the High Priest of God?
    - So, we haven't yet defined what the second death is, but thus far we must question the idea of whether such a death could hurt Jesus or have power over Him.
- The lake of fire is the second death. (Revelation 20:14).
- Their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)
    - Did Jesus die in the lake of fire? Do we have any evidence that fire rained down from God upon Jesus at the Cross or in Gethsemane?
    - Do we have any evidence that God used any kind of power on Jesus? Or do we have the opposite, Jesus crying out "my God, my God why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:45, 46)?
    - So we haven't fully defined what the fire is, but we have no evidence that Jesus experienced it at the cross.

These are the only Bible texts that directly mention the term second death.

Some Bible commentators add further clarification between the first and second death noting that the first death is the death from which a resurrection occurs but the second death is the death from which there is no resurrection. There is sound Biblical evidence for this conclusion (1Cor 15:12-21, 42-49, 1Thes 4:16, Rev 2:11, 20:5,6,14, 21:8). If we accept this additional demarcation then we must ask,

- Did Christ die a death from which there was no resurrection or did Christ rise again? "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1Corinthians 15:13).

While the Bible doesn't use "second death" language in any other place, Jesus actually described the two deaths (first and second) in Matthew 10:28 when He said:

- "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28 NIV84).

Christ makes a distinction between two types of death. The first in which only the body is destroyed and the second in which the body and soul is destroyed. Amazingly, the word translated "soul" is the Greek word "psyche" which means "mind, identity, individuality."

So, we can inquire about Jesus, when He died on the cross, did He have His mind, identity, individuality destroyed or did He rise again as the "same Jesus" (Acts 1:11) who died?

If we use the Bible as our guide, we have three demarcating features of the second death:

- lake of fire
- death without resurrection
- death which destroys both body and soul (psyche, individuality, mind)

When Jesus died were any of these identifiers met? No! The Bible seems to be making a strong case that Jesus did not "die" the second death. If He didn't die the second death, then what was the significance of His death?

Jesus' death was the means of actually destroying death!

Christ confronted the second death and conquered it, not "paid" it.

- Jesus "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life." (2 Timothy 1:10).

- Christ destroyed the elements of Satan's government that bring death "by his death he destroyed him who holds the power of death that is the devil" Hebrews 2:14.

Christ died in order to eradicate the death causing principle of fear and selfishness and restore God's design law of love back into the human species.

His life on earth was accomplished through the exercise of human abilities. Jesus was tempted in His humanity, not His divinity. He chose with His humanity to say no to temptation, to trust the Father, to surrender His life in love.

And Jesus died when love overcame selfishness in His humanity, when He gave His life freely, when He chose to lay down His life voluntarily, when He refused to act selfishly, when He refused to use power to "save self."

In Christ the law of love, the law of life, was fully lived out when Christ refused to use His power to save self, but rather gave His life freely in love. **In Christ, giving destroyed taking, love destroyed selfishness, life destroyed death!**

So, because Jesus was a unique being whose mother was a sinful woman but whose Father was God, in the person of Jesus from His birth He had the ability to experience temptation in every way like we do, but He also had the ability, through trust to resist those temptations. It would be like you and me after rebirth—when we are reborn with new hearts that desire righteousness and we through faith can resist and say no to temptation. Jesus was born in this state. And because of this, Jesus never developed any bad, sinful, habits that needed to be overcome.

Jesus was,

- tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin**.** (Hebrews 4:15 NIV84).

And,

- each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. (James 1:14 NIV84).

If both of these passages are true, and they are, then Jesus had a humanity that could tempt Him. And we see that in Gethsemane, when He experienced terrible human emotions that tempted Him to not go through the cross, to "save Himself." But with each temptation, Jesus chose, with His human abilities, to say no to the desire to save self and instead trust His Father, carry out the mission, and lay His life down freely.

And thus, Jesus He destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that all humanity inherits from Adam, and restored perfectly God's love and trust and became the second head of humanity. **And this is why He rose again**, and could so accurately tell His disciples that He was going to die and rise again, because He understood that death is caused by deviation from God's design and that He was going to eradicate all deviations that He inherited from Mary, and He understood that life comes from God and is sustained by living in harmony with God's design laws for life and once He completed His mission, life would be restored into the humanity He possessed.

Thus, Christ's death destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light!

Christ's experience on the cross stands in sharp contrast to that of those who die in the lake of fire where they are overcome by selfishness. The differences between Christ's death and that of those who die the second death are stark:

Christ died trusting the Father – Luke 23:46
The wicked die distrusting the Father – Revelation 6:16

Christ died longing to see the Father – Mark 15:34

The wicked die hiding from the Father – Revelation 6:16

Christ died when the Father's presence was hidden – Mark 15:34
The wicked die when the Father is fully revealed – 2 Thessalonians 2:8

Christ died less than 72 hours – Luke 24:1-8
The wicked die eternally – Malachi 4:1-3; Romans 6:23; James 1:15; 2 Peter 3:10-12

Christ died when love overcame selfishness – John 3:16, 10:17,18; 1John 3:16
The wicked die overcome by selfishness – Revelation 21:8

If the Scriptures teaches that Christ did not die the second death, then why do so many insist that He did?

Because they have accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law and therefore they have misdiagnosed the problem of sin as being a legal problem rather than a terminal problem. And in the legal fantasy view, the problem is the inflicted second eternal death, and someone as to pay that penalty, thus it is taught Jesus died the second death so they can teach their penalty is paid.

Where some get confused is in focusing on the Father's actions, what the Father did do to Jesus at the cross, where the Bible describes the wrath of the Father being poured out on Jesus.

But this is because they confuse God's wrath with Satan's wrath. Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of imposed rules, made up laws, enforce through inflicted punishments. Thus Satan's wrath is always the use of power to inflict harm.

God's kingdom is the kingdom of reality, built by the Creator upon design laws that are the protocols for life, health, and happiness. Breaking God's design laws always results in pain, suffering, and eventual death unless remedied or cured by God. Thus God's use of power **is to hold at bay** the harm that sin brings and God's wrath is *not* the use of power to inflict harm, **but the stopping of the use of power that has been preventing the harm**. And on the cross, Jesus experienced the wrath of God when God let Him go, gave Him up, stopped using power.

And why did God do this? So that They, the Godhead, could accomplish the mission for which Jesus came—for Jesus to destroy the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle into the humanity He assumed and destroy the devil's power and lies, and to secure the universe into loyalty to God. And the only way for that to happen was for the Father, the source of life, to let go of His Son and allow Jesus to experience what Jesus had freely chosen, to be our Savior! If God would not have let go, then Jesus could not have completed His mission—He could not have died.

And in the end, God treats the wicked the same, **God lets them go** to reap what they have chosen, but they have chosen selfishness and rejected love, they have chosen rebellion rather than loyalty, distrust instead of trust, unfaithfulness rather than faithfulness, wickedness and not righteousness, evil rather than goodness, dishonesty rather honesty, and preferred lies to the truth. They have chosen to harden

themselves in evil, sin, guilt, shame and when God ceases to use His power to shield them they reap what sin does, eternal destruction and they die the second death and never rise again.

WEDNSDAY

Read last paragraph,

- However, a mere repetition of the words of the Psalms with only a slight comprehension of their meaning will not produce the authentic transformation intended by their use. When praying the Psalms, we should seek the Holy Spirit to enable us to act in the way demanded by the psalm. The Psalms are the Word of God by which believers' characters and actions are transformed, not simply informed. By God's grace, the promises of the Psalms are made manifest in the lives of believers. This means that we allow God's Word to shape us according to God's will and to unite us with Christ, who demonstrated God's will perfectly and, as the incarnate Son of God, prayed the Psalms, as well. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 16).

Have you ever heard, pain is fertilizer for the soul?

Paul wrote,

- We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope (Romans 5:3-4 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Is this true? Is this what is being taught today?

I read a very interesting book entitled *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff, Jonathan Haidt.

- Lukianoff is a graduate of American University and Stanford Law School. He has described himself as a "pro-choice liberal" and an atheist.

- Jonathan David is an American social psychologist, Professor of Ethical Leadership at New York University Stern School of Business, and author. His main areas of study are the psychology of morality and moral emotions.

I share their backgrounds because I want you all to understand, universal truths of God's kingdom can be understood by anyone with an honest heart to know the truth. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:20:

- For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:20 NIV84)

These writers are not conservative Christians, but they have discovered eternal truths, which are outworking of God's design laws and methods.

In their book they do an excellent job of describing three lies, they call them untruths, that are ravaging college campuses and society in general and have become dominant with the igen or generation Z, which is the group that began college in 2013. The three big lies or untruths are:

- What doesn't kill you makes you weaker
- Always trust your feelings
- Life is a battle between good people and evil people

They identify from ancient wisdom writings—Confusion, Buddha, Socrates, Plato etc. common truths that all the great sages agree upon and then demonstrate that the three core untruths popular and taught on campuses today are opposite ancient wisdom.

- What doesn't kill you makes you weaker
    - Truth—what doesn't kill you makes you stronger—the idea being that we only grow through challenges, through overcoming obstacles, through the painful and difficult experiences in life. This is an outworking of one of God's design laws—which one? The law of exertion.
        - "we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character" (Ro 5:3–4 NIV84).
    - So accepting the lie has led to concepts of avoiding things that are difficult, trials, obstacles, emotionally upsetting things. We must be safe, we need safe spaces, places where our ideas won't be challenged, where our concepts won't be exposed as flawed, where words won't upset us. We must remove names from buildings, or statues, or books, we must change names of teams because these are insensitive and hurt us and it isn't safe to be in a society that would injure us in this way. And in the church we must remove people who challenge our orthodoxy with evidence and truth we can't refute. Rather than struggling through in deep study and embracing unfolding truth, we instead must create safe theological spaces where the minds of our members are never challenged by new ideas. And what happens to minds and characters when the lie that what is challenging makes you weaker is accepted? Destruction of minds and characters, people get weaker, they don't get stronger.
- Always trust your feelings
    - All the great sages have taught that emotions energize us but are not to be trusted as emotions can lie. Can you think of a Bible text that supports this?
        - When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire" (James 1:13–14 NIV84).
    - When people accept this lie then if they feel pain they conclude that the other person has assaulted them. And anything that hurts is aggression, words are redefined as violence and it is okay to use physical violence to stop the speech of others because their words hurt us and are violent. Facts, evidences, and truths don't matter, only our feelings matter.

        - They create falsehoods like this: Words that offend cause stress; stress increases inflammatory factors in the body which causes physical harm; thus offending words are acts of violence. What is wrong with this thinking? Replace words causing stress with anything else—such as your boyfriend or girlfriend break up with you causes stress, stress causes physical harm, therefore a breakup is an act of violence. Or, making a poor grade on an exam causes stress, stress harms the body, therefore if a teacher gives a bad grade it is an act of violence against you. Or being held accountable for sin, being brought to conviction, this causes stress and stress harms the body therefore the Holy Spirit convicting of sin is an act of violence.
- Life is a battle between good people and evil people
    - Throughout human history the sages have described that there is a battle between good and evil occurring *in every human heart*. But the new view is there isn't a battle between good and evil as principles, methods, motives of our hearts—there are only good and evil people. Thus, if someone disagrees with your view, challenges your beliefs and hurts your feelings, they are evil and evil must be destroyed.

They cite several studies on how humans divide into groups, and that it doesn't matter how people get divided into groups, once they are divided into groups they begin thinking of "us versus them" and they treat people in the "us" category better than the "them" category. Studies have demonstrated that it doesn't matter if people are divided by a coin toss, or by guessing the number of dots on a page full of dots, once they are divided into groups, people that are not in their group are treated worse than those in their group.

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph which is a historical quote from EG White:

- "This world is a vast lazar house, but Christ came to heal the sick, to proclaim deliverance to the captives of Satan. He was in Himself health and strength. He imparted His life to the sick, the afflicted, those possessed of demons. He turned away none who came to receive His healing power. He knew that those who petitioned Him for help had brought disease upon themselves; yet, He did not refuse to heal them. And when virtue from Christ entered into these poor souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease, as well as of their physical maladies. The gospel still possesses the same power, and why should we not today witness the same results?"—Ellen G. White, Welfare Ministry, pp. 24, 25. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 17).

The gospel does still possess the same power—but only if we are presenting the actual true gospel and not a counterfeit. What do you understand the gospel to be, the good news that is eternally good?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q1 Psalms Lesson
3 The Lord Reigns

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH and MONDAY

We are starting with Sabbath and Monday together because the title for the week and the title for Monday are the same, "The Lord Reigns"

The lesson points us to Psalm 93 for our memory text. Let's read the entire five verses, first from the NIV and then from the Remedy:

- The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed in majesty
and is armed with strength.
The world is firmly established;
it cannot be moved.
2 Your throne was established long ago;
you are from all eternity.
3 The seas have lifted up, O LORD,
the seas have lifted up their voice;
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.
4 Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea—
the LORD on high is mighty.
5 Your statutes stand firm;
holiness adorns your house
for endless days, O LORD. (Psalm 93:1-5 NIV84)

Don't you love this psalm? What do you understand the meaning to be? Is it simply and only a testimony to the creatorship, eternal essence, and infinite power of God? Or is this a psalm inspired by the Holy Spirit in the context of the universal war over God's trustworthiness and is it intended to inspire us with eternal truths about God in that context?

In other words, is there deeper meaning contained in this psalm that goes beyond the obvious that God is Creator, infinite, eternal, and powerful?

Consider the Remedy paraphrase:

- The Lord reigns supreme, covered in majesty;
the Lord is covered in majesty — the majesty of infinite love
secured and bound by the strength of infinite truth.

> The world is established as the showcase of your methods of love;
> your design laws for life cannot be changed.
> 2 Your rulership was established long ago when you built all reality;
> you created time and existed before time began.
> 3 Seas of selfish beings have risen up, O Lord,
> the seas of the selfish have raised their voices in opposition to your rule;
> the seas of the selfish have pounded against your kingdom of truth and love.
> 4 Love is mightier than the thundering flood of selfishness;
> truth is mightier than the stormy seas of lies and deceit —
> the Lord, Creator God on high, is mighty!
> 5 Your design protocols for life can never be changed;
> holiness and healthiness — perfection in all things — adorn your house
> for all eternity, O Lord. (Psalm 93:1-5 REM)

This paraphrase magnifies a certain meaning, but is that meaning a violation of the text? In other words, when you read the more conservative text is this meaning one possible interpretation? And are there Bible texts that support such interpretations—like the seas representing people (Rev 17:15)? And in the context of the Great Controversy, what is the most likely truth the Holy Spirit wants people to know—simply and only that God is powerful—or that God is not only powerful but trustworthy? Don't the devils believe God is powerful and it scares them?

Read the first paragraph,

- The Psalms unswervingly uphold the foundational belief in God's sovereign reign. The Lord created and sustains everything that He had created. He is the Sovereign King over the whole world, and He rules the world with justice and righteousness. His laws and statutes are good and bring life to those who keep them. The Lord is a just Judge who ensures that the world remains well ordered, and He does so by rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked, but in His time, not ours. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 20).

What do you understand God's "sovereign reign" to be? What does it mean? How is God sovereign?

The question of God's sovereignty and what it entails has generated debate throughout Christianity history, yet there is a clear and understandable, truthful, factual, and testable answer—but what is the first question we must answer in order to answer other questions?

How do we understand God's law functions? If we understand God's law functions like human law and government, then sovereignty becomes Calvinistic, God's sovereignty is taught to be first His **right** to control everything, and second His **use of power** to control everything. Therefore, it is taught that while evil is still evil, it is good for evil to have happened because it couldn't have happened except God, in His sovereignty, chose for it to happen.

Those who accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, will describe God's sovereignty in ways like this: "the right to exercise his ruling power over his creation." Or "God is in control of all things" or "God controls everything that happens."

The question that arises with such assertions about God's sovereignty is one of human freewill, do we have freewill, or does God's sovereignty determine our decisions for us? Are we predestined by God to do evil and good things because He is in control or is God's control limited by our freewill?

What do you think would happen if you were counseling a rape victim, or someone whose family was kidnapped and killed by terrorists, and you said to them, "Don't worry, God is in control"?

Would such a statement likely be therapeutic, healing, helpful for them to hear? Would saying those words most likely enlighten the individual to eternal truths and lead them to trust God more, or might those words put barriers between that person and God?

Would it be true or false to say to the rape victim, "God is in control"?

- If we say it's true, what does that say to the rape victim about her rape and about God?
    - Did God instigate the rape?
    - Did God motivate, control, and inspire the rapist to rape them?
    - Did God want the person to be raped?
    - If God is in control and chose for the rapist to rape then does that mean rape just and good?
    - If we conclude that rape is evil but God is in control and still caused the rape then does God support, choose, and cause evil; is God the source of evil?
    - And how could anyone ever trust such a god?

- If we tell the rape victim that God is not in control, are we speaking truthfully?
    - Or are we misrepresenting God in some way?
    - Are we limiting God's power and sovereignty?
    - Do we enhance or undermine faith in God if we teach that God doesn't have control over His creation?
    - Is a god with limited control merely like the many regional pagan gods a being with limited power and susceptible to forces beyond its control?
    - Would it bring healing to the rape victim to believe God is not in control?
    - Would they be able to move forward in this sinful world with less anxiety if they believe in a god who is limited in their ability to protect and save because they have limited control?

What is the root to all of these apparent problems and what will cause all of these problems to evaporate? The cause of all of this confusion, comes from Satan the author of confusion, and is his lie that God's law is imposed law. To clear up the confusion one only needs to reject the lie and embrace the truth that God's law is design law.

It is the use of the lie that God's law is imposed and trying to answer these questions through that law-lens that directly causes all the confusion and conflicts described above, but as soon as we return to design law all the problems disappear.

God's laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, such as the laws of physics, gravity, law of love, truth, worship, liberty, exertion, laws of health, and so many more. It is how reality works.

Thus, **God is in control of what God controls** — and **God controls Himself and all His laws. He sustains reality**; He keeps the universe running upon the protocols and laws He established. **And one of those laws is the law of liberty**, which grants real freedom to sapient beings. Why? Because God is love and love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

Robots cannot choose and robots cannot love and if God acted to restrict freedom to choose, He would destroy love. Understanding design law, including the law of liberty, clears up apparent contradictions—like the apparent contradictions in Scripture where it teaches all of the following:

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3)
- Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32).
- Pharaoh's heart became hard or was hardened (Exodus 7:22)

Are all three statements true? If we have the imposed law view, then someone is responsible, someone makes it happen the way it does, and God as supreme is the one who does it, thus Pharoah didn't have a choice, God used him like a pawn and forced a hard heart upon Pharaoh. This is a lie, an untruth, a false understanding that occurs when we believe God's law functions like human law.

When we return to design law, how reality works, we understand exactly how all three statements of Scripture are true and **the fact the Bible says it in all three ways is proof, evidence, that the design law understanding of God's law** is the right understanding.

But here is how it works. What actually hardens a heart? The choice to reject love and truth and act upon fear, selfishness and lies. In other words, sin itself hardens the heart.

Then how did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By presenting the truth and leaving Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. The accepting or rejecting causes the end result — healing or hardening. The act of choosing to accept or reject truth; to embrace love or embrace selfishness; to steal, lie, cheat, or be honest, truthful and loyal, changes the person who makes the choice. Without the truth presented and the freedom to reject it, Pharaoh's heart would not have become as hardened. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through the laws of truth and freedom; He presented truth and left the ruler free. God controlled Himself and His laws, but Pharaoh exercised his own will and controlled his own choice, operating upon the law of liberty God was sustaining, and in choosing to reject the truth, he hardened his own heart. This is how reality works and how God is in control.

One might ask however, if God foreknew that Pharaoh would reject the truth, and this would result in hardening of Pharaoh's heart, why did God do it? Because of reality—Pharaoh, like every human born since Adam's sin, was born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5). He had the same terminal sin condition as every other human and needed the same remedy from God. If God did not present the truth to Pharaoh then Pharaoh would have had no opportunity to be saved from sin, and what would it say about God if God withheld saving truth? So God presents the truth because He is love, and He

loved Pharaoh and wanted Pharaoh to come to salvation, but Pharaoh chose to reject it and hardened his own heart.

So, what do we say to the rape victim?

If the person is a believer and ready for a discussion about such things, we tell them that God is love and love only exists in freedom—and as the sovereign Creator, He could have made us all robots, beings programmed to act the way He chooses—but such beings only simulate life, they are not alive, they cannot love, create, develop, hope, be friends. God created human beings in His image, to be like God in our entire being—to love, to create, to be loyal, to develop friendships, especially friendship with God. But all of this requires real and genuine freedom, thus one of God's laws is the law of liberty and God sustains this law and leaves all His intelligent creatures free to choose for themselves. And when Lucifer chose rebellion and evil, God did not use power to destroy him, but left him free and countered that assault with truth and love and ultimately sent Jesus to take up the responsibility of eliminating the damage and restoring love and trust—of healing all the damage. God is not responsible for evil, He is responsible for love and freedom, and He takes responsibility to heal and restore all who love and trust Him.

But what do we do with texts like this one?

- See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. (Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84).

How do we understand this? Didn't I just last week read the following quote from the Adventist Review December 8, 2023:

- "To spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26**). In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead. … Or, to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn't have to kill us"** (emphasis mine). (Goldstein, C. "Law, Freedom, Love." Adventist Review online edition, Dec 8, 2023, https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAlHxfD47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0)

And then quoted Hebrews 2:14

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).

And then I stated that the author attributes to God Satan's power, the power of death. Didn't I do that last week?

But now we read,

- See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. (Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84).

So, was I wrong last week? Is God truly the author of death, the source of death, the one who wields the power of death? We cannot ignore this text in Deuteronomy, so how do we understand it?

As we do with all Scripture, we must place it in the setting of the rest of Scripture, the entirety of the inspired record, and the setting of the Great Controversy and not take one text by itself to make a conclusion. And with just a little more Bible searching we find this text:

- The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. (1 Samuel 2:6 NIV84).

Ah, and the light goes on. We see an expansion through Hebrew parallelism where the second phrase expands on the first phrase, and what do we learn? That God is speaking of sometimes putting people into the first death experience but not the second death experience, and God will raise people from the first death experience.

In Scripture the word "death" is applied to two very different and distinct states of being.

- First death, which the Bible describes as s sleep death in which only the body dies, but the soul, the individuality sleeps, like a computer whose battery dies sleeps, and from which there is a resurrection. First death is not the end of life, it is a pause in one's life—the life continues at the resurrection.
- Second death, is when both body and soul are destroyed. And the second death is the death that is the wages of sin, the death that occurs when one is completely and permanently cut off from God, the source of life and from which there is no resurrection—it is the end of one's life for all eternity.

Now which of these two deaths does the Deuteronomy and 1 Samuel texts attribute to God controlling? The first death, the sleep death, which is not the wages of sin death. It is an artificial state of suspended animation, i.e. asleep, that is permitted by God's grace to limit the destructiveness of sin and rebellion and to allow for the plan of salvation to be carried out. If not for God's grace there would be no first death, only second death. Thus the Bible rightly tells us that God is in control of the sleep death. God in many places, put people to sleep, but God will also wake them up. Going to sleep is not death, it is suspension of life, it is a time out from living, a sleep.

But the second death is the eternal cessation of life and that is what choosing Satan and his ways cause. As the Bible says, "those who sow to the carnal nature reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8) and "sin when full grown brings forth death" (James 1:15). Eternal death, the wages of sin death does not come out from God, it comes out from sin, from breaking away from God and His design laws for life.

So, was I wrong last week when I pointed out that the Review article attributed to God the power of death and that power is Satan's power? No, I stand by what I said, it is the truth, reality. God is the source of life, Satan and sin severe our connection with God and life and is the cause of death. Death does not come out from God.

Or what about this text:

I received an email asking how we understand:

- I form the light, and **create darkness**: I make peace, and **create evil**: I the LORD do all these things." (Isaiah 45:7 KJV emphasis mine).

However, this is not the only possible translation, and the translation informs us of the biases of the translator—perhaps having an imperial law understanding of Sovereignty.

Henry Wright, in his book, *A More Excellent Way*, clarifies this verse:

- Some say God created evil because of Isaiah 45:7

  "I form the light, and create the darkness. I make peace and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Isaiah 45:7"

  In the *Strong's Concordance*, the Hebrew word for create, under #1254 is *bara*. It is the same word used when God created. But the second meaning for the Hebrew word create is "*to break down, tear down, cut down like wood.*"

  Now let's read the Scripture again with the Strong's definition in it.

  I form the light, and I tear down and destroy darkness. I make peace and tear down and cut down like wood everything that is evil. I am the author of the destruction of evil" (A More Excellent Way To Be in Health by Henry W. Wright, p. 130. emphasis mine)

Which translation do you think is the more accurate one?

Do you see how a design law understanding brings everything into harmony?

In the first paragraph in Sabbath's lesson and third paragraph in Monday's lesson the author uses the language that God's reign is established in both justice and righteousness.

What does this mean?

This is evidence of the infection of imposed law into our theology. Sentences like this are evidence of the Romanization of Christianity, the belief in the lie that God's law functions like human law.

In the Bible there is no word “justice” or “justification” or “righteousness.” These are English words. And “justice, justify, justification” all come from Latin roots, which is the basis of much of our legal language—i.e. Latin = Roman, the Romanization of Christianity.

In the Greek New Testament there is only one root word for all of these terms. If you look up these words in any lexicon this is what you will find:

- Just is δίκαιος [dikaios /dik·ah·yos/]
- Righteous is δίκαιος [dikaios /dik·ah·yos/]

- Justifies and Justify is δικαιόω [dikaioo /dik·ah·yo·o/]
- “Be righteous” is δικαιόω [dikaioo /dik·ah·yo·o/]

- Justice is δικαιοσύνη [dikaiosune /dik·ah·yos·oo·nay/]
- Righteousness is δικαιοσύνη [dikaiosune /dik·ah·yos·oo·nay/]

If the authors understood design law and did not infect our theology with Romanism, they would never separate justice and righteousness—because these two terms are always the exact same thing.

When your child disobeys your clear warning to never take medicine from the medicine cabinet and overdoses on an entire bottle of some pharmaceutical, and you see them seizing and dying from their action—what is the right thing for you to do? What is the just thing for you to do? If you do what is just do you take out your belt and beat them? Do you tell them, “Well I could let you die from the consequences of your action, but justice demands that I pour gas on you and burn you as long as you deserve. Now, I would prefer to just let you die, you see, but I am a just parent and I am required to enforce my rules so, as much as it grieves me, I must torture and kill you.”

Or, does justice seek to save and restore, to heal? And isn’t that the right thing?

And thus we read Romans 3:23-26 from the NIV, which leans strongly in the Romanized view of penal legal language and from the GNT which is less so, and from the Remedy:

- For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26 NIV84).

- Everyone has sinned and is far away from God’s saving presence. But by the free gift of God’s grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to

demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26 GNT)

- For all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26 REM)

SUNDAY

What do you think of title "The Lord Has Made Us"?

Is this referring to our individual biological existence?
Is it referring to a collective us—the Lord made the human species, the Lord made Israel a nation; the Lord made the SDA church into a worldwide organization?

God is the Creator—no question about it. He spoke all things into existence, space, time, matter, energy, and life. All living things were created by Him, including humanity. And I believe God created Adam from the dirt of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and Adam became a living being. And I believe God created Eve from tissue taken from Adam.

So both Adam and Eve were created directly by God, by divine action to specifically bring them into existence as living beings.

And I believe God, sometime later, took divine action to bring Jesus into the world as our Savior, to cause Mary to become pregnant and give birth to Jesus a blend of our humanity and His divinity.

And all three of these beings—Adam, Eve, and Jesus when God completed His action to bring them into human existence were sinless.

What about you and me, did any of us, as individuals, come into the world by a direct act from God to create a sinless being?

How did we come into the world?

God gave Adam and Eve a godlike ability, the ability to create beings in *their* image. He created human beings with the ability to make freewill choices and those choices will develop and change us. As we develop and change, either for good or evil, we make changes in our being, epigenetic changes

in how our DNA is expressed, and then when we procreate we pass along to our offspring attributes of ourselves. This is well documented and proven scientific fact, as the Bible says, the sins pass down three and four generations.

All of this ability to procreate is only possible because of God's creation, His design, the delegated and endowed ability to procreate, and God's ongoing sustaining of life and the laws upon which life exists and operates. In other words, having children is only possible because of God's original creation and His ongoing sustaining of the laws that govern life and health.

However, does that mean that God acts with divine power to create each of us as we are? Does God create defective, sinful beings? No, God creates sinless beings. That is why the Bible teaches we were all in Adam when Adam sinned and that we are born in sin, conceived in iniquity.

The reason I am here as the unique person I am is not because God chose to use divine power in special creation from heaven to create me as a unique being, but because my mother and father chose to use the delegated abilities God invested in humanity to have a child. And had my mother and father chosen to skip the one month in which I was conceived and had a child conceived the next month, their second child wouldn't be me but one of my siblings.

Do you agree or disagree with this? What are the implications? Do we understand that God does not create sickness, defects, sinners, but that His creation has been damaged by sin and sickness, defects, and sinners are born because God continues to sustain His creation and give us freedom in harmony with His character and laws of love and liberty? And God is working to eliminate all sin, sickness, and defects from His creation and restore us to perfection?

In the fourth paragraph the lesson states,

- "Only the Creator has the power to bless and cause His people to increase, and thus, He is the only One worthy of their worship and trust." (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 21).

What do we understand this to mean? Does it mean that all births are God's will, God using power to create new humans? So when men rape women and they get pregnant was that an act of God? Or when that happens do we see that human beings are abusing the abilities and powers God has given them?

TUESDAY

The title for the lesson is God is Judge, when you hear this title what thoughts, images, feelings, beliefs come to mind?

Do you think of images like these?

Or do you instead, when you think of God as judge think of these?

Consider both places, the courtroom and the hospital:

- Do people get examined and have things about themselves revealed in both places—sometimes things they prefer to keep hidden?
- Are judgments made in both places?
- Are verdicts given in both places?
- Are decisions made by others that impact the one being examined in both places?
- Are decrees or findings made by the examining authority in both places?

- Then are the same things happening to the one being examined in both places?
- What is the difference? The law which is being followed!

In the first setting—the courtroom—the law being followed and applied is worldly, imposed, made up, arbitrary rules that created beings make and which require judicial oversight and external enforcement.

In the second setting—the hospital—the law being followed and applied is God's law, design law, the laws of health, the laws that the Creator built reality to operate upon and that life requires harmony with, thus the sick one requires healing, restoration, lest they die from their terminal condition.

Which judgment do you think represents the truth about God's government?

The judicial model, the penal legal salvation model, is a lie, it is based on accepting Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law.

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 75, let's read verses 2-8 in the GNB and the Remedy, and I want you to notice how the two laws come out in the translations:

- "I have set a time for judgement," says God,
"and I will judge with fairness.
3 Though every living creature tremble
and the earth itself be shaken,
I will keep its foundations firm.
4 I tell the wicked not to be arrogant;
5 I tell them to stop their boasting."
6 Judgement does not come from the east or from the west,
from the north or from the south;
7 it is God who is the judge,
condemning some and acquitting others.
8 The LORD holds a cup in his hand,
filled with the strong wine of his anger.
He pours it out, and all the wicked drink it;
they drink it down to the last drop. (Psalm 75:2-8 NIV84).

What do you hear? Which law does this sound like?

- God says, "When the time is right, I will unite with my people and govern them uprightly.
3When the earth and all its selfish inhabitants slowly decay,
it is I who holds the cure — the foundational design for life.
4To the arrogant I say, 'Stop bragging about yourselves — you have no remedy,' and to the wicked, 'Do not blow your own horn of self-exaltation.
5Do not trumpet your own spiritual health, trying to exalt yourselves;
do not be proud, with heads held high and necks unwilling to bend in humility and accept treatment.'"

6The exaltation and restoration of humanity does not come from anywhere on earth — east or west, north or south.
7It is the Creator God who governs! The proudly-selfish die, while the humbly-righteous live.
8In the hand of the Lord is a cup filled with the unfermented wine of absolute truth and love; he pours it out, and all the selfish of the earth drink down the truth of their true condition, bitterly swallowing every evil and corrupt fact they have thus far denied. (Psalm 75: 2-8 REM)

So, why do you think the boasting of wicked is in vain? It would be like:

- declaring that people who jumps off the Empire State Building live longer than those who takes the elevator down?
- someone claiming that cigarettes improve their lung function?
- putting a screen door on a submarine?
- declaring a man can become a woman or a woman can become a man?

But do you understand why these illogical declarations like declaring a man can become a woman has happened? It is because people believe that human law systems are the way reality works, made up rules determine right and wrong, and made up rules can be changed. Thus, if reality is determined by made up rules, then if we change the rules, then we change reality.

This is what happens when we teach God's law functions like human law, we teach lies about God, lies about reality, lies about right and wrong, lies about judgment and justice.

I recently read about a *global* study of 15-year-olds that tested their reading comprehension nad found that 91 percent of them could not tell the difference between fact and opinion! https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/a9b5930a-en.pdf?expires=1704112635&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=EFFF5DF3ED7066C7FAF93D58F06D0FC3

What happens when we substitute opinion for facts, for truth? We end up doing irrational and destructive things like walking around with a mask on our face believing it somehow can stop the spread of a virus, or take an experimental injection with no evidence of long term safety because the people in authority declared it is safe, or we believe that a man can become a woman etc.

We must lead people to objective reality and the God of reality and we do that be rejecting the Romanized view of Christianity with its made up laws and satanic god who is the source of inflicted torture and death.

Do you have any questions about judgment? –well turn to Wednesday and the first question at the top…

WEDNESDAY

Read the question at the top of the day's lesson:

- The theme of God's judgment prompts a significant question: How can God's people have peace with God and assurance of salvation at the time of judgment? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 24).

This is an incredible question—what is implied by the question? Doesn't the question imply that God has something against us, that God needs something done to Him so that He won't judge and punish us?

Jesus taught us that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks—people reveal what they think and believe by how they live and what they say. The lesson authors and editors reveal that they believe God's law functions like human law—I don't judge their motives. In fact, I view them like I do Saul of Tarsus before the Damascus road—zealous for God but ignorant of the truth. Saul of Tarsus thought he was serving God when in fact He was opposing God. I pray for those in leadership who are like Saul, I pray that God will give them the experience they need in order for them to reject the imposed law view and embrace design law.

So, how can people have peace with God and assurance of salvation in the judgment—by being healed, trusting God and receiving from the Holy Spirit a new heart and right spirit, by being reborn, by being recreated, by having God's living design law of love and truth written upon our hearts and minds so that we are sealed, so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that we cannot be moved. So that in God's examining room God finds within each person Jesus living there (Gal 2:20).

Read the first paragraph,

- God's people are secure because the Lord placed His dwelling place in Zion (Ps. 76:1, 2) and established His everlasting covenant with them as His treasured possession (Ps. 94:14, Ps. 105:8–10). God does not simply promise not to reject His covenantal people—He actively works to keep them secure in Him. He forgives their sins (Ps. 103:3); He instructs, blesses, and strengthens His people (Ps. 25:8−11, Ps. 29:11, Ps. 105:24). God's judgments are given to turn the people to righteousness and to demonstrate that God cares for them (Ps. 94:8–15). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 24).

Hmmm….I guess it depends on the meaning we attach to the words, but this is certainly not clear and in fact gives much opportunity for error, so let's unpack it.

- "God's people are secure because the Lord placed His dwelling place in Zion (Ps. 76:1, 2) and established His everlasting covenant with them as His treasured possession (Ps. 94:14, Ps. 105:8–10)."
    - What do we mean by "His dwelling place in Zion?" If we mean the building built by human hands and destroyed twice—then no, that is not what gives us security. That building is only an object lesson, a teaching tool, a stage where a play was enacted to teach reality. But if we mean by "His dwelling place" "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14 NIV84), then this is absolutely true, our security is found in Jesus!

    - What about the second part, His everlasting covenant with them as His treasured possession? What is that covenant? The covenant of grace—when was that covenant given? In Eden to Adam and Eve after they fell and the Messiah was promised. So, to whom is that covenant promised and made available? To all humanity. And who receives the blessing of that covenant? All those who have faith like Abraham:
        - a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. (Romans 2:29 NIV84).
        - If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29 NIV84).
        - Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:7–9 NIV84).
- God does not simply promise not to reject His covenantal people—He actively works to keep them secure in Him. He forgives their sins (Ps. 103:3); He instructs, blesses, and strengthens His people (Ps. 25:8−11, Ps. 29:11, Ps. 105:24).
    - Who are His covenant people? All who have faith like Abraham and thus have circumcision of the heart, i.e. are reborn, are transformed, are healed, are set right in heart and mind. It is reality based, actual transformation of the sinner from distrust and enmity of God to love and trust in God.
- God's judgments are given to turn the people to righteousness and to demonstrate that God cares for them (Ps. 94:8–15).
    - And how do they use judgments here? This is a correct use of the word, as therapeutic interventions that are judged to be healing and redemptive. This is a design law application and we agree!
    - But is this how judgment is always used by the authors?

THURSDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- The Lord's supremacy in the world as the Sovereign Creator, King, and Judge has theological implications for the reliability of His testimonies. The testimonies (Hebrew 'edut, "decree," "law") refer to the body of laws and ordinances with which the Lord governs the religious and social life of His people (Exod. 32:15). They are "very sure" (Ps. 93:5), reflecting the stability and permanence of God's throne and the world that God created and sustains (Ps. 93:1, 2). The Hebrew word translated as "sure" (the English word amen derives from this word) conveys the notion of reliability, faithfulness, and firmness (2 Sam. 7:16, 1 Chron. 17:23). God's laws are unchangeable and indestructible. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 25).

The first sentence is absolutely true, "The Lord's supremacy in the world as the Sovereign Creator, King, and Judge has theological implications for the reliability of His testimonies."

What is another way to say this? What we believe about God determines whether we can trust Him!

And what we believe about God—His Sovereignty, Him as ruling King and righteous Judge are all determined by what we believe about God's law.

Consider standing at the foot of the cross and asking those religious leaders who were crucifying Jesus:

- Do you believe in the Bible? Absolutely, and that is why we are here because this man refused to follow the Bible and wouldn't stone a woman caught in adultery.
- Do you believe in God as Creator? Of course, and that is why we are here because this man claimed He was equal with the Creator.
- Do you believe in God as Sovereign and Judge of all the Earth? Absolutely, and that is why we are here because this man usurped God's authority and healed on Sabbath and law breaking requires inflicted punishment and we are here to ensure He is judged and punished.

If you went down the list of doctrines—did they eat a different diet from Jesus? Did they have a different Bible? Did they have a different understanding of creation? Did they have a different sanctuary? Did they observe different festivals? Did they have a different Sabbath?

What did they have different? The law of God and thus they worshiped a false pagan god with all the right doctrines.

This is happening to our own church today! Those who are worshiping and teaching the false views of God are not deniers of God as Creator, King or Judge—they all believe passionately those things, but because they believe all those things through the framework of Satan's lies about God's law, because they believe God's law functions like human law, they come to a completely different conclusion about who God is, His character, methods, principles, government, the problem of sin, the solution for it, and ultimately they teach things about God's law and justice that undermine our ability to trust Him. They create theologies in which to trust—they trust in:

- A blood payment to keep them safe from the god they don't trust
- A mediator to stand between them and protect them from the god they don't trust
- A covering of some type to hide them from the god they don't trust
- A legal adjustment in books to force the god they don't trust to follow the law and declare them innocent

Understand, the penal legal system of theology is a fraud that teaches people to trust in various things that influence, shield, protect, or control the god they do not trust. They do not want to go into God's presence directly, they want these mechanisms involved.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q1 Psalms Lesson 4
The Lord Hears and Delivers

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW MAGAZINE: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ, is now available!

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles (Psalm 34:17 NIV84).

Don't you love Bible promises like this? Haven't you found comfort in the assurance of God's watch care that they bring?

- Is this a promise we can rely upon? For what?
- Does God always deliver those who cry out to Him?
- If God does not deliver someone who cries out to Him does that mean that they are not righteous?
- If God only delivers some of the time, then is this text wrong, should it instead read as, "The righteous cry out and the Lord sometimes listens and sometimes the Lord delivers"?

What is the cause of these apparent problems in understanding and applying the text? The problems arise when we take a verse in isolation and place a meaning on it that it was not intended to convey.

In my understanding, this verse was not intended to indicate that God delivers the righteous from *all* temporal troubles, but delivers the righteous from *all* troubles of *sin that interfere with salvation*—in other words, **God delivers the righteous from sinfulness and** every obstacle sin causes that would prevent a person from being saved if they were not delivered from it**; He does not deliver from every earthly trouble**.

Why do I think this? First, consider the examples of the righteous in Scripture:

- The Apostles John, Peter, and Paul—were they delivered from all earthly troubles? Or did John end up isolated on an island, and Peter and Paul both martyred, and Paul beaten multiple times, shipwrecked, and imprisoned?
- Peter wrote:

- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV84).

Would these people to whom Peter is referring, who are suffering griefs and all kinds of trials—are they righteous or unrighteous?

He tells us these kinds of troubles are not removed because they are not an obstacle to our salvation, but somehow involved in helping us overcome fear, selfishness, distrust in our salvation journey.

And the context of the Psalm itself leads me to understand verse 17 referring to something other than earthly troubles, starting back at verse 14:

- Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

  The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him. (Psalm 34:14-22 NIV84).

And understanding the overall context of Scripture, the grand central theme and purpose of the Bible—the truth about God and the plan of salvation, here is how I paraphrased it:

- Those set right with God call to him and he answers them; he heals them from all their sin-sickness. (Psalm 34:17 REM).

Read first paragraph,

- Again and again, the Psalms highlight the truth that the Sovereign Lord, who created and sustains the universe, also reveals Himself as a personal God who initiates and sustains a relationship with His people. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 28).

When we think of God's Sovereignty what comes to mind?

- His power?
- His authority?
- His rulership?
- And if we think of His rulership, His governing of the His universe, what comes to mind? His law—and how do we understand God's law functions?

- What is Satan's lie about God's law? That God's law functions like the laws creatures make, made up rules that require legal enforcement. And today we are releasing our new magazine,

  The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ. This magazine will document this original lie, how it began in heaven, spread to Adam and Eve, infected God's people, was corrected by Jesus and the truth was taught by the Apostles, but the church became reinfected with this lie, how the Reformation arose to return Christianity to what Jesus Himself taught, and that the Reformation is a process of unfolding truth. How the Reformers in 1888 were confronted by the legalists in the SDA church and how the SDA leaders rejected the advancing truth of the Reformation and this has directly caused a delay—just like the children of Israel were delayed 40 years in the desert because of their unbelief. And how we can free ourselves from this lie and return to worshiping God as Creator. It is time for this message to go forward, the message that is to lighten the world for Christ's return. I encourage you to get a copy, read it for yourself, and when you agree with its contents, please share it far and wide. We will ship these to any US postal address at no cost. It is available online to be read or downloaded. And then please share with us any feedback you have or hear.

- And if we believe God's law functions like human law, and God's government runs legally, with judicial oversight and infliction of external penalties, then we end up worshiping a creature instead of the Creator, and it impacts how we translate and understand Scripture.

This one lie about law bends, twists, perverts, corrupts everything we teach about God, the sin problem, and the plan of salvation so that the theology taught actually support Satan's view of God.

Let's consider Psalm 75 and read it through the GNT and see how the translators honestly translate the language, but because of the belief that God's law functions like human law, judicial/legal concepts get brought over. But their interpretation of the text is not the only legitimate one. I will contrast it with the Remedy version.

Verse 2:

- "I have set a time for judgement," says God, "and I will judge with fairness. (Psalm 75:2 GNT)
- God says, "When the time is right, I will unite with my people and govern them uprightly. (Psalm 75:2 REM)

Verse 3:

- Though every living creature tremble and the earth itself be shaken, I will keep its foundations firm. (Psalm 75:3 GNT)
- When the earth and all its selfish inhabitants slowly decay, it is I who holds the cure — the foundational design for life. (Psalm 75:3 REM)

Verse 4:

- I tell the wicked not to be arrogant; (Psalm 75:4 GNT)
  The GNT truncated this verse significantly, leaving out a second phrase. The NIV reads:
  To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,'
  and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns. (Psalm 75:4 NIV84).
- To the arrogant I say, 'Stop bragging about yourselves — you have no remedy,' and to the wicked, 'Do not blow your own horn of self-exaltation. (Psalm 75:4 REM)

Verse 5:

- I tell them to stop their boasting." (Psalm 75:5 GNT)
  The GNT truncated this verse significantly, leaving out a second phrase. The NIV reads:
  Do not lift your horns against heaven;
  do not speak with outstretched neck.' " (Psalm 75:5 NIV84).
- Do not trumpet your own spiritual health, trying to exalt yourselves; do not be proud, with heads held high and necks unwilling to bend in humility and accept treatment.'" (Psalm 75:5 REM)

Verses 6-7:

- Judgement does not come from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south; it is God who is the judge, condemning some and acquitting others. (Psalm 75:6-7 GNT)
- The exaltation and restoration of humanity does not come from anywhere on earth — east or west, north or south. It is the Creator God who governs! The proudly-selfish die, while the humbly-righteous live. (Psalm 75:6-7 REM)

Verse 8:

- The LORD holds a cup in his hand, filled with the strong wine of his anger. He pours it out, and all the wicked drink it; they drink it down to the last drop. (Psalm 75:8 GNT).
- In the hand of the Lord is a cup filled with the unfermented wine of absolute truth and love; he pours it out, and all the selfish of the earth drink down the truth of their true condition, bitterly swallowing every evil and corrupt fact they have thus far denied. (Psalm 75:8 REM)

So, why do you think the boasting of wicked is in vain? It would be like:

- declaring that people who jumps off the Empire State Building live longer than those who take the elevator down
- someone claiming that cigarettes improve their lung function
- putting a screen door on a submarine
- declaring a man can become a woman or a woman can become a man

But do you understand why these illogical declarations, like declaring a man can become a woman, have happened? It is because people believe that human law systems are the way reality works, made up rules determine right and wrong, and made up rules can be changed. Thus, if reality is determined

by made up rules, then if we change the rules, we can make what was illegal legal and thus we can change reality.

This is what happens when we teach God's law functions like human law, we teach lies about God, lies about reality, lies about right and wrong, lies about judgment and justice. And people believe that when the government passes a law that marijuana is legal then it is now also healthy.

I recently read about a *global* study of 15-year-olds that tested their reading comprehension and found that 91 percent of them could not tell the difference between fact and opinion! https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/a9b5930a-en.pdf?expires=1704112635&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=EFFF5DF3ED7066C7FAF93D58F06D0FC3

What happens when we substitute opinion for fact and truth? We end up doing irrational and destructive things like walking around with a mask on our face believing it somehow can stop the spread of a virus, or take an experimental injection with no evidence of long-term safety because the **people in authority declared it is safe**. Or we believe that justification is when God declares us righteous while we remain unrighteous, or a myriad of other fantastical things taught in Christianity that contradict objective reality and Scripture itself.

We must lead people to objective reality and the God of reality and we do that be rejecting the Romanized view of Christianity with its made up laws and satanic god who is the source of inflicted torture and death.

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 139:1-18, which will address the question brought up last week about being knit together in our mother's womb.

Let's read these verses, from the NIV and the REM and then consider their meaning:

Verses 1:4:

- LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. (Psalm 139:1-4 NIV84).
- Lord, you have examined me and you know everything about me. You know every action I take; from across the cosmos, you know every thought I think. You know whether I am working or resting; you know my heart motives — the way I operate. Before the words come out of my mouth you know exactly what I will say, O Lord. (Psalm 139:1-4 REM).

What is the theme of these verses? What truths are contained within? These verses are about God's foreknowledge, omniscience, ability to know all things. Some don't like the idea of God foreknowing our thoughts and choices, as if that restricts our liberty, that is because they confuse knowledge with causality.

Verses 5-6:

- You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. (Psalm 139:5-6 NIV84).
- You seek me to lead me — you surround me, guiding me and protecting me. The full knowledge of you is too immense for me; you are infinite, and I cannot comprehend it. (Psalm 139:5-6 REM).

Do you hear a difference in these translations?

Verses 7-12:

- Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (Psalm 139:7-12 NIV84).
- Where can I go and be away from your Spirit? You sustain all reality — where can I flee and be beyond your presence? If I go to heaven, your sustaining presence is there; if I sleep in the grave, your sustaining presence is there as well. If I rise with the beams of sunlight in the east, if I settle beyond the ocean waves in the west — even there your Hand would guide me, the One at your right hand would keep me safe. I could claim that darkness will hide me and the light around me turn to night, but my claim doesn't change reality and no darkness is impenetrable to you; for night becomes day in your presence and darkness becomes light. (Psalm 139:7-12 REM).

What is the theme of these verses? These verses again speak of the omniscience and omnipotence of God. The Remedy emphasizes the reality behind these truths, that God as Creator sustains all reality, thus it is not magic, or wishful thinking, but objective reality. And the Remedy emphasizes that the Right Hand of God is a symbolic representation of the Son of God, Jesus, the member of the Godhead who wields the power of God, through whom all things were made and who sustains all things and who is the one who carried out by deed and action the fulfillment of the plan of salvation, the one who keeps us safe.

Now we get into the verses that, in my opinion, have been misunderstood to teach something never intended and not found in the verses themselves.

Verses 13:

- For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13 NIV84)
- For you have redeemed my heart and mind; you covered me with grace from the moment I was conceived in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13 REM).

Do these say the same thing or do you hear very different meaning? Which is most accurate?

Before we get into the Hebrew words, think through the meaning—does God create sin, sinfulness, sickness, defects in His creation? Or when God creates does He create in perfection—does God create sinless beings without defects?

If we say God is creating us in our mother's wombs by using the same level of divine power and direct action that He did in Eden—then we have a real problem, for none of us chose to be born sinners, and if God is in fact the one who directly made us the way we are then we can rightly turn to Him and say, "How dare you call me to account for my sinfulness when you made me a sinner and you never gave me a choice not to be born a sinner."

In other words, to interpret this text to mean that God directly made each one of us by His divine action, is to make God the source of sin also our personal, individual sinfulness. This is a lie.

God created Adam and Eve directly and they came to life sinless and flawless. God, when He created them in sinlessness, endowed them with an ability to create beings in their own image, to make choices and those choices would develop and change them and when they had children their children would reflect aspects of them. Thus when Adam and Eve sinned, they passed along to their children what they possessed, a sinful nature, and the Psalms elsewhere tell us we are born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5).

Further the Bible tells us we are one human family, all branched out of the human family tree that descended from Adam. Thus we were all in Adam when Adam sinned, offspring of Adam, not new creations created by God. **We only become new creations by God's divine power at conversion, when we are reborn. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians:**

- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV84).

We are a new creation by rebirth, not by our first birth! We are new individuals descended from Adam by our first birth but that is part of the old creation, the creation damaged by sin. Our first birth is not the action of divine energy to create a new species, a new humanity, but is the outworking of God's gift of procreation given to Adam and Eve.

The way God used divine power, prerogative, action, initiative, and energy to create a new purified humanity was through the work of Jesus!

So, I cannot accept the idea that Psalm 139 means that God acts directly to create each one of us individually as new creations. Then what does the text mean? My paraphrase:

- For you have redeemed my heart and mind; you covered me with grace from the moment I was conceived in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13 REM).

This is the footnote in the Remedy Psalms explaining my paraphrase:

- The Hebrew word translated in many Bible versions as "formed" or "made" is קנה [qanah], and according to the New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries is translated most commonly as "bought," "buy," "purchased," and also as "redeemed." The Hebrew word translated as "inmost being" is כליה [kilyah /kil·yaw/] and means "seat of emotions or affections," thus the author's translation of "heart and mind." The Hebrew word translated as "knit me together" according to the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon is סוּך, סכך, שׂכך [cakak, sakak /saw·kak/]… 23 occurrences; AV translates it as "cover" 15 times, "covering" twice, "defence" once, "defendest" once, "hedge in" once, "join together" once, "set" once, and "shut up" once. Contrary to popular translations, the context of this verse is not about physical embryological development, or God using power to physically create a new human life, but is about the plan of redemption. The Psalmist in Psalms 51:5 describes that he was "born in sin, conceived in iniquity" and here acknowledges that despite his sinful origins, God was already there acting to redeem him and cleanse him from sinfulness.

Verses 14-16:

- I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:14-16 NIV84).
- I praise you because you are awesome; wonderful and marvelous are all your works, and I know this very well. You know my entire being — how I was built from your secret code, constructed from the elements of the earth. You saw me before I was born; my entire life was recorded in your book of foreknowledge before one day came to be. (Psalm 139:14-16 REM).

What is the theme of these verses? It is again about God's sovereignty—His rulership through design law. He is the Creator and Sustainer of reality. He built reality and it runs on His protocols, including the law of liberty. Thus when Adam and Eve abused the privileges given them and produced new sinful beings in their image—God intervened to reverse this choice and to bring about a new creation, a recreation of holiness from the fallen sinful humanity. And God foreknows us before we are born, and the outcome is already written because God lives outside of time and is not confined to time. But because one of God's laws is the law of liberty, His foreknowledge in no way restricts our freedom to choose. Another way to say this, is that the only reason God knows what is in His book is because we chose for it to happen. God's foreknowledge doesn't put events in His book, our choices do.

Verses 17-18:

- How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. (Psalm 139:17–18 NIV84).
- To me, your thoughts and purposes are the most precious, O God — the infinite source of all reality; if I could count them, they would outnumber all the grains of sand. No matter what I think or do, it bears witness to your foreknowledge. (Psalm 139:17-18 REM).

Does this answer the question that came up last week?

Read third paragraph,

- This wonderful truth about God knowing us intimately should not scare us but instead drive us into the arms of Jesus and what He has accomplished for us at the Cross. For by faith in Jesus, we have been given His righteousness, "the righteousness of God" Himself (Rom. 3:5, 21). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 29).

What does this mean? Why are the authors encouraging us to run to the arms of Jesus? Would there be any objection or problem if instead we ran to the arms of the Father?

Why doesn't it say "drive us to the arms of the Father and what He has done for us through Jesus at the cross?" Didn't Jesus tell us that life eternal was intimacy with the Father, knowing God and Jesus? Didn't Jesus pray we would be one with the Father and Jesus? We, of course, are never wrong to run to Jesus—but when we run to Jesus does Jesus want us to know, realize, understand, experience, that truth that He brought us is all about the Father—if you have seen me you have seen the Father? Does Jesus want us to realize,

- For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NKJV).

So, if some don't make this connection between Jesus and the Father, is it because they believe that Jesus must do something to the Father for us? That Jesus, as our High Priest, must plead to the Father His blood to pay for our sins and that it isn't safe to run directly to the Father?

But Jesus also said the following, telling His disciples He would speak plainly to them, no more parables, figures of speech, or metaphors, but tell them directly and specifically what it is like:

- "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves

you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. (John 16:25-27 NIV84).

Jesus is saying that He will not pray the Father for us, because the Father Himself loves us—there is no need. In fact, God so loved the world that He sent His Son, and God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself, not keeping a record of their sins against them.

When Jesus washed Judas' feet, who stood between God and Judas? Do you believe Jesus is God? Did someone have to plead with Jesus to be kind to Judas? Do we see the Father in that moment?

But there is someone who has worked to get in between us and God and who is that? It is Satan—Satan is the one who wants to stand between us and God, to intercept every ray of light coming from the throne of God. And Satan does this through a variety of lies:

- There is no God so people put up a mental barrier
- Through false gods and false religious beliefs
- Through sensualism, humanism, materialism
- But also through impersonating and angel of light, through standing in the place of Jesus and pretending to be Jesus, through impersonating our High Priest but changing the role and function of our true High Priest into one we will like more, into one that functions like we do, into one who practices the laws that are like our laws. Satan stands between us and God when we believe in a heavenly high priest who must plead to the Father his blood to pay our legal debt, who must propitiate the wrath of God.
- Through attacks on the Trinity, the idea that Jesus is a second order being, not fully equal to the Father, some offspring, or later created being like Satan, a created being

MONDAY

Read Psalm 40:1-3:

- I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. (Psalm 40:1–3 NIV84).

What do you hear in this psalm? What is the message?

Does the Remedy version add any insights? Do you agree with this emphasis?

- With eager expectation I looked for the Lord: he drew near to me and heard me crying. I was drowning in despair, near death, but he pulled me out; he pulled me out of the miry abyss. He placed me on the solid Rock and gave me a new firm standing. He inspired me to sing a new

song — praise to our God of love. May many see what God has done and be overwhelmed with admiration and trust the Lord completely. (Psalm 40:1-3 REM).

TUESDAY

Read Psalm 17:7-9:

- Show the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings from the wicked who assail me, from my mortal enemies who surround me. (Psalm 17:7–9 NIV84).

What is the meaning? What does it mean to be saved by God's right hand? Is this speaking of saving from the mortal enemies around us? If so, then did God not save Peter and Paul by His right hand? Was God's right hand weak when Stephen was stoned? Or is the Psalm primarily about eternal salvation and not temporal life?

From the Remedy:

- Pour out your wonderful love and kindness — your healing power to transform and restore to your ideal all those who seek you to deliver them from selfishness. Lord, you keep your eye on me — watch me closely, but hide me in the shadow of your wings from the selfish who seek to destroy me — from enemies all around who seek to kill me. (Psalm 17:7-9 REM).

Read Psalm 31:1-3:

- In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me. (Psalm 31:1–3 NIV84).

What is the meaning? What kind of refuge? What is the relationship between shame and righteousness and how are we protected from shame?
Is this primarily temporal protection or spiritual?

- Lord, I come to you for healing: don't let guilt and shame destroy me; restore me to your perfect design. Listen to me — listen closely and heal me — heal me quickly; be my unfailing remedy, a healing sanctuary to renew me. Since you are my remedy and my sanctuary, reveal your character of love by recreating me in your image. (Psalm 31:1-3 REM).

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points out that in 1 Corinthians 10 Paul uses the experiences of Israel leaving Egypt, going through the Red Sea, eating manna as metaphors for the plan of salvation. The lesson states,

- All through the Old Testament, and even in the New, the deliverance from Egypt was seen as a symbol of God's power to save His people. Paul in these verses in 1 Corinthians does just that, seeing the whole true story as a metaphor, a symbol of salvation in Jesus Christ. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 32).

How do you see the true story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt as a metaphor for our deliverance from sin?

- Egypt represents this sinful godless world—all through Scripture Egypt represents godlessness, rebellion and rejection of God—"who is God that I should know Him" Pharaoh says.
- Pharaoh represents Satan, who rejects knowing God as a friend, rejects trusting God.

- The descendants of Israel are initially invited into Egypt but are then taken as slaves.
- Satan invites/tempts people into sinful living practices which will become habits and addictions that enslave them.
- Moses, a deliverer was born from among the people
- Jesus our deliverer was born from among humanity

- The people resisted and rejected Moses
- Humanity has resisted and rejected Jesus

- Moses confronts Pharaoh and secures the slaves freedom
- Jesus confronts Satan and secures our freedom from sin

- Moses leads the people out of bondage to the promised land
- Jesus leads us out of the bondage of sin to our heavenly promised land

- The people grumble along the way because they had to give up the comforts of Egypt
- We grumble along the way to salvation because we have to give up our comforts, our addictions, our sinful habits, our false beliefs that give us false security

- They walk through the Red Sea and metaphorically are baptized
- We go through the ceremony of water baptism to symbolize the true baptism of immersing our hearts and minds in the Holy Spirit to be reborn

- They drank water from the rock
- We drink living water of truth and love from the living Rock Jesus Christ

- They ate manna, heaven's bread
- We eat the living manna, the Word made flesh, by eating the words of truth that become building blocks of our understanding and beliefs.

- God approached them at Sinai to talk with them directly, with no other being in between, but they rejected that and asked for Moses to appoint intercessors, go-betweens, to talk to God and then talk to them
- God still seeks to talk to us directly, but we prefer to teach that we need a go-between an intercessor to plead to God in our behalf

- God wanted to take them directly into the promised land, but their distrust and rebellion caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years
- God has wanted to take us to our heavenly home long before this, but because of our distrust, our refusal to accept the true message of God's character of love, His design law as the foundation of His government, and our insistence on presenting a Romanized version of god to the world, we have been wandering in the wilderness of this world and will continue to wander until we present the truth and all who are healable accept the truth and are won back to love and trust.

THURSDAY

The title is Help From the Sanctuary—what does this title mean to you?

Is there help from the sanctuary? What help? What sanctuary?

Read the first two paragraphs,

- The motif of spiritual and physical refuge and help notably appears in the context of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is a place of help, of safety, and of salvation. The sanctuary provides a shelter to the troubled. God defends the orphans and widows and gives strength to His people from His sanctuary. When "out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth" (Ps. 50:2, NKJV), God's righteous judgments are proclaimed, and the Lord's blessing goes forth (Ps. 84:4, Ps. 128:5, Ps. 134:3).

  The refuge in the sanctuary surpasses the security provided by any other place in the world because God personally dwells in the sanctuary. The presence of God, not merely the temple as a firm building, provides safety. Likewise, being the mountain where the Lord dwells, Mount Zion surpasses other mountains though in itself it is a modest hill (Ps. 68:15, 16; Isa. 2:2). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 33).

What do you think of this idea that our security is in the sanctuary? Do we mean the building that humans built or something else? Of course we mean the God who was represented as dwelling in that building

But what did that building represent?

What do you think these verses mean, in light of our sanctuary and safety?

- Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. 13 It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’ (Zechariah 6:12–13 NIV84).

- Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” (John 2:19 NIV84).

What sanctuary or temple is our refuge? Is it not referring to Jesus Himself who left heaven to build the temple, with Himself as the chief cornerstone and we receive Jesus via the Holy Spirit and become living stones built together into a house for the Lord?

The temple concept is a metaphor that is to point us to reality. Is our security in any of the metaphors of Scripture or only in God? Is our security in:

- The blood or in Jesus who shed His blood?
- The animal sacrifice or in Jesus the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?
- The temple sanctuary building or system or the God of the temple?
- In communion bread or Jesus whose body was broken for us?
- In law keeping or in having the Spirit taking the victory of Jesus writing God’s living law in our hearts and minds restoring us to unity with God?
- In the Bible or in Jesus? Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day that they search the Scriptures thinking that in them they will find eternal life, but the Scriptures teach of Jesus.

Where is our security? In Jesus and all these things God has given to us, the Scriptures, the object lessons, parables, metaphors, ceremonies, feast days, all of it is intended to help us understand and experience reality—to know God and Jesus Christ—this is our security, the reality of knowing God as our friend and thereby being transformed to become like Abraham and Moses God’s friend.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q1 Psalms Lesson 5
Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land

by Tim Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW MAGAZINE: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ, is now available! https://comeandreason.com/lie-that-deceived-angels/

SABBATH

The memory verse for this week's lesson is Psalm 137:4, however the entire Psalm is about the captivity in Babylon and I thought it might be interesting to compare this nine verse psalm from the NIV and the REM, and as we do so to allow you to consider the difference in meaning that comes across—and consider not only the historical captivity of the ancient Israelites, but the object lesson meaning of prophetic captivity of God's people in Babylon as well.

My view of accurate Bible translation is primarily about bringing the meaning across, not the exact word for word translation across, especially if the new language word means something different than the old language word intended. And to bring across the most accurate meaning one needs to understand the truth about God's character, His design law, the nature of sin, God's solution for the sin problem—and if when translating one's understanding of those elements is tainted by the imperial, imposed, human law lie then the translation of the Bible, while being linguistically appropriate, will almost always be slanted to bring legal ideas into the text that are not reality-based and miss the larger reality of the plan of salvation.

So, consider these two versions:

- By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. (Psalm 137:1 NIV84).
- By the rivers of Babylon, as captives in this selfish world, we wept when we remembered Zion—God's fortress of spiritual health and wellness. (Psalm 137:1 REM).

The Remedy version expands the meaning from merely the literal historical people who were held captive in the historical kingdom of Babylon, to include the spiritual object lesson that both ancient Israel and Babylon represent—God's people enslaved by Satan's kingdom of fear and selfishness that operates upon imposed human law, a legal justice system of inflicted penalties, which stands in contrast to God's kingdom which as Jesus said is within you—the kingdom of spiritual health and wellness. Thus, the Remedy immediately draws the mind to consider the deeper lessons that the historical events in the OT were recorded to teach us.

What do you believe is the primary purpose of Scripture—what is the intention of the Holy Spirit in having the writers record what is written in the Bible? Is the Bible merely and only a history book, or is the purpose of the recorded history to reveal through the truth about our existence, the sin problem, and God's solution for it, the plan of salvation?

- There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? (Psalm 137:2-4 NIV84).
- There on the willows we hung our harps while our captors told us to sing: they demanded songs of happiness and joy; they said, "Sing us a song of health about Zion!" How can our lives be songs revealing God's character of love while our hearts are held captive to this selfish world? (Psalm 137:2-4 REM).

The Remedy again expands the meaning beyond the historical people in the land of Babylon to the larger meaning, that the song is not merely a tune that is sung from the mouth, but the song is the melody of our lives, that our lives are to be songs of truth and love that harmonize with God's kingdom of truth and love.

But how can our lives be songs that resonates truth and love if our hearts are held captive to this selfish world? Which introduces the reality, that while we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. And even if we end up imprisoned by the powers of this world, like Jesus and so many of His faithful followers throughout history, the evil powers of this world cannot imprison our hearts and minds without our consent. The only way we can have lives that are songs of truth and love to God is by having our hearts circumcised by the Holy Spirit, hearts set free from the captivity to the fear and selfishness of this world.

Do you agree with my understanding of the true meaning of what the psalm is intended to lead us to understand?

- If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. (Psalm 137:5-6 NIV84).
- If I forget the truth about you, O Jerusalem—the center of God's healing plan—may I write no more music. May I sing no more songs, if they are not about you; if they do not teach God's healing plan centered in you, O Jerusalem, as my highest joy. (Psalm 137:5-6 REM).

What do you hear here? That the psalmist would rather be silent that use his talent to misrepresent God! This is our prayer, we at Come and Reason Ministries pray that we will only say of God what is right, that our classes, presentations, publications, programs will constantly improve and refine our ability to give ever more clear presentations about God, to advance and grow in truth, to eliminate any remnants of misunderstanding and falsehood that we have believed or taught. We would rather be silent than to teach things about God that are not true.

And now the final three verses, verses that have been very difficult for people to understand and explain, verses that confound people, and even those who say we should take the Bible just as it reads and apply it to our lives, don't want to do that with these verses—why? Because the way these verses are rendered doesn't fit with what we understand from Jesus, and that is because I believe the common translation misunderstands the true meaning that was intended…but let's compare the two versions.

- Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!" O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us—he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks. (Psalm 137:7-9 NIV84).

Do you think that this is true as it reads? Do you think that one can find true, genuine, godly happiness by killing the babies of one's enemies? In this world, the psalm could link a truth with killing of enemies babies—such as increased safety and reduced risk of future conflict if you wipe out all your enemies and kill their babies—but that isn't the same thing has happiness, or is taking vengeance oneself on one's enemies, which the Bible tells us not to do. So, on its face this version isn't translated in a way that, if taken as it reads, communicates truth.

Some scholars have then understood this to be a Psalm that rather then communicating the truth of how reality works, the true way to find happiness, it instead communicates the struggles of the psalmist, his anger, temptations, carnal desires for vengeance and then models going to God in prayer with such angry motives where in conversation with God they are worked out. This principle of going to God with our anger, ungodly desires and talking with God for heart change is absolutely a healthy action to take, yet if that was the intent of this psalm, I would expect a few more verses, like we see in other psalms where the psalmist goes from the despair, discouragement, anger, to hope and trust in God for the conclusion. This psalm doesn't do that, so while I think it is right to go to God with one's frustrations, anger, desire for vengeance and work it out with God, I do not think this psalm was written to model that, because I think it is a poetic description, inspired by the Holy Spirit of what brings true happiness in the plan of salvation. This is how I rendered it:

- Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did the day Jerusalem—your spiritual treatment center—fell? They shouted, "Tear it down, tear it down to the ground!" O people of Babylon, who cling to selfishness, you are doomed to destruction! Happy are those who are finished with you, just as you deserve; who have weaned themselves from you. Happy are they who take your children to fall upon the Rock and be broken. (Psalm 137:7-9 REM).

Do you hear a difference between these two versions? Can you see two different laws being applied—the imposed law in the NIV and Design law in the REM? And which is most consistent with the plan of salvation? What is it that God is trying to do to sinners—destroy them or turn them from enemies into friends by bringing them to Jesus the Rock of our Salvation and have us fall upon Him and have our fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and sinfulness broken up so we can be reborn in righteousness? And what brings genuine happiness? Isn't it when we turn our enemies into our friends by bringing them to Jesus and have them experience salvation and heart transformation?

Do you think the Remedy paraphrase has misrepresents the Scripture or brings a more accurate understanding, making the true meaning clearer?

Read first paragraph,

- We do not need to get deep into the book of Psalms in order to discover that the Psalms are uttered in an imperfect world, one of sin, evil, suffering, and death. The stable creation run by the Sovereign Lord and His righteous laws is constantly threatened by evil. As sin corrupts the world more and more, the earth has increasingly become "a strange land" to God's people. This reality creates a problem for the psalmist: How does one live a life of faith in a strange land? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 36).

What do you think of this paragraph?

What law lens do you hear "righteous laws" through?

Do we recognize the strangeness that sin has brought into the world, or do we see the sin, Satan's methods, Satan's structure, as normal and think God's ways are strange?

- "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some **strange ideas** to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." (Acts 17:18-20 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Why was the truth Paul presented in Athens considered strange to the people there? Because they had accepted false gods, with worldly methods, and Paul was presenting the truth about the Creator.

What about today? If we present the truth about God as Creator, that His laws are design laws, the protocols reality operate upon, that God's laws are not the type of laws sinful humans make up, rules that require legal oversight and enforcement, do people complain that our view is strange, that it doesn't make sense to them? Why is it strange to so many people? Because the lies about God's law, God's government, and God's character have accepted and viewed as normal or true, thus when we present the truth the truth is not known, it seems strange—and what do people often do with strange or unknown ideas—feel threatened and resist or fight against them.

This is what the Bible calls stiff-necked, an unwillingness to turn the mind, consider other possibilities, to learn, to examine the evidence, to follow the truth. It is the opposite of obedience—Biblical obedience is not about rule-keeping, it literally means a humble willingness to listen, be instructed with truth and follow the truth applying it to one's life. But, when one accepts the imposed law lie then obedience becomes rule-keeping and righteousness becomes misrepresented as a stiff-necked resistance to advancing truth—to clinging to the traditions, or in Adventism claims of standing by the old landmarks which shuts out advancing truth—consider this historical quote from one of the

founders of the Adventist church after 1888, where the official leadership rejected the truth about God's design law and chose Romanism, the lie that God's law is imposed:

- In Minneapolis God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This **light from heaven by some was rejected with all the stubbornness the Jews manifested in rejecting Christ**, and there was **much talk about standing by the old landmarks**. But there was evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were. There was evidence and there was reasoning from the word that commended itself to the conscience; but **the minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light**, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the "old landmarks" when **it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks**. (Counsels to Writers 30, emphasis mine).

The reality is that we are in a land that is enemy territory, all the kingdoms of the world are Satan's, they all run on made-up rules with judicial oversight and inflicted punishments—the laws that creatures make. Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world, it does not operate like these earthly governments. Yet, the church has become Romanized, infected with the lie that God's law is like human law, made up rules requiring God to use His power to inflict punishment for sin. Thus, rather than realizing the world is a strange place, they think the gospel is strange, the truth that God does not have to use power to inflict punishment for sin is strange. They don't know what to do with passages like:

- Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will **freely pardon**. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:7–9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Freely pardon? This doesn't make sense, to pardon people freely, without a price being paid, without a penalty being inflicted, without someone taking the punishment is strange. Freely pardoning doesn't make sense to those who believe God's government functions like human governments.

But when we return to design law, we realize that God's pardon does not reverse the damage of sin, to reverse the damage of sin requires divine intervention in the heart and mind of the sinner to recreate them in righteousness and that requires they trust God and open their heart to Him.

So, God pardons everyone freely, but only those who trust God and receive His indwelling Spirit are reborn, healed, renewed, recreated, receive the mind of Christ, have the living law of God written into their heart and mind, become friends of God, have fear, selfishness, and distrust removed from their being and are reconciled, restored to at-one-ment with God. All those who reject the truth, who cling to the lies and distrust God will die from their sin-sickness, but God is still forgiving toward them, because that is who God is. Just like a doctor who forgives his patient who lied and didn't take the medicine, but despite the doctor's forgiveness, the patient still dies.

But this free pardon doesn't make sense if one believes God's law is like human law, made up rules, because our laws require external enforcement. And thus we have many church leaders, with sincere hearts, functioning like Saul of Tarsus, persecuting the followers of Christ who are advancing in the truth through various means of censure, removal from office, disfellowship, deplatforming, slander, labeling them as heretical and so forth. We pray for these sincere Sauls of our day that they may have a Damascus road experience and become powerful agents for the true gospel just like Paul became.

The second paragraph says,

- As we already have seen, the psalmists acknowledge God's sovereign rule and power, as well as His righteous judgments. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 36).

What do you understand God's righteous judgments to be? What law lens do you hear judgments through?

Do you think human law and think judicial findings with the infliction of just punishments, or do you think Design law and think diagnosis of what is wrong and the reality-based judgment of what is the best therapeutic intervention to advance the plan of salvation—the plan of healing?

Consider this historical quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets* what type of judgment is described here, what law lens is used in this description?

- "How great is the long - suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." (Patriarchs and Prophets 587).

What type of judgment is being described? What law in operation? Why does God intervene like this? Is it judicial or is it remedial, healing, discipline, redemptive, teaching by experience how reality works, and in OT times God working to protect the branch of the human family tree through whom Jesus will be born?

Read the question from the bottom of THURSDAY's lesson:

- How does the promise of God's judgment upon the world, and upon all its evil, give you comfort when so much evil now goes unpunished? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 41).

What law lens is this question presenting? Is this question even true? Do the unrepentant ever get away with evil? Why or why not?

What happens in the heart, mind, character, soul of a person who sins? Every choice to sin, whether in heart, mind, or deed, damages the person, perverts the mind and soul of the sinner, hardens the heart, sears the conscience, corrupts the character, incites fear, guilt, shame, and if the person doesn't repent and experience God's healing power in their lives, then their sin eventually sears the conscience and destroys the faculties that are sensitive to the Spirit of God, to truth and love.

The idea that sin goes unpunished is an idea that presents Satan's lie from the beginning, that sin doesn't harm, but God harms you for it by inflicting punishment—which leads people to solve the false-problem that we are in legal trouble with a punishing god by telling more lies, like god requires appeasement, assuaging of His wrath, a legal penalty to be paid, and we must have someone interceded with this god to protect us, hide us, erase our records of sin so this god won't punish us.

These lies undermine love and trust and prevent hearts and minds from being healed, from being restored to unity or at-one-ment with God. It may lead people to cognitive conversion, the legal conversion of claiming legal justification, but it does not lead to spiritual renewal, the new covenant where the living law of God is written upon the heart and the character of Christ is reproduced within.

SUNDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- The problem of evil in the Psalms is primarily theological; it inevitably concerns questions about God. Thus, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is seen principally as a divine scandal because it provided an opportunity for the heathen to blaspheme God. God's inheritance (the people of Israel) is the sign of His divine election and covenant (Deut. 4:32-38; Deut. 32:8, 9) that will never fail. The concept of God's inheritance also contains an end-time dimension, as one day all nations will become God's inheritance and will serve Him. The notion that the nations invaded God's inheritance threatens these divine promises. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 37).

What do you think? The problem of evil is primarily theological—it concerns questions about God is well said, Satan lies about God to undermine our trust in God. So, what are the questions that have arisen and what are the answers?

What are the questions that need answering as you understand them?

The lesson makes a suggestion and a suggested answer in the fourth paragraph,

- However, more important than the restoration of Israel's fortunes is the defense of God's character in the world (Ps. 79:9). If the evil actions of the nations go unpunished, it will appear that God has lost His power (Ps. 74:18-23, Ps. 83:16-18, Ps. 106:47). Only when God saves His people will His name be justified and uplifted. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 37).

The lesson is absolutely right to focus our attention on God's character, but what character does the lesson suggest God has, and is presenting God as a punishing god, who will inflict punishment, as the lesson suggest, defending God's true character or misrepresenting God and supporting Satan's charges against God?

Here is a quote from the book *The Desire of Ages* that details one of the charges of Satan:

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

Hmmm….if we present God as a powerful being who uses power to inflict punishment for sin are we defending the character of God or are we advancing Satan's rebellion by perpetuating his lies about God?

Consider these historical quotes, which document what the Adventist Reformers wanted the church to teach, but which got rejected in 1888 and instead the institutional church has embraced and still is teaching the imposed Roman view of law with its imperial punishing false god:

- **We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin**. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death**. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p 235, emphasis mine)

- The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work.** By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, **the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.** (The Great Controversy 35, emphasis mine).

- **From the beginning** it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to **misrepresent the character of God**, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. **The Creator has been presented to their minds as**

> **clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,**--that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. (Testimonies volume 5, p 738, emphasis mine)

And how does Satan do this? By getting us to accept the lie that God's law function like human law. When we do this, we **always** teach that God is required by law to use His power to inflict death as punishment for sin. We deny the plain teachings of Scripture that death comes from sin when it is full grown James 1:15, or as the wages of sin (Romans 6:28), or that death is Satan's power (Hebrews 2:14), or that Jesus destroyed death (2 Tim 1:10), or that God did not use power to execute Jesus on the cross. This one single lie about law causes the clearest evidences of Scripture to be twisted, denied, and distorted.

And thus the quarterly rightly teaches that God's character is under assault and God's character must be revealed in truth, but then sadly turns around and presents Satan's lies about God to misrepresent God's character as punishing.

When one believes God's law functions like human law, then the issue becomes one of power, which god is most powerful, because that god can overthrow all the others and enforce his ways through punishment—but this was never the question, the devils believe in God's power and they tremble in fear. The question was over God's trustworthiness, can we trust the one with the power to not to use His power to coerce, force, compel, and inflict punishment, for all such use of power destroys love and individuality and creates either rebels, or slaves, mindless drones doing what the master says without question.

Read the bottom green section,

- "The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 671. How do you understand this important truth and what it should mean in your own Christian life? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 37).

How is God honored? How does God get His character restored into people? Can character be created by God? Can God use power to force people to love Him, to trust Him, to be loyal in heart to Him, to actually be His friends?

How does God get what He wants, His character restored into us?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

And how does the Spirit work? Truth and love—truth presented in love while leaving us free to choose. It is our choice to respond to truth and love and then when we choose yes, we receive divine power to succeed and thus our characters are transformed by a trusting/faith connection with God!

It is by beholding we are changed, the design law of worship—but when we replace the truth of God as Creator, with a Roman god who makes up laws and uses power to inflict punishment, we become like that false god and do not glorify the Creator, but the enemy, just like so many religious people through history who have used power over others to punish heretics.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Psalm 41:1-3:

- Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness. (Psalm 41:1-3 NIV84).

What does this text mean?

From what trouble does the Lord deliver these righteous people? Is this a promise to deliver from earthly enemies, disease, and death?

Many Jews went into the gas chambers in Nazi Germany claiming promises like this one—and what happened? And in the aftermath of the Holocaust, many Jews stopped believing in God because of promises like this when God didn't deliver from their enemies.

What about Christians, does God protect all Christians who are faithful and loyal to Him from earthly enemies and disease and death?

Then what does this mean? Is it just a psalm of wishful thinking? A psalm of what God can do, but not something we can have faith in?

Or is it about the central theme of Scripture?

What is the central theme of Scripture? Is the Bible narrative about earthly dominance and earthly delivery, or is it about deliverance from sin and the restoration of righteousness?

Then could the psalm, inspired by the Holy Spirit, be about something larger than earthly deliverance?

Here is how I paraphrased it:

- Happy and spiritually-healthy are those who care for the helpless; in the time of trouble, the Lord will deliver them. The Lord will preserve their individuality and give them eternal life; they will live and be happy upon the earth. The Lord will not give them up to die from selfishness — their enemy. He will provide remedy to their sin-sickness and restore them back to his perfect design. (Psalm 41:1-3 REM).

- Did Stephen experience happiness and spiritual health?
- Did Stephen get delivered from his time of trouble—what law lens and what do we understand his true time of trouble to be? Was his time of trouble merely physical persecution, or was his real battle the temptation to hate his persecutors, the fear of death, and any temptation to retaliate with earthly means against his enemies, to curse them, a desire for vengeance upon them?
- Did Stephen, by being delivered from fear, selfishness, evil retaliation, with a heart of love that forgave those who stoned him, have his individuality preserved and will he receive eternal life?
- Will Stephen live happily upon the earth—the earth made new?
- Will Stephen be given up to die of selfishness and decay in an eternal grave?
- Will Stephen benefit from the Remedy Jesus procured and be restored to God's perfect design?

Do you think the Psalm could really mean this larger view?

TUESDAY

Read Psalm 42:1-3

- As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:1-3 NIV84).

Read third paragraph,

- It is remarkable that the psalmists resolve not to keep silent in the face of God's silence. The psalmists unswervingly believe in prayer because prayer is directed to the living and gracious God. God is still there, even when He is apparently absent. He is still the same God who heard them in the past, and so, they are confident that He hears them now. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 39).

What do you think of God keeping silent? Does God sometimes keep silent? What would be the reason for this? Are there times when God is trying to communicate to us but something on our end prevents us from hearing Him and so it seems to us He is keeping silent? What kinds of things interfere with our ability to hear God?

- Mind altering substances
- Entertainments
- Busyness
- Anger, frustration, powerful feelings
- Denial, fear of hearing what God wants to tell us
- Not taking time to listen, not even considering God is trying to talk to us
- Not believing in God, or not believing God is good

But what about when people are seeking God and it seems like He is silent, what might that mean?

Could God keep silent because God has already provided the answer, the evidence, the direction, the truth but we didn't like it and are petitioning for a different answer?

Could God keep silent because in some way the struggle we are in is part of our growth, our journey, our development?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 77 and notes that the psalm begins with a plea to God for help, but notes "remembering God appears to intensify his anguish" and asks "How can remembering God produce such strong feelings of distress?" And then notes the psalmist asks a serious of troubling questions.

Let's compare Psalm 77:1-9 from the NIV and the REM:

And you will note it really does depend on what law lens one sees the Bible through, because that determines how we diagnose the problem, and then understand the struggle or problem to be.

- I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. (Psalm 77:1-2 NIV84)
- I cry out to God — Help me, please help me! I cry out to God — O hear my plea! When I was in trouble, overwhelmed and afraid, I ran to the Lord; all night I prayed with my hands reaching out toward heaven, but my heart resisted his comfort. (Psalm 77:1-2 REM)

- I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. (Psalm 77:3-4 NIV84).
- I thought of you—your methods of love and truth—and I groaned; I brooded, clinging to my selfish desires, and I became even more overwhelmed. You opened my eyes to my true condition; it was so upsetting I couldn't talk about it. (Psalm 77:3-4 REM)

- I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired: “Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” (Psalm 77:5–9 NIV84).
- My thoughts went back to better times, to years long ago; at night I remembered my songs from the past. My heart searched deeply; my mind thought intensely about the differences. "Will the Lord let me go my own way forever? Will he never be pleased with my choices again? Has his perfect love disappeared from my heart completely? Has his promise to heal me been permanently hindered? Has God forgotten his merciful plan? Has he given up on me and withheld his remedy?" (Psalm 77:5-9 REM).

Do you see a difference? Which is more consistent with the central theme of Scripture?

Now let’s look at verse 10:

- Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High.” (Psalm 77:10 NIV84)
- It sickens me to think that I could obstruct the plan of the Creator God to heal me. (Psalm 77:10 REM)

Do these sound even close or similar? What is going on?

Consider these translations:

- And I said, “This is my fate; the Most High has turned his hand against me.” (Psalm 77:10 NLT).

Does God ever turn against us? Doesn’t Paul write:

- If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:31-32).

Is God truly against us, or is God for us? So perhaps the NLT isn’t the best translation.

- And I say, “It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed.” (Psalm 77:10 NRSV)

Does God change, or is God the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)? So maybe this isn’t the best translation. And are you noticing how different these various translations are?

- Then I said, “What hurts me most is this—that God is no longer powerful.”[t] (Psalm 77:10 GNT) (footnote: t “Verse 10 in Hebrew is unclear”).

Is it true that God is no longer powerful? But the footnote is quite helpful, it tells us the Hebrew is unclear. People are making their best educated guess as to what it means and they struggle because they really don't understand design law.

So my paraphrase, what is actually happening in the salvation process? Where is the tension between God's power and our healing? Isn't always with our willingness to cooperate with God or not? So, I paraphrase it as:

- It sickens me to think that I could obstruct the plan of the Creator God to heal me. (Psalm 77:10 REM)

THURSDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 73 which teaches the foolishness of looking at the apparent blessings of the godless as evidence of success. Let's read from the Remedy:

> 1We know that God is good to the upright —
> to those who are pure in heart.
> 2But I almost tripped myself up;
> I nearly slipped away from the truth:
> 3I began to envy the arrogant
> when I saw how the selfish prospered in this world.
> 4They don't suffer with physical disabilities;
> their bodies are strong and healthy.
> 5They are privileged — not burdened with the problems of ordinary people;
> they do not have the daily struggles that others endure.
> 6Their pride and arrogance are flaunted like a necklace;
> violence and exploitation cover them.
> 7They go about draped in extravagant riches,
> intoxicating themselves with whatever their selfish hearts can imagine.
> 8They belittle others and speak harmful words designed to injure;
> they exalt themselves, lording over others and threatening oppression.
> 9They claim to speak for heaven,
> and with their decrees they seek to rule the earth.
> 10People turn to them
> and sadly, have the water of life drained away from them.
> 11These haughty ones say, "God will not know.
> The Most High will not find out."
> 12Look at what the selfish are like:
> concerned only with self, they get richer and richer.
> 13I wondered, "Has my pure living been for nothing?
> Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?
> 14All day long I am touched by problems and temptation;

every day is a struggle."
15If I had shared these ideas as truths with others,
I would have betrayed all who are loyal to you.
16When I tried to understand why the selfish seem to prosper,
it made no sense to me
17until I studied the lessons revealed in the holy places of God:
then I understood their inevitable end.
18Truly you gave them the freedom to slip around your design for life;
you surrender them to their own terminal condition.
19Their desolation is swift —
they are consumed completely by the terrors of unremedied selfishness.
20Selfish success is like a dream when one awakes:
When the Creator restores earth to his design of love,
all will realize that selfish prosperity is mere fantasy.
21When my heart was sour,
discontented and torn up inside,
22I was ignorant and didn't understand reality at all;
I must have seemed like a dumb animal to you.
23Nevertheless, I have always stayed close to you,
and you hold my hand as I journey through life.
24With your wise counsel, you lead me in the way of life
to the complete restoration of your glory within me.
25There is nothing in all the heavens
or anything on earth that I desire besides you.
26My mind and body may grow weak,
but God is my remedy —
my source of eternal life.
27Those who separate from you will perish;
all who choose selfishness betray you and your kingdom of love —
they will be severed from life and cease to exist.
28But as for me, being united with God is my greatest delight —
to find healing and restoration with my Creator,
and to proclaim all that you have done!

Thoughts?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q1 Psalms Lesson 6
I Will Arise

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalms 18, let's compare the first 15 verses from the NIV to the REM version, keeping in mind the differences and what do you think of those differences.

- I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psalm 18:1-2 NIV84)
- I love you, O Lord; you are my strength. The Lord unites my will with his, making my resolve rock-solid: he makes me strong and heals my brokenness. God is my solid foundation; I trust him completely. He cleanses my mind, protecting me from lies; he is the source of my healing—my Savior. (Psalm 18:1-2 REM)

If you think about the reality of the sin problem and God's interventions to solve it and save you and me—what is God doing? Is God merely creating fortresses around us, places we can hide from external assault, or have many of God's faithful been physically assaulted, imprisoned, tortured and killed but their hearts and minds were fortresses; so God is healing us, recreating us, establishing us as spiritual fortresses built upon love and trust in Him so that we stand firm in face of the assaults of this world—isn't that the reality? Isn't that the true meaning of the psalm presented through various images?

- I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears. (Psalm 18:3-6 NIV84).
- I call out to the Lord—the source of goodness, love and truth—and he saves me from my enemies. The tendrils of death creep through me; the undertow of selfishness fills me with fear. The grave has hold on me and pulls me down; the chains of death have captured me. In my terminal state I call out to the Lord; I cry out to my God for healing. He hears me from where he dwells; he hears my call for help. (Psalm 18:3-6 REM)

What is the real problem that we sinners face—is it external enemies that can kill our bodies, or is it the sin condition, being dead in trespass and sin, having the infection of fear and selfishness that without remedy results in an eternal death? So, what is the Holy Spirit desiring for us to truly understand, that God is powerful and can deliver from an earthly enemy, or that God is good, a being

of infinite power but one whose character is love and who is not the source of death but of life and will heal us if we trust Him?

- The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. (Psalm 18:7-8 NIV84)
- The earthly systems shake and shudder, the foundations of the pagan high places quiver; they tremble, because God's passion to heal is fired up. The creative breath of life blew from his nostrils like smoke; the fire of truth came from his mouth, the burning flames of infinite love blazed forth from him. (Psalm 18:7-8 REM)

Is the message of Scripture focused only on God's physical power? Again the devil's know that God is powerful and it scares them. If people know God is powerful, but believe His law is like human law and believe God, in so called justice, must use His infinite power to inflict punishment for sin, will that solve the sin problem, will that result in sinners being won to trust and becoming loyal friends of God? No! The message of Scripture of course informs us that God is Creator and God is powerful—but that was never in question. Satan didn't question whether God was powerful in heaven—the question that causes rebellion and distrust of God is over whether we can trust God with the power and if we teach His law is like ours, then we always teach that God is not trustworthy, that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted as punishment for sin, and then teach theologies that function to hide us or protect us from God—think of all such theologies that have the action of hiding or protecting us from God, why? Because those who believe those theologies believe something about God that scares them and that God in some way will harm them if something isn't done to Him.

So the message of Scripture is that God's powers that shake the earth up are the powers of truth and love that overthrow the carnal powers of this world, overthrow lies, fear, and selfishness.

- He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky. (Psalm 18:9-11 NIV84).
- He stepped down to earth from his heavenly dwelling place, he entered into darkness, establishing himself in human form. He came, swiftly flying on the wings of angels; he appeared by the power of the Spirit. Making humanity his tabernacle, he veiled his glory in darkness surrounded by amniotic fluid—a dark cloud of water. (Psalm 18:9-11 REM)

Do you see a difference? What do you think is the central theme of the Bible? What is the Holy Spirit inspiring the writers to teach about? When God comes down from heaven, does He come down to destroy or to save? I think this is a Messianic Psalm describing the plan of salvation.

- Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning. The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot his arrows and scattered the enemies, great bolts of lightning and routed them. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils. (Psalm 18:12-15 NIV84)

- The light of truth goes forth from him—a hailstorm of fiery truth powerful like lightning. The Lord spoke truth like thunder from heaven; the Creator voiced words that burned like fire. His sends out his arrows of truth broadly across the earth—great flashes of light that only confuse those who prefer darkness. When you rebuke selfishness, O Creator God, when your nostrils breathe out your life-giving power of love, the channels of water that bring life are seen, the foundations that you built life upon are understood. (Psalm 18:12-15 NIV84)

Again, what message do you believe God wants us to understand from Scripture?

MONDAY

The title is Justice for the Oppressed—What is justice? Isn't it doing what is right? How do you know what is right? What defines what is right?

Doesn't the law determine what is right in any system?

Then, what law lens do we understand God's justice through—is it Roman imposed law, or Creator design law? And what difference does it make?

In our Magazine The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity and Delays the Second Coming of Christ we have a table in the back that contrasts various words like justice through the two law lenses:

Justice in the imposed law view is: Punishing the oppressor
Justice in the design law view is: Delivering the oppressed

Which do you think is God's justice? Even for the wicked in the end? Does God use power to inflict punishment on the unrepentant oppressors and call it justice, or does God stop using power and thereby deliver the oppressors from their suffering and that is His justice?

Jump to WEDNESDAY's lesson and from the lesson we read the following:

- Some psalms beseech God **to take vengeance on individuals and nations** who intend to harm, or who have already harmed, the psalmists or their people. These psalms can sound perplexing because of their harsh language and apparent discord with the biblical principle of love for enemies (Matt. 5:44)…

  However, nowhere does the psalmist suggest himself to be the agent of vengeance. Instead, **he leaves retribution solely in God's hands**. The Psalms evoke the divine covenant curses (Deut. 27:9-16) and implore God to act as He has promised.

  The Psalms are prophetic proclamations about **God's impending judgment**; they are not solely the psalmist's prayers. Psalm 137 reflects the announcements of divine judgment on Babylon, as seen in the prophets. The devastation that the Babylonians brought to other nations

would turn back on them. The Psalms convey **divine warnings that evil will not go unpunished forever**.

God's retribution is measured with justice and grace. God's children are called to pray for those who mistreat them and even to hope for their conversion (Ps. 83:18, Jer. 29:7). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 48).

What do you hear in these paragraphs? What law is the lesson describing God applying? Imposed law, the types of laws that creatures make up, which make God out to be the source of pain, suffering, and death. This is Satan's view of God. It is contrary to the message that is to lighten the world for Christ's return, it is an exact refutation of the message given to the Adventist church at 1888 and through the ministry of Ellen White.

We addressed psalm 137 last week, so if you would like an exploration of that psalm and didn't get to join us for class last week, you can find that discussion on our website along with the notes.

But notice the lesson uses language of retributive justice, vengeance, judgment which lead the mind to think of inflicted punishment. But consider how EGW uses these terms in the book *The Great Controversy*, specifically note the terms used, then note the description of what occurs, how the punishment happens, what God is actually doing, the actions God takes. You will note that, God uses power to heal, to protect and restore, but please notice that the justice of God, the justice of design law is the merciful delivering of the wicked from suffering, not the use of power to inflict suffering:

- God has given to men a **declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin**. [what do you think that declaration is?] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." [What do you hear? What is His method? Why will God not clear the guilty? What law lens do you see it through, imposed or design? Because of a judicial system or because of reality, because the guilty remain infected, in rebellion, hostile, selfish, terminal in sin and God will not pretend that unhealed, unreborn, unrenewed, unrighteous people are righteous. God will not commit fraud and declare unrighteous people to be righteous as the penal legal system claims.] Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. The **power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion**; **yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being**. (The Great Controversy 541.2) [What does this mean? Do you hear retributive justice and think using power to inflict harm, pain, punishment? This would be human law, imposed law, Satan's method and if we apply it to God we misrepresent God. So, let's keep reading and see how this author applies these words to God, what law is applied in bringing about this retributive justice, how reality works.]

  God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy

of love. [If this is true, can God then be the source of inflicted suffering, punishment, and death? If you understand how reality works—God's law of love and liberty, then you recognize that the human imposed law understanding of retributive justice with inflicted pain and death is incompatible with the very next sentence from the author. It is impossible to get anything other than slavish obedience from inflicted punishment; inflicted punishments do force the will, and it is impossible to get love and trust by threatening to kill people who do not love and trust you. Thus, immediately this author is calling every person who is still capable of thinking for themselves, every person who is not blinded by the lies of Romanism and the imposed law system, to stop, think, and inquire—how can God apply retributive justice and at the same time not be forcing people? And that is only possible when we understand design law.] **He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence**. [What reason would God have us obey? Not fear of punishment, but appreciation of His character of love, which cannot exist if God is the source of inflicted punishment. It is Satan's view that God must punish sin because when this lie is believed it undermines love. DA761] And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. (The Great Controversy 541.3) [But those who do not have a just conception of these qualities will either reject God or serve Him from fear, teach theologies that hide and protect them from God.]

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. [What are the principles of God's character? Do these principles coerce, compel, or torture?] Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [What are principles? Laws, protocols, standards, and in this case it is God's character of love, which is His law of love, which is a transcript of His character. Does love seek to inflict pain and suffering to torture and punish or to deliver? But notice what is describe next as love for our enemies] **God executes justice upon the wicked**, for the good of the universe, and **even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** [What is justice? Doing what is just or right, and what determines what is actually just or right? The law—so it comes back to how one understands God's law functions. Those who accept the Roman lie that God's law is like human law believe the lie that God's execution of justice is the infliction from God of pain and death. But, when we return to worshiping the Creator and realize His laws are design laws, such as the law of love, liberty, worship and more, we realize that God uses power to heal, to save, and when people refuse Him, then God uses power to minimize pain, minimize suffer, and to stop the torment of those who won't allow Him to heal them—by applying the law of liberty and letting them go to reap what they have insisted upon, separation from Him and thus they die eternally and stop suffering. Thus, God's justice is like the parent whose child is in liver failure and refuses to be healed, the parent does not seek to prolong and protract the suffering, but allows the suffering to end. Notice what is described next.] **He would make them happy *if He could* do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character.** [Why can't God make them happy? Because they refuse to participate in His methods, they refuse to allow Him to heal them. Love cannot be forced and thus God cannot use might and power to make them happy.] He surrounds them with the

tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. [How do they make void His law? By replacing it with a false law—imposed law. Think how sad it will be for those legal Sabbath keepers who wouldn't enter Pilates house while they sought to kill Jesus. Law keepers, but the wrong law—not the wrong Sabbath day, the wrong law—the human imposed law with inflicted penalties, how many today are in the same situation?] While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided**. [Who determines their destiny? Is it a heavenly judge making a legal ruling in a heavenly court, or is the decision that of the sinner who permanently hardens their heart to the work of the Holy Spirit?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** [These are rhetorical questions, meaning that God will not do this, God has the power to do this, to artificially keep people alive and chain them to His side. But He won't use power in this way, why? Because it would inflict torture and pain and God is the source of healing and life. Note what comes next…] (The Great Controversy 541.4)

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why are they not prepared? Is it that they don't have the right blood, don't have the right legal payment, don't have the right robe to hide behind so the Father won't see their true self? Or is it that they don't have the right heart, mind, character, within them?] **Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters**. [How did it become fixed? Who fixed it there? If God "judges" their characters as fixed in sin and beyond saving, does that mean God's judgment is what makes their characters fixed in sin or is God's judgment simply the accurate diagnosis of what they have chosen to do to themselves?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? (The Great Controversy 542.1)

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no;** [Why not? Because God uses divine power to prevent them, to torture them, to inflict harm upon them, or is their condition incompatible with God's design for life?] **years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven**; but ***they*** have never trained the mind to love purity; ***they*** have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.** [Why are they unfit? Is it that they don't have the right legal payment in record books, or is it something actually incompatible

with life within them? Notice why they are not fit] **Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.** [This is huge, what do they experience as torture? Purity, holiness and peace! Is this God using His power to cause pain, to inflict suffering, is there something coming out from God other than goodness, mercy, love and truth? It is their condition which experiences goodness as pain, purity as torment, holiness as suffering. The torture happens because of sin in them, not as an infliction from God!] **They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction**, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What do the wicked actually want? Separation from God! Why do they want it? To be at peace, to stop their suffering; So, in this situation what is the just action for God to take, what is the merciful action for God to take? Is there a difference between justice and mercy? Notice the next sentences] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and *just and merciful on the part of God*.** (The Great Controversy 542.2)

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [This is design law, this is justice and mercy, and justice and mercy rightly understood is always an expression of God's character of love and does the same thing] (The Great Controversy 543.1)

What justice is described here? What is God's retributive justice? It is God delivering the wicked in the end from torment, torture, and suffering by the application of God's law of love and liberty! God's justice is NEVER the infliction of pain, suffering, and torment—it is delivering from it.

But some get confused because they don't differentiate discipline from punishment, they don't distinguish therapy from torture, treatment from torment. Thus, they will take examples of God disciplining or therapeutically intervening and argue that God is punishing.

But when we return to worshiping God as Creator and understand God's laws as design laws, then we can discern reality and differentiate the true from the false.

TUESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 82, let's compare the NIV and REM

- God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods" (Psalm 82:1 NIV84)
- God takes a stand against the assembly of false gods; he presents his diagnosis regarding all pagan gods. (Psalm 82:1 REM)

Does your version read similarly? Am I just making things up, or does the Hebrew allow for a wide range of interpretations?

Consider these two versions:

- God presides in the heavenly council; in the assembly of the gods he gives his decision (Psalm 82:1 GNT)

Well that seems a little confusing—are there many gods in heaven where God presides? Is it like Greek mythology with Zeus managing a bunch of lesser gods and demi-gods?

- God stands in the assembly of El; in the midst of the gods he renders judgment. (Psalm 82:1 NET).

And the NET has this explanation:

- The phrase עֲדַת אֵל (’adat ’el, “assembly of El”) appears only here in the OT. (1) Some understand “El” to refer to God himself. In this case he is pictured presiding over his own heavenly assembly. (2) Others take אֵל as a superlative here (“God stands in the great assembly”), as in Pss 36:6 and 80:10. (3) The present translation assumes this is a reference to the Canaanite high god El, who presided over the Canaanite divine assembly. (See Isa 14:13, where El’s assembly is called “the stars of El.”) In the Ugaritic myths the phrase ’dt ’ilm refers to the “assembly of the gods,” who congregate in King Kirtu’s house, where Baal asks El to bless Kirtu’s house. If the Canaanite divine assembly is referred to here in Ps 82:1, then the psalm must be understood as a bold polemic against Canaanite religion. Israel’s God invades El’s assembly, denounces its gods as failing to uphold justice, and announces their coming demise.

  The present translation assumes that the Hebrew term אֱלֹהִים (’elohim, “gods”) here refers to the pagan gods who supposedly comprise El’s assembly according to Canaanite religion. Those who reject the polemical view of the psalm prefer to see the referent as human judges or rulers (אֱלֹהִים sometimes refers to officials appointed by God, see Exod 21:6; 22:8–9; Ps 45:6) or as angelic beings (אֱלֹהִים sometimes refers to angelic beings, see Gen 3:5; Ps 8:5). (The NET Bible First Edition)

The Remedy takes the position similar to the NET that this is God’s indictment of the false gods of this world with their imposed law systems that always render injustice under the guise of justice.

- God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the “gods”: “How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? (Psalm 82:1-2 NIV84)
- God takes a stand against the assembly of false gods; he presents his diagnosis regarding all pagan gods. He says, "When will you stop using a list of rules to govern? When will you stop protecting selfishness with your legal system? (Psalm 82:1-2 REM).

Imposed law systems with legal oversight and inflicted punishments never provide justice—someone is always getting misjudged, innocents punished, guilty set free, corrupt judges, abuse of power and on and on. And this corrupt system of imposed laws was incorporated into Christianity through Rome and it is taught that God’s system works this way and God’s justice is for God to punish an innocent

person and declare the guilty innocent. And the blind guides who are leading the blind don't even realize how unjust this is—they, with all sincerity, declare such actions to be just.

- Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. (Psalm 82:3-4 NIV84)
- Do what is actually right, healthy, and loving for all people; protect the poor and the fatherless; do what is right to the poor and oppressed — what heals and restores. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the power of selfishness. (Psalm 82:3-4 REM)

Here we see the justice of design law, the justice of God is delivering the oppressed, not the infliction of punishment on the oppressors.

- "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. (Psalm 82:5 NIV84)
- These false gods don't understand reality; they don't understand my design-laws—how I built life to function; they operate in the darkness of a rule-enforcement system and the world is crumbling all around them. Psalm 82:5 REM)

Do you see the world crumbling all around us as governments try and pass more laws, use more force, to bring order? But as more laws are passed do you see that things are getting better or worse? Consider some of the laws:

- Laws that define more than 27 different gender identities—does this bring more unity, harmony, clarity, stability or contribute to confusion, division, and the crumbling of society?
- Laws that declare intoxicating substances as legal are not the same as making them healthy—and the data now shows that in Colorado where marijuana is now legal, mental health disorders are 35% higher than the national average, why? Because our laws do not change God's laws and violations of God's laws, including the laws of health, always damage.
- Laws that tell you what light bulbs, appliances, and straws you must use? Do these things actually have any bearing upon reality—no, they are all based off lies designed to trick people into going along with force that enslaves the masses and takes buying power from the masses to enrich the elite titans of industry, thereby making the wealthier wealthier and the poorer poorer—but they do it in a way that they not only steal wealth, and take away freedom, but the blind masses believe they are improving themselves and saving the planet. If you would like more data on this read our blogs God's Promises and Climate Change Part 1 and Part 2

- "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler." (Psalm 82:6-7 NIV84)
- I say to you, fallen angels pretending to be gods, "Even though you are all children of the Most High, you will die like mortals; your life will end like that of any ordinary ruler." (Psalm 82:6-7 REM).

All the false gods of this world are proxies for Satan and his fallen angels and we are either worshiping God or one of Satan's proxies.

- Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance. (Psalm 82:8 NIV84)
- Rise up, O God, and diagnose the earth, for the entire world belongs to you. (Psalm 82:8 REM)

Is there a difference when you hear judge and diagnose? When the king at the end separates the sheep from the goats, does the judgment of the king make a sheep a sheep and a goat a goat? It is not the judgment of the judge that determines the outcome as happens in human courts, it is the condition of the people, goats are goats and sheep are sheep and God's judgment in the end is simply accurate diagnosis of who partook of the Remedy provided by Jesus and was reborn and restored into godliness and who did not.

THURSDAY

The Title of the lesson is The Lord's Judgment and the Sanctuary

And the question that defines how the Bible is interpreted and taught is relevant here again—and that is what law lens does one hold when they read the Bible. Sadly, the authors again reveal that they have accepted Romanism, the lie that God's law functions like imposed human law that requires legal enforcement and thus they interpret the beautiful sanctuary message in a false legal light that obstructs the healing power God intended it to provide us.

Let me show you, the first paragraph reads:

- The Lord's judgment is closely related to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was the environment where the psalmist's understanding of the problem of evil was transformed (Ps. 73:17-20). The sanctuary was designated as the place of divine judgment as indicated by the judgment of Urim (Num. 27:21) and by the breastplate of judgment of the high priest (Exod. 28:15, 28-30). Accordingly, many psalms depict God on His throne in the sanctuary ready to judge the world for its sin and evil. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 49).

The lesson points to Exodus 28:15 & 30 to support this view, so let's read these verses:

- "You shall make **the breastplate of judgment**… And you shall put in the **breastplate of judgment** the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall **bear the judgment** of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually. (Exodus 28:15 & 30 NKJV).

What law lens do you read these verses through? The lesson clearly reads them through imposed law and believes judgment means something judicial. But judgment can also mean discernment, decision-making, determining the right and the wrong action to take, not judging someone else legally. And it is

in fact the exercise of discernment, wise decision-making type of judgment that is intended here for that is how Urim and Thummin were used. Urim and Thummin were not used judicially! And most other translations translate it this way. Here is the NET:

- "You are to make a **breastpiece for use in making decisions**… You are to put the Urim and the Thummim into the **breastpiece of decision**; and they are to be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. Aaron is to **bear the decisions** of the Israelites over his heart before the LORD continually. (Exodus 28:15 & 30 NET)

And the NET commentary on these verses reads:

- The Urim and the Thummim were two objects intended for determining the divine will… or "judgment" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV). The term is מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat), the same word that describes the breastpiece that held the two objects. Here it is translated "decisions" since the Urim and Thummim contained in the breastpiece represented the means by which the LORD made decisions for the Israelites. The high priest bore the responsibility of discerning the divine will on matters of national importance.

And here is commentary on Urim and Thummin from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

- At the right and left of the breastplate were two large stones of great brilliancy. These were known as the Urim and Thummim. **By them the will of God was made known through the high priest**. When questions were brought for decision before the Lord, a halo of light encircling the precious stone at the right was a token of the divine consent or approval, while a cloud shadowing the stone at the left was an evidence of denial or disapprobation. (Patriarchs and Prophets 351, emphasis mine).

So, the idea that the High Priest was acting in a judicial manner is not supported by the breastplate and Urim and Thummin, but the idea that the High Priest acted to discern, make wise decisions to lead the people is supported. This is design law, truth being unfolded and revealed and people seeking to understand the truth and follow the truth where it leads. This is the purpose of the Sanctuary, to reveal truth, the truth about God and the plan of salvation to lead people out of sin, out of alienation, out of fear, selfishness and death, back into unity, at-one-ment with God.

That requires accurate diagnosis of what is wrong and the application of the remedy from God that heals and restores. That is the message of the sanctuary. I can tell you with confidence, there is nothing penal legal going on in the sanctuary—there is something real, actual, in harmony with God's kingdom and design law going on and that is the removal of lies, fear, selfishness, from hearts and minds and restoring in people Christlikeness.

The lesson states,

- At the sanctuary, the plan of salvation was revealed… the Bible presents sin as a violation of God's moral law. God's holiness means that He loves justice and righteousness. Likewise,

> God's people should pursue justice and righteousness and should worship God in His holiness. To do that, they must keep God's law, which is an expression of His holiness… Yet, the "God-Who-Forgives" takes vengeance upon the wicked deeds of unrepentant people (Ps. 99:8, NKJV). The practical implications of the sanctuary being the place of divine judgment are seen in the constant awareness of God's holiness and demands for righteous living according to God's covenantal requirements. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 49).

Thoughts? What do you hear in this description? Do you hear design law or the Roman infection of human law?

SABBATH

Read the third paragraph,

- Yes, the Lord is long-suffering and holds His wrath in His great forbearance, not wanting anyone to perish but to repent and change their ways (2 Pet. 3:9-15). And though God's proper time for His intervention does not always coincide with human expectations, the day of God's judgment is coming (Ps. 96:13, Ps. 98:9). We just need to trust in Him, and in His promises, until that day comes. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 44).

How we understand three words in this paragraph significantly impact what we understand this paragraph to mean, particularly what we understand about God and the sin problem and God's solution for it.

Those three words are:

- Wrath
- Intervention
- Judgment

And what determines how we understand these words? What law lens we read the Bible through.

Did anyone read my blog for this week, **God's Wrath Versus Satan's Wrath—What's the Difference?**

The Bible says,

> Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having **great wrath,** because he knows that he has a short time (Revelation 12:12 NKJV, emphasis mine).

So what is the difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath?

- Do we understand wrath to be the same functionally regardless of who the agent of that wrath is?
- Do we see God and Satan acting in similar ways, using similar powers, and causing similar outcomes?
- Do we differentiate God's wrath and Satan's wrath only by motive—for instance, saying that God acts in justice whereas Satan acts in selfishness, but they both use power to inflict harm?

There is certainly one similarity, and that is the *result* when people are not shielded, protected, or delivered from either Satan's or God's wrath. The result of experiencing the full wrath of either being is bad, not good.

But does the result of experiencing unrestrained wrath from either God or Satan mean that Satan's wrath and God's wrath are manifestations of the same power, methods, and actions? Absolutely not! In fact, the wrath of God and that of Satan are exact opposites. God's wrath functions exactly the opposite of how Satan's wrath functions, and we can only understand this if we understand reality, which is to understand God's design law.

A Creature's Wrath

If we view the world through Satan's system of government, that of a creature who cannot create reality so, instead, makes up rules that are enforced through external punishments, then we understand wrath to be the use of power to punish—to inflict harm upon those whom one is wrathful toward. This is Satan's wrath, and it comes out as a result of satanic power.

Throughout human history, God has been shielding us from Satan's wrath, his evil use of power.

And God's active use of His power to protect us from what sin does and from Satan's wrath is God's interventions or intercessions. His first intervention or intercession was immediately after Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis 3 where God put enmity between sinful humans and Satan—meaning God intervenes in human hearts by His Spirit to convict of sin, to put a longing, a desire for love, truth, and heaven, to cause us to be unsatisfied with sin and this world—a conviction to seek our Creator.

God also intervenes to hold back the four winds of strife (Revelation 7:1); He restrains Satan and the principalities of darkness (Revelation 12:7; Colossians 2:15); and He has been sending angel armies to shield us (2 Kings 6:17–20).

And God intervened with what sin naturally does to the sinner—separates from God and causes death, by sending Jesus to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). In other words, God intervened with our sin condition to destroy the sin and open a path of eternal life for all who are restored to trust in Him.

We see God's interventions happening all throughout Scripture to hold at bay Satan's power, Satan's wrath.

Satan's wrath is the use of power to cause harm!

But God's wrath is the opposite—it is when He *stops using power to protect us*. God is the Creator, the builder of reality whose laws are the template of health and life. Breaking His laws directly causes us harm, and God, in harmony with His character of love, must expend His power, His energy, His resources, to hold at bay the harm that results from breaking His design-laws and to impart the healing solution. While Satan uses power to injure, God uses power to heal, restore, recreate, renew, and rebuild.

God's wrath occurs when He respects the choices of rebellious people and gives them what they have insisted upon—freedom from Him, His design laws for life, and His merciful healing power and presence.

This is exactly what Paul describes in Romans:

> The **wrath of God is being revealed** from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men **who suppress the truth by their wickedness,** since what may be **known about God** is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities**—his eternal power and divine nature—have been **clearly seen,** being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:18–20 NIV84).

Paul then goes on to explicitly state three times and describe with outcome-based evidence that God's wrath is letting people go to reap what they have chosen when they break away from His protective care. In verses 24, 26, and 28, Paul says that God *gave them up,* or *let them go,* or *handed them over* to what they insisted upon—and the only outcome from breaking away from the Creator and Sustainer of life and health is ruin and death.

The scholarly commentary *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, published by Intervarsity Press, explains these verses beautifully:

> In some sense, **God's wrath is built into** the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, **we cause or own disintegration.**
>
> The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18–32, **is not something caused by God.** The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the **inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated.** Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of

> God's truth (Rom 1:18–20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21–22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24–27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28–32).
>
> The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, **is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves.**
>
> In light of these reflections, **the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained.** … God loves us with an everlasting love. **But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death** (p. 543).

God is the God of reality—and His wrath is the exact opposite of Satan's; yet, sadly, billions believe that God's wrath is functionally no different than Satan's. Billions have been led to believe that God's wrath is when He uses His power to inflict pain, suffering, and torture upon His children. This is a lie! And this lie is the fruit, the unavoidable result, of believing another lie—that God's law functions like human law; that is, imposed rules. If one believes that any part of God's law is like human law, made up rules, then one **always** believes that God must use power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking, for if there is no punishment in this artificial system, then there is no "justice."

But God is calling people to reject this lie, to stop teaching others that He functions like a creature, and to return to worshiping Him as Creator—the One who speaks reality into existence and whose laws are design laws that all reality operates upon.

We have defined wrath and interventions, what about Judgment—what does this word mean, how do you hear it?

If we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law what does judgment mean?

Does judgment mean something different when we worship God as Creator, understanding His laws are design laws?

Yes, in fact in Scripture, in addition to the human judicial judgment we see when Pilate judged Jesus, there are four godly judgment types, or uses of the word to mean something quite different:

1. In Eden Adam and Eve had to make a judgment; at Mt. Carmel the people were called by Elijah to make a judgment; Paul in Romans 3:4 wrote:

   "Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when **You are judged**." (Romans 3:4 NKJV, emphasis mine).

The first type of judgment, is our judgment of God, deciding for ourselves whether to believe or reject Satan's lies about God. Sadly, far too many believe Satan's lies about God's law and thus judge God to be like Satan in character, the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted as punishment for sin. This is why Revelation 14 tells us before Christ returns a special message is to go to the entire world calling people back to worship of the Creator—for the time in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God. Sadly, however, is that the SDA church leadership, having rejected the message of design law brought to it in 1888 and instead embracing the imperial Roman view of law, has taught that the hour of God's judgment is judicial, tribunal, punitive, and misrepresents God and His kingdom.

2. The second judgment is God's diagnostic and therapeutic judgments—through history. These include in our hearts and minds and also globally, His judgments as to what is therapeutically necessary to fulfill the plan of salvation, to bring the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15. These types of judgments are not judicial, i.e. required by law to punish sin, but therapeutic required by reality to destroy sin and heal God's creation. Such actions as the Flood, God's judgment that this was needed to preserve the human line through whom Messiah would be born, for without Jesus being born as our Savior no human being could be saved from sin. And all those who died in the Flood died the first/sleep death and will rise in one of two resurrections—thus the action was not a judicial one.

3. The third judgment happens during the 1000 years when the righteous in heaven examine the history of the Great Controversy, including how Lucifer and one third of the angels rebelled in heaven. And the righteous will make a judgment in their mind about these events and God's actions and the righteous will judge that all sin, all rebellion, all evil, all pain, suffering, destruction, death 100% come from Satan and none of it is because God failed in any way. We will judge that every single human not in heaven is not there because of their own choice and that there was nothing more God could do to save any one of them.
4. The fourth judgment is the Great White Throne Judgment:

- I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

  Surely this judgment must be judicial … right? No, it isn't.

  What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

- Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned (Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84).

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what the reality actually is. God is the God of reality, the builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols upon which life operates. There has never been a heavenly judicial law court like humans make; the idea that God is an arbitrary judge who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin is a lie from Satan.

The fourth and final judgment is not judicial; it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

- He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).

If you would like to read more check out our blog on the Four Judgments or read our magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels.

2024 Q1 Psalms Lesson 7
Your Mercy Reaches Unto the Heavens

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory verse:

- I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations. For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, And Your truth unto the clouds. (Psalm 57:9-10 NKJV)

- I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the people; I will sing your praise with the family of God. For your great love is the basis of life in the entire universe, and your truth — the foundation of the smallest particle of matter. (Psalm 57:9-10 REM)

Do these sound different to you? What do we understand God's mercy to be? Is it something other than His love?

SUNDAY

- Psalm 136 summons God's people to praise the Lord for His mercy as revealed in creation (Ps. 136:4-9) and in Israel's history (Ps. 136:10-22). "Mercy" (Hebrew khesed, "steadfast love") conveys God's goodness and loyalty to His creation and to His covenant with Israel. The psalm shows that God's immense power and magnificence are grounded in His steadfast love. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 53).

The Hebrew for mercy is the same Hebrew for steadfast love, so many other translations also translate this verse as God's love rather than God's mercy (NIV, GNT, NET, NRSV, ESV, NCV).

And what do we understand God's love to be—is it merely sentiment, emotion, positive attitude? Or is it functional, operational, directional, motivational to action—and actions that are beneficial to others, giving, altruistic? Does love compel God to act in certain ways and to restrain or forbid other activities?

What does love compel a person to do when the object of that person's love is in danger? Isn't the one who is motivated by love compelled by love to act in ways that save, redeem, heal, relieve, deliver, and restore? Is love ever the source of harm, evil, torture, or death?

Does love sometimes act in ways, that given the situation, results in transitory pain, such as doctor setting a broken bone, or a parent cleaning dirt out of their child's wound? Does that mean love harms?

What about the phrase, "Mercy conveys God's goodness and loyalty to His creation and to His covenant with Israel"?

Does Israel have a covenant that is restricted to Israel? What is the covenant to Israel? Isn't it the covenant of the promised Seed, which was promised to Jacob, but before that was promised to Isaac, but before that was promised to Abraham? But wasn't that same covenantal promise previously given to Adam after the fall? So when we think of the covenant to Israel are we allowing our minds to become sectarian and restrictive, or are we seeing the larger view, the outworking of God's promise, God's covenant, to the entire human race and realizing that the Bible narrative focuses in on the branch of the human family tree through whom God's promise to the entire human race will be accomplished?

Would it be more accurate to say, "Mercy conveys God's goodness and loyalty to His creation and to His covenant with the human race that was being worked out through Israel"?

I find that far too many people somehow think the covenant to Israel is restrictive, limited, unique to the descendants of Jacob, but it is not. The promise was for the Messiah to come so that the human species would be saved from sin and the entire Earth returned to human governance—reclaimed from Satan's infection.

The covenant of grace, the promise that God would save sinners, was given immediately after Adam sinned:

- And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15 NKJV).

This covenant contains God's promise to send Jesus, the Seed of the woman, to overcome and destroy Satan and sin and redeem humanity. The entire Old Testament is the outworking of this promise.

The promise to Abraham is the recommunication of the promise made in Eden, with the promise that it would be one of Abraham's descendants who is the fulfillment of that promise:

- In your seed **all the nations** of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice (Genesis 22:18 NKJV, emphasis mine).

And this promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob.

There is no doubt that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but that covenant is the same covenant that was given to Adam, but with Abraham we now have the identification of the specific branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin and a highly trained Jewish theologian of the first century, wrote:

- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise** (Galatians 3:26–29 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is there some covenant to the Jews that is not to the rest of the world? Some might argue it was for the land, that Abraham was promised the land of Palestine—but that regional land was promised as part of this global covenant; Abraham's descendants would occupy the local regional area of Palestine *until the Messiah came*, and then through the promised Seed, Jesus Christ, the full covenantal promise will be accomplished so that the meek will inherit the entire Earth. The covenantal promised land is the entire planet and it is promised to those who belong to Christ—these are the heirs of Abraham and that is the true land of inheritance.

Remember what the writer of Hebrews wrote, because it agrees with our assessment. Hebrews in chapter 11, the hall of faith, tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived in the regional promised land (Hebrews 11:9)—"did not receive the things promised" (Hebrews 11:13), but that these faithful were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "All of these people" of faith "did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. … They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

Hebrews tells us that "all of these people" did not receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn't he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous. Then the promise will be realized and we, who have faith like Abraham, will receive our inheritance of a goodly land, a beautiful home, perfect and flawless that God intended Adam and Eve to possess.

The point is that God was fulfilling his covenant to the human race through Abraham's family tree—but the covenant is not restricted to Abraham's genetic descendants, it is for the entire human race.

Read the bottom green question:

- How does the image of Jesus on the cross, dying as a Substitute for our sins, most powerfully reveal the great truth about God, that "His love endures forever"? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 53).

Before we discuss this question—let's affirm that we believe in the substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrifice in our behalf, to save us from sin. As Paul wrote:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Note, according to Paul in this verse, the reason for Christ's substitutionary sacrificial death was not legal, it was not penal, it was not a payment, it was not to assuage God's wrath or propitiate God for God was never the problem. When Adam sinned God did not get changed, God's law did not change, the condition of Adam changed from sinless, loyal, faithful, trustworthy, to sinful, disloyal, unfaithful, untrustworthy fear ridden and selfish.

Thus Jesus became our substitute so that we might become the righteousness of God, so that we sinful humans might be cleansed from sin and restored to God's perfect ideal for humankind.

We believe that Jesus came and voluntarily put Himself into a position that was not naturally His own for the purpose of delivering us from the position that was naturally our own—He took our place. He substituted Himself.

We should never deny this—for it is eternally true.

The question that arises is, why? Why was it required for us to become righteous? Why was it necessary for humans to be saved from sin? How did Christ's voluntary and substitutionary sacrifice achieve the righteousness of God in humanity?

If God is love and He loved the world so much He sent His Son, if God is merciful—full of mercy, if God pardons freely as Isaiah 55 says, if God does not keep a record of our wrongs as 1 Corinthians 13 says—then why couldn't God just forgive us outright without the death of Jesus?

And the answer of course is that God did forgive us outright, and it is because of God's love and forgiveness that He sent His Son to do what Jesus needed to do, because God's forgiveness extended freely from His heart does not remove sinfulness from us. And salvation, healing, requires that sinfulness in sinners be replaced with sinlessness, righteousness, purity, holiness. And once Adam sinned, every human being has been born infected with sinfulness, with fear and selfishness, with unholiness. Thus, Jesus had to partake of this humanity and merge His sinless, holy, pure, self with this damaged humanity—be tempted in all points like we are, yet with His human abilities choose holiness, righteousness, and reject the pull of sin, and ultimately take the fallen, diseased, carnal nature to the cross and kill it and rise in a new purified humanity free from the infection of fear and selfishness. This is reality, it is design law, it is restoring, cleansing, purifying and fixing the problem by removing the defect.

Thus Jesus came, as John the Baptist said, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus came to take away sin, to destroy death, to destroy the cause of death, and thereby heal this creation.

God can create a new species any time God wants. After Adam sinned, God was still free to gather some dirt together, form a new body, breathe the breath of life into that body and create a new sinless human being—but such a being would not be part of the creation He made in Eden. It would not be related to Adam and Eve, but a new, similar yet distinct, creation. Creating a brand new human would not save Adam and Eve, it would not save this creation, the one God made in Eden.

When God made Adam He breathed into Adam the breath of life—every other human being received life from that breath of life given to Adam. Eve was not formed out of dirt and she did not receive her own breath of life, she was formed from the living tissue of Adam's body, tissue that was already alive—an extension of that same breath of life, or live energy that God breathed into Adam. And that Greek and Hebrew word for "breath" is the same work as "spirit." It is the internal motivational energy that invigorates and animates all of us. Because God gave Adam and Eve procreative abilities that same life breathed into Adam is shared with every single human being. But the sad reality is that Adam altered the quality of that life energy. His sin changed the motivational energy from pure love, to energy contaminated with fear and selfishness and we are all born with motivational drives of fear and selfishness.

So, what was needed? A human being that is part of Adam, part of this creation, a human being who partakes of that same life, life-energy, given to Adam in Eden, that life which is now infected with fear and selfishness so that this Savior could purify that life, could destroy the terminal condition and restore God's perfect living law of love, His protocols for life, back into this human creation.

Thus Jesus came as the second Adam, partaking of the very same human life that was given to Adam through His mother Mary, the humanity that has been damaged by sin and terminal because of Adam's fall, but because the Father for His human body was the Holy Spirit Jesus was also invigorated with spiritual purity, a life energy undefiled by sin and as a real human being, partaking of the life given to Adam, He could face temptation like every human does yet Jesus was able to choose, with His human abilities, to say no to every temptation and live a life of purity. And on the Cross Jesus destroyed death causing principle, the impure energy of fear and selfishness contaminating the life energy breathed into Adam. At the cross, Jesus destroyed the carnal terminal sin nature, and arose in a purified humanity and became the new head of humanity and He now stands in God's presence not only in His preincarnate position as the Son of God—but Jesus now stands in God's presence as the representative head of humanity—a real human being, sinless and perfect. He stands as Adam's substitute—in the place in the heavenly counsel that God designed Adam to stand. And through faith, we can each receive that same divine energy of the Holy Spirit, that takes what Christ achieved and invigorates us with a reborn spirit, new life motives, so that we become literal partakers of the divine nature as our spirits, our internal energies, motivations, drives, change from fear and selfishness to love and trust via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

So how do you answer the question:

- How does the image of Jesus on the cross, dying as a Substitute for our sins, most powerfully reveal the great truth about God, that "His love endures forever"? (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 53).

This takes us right into **MONDAY's** lesson because Christ came to fix what Adam did to the species, and because Christ fixed it, then we can partake of His victory so that "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20) and we become partakers of the divine nature, we get new hearts and right spirits, the mind of Christ, reborn, recreated, the law written on our hearts and minds etc.

This is the true plan of salvation—and there is nothing penal legal going on, it is real, actual, literal, regenerational, the restoration of God's living law into you and me through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ.

So, Monday the lesson focuses our attention on Psalms 51, in which David prays for a new heart and right spirit, to be cleansed in the inner man, that is what salvation is, healing, recreating, cleansing of the sinner—not cleansing of books.

But let's read the first two paragraphs:

- King David pours out his heart before the Lord, asking for the forgiveness of sin during the spiritually darkest moments in his life (2 Samuel 12). Forgiveness is God's extraordinary gift of grace, the result of the "multitude of Your tender mercies" (Ps. 51:1, NKJV). King David appeals to God to deal with him not in accordance with what his sin deserves (Ps. 103:10) but in accordance with His divine character, namely His mercy, faithfulness, and compassion (Ps. 51:1; Exod. 34:6, 7).

> Divine forgiveness involves more than a legal proclamation of innocence. It produces a profound change that reaches the most inner parts of human self (Ps. 51:6, Heb. 4:12). It brings about a new creation (Ps. 51:10, John 3:3-8). The Hebrew verb bara', translated "create," depicts divine creative power (Gen. 1:1). Only God can bara'; only God can produce a radical and lasting change in the repentant person's heart (2 Cor. 4:6). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 54).

There is so much that is very well said in these two paragraphs. There is no question that God's forgiveness is a manifestation of His grace, love, mercy, and character, and that the experience forgiveness from the sinner's perspective involves a profound change of the inmost being, a new creation, brought about by divine power. This is all well said.

But what about the idea of forgiveness involving a legal proclamation of innocence? This idea is dropped in as an assumed truth, as if "we know forgiveness is when the guilty are legally proclaimed innocent, but forgiveness also includes so much more…" It seems the lesson assumes this to be true and wants to make special emphasis of the transforming nature of forgiveness. I am glad the lesson has emphasized the healing, transforming elements, because they are the truth of forgiveness, what forgiveness actually is. But is the assumed legal innocence proclamation true—or is that a falsehood based on accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law?

When will it be true that Adam and Eve are innocent? Does accepting Jesus as our sinless Savior change the history of what Adam and Eve did, or what you and I have done? Do any humans ever get to say they are in fact innocent of sin? So, if we are not in truth, in fact, in reality, innocent of sin and God proclaims that we are, what are we teaching about God? That God is bearing a false witness, God is declaring something to be true when it is in fact false.

As I understand it, there is nothing in Scripture that says we will be declared innocent. What gets declared, and this is said in a variety of ways but it all means the same thing, is that the saved sinners are:

- Healed
- Redeemed
- Recreated
- Renewed
- Reborn
- Perfected
- Restored
- Made Christlike
- Made Righteous
- Set right
- Put right
- Made Holy
- Purified
- Made Faithful

None of us ever get proclaimed or declared to be innocent, no, we all are guilty—but all the saved are also all healed, reborn, recreated, renewed, delivered, made righteous, made holy, purified, and

cleansed. This is the gospel through design law, taking what has been damaged by sin and restoring it to perfect, holy, righteousness.

In fact, it is the truth of our sickness in sin and God's saving us from it that gives us a story to tell, the song of the redeemed—if we are all declared innocent, if we have had our records erased and there is no memory of our sinfulness from which Jesus cleansed and healed us, then what will we witness about?

If you had had a terrible cancer, suffered greatly, and Jesus healed you fully into robust perfect vibrant health—would you have a story to tell? Do you need to forget your sickness or as you recall what you have been saved from do you rejoice in Jesus and what He has done for you? But what if after your healing you have your memory erased and no longer recall the sickness of the past, do you have the same appreciation for what Jesus did to heal you?

It is an eternal truth that God forgives us—but God forgives the unrepentant also, Jesus forgave those who crucified Him. The difference between the saved and the lost is not in God's attitude toward them, it is in the sinner's attitude toward God. The saved respond to God's forgiveness, are convicted in heart, won by His love, and repent and are reborn with new hearts and right spirits; whereas the wicked reject and despise God's forgiveness, harden and close their hearts, and solidify themselves in sin and selfishness.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph:

- The psalmist's great affliction is related to his own and his people's sins (Ps. 130:3, 8). The people's sins are so grave that they threaten to separate the people from God forever (Ps. 130:3). Scripture speaks of the records of sins that are being kept for the Judgment Day (Dan. 7:10, Rev. 20:12) and of sinners' names being removed from the book of life (Exod. 32:32, Ps. 69:28, Rev. 13:8). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 55).

Why would sin separate people from God? Is it that God cannot stand it and gets offended, or is it that the people in sin cannot stand holiness and flee from God's presence?

When Moses came off the mountain reflecting God's glory what did the people do? They shied away, begging him to cover his face, why? Because they could not tolerate the heavenly light. When Jesus appears at the second coming, what to the wicked plead for? For the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the presence of Jesus.

Please note, that sin cuts people off from God and **that alienation happens in the heart and mind of the sinner.** As soon as Adam and Eve sinned **they** ran and hid, but God, in love, mercy, and with forgiveness ran after them and has been pursuing sinful humanity ever since.

The Bible tells us that while we were still sinners Jesus died for us (Romans 5:8). For God so loved the world He sent His Son (John 3:16). **So sin does not cause God to pull away from us; it is unhealed, unremedied, unremoved sin in the sinner that causes the sinner to pull away and cut themselves off from God**. And eventually, when the unremedied sin destroys the faculties that

respond to love and truth and no further amount of love and truth will have any saving impact, then God let's go, He stops using His power to prevent the separation and the sinner reaps what they have sown—eternal separation from source of life and they die.

What about the idea that "Scripture speaks of the records of sins that are being kept for the Judgment Day (Dan. 7:10, Rev. 20:12)"

This is a sad misunderstanding that people draw when they read the Bible with the lie that God's law functions like human law.

The lesson cites Daniel 7:10:

- A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. (Daniel 7:10 NIV84).

Is there anything in this text that says these books are books that contain records of sin? Is there anything in the text that says this is a legal proceeding?

Some argue that the "court" being seated indicates a courtroom, a legal court with a judge and jury. And that is exactly how people read it when they go to the Bible with the Roman view of law, when they falsely believe God's government works like Rome's with imposed law and legal proceedings. But the text doesn't actually say any of that, it is all presumed and projected in.

There is another type of judgment that is not legal in nature—the judgment that is at the center of the Great Controversy, the judgment that the entire universe is required to make, the judgment that **must** occur and is **required** for the sin problem to come to an end—and that judgment is what Paul describes in Romans 3:4. And it is that judgment which is being described here in Daniel 7:10.

- Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "***so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged***." (Romans 3:4 NET, emphasis theirs)

The issue in the entire Great Controversy is whether God is trustworthy, did Satan tell the truth about God or did Satan lie about God? Are we safe with God when God is all powerful and all-knowing, including knowing the future before it even occurs?

So Daniel describes a time when the heavenly court is seated, but this is not a legal court, it is the heavenly royal court, and the court in which Jesus is coronated and receives His kingdom. And when Jesus, in His humanity, receives His throne then the books are opened so that the onlooking universe can see the evidence and make a right judgment about God, so that the Great Controversy can be ended. For this is hour in history for God to be judged, the hour of His judgment has come! It is the time for Satan's lies about God to be permanently rejected and God to be judged righteous!

The court in Daniel 7 is the exact same court we see in Revelation 4 & 5, and we know how Daniel and Revelation go hand in hand and complement each other.

In Revelation 4 and 5, you will find that, just as in Daniel 7, there is:

- a great assembly in heaven
- that the ancient of days has taken His throne
- he is surrounded by the 24 elders and the four living creatures
- Jesus comes and is recognized as worthy—is coronated as righteous ruler
- and a book which is sealed with seven seals is opened

Daniel 7 and Revelation 4 and 5 are describing the same event.

And what is recorded in the book with seven seals?

In my view, this is the book of God's foreknowledge, what He foreknew would happen before He created anything including Lucifer. God recorded it all and sealed it with seven seals. Then He began to create and created recording angels to document history as it unfolded in accurate detail. At some point in time Lucifer rebels and the entire Great Controversy unfolds, Adam falls, Jesus comes and redeems humanity and then a time comes in history when a grand court is seated and the books are opened, and those books are both the books are both of history recorded by the recording angels and the book sealed with seven seals, which Jesus the Lamb opens. And as the books are compared all see that God, though He has foreknowledge, never uses that knowledge to restrict our freedom, that God didn't manipulate, or act in any way with His use of power but that which was the outworking of love for the good of His creation. And God is judged righteous and innocent of all of Satan's charges and Satan is judged as guilty of all sin, pain, suffering, and death.

This is the judgment of Daniel 7, and we participate in that investigative judgment as we also are called to investigate the evidence God has given at such extreme cost to Himself and make a right judgment about God, to stop worshiping the imperial Roman dictator god and return to worshiping Him who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water, to return to Creator worship which means rejecting the imposed law lies with its penal legal system and understand God's laws as design laws.

There is another set of books mentioned in Revelation 20:12, the Great White throne Judgment, the books from which the wicked are judged according to the deeds recorded there. And what are these books? Revelation 20:12 explicitly states it is the book of life, the place in heaven where God keeps the sleeping souls, where individualities and characters are recorded. And the wicked are judged, diagnosed, by what is actually in their hearts, minds, and characters. It is not a judicial proceeding, it is an accurate diagnosis of what they have chosen to become when they refused the Remedy of Jesus Christ which, had they accepted would have removed from them all sinfulness, all fear, guilt, shame, evil, and deceit. But having rejected Jesus they have solidified themselves in sin, thus the records being a full and complete transcript of their actual individuality and character contains all the ongoing evil they still have within them.

Thus, when the judge at the end separate sheep and goats the action of the judge to separate sheep and goats does not make sheep into sheep and goats into goats, it merely and accurately distinguishes what is.

Read the second paragraph,

- The psalmist thus appeals to God's forgiveness, which will eradicate the record of sins (Ps. 51:1, 9; Jer. 31:34; Mic. 7:19). He knows that "God is not angry by nature. His love is

> everlasting. His ‘anger’ is aroused only by man’s failure to appreciate His love. . . . The purpose of His anger is not to wound, but rather to heal man; not to destroy but to save His covenant people (see Hos. 6:1, 2).”—Hans K. LaRondelle, Deliverance in the Psalms (Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1983), pp. 180, 181. Remarkably, it is God’s readiness to forgive sins, and not to punish them, that inspires reverence of God (Ps. 130:4, Rom. 2:4). Genuine worship is built on admiration of God’s character of love, not on fear of punishment. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 55).

There is much in this paragraph that we can appreciate, that God wants worship based on admiration and love not on fear—in fact if people are worshiping God out of fear what does that reveal and what happens to them if that doesn’t change? It reveals they don’t truly know God, but have some falsehoods about God still operating in their hearts, and if it doesn’t change they get harmed by it, physically and spiritually. Fear activates fear inflammatory cascades in the body causing health problems, and fear leads to distrust and rebellion, or submission and loss of individuality, mindless slaves. That is why the Bible teaches that perfect love casts out all fear.

Just to clarify, we mean fear as in terror, being afraid, not the old English definition of awe, admiration, and reverence, we are always to grow in awe, admiration, and reverence for God while we have no fear.

What of the sentence, “The psalmist thus appeals to God’s forgiveness, which will eradicate the record of sins”?

Does God erase the records, history, facts? If so, how can we still read about David in the Bible, haven’t those records been erased? Will there be no Bibles in heaven?

What about when David and Bathsheba are talking with Uriah and Solomon comes up and says hello mother? Hmmm…will they know how Solomon became their child? Will Uriah be aware?

Sin does not happen in record books and it doesn’t get erased from record books. Sin happens in hearts and minds and God cleanses hearts and minds from sin, not books. The penal legal model cheats people from genuine salvation by getting them to find security in a legal adjustment in books rather than actual healing of their hearts and minds.

What do you think of this sentence? “His ‘anger’ is aroused only by man’s failure to appreciate His love”?

This sentence could easily be misconstrued—let’s understand that the author meant it in the best light, that of a parent who is angry at disease that harms their child, but not at the child. So God’s anger is toward sin, not the child who is sinful, thus God’s anger is aroused when sin prevents people from appreciating God’s love.

But this choice of language could be easily misunderstood and confusing when discussing love, because love is relational and in this context it is being suggested that God gets angry when we don’t appreciate His love. I have had many female patients, wives, come to see me after their husbands got angry and beat them because they didn’t appreciate their love. Are we suggesting that if we don’t appreciate God’s love that God gets angry and His anger must be vented, and if we don’t love Him by accepting Jesus, then He will vent that anger on us? If so, are we presenting a god who functions no differently than a self-centered narcissistic and abusive husband?

Sadly, I have seen God presented in this way more than one. But this is a lie, God is never the source of inflicted harm, suffering, or death. God's anger is at the sin and situation, because He knows that those who don't appreciate His love will suffer terribly from unremedied sin and die eternally.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 113, let's compare the NIV and REM:

- Praise the LORD. Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised. (Psalm 113:1-3 NIV84).
- Praise the Lord. Give praise, all who speak the truth about God; shine brightly, revealing the character and methods of the Lord. Let God's character of love be praised, both now and forevermore. Throughout all creation—from east to west—God's character of love is praiseworthy. (Psalm 113:1-3 REM).

In the Remedy, I attempted to bring forth the meaning in the setting of the GC. Who are the servants of the Lord? All throughout Scripture the servants of God are His prophets, which are not primarily prognosticators, but are the people who go out to others with a message from God for the people, they are God's spokespersons. And what does it mean to praise God? Does it not mean to reveal the truth about Him? Can we truly praise God if we are misrepresenting Him? So in this context I paraphrased the true message that we are to praise God by speaking the truth about Him, being bright lights of truth that reveal His true character—why? What does a name mean in the Bible context? It means their character, thus those who praise the name of God are elevating, praising, and magnifying the true character of God.

- The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? (Psalm 113:4-6 NIV84).
- The Creator is supreme — greater than all nations; his glory is higher than the heavens. Who is like our Creator God, the infinite One who sits enthroned high above our reality, who must bend down from infinity to look upon the heavens and the earth? (Psalm 113:4-6 REM)

My view elevates God as Creator as the One who sits above and outside of our linear plane of existence, sustaining all things and thus is beyond all of us, and is outside of time itself. This becomes important in understanding the plan of salvation and what God is seeking to fix, heal, resolve—not primarily temporal or earthly things, but God wants to restore His creation to harmony with the rest of the universe, free it from sin. This difference is noted in the following verses and how they are interpreted differently:

- He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people. He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD. (Psalm 113:7–9 NIV84).
- He raises from dust those dying in sin and exalts those who need healing from decay; he seats them upon thrones, with his royal family redeemed from the earth. He makes the barren place home—a happy motherland filled with his children. Praise the Lord. (Psalm 113:7–9 REM).

I think the true message inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the message of the plan of salvation from sin and the restoration of the Earth to God's home for human beings—as Jesus said, the meek will inherent the earth. I think that when we see the message of Scripture as primarily about this sinful plane of existence and delivering from earthly problems, we find promises that are unreliable, some people are delivered, but many righteous are not. But when we realize the true message of Scripture, every single righteous person is delivered.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Psalm 103, let's compare the NIV and REM:

- Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. (Psalm 103:1 NIV84).
- Praise the Lord, O my soul; with all that is within me, praise his perfect character of love! (Psalm 103:1 REM).

Do you hear these differently? Is my paraphrase leading away from the true meaning, or does the holy name of God mean His perfect character of love?

- Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103:2-5 NIV84).
- Praise the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all he does to heal us: He forgives all our deviations from his design-law for life and provides the remedy to our sin-sickness, delivering us from eternal death and enveloping us in his love and tender mercies; he fills and adorns us with his goodness and gives us new life—a rebirth—to soar free like an eagle. (Psalm 103:2-5 REM).

What do you think of these two versions? As you compare the Remedy with the NIV, do you think the Remedy introduces ideas that are not in the NIV, or does the Remedy simply make the true meaning clearer? What do you think the true message of Scripture is, about satisfying the earthly desires of our youth, or about being reborn into God's heavenly family?

- The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. (Psalm 103:6 NIV84).
- The Lord does what is right—restores his creation to harmony with his design, healing those who are crushed by sin and selfishness. (Psalm 103:6 REM).

When you hear "justice" what do you think? What is justice for the oppressed? The Remedy understands justice through design law, doing what is right, which is restoring creation back to God's design for life. Notice a difference in the following verses:

- He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those

who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:7-12 NIV84)

- He made known his ways to Moses, his methods to the people of Israel: The Lord is merciful and gracious; he is infinite in love, holding on as long as there is hope—yet he will not strive for all eternity to win our hearts; he will not hold back forever letting us go our own rebellious way. He doesn't lay on us what our terminal sin-condition rightly deserves or leave us to rot in character, as our selfishness would naturally do. As high as heaven is above the earth, so mighty is his love to heal those who revere him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes the infection of fear and selfishness from us. (Psalm 113:7-12 REM).

Do you see how design law helps us understand the reality of what is happening, how God is always love, always gracious, always merciful, and that God in mercy will not allow the unrighteous to suffer forever, but stops pursuing when there is no longer any hope of cure. And what is God actually removing from sinners—Is God, in the plan of salvation. removing deeds from sinners, changing historical facts, removing records of deeds, or is God removing the sin, sinfulness, fear, selfishness, distrust and rebellion from our hearts and minds. In other words, removing the carnal nature from us and restoring in us the divine nature.

- As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. (Psalm 103:13-18 NIV84).
- As a father tenderly pours love upon his children, so the Lord tenderly pours his love upon those who revere him; for he knows how we are made, and he realizes we are descended from one man who was formed from mud. For human life is like grass: we blossom like flowers in the field, then the winds of time blow and the flower is gone, and where it grew no one remembers. But from eternity past to eternity future, the love of the Lord flows out to those who revere him—his righteous remedy healing all generations who participate in his treatment plan and live in harmony with his design protocols for life. (Psalm 103:13-18 REM).

Does it help you understand the meaning more clearly to shift away from "keep his covenant and obey his presents" to "who participate in his treatment plan and live in harmony with his design protocols for life"?

- The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul. (Psalm 103:19-22 NIV84)
- The Creator God has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom of love governs over all creation. Praise the Lord, you loyal angels of God—you mighty beings who do his bidding, who carry out his commands. Praise the Lord, all who live in heaven—you who live devoted to doing his will. Praise the Lord, everything he has created, throughout his entire domain. Praise the Lord, O my soul. (Psalm 103:19-22 REM)

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 8
Wisdom for Righteous Living

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What is wisdom? Is it the same as IQ? Is it the same as knowledge?

Wisdom is the ability to discern, differentiate, prioritize, and choose what is actually, in reality, healthy, right, true, and good—what is the best conclusion, course, action in any given situation.

Can wisdom be achieved by following a list of rules? Even if those rules are good ones? Why or why not? Because wisdom requires understanding of the reasons—rule-keeping impairs growth in understanding! So legal religions actually interfere with growing in godly wisdom, because they keep believers functioning as children, on spiritual milk—we are not suggesting the babes in Christ are not saved, or don't love Jesus, we are simply describing reality—if one needs the rules one is still immature and therefore not yet wise.

What is required for wisdom? Understanding of reality—understanding God's character, God's design laws, God's purposes; understanding the problem, the circumstances, the situation, and then applying God's methods, God's design laws, God's principles to the problem in its setting or situation.

If one follows a list of rules, applying those rules in all circumstances, without understanding the design laws of God, the principles of God, the purposes of God, without understanding the real cause of the problem and the situation then such a person will follow rules seeking to do good, but will instead harm, instead of being wise, they will be foolish. This is what all legal religions and legal theologies do, though they claim to be wise they are fools. They have a form of godliness but without power to save. For example:

- The religious leaders who persecuted and crucified Christ—they criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath and His disciples for pulling heads of grain on the Sabbath—why? Because they had a rule—a rule that they wanted to apply without regard to God's design law and thus thinking they were wise in legal law keeping of God's commandments, they were fools and rejected the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath

This is what happens with all human governments; this is what happened during COVID, all kinds of harmful and provably destructive actions enforced upon people, and some are still doing them, because of following rules rather than thinking and applying wisdom. For example:

- People driving alone in their cars wearing masks.

- Law enforcement giving tickets to people who sit in their car in a parking lot listening to a sermon over a PA system or arresting people walking alone on in a park for not wearing a mask.
- Or people at sporting events required to wear a mask but the athletes in the event were not required to wear a mask.
- One of the primary goals of all of that was to condition people to stop thinking, to, based on fear, revert to childlike functioning, accept voices of authority without question. To become mindless pawns easily manipulated by the powerful elites. Sadly, throughout much of church history various church leaders have functioned exactly the same way.

Paul wrote:

- "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Romans 1:21-23 NIV84).

Are images made to look like mortal man restricted to statues? No, this would include creating a god of self, of evolutionary theology claiming humans are the highest evolved life form and working to create humans 2.0 by genetic and cybernetic manipulation. It would include the legal theologies in which it is taught that God functions like a mortal man, He makes up laws like mortal man does, and He uses external coercion like mortal man does to inflict legal penalties on people for rule breaking, and His justice is the same justice as mortal man's, the punishing of the law breaker. Thus, the glory of the immortal God is exchanged and people worship a mortal man in the place of God in their penal substitutionary theology, and because of the law of worship, they will become like that false god, and it will seem right and good to them to use the power of their office, of the state, to coerce the consciences of others for a good goal—such as "to save lives" or protect the environment etc.

What wisdom have you gleaned from God's Word that has helped you live righteously?

I love this paragraph from the book *Education*, do you see wisdom in this paragraph, and if so, what wisdom?

- The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. (Education 190).

Tell me the wisdom of the following from this paragraph:

- Approaching the study of the Bible as a student
    - If we go to the Bible as an expert, as the teacher of the Bible, or as a cynic, critic, doubter, or as someone who already knows what the Bible teaches and is looking to support preconceived ideas, such as the idea that God's law functions like human law and God is the source of punishment etc.,—then our hearts and minds are closed to truth and we cannot learn. But if we have the heart and mind of a student, recognizing we are finite, and we have much to learn and the Bible is a source of God's inspired revelation to us, and we approach its study humbly, with eager desire to be instructed and learn, then the Bible becomes the bread of heaven to us.
- Viewing the word as a whole
    - If we take a little here and a little there we can make the Bible say anything and this is one of the reasons there are so many denominations. Wisdom is in recognizing that there is one God, one human race, one sin problem, one solution to the sin problem and the Bible teaches this reality and must be taken as a whole.
- Recognizing how various parts relate
    - Wisdom understands the various parts are teaching the same truth and applying the same principles, but if we confuse the parts and misconstrue the setting, for instance misunderstand that the theme of the OT is the coming Messiah, the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15, and instead think it is about a legal relationship with a specific branch of the human family, then some teach that in OT times God saved people through animal sacrifices, or if we misconstrue first and second death, or misconstrue God's design laws with God setting up a civil government that did NOT represent His kingdom, but merely kept open the avenue for the Messiah while teaching in object lesson the truth of His kingdom, then one will misread the Bible, and come to foolish, legal, human-law based beliefs that work against God, all the while claiming wisdom. But if we understand the principles then we can examine the various parts and realize that God is always apply the same principles, just like a parent who loves their child in one situation they hug and kiss, in another situation they yell out in warning, even with threats to stop their child from running in the street, and in another situation they set up rules with temporary made up inflicted punishments designed to discipline and protect, not set up a legal government.
- Gaining a knowledge of its grand central theme
    - The grand central theme is the Great Controversy over God's character and government, and humanity is caught up in this larger war and the theme is God working to eradicate sin from the universe through the outworking of His design laws—truth, love, and freedom, which expose the liar and win us to trust, while at the same time providing Jesus to restore humanity back to sinless perfection—to fix what Adam's sin did to humanity.
- God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption.
    - What is God's original purpose? What was happening in the universe when God made this planet with all its life, and the Sabbath—when God created it and what was its purpose?

- Understanding the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy
    - It is wisdom to recognize that God's divine nature is seen in what He has made so that men are without excuse—design laws that all reality are built upon, but also to recognize that all nature groans under the weight of sin, that the law of sin and death is at work in nature and the world. In other words, two antagonistic principles the law of life versus the law sin and death. Do we understand these two principles?
- Learning to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation.
    - Can we see that through all human history these two powers, God versus Satan, Love, Truth, Freedom versus fear/selfishness, lies/deception, and coercion have been warring for hearts and minds? Do we see that these principles are coming to a head in world events leading up to the second coming? Do we see how they played out during the COVID crisis and how many so-called saints were duped into accepting and applying the methods of Satan under the guise of doing good—some were just babes in Christ and like good and obedient children followed the voices of authority, but others who were in leadership in the church demonstrated true foolishness while they claimed to be wise?
- Seeing how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience
    - Do we understand that it is not primarily about the behavior, but the motive of heart that leads to the behavior. Are we motivated by truth, love, and the respect for the freedom of others, or are we motivated by fear, insecurity, the need to protect self, a willingness to coerce others to advance what we believe is right?
- Applying all of this to learn how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.
    - Do we recognize that we are infected with fear and selfishness that our spirits are sick and that we must be reborn with new hearts and right spirits that love God and others more than self and that new spiritual vitality of love leads us to do what is right, healthy, and reasonable because it is so, not because a rule says it?

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 119 and in the commentary seems to equate the use of the word "law" in this psalm with the Ten Commandments, for instance, the second to the last paragraph states,

- God's commandments are a revelation of God's will for the world. They instruct people on how to become wise and to live in freedom and peace (Ps. 119:7-11, 133). The psalmist delights in the law because the law assures him of God's faithfulness (Ps. 119:77, 174). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 61).

When you hear "God's commandments" what does that cause your mind to think? It is true the lesson doesn't say "the Ten Commandments," so maybe the authors don't mean that and maybe it is just that I am so conditioned to equate commandments with the Ten Commandments.

If we do consider the commandments as the Ten Commandments, would the sentence, "God's commandments are a revelation of God's will for the world," most accurately communicate the meaning of what psalm 119 is trying to tell us? Or, if we understand the law or commandments to mean the Ten Commandments then does this sentence create a framework that boxes in the psalm, an idea that ropes our thoughts into a legal way of thinking about God's law that is actually contrary to what the psalmist was intending, and is contrary to what Jesus was teaching?

In other words, is the psalm restricted to, primarily about, intended to focus our attention upon the Ten Commandments, or is the psalm leading us to move way past the Ten Commandments and understand God's law as design law and not a list of rules?

Jesus and the New Testament writers tried to teach us this:

- "The **entire law** is summed up in a single command: '**Love** your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:14, NIV84, emphasis mine)
- "If you really keep the **royal law** found in Scripture, '**Love** your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right." (James 2:8, NIV84 emphasis mine)
- "Jesus replied: '**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love** your neighbor as yourself.' **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments**." (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV84, emphasis mine)

God's design laws are not lists of rules, and in fact, all the written laws were added after sin, including the Ten Commandments. And they were added because we needed them, not because God's government works on imposed written laws.

This was the controversy at the 1888 SDA General Conference, with the righteousness by faith message of the ongoing Reformation advancing the truth that the law in Galatians that was added was the Ten Commandments, and the legalist church leaders rejecting the advancing truth and declaring the Ten Commandments are eternal and not added, that God's law is imposed, that sin is legal, and that righteousness by faith is legal trick when God declares people to be righteous while they remain unrighteous, rather than the truth of Scripture 2 Corinthians 5:21, that we become righteous.

We will never finish the Reformation, never fulfill our end-time mission to lighten the world for Christ's return as long as we present God's law as imposed for that penal legal message is not the Testimony that Jesus gave. The final message that we are to give is the Testimony of Jesus—that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father, that God's laws are design laws and God is not the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin. The Adventist Reformers, whose message was rejected by the Adventist legalists in 1888, taught that the idea that God must punish sin is Satan's lie from the opening of the Great Controversy!

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

Psalm 119 is an incredible psalm that teaches the truth about God's law being design law, yet when people falsely believe that God's law is imposed they are vulnerable to read the psalm in legal ways, as rules enforced by external coercive force.

The lesson points our attention to the first 16 verses of psalm 119, let's contrast the first 8 verses from the NIV and REM:

- Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. (Psalm 119:1 NIV84)
- Happy and healthy are those whose characters have been healed, who live in harmony with God's design for life. (Psalm 119:1 REM)

- Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. (Psalm 119:2 NIV84)
- Happy and healthy are those who preserve God's principles in their characters and seek him with all their heart. (Psalm 119:2 REM)

- They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. (Psalm 119:3 NIV84)
- They do no wrong; they walk in the Lord's ways. (Psalm 119:3 REM)

- You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. (Psalm 119:4 NIV84)
- You have established the laws upon which life and health are built, and they are to be eagerly observed. (Psalm 119:4 REM)

- Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! (Psalm 119:5 NIV84)
- Oh, how I wish my nature was established to naturally live in harmony with your design protocols for life! (Psalm 119:5 REM)

- Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. (Psalm 119:6 NIV84)
- Then I would not feel ashamed when I compare my life to your perfect law of love. (Psalm 119:6 REM)

- I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. (Psalm 119:7 NIV84)
- When your living law of love is assimilated into my mind and character, then I will praise you with a heart that is right with you. (Psalm 119:7 REM)

- I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me. (Psalm 119:8 NIV84)

- I will live in harmony with your specifications for life; please don't let go of me. (Psalm 119:8 REM)

MONDAY

Read the third paragraph,

- God restrains His righteous wrath and extends His grace anew. The psalmist exclaims, "Who knows the power of Your anger?" (Ps. 90:11, NKJV), implying that no one has ever experienced the full effect of God's anger against sin, and so, there is hope for people to repent and gain wisdom for righteous living. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 62).

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 90:11, which, in the NIV, reads:

- Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. (Psalm 90:11 NIV84).

What do you think? Let's read a little wider in psalm 90, verses 7-13 comparing the NIV with REM:

- We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. (Psalm 90:7 NIV84)
- Our sin-sickness comes to an end in your presence, therefore, it terrifies us to be abandoned by you. (Psalm 90:7 REM)

- You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. (Psalm 90:8 NIV84)
- Our terminal condition is laid out before you, the corruption most deeply hidden in our souls is exposed in your presence. (Psalm 90:8 REM)

- All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. (Psalm 90:9 NIV84)
- All of our days we struggle to turn away from the selfishness which you hate; our lives end in mournful meditation. (Psalm 90:9 REM)

- The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. (Psalm 90:10 NIV84)
- We live for seventy years, or eighty years if we are strong; but our selfishness causes life to be hard — a struggle filled with sorrow; time flies by so quickly and we pass away. (Psalm 90:10 REM)

- Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. (Psalm 90:11 NIV84)

- Who really knows how angry it makes you that this happened to us? Your wrath to destroy sin is awe-inspiring. (Psalm 90:11 REM)

- Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12 NIV84)
- Help us understand our terminal condition—how short life really is—so that we may have the wisdom to partake of your remedy and experience renewed hearts. (Psalm 90:12 REM)

- Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. (Psalm 90:13 NIV84)
- When will you turn to us, O Lord—turn and comfort your helpers? (Psalm 90:12 REM)

Do you see how the law lens one holds completely changes how one understands the Scripture, how the legal law lens twists and undermines the gospel? When the human law lens is used to interpret the Scriptures instead of reading the truth about God that removes our fear and restores us to trust in God, the Scriptures are twisted to be a cause of fear. This is why the Bible tells is in Revelation 14 that the final message that lightens the world is the message of the *eternal* gospel; the message that calls people back to worship God as Creator and calls people to stop worshiping Him as a Babylonian dictator, to finally make a right judgment about God, which means we must reject the human imposed law lie and return to design law understandings!

And this leads us to a proper understanding of wrath, the difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath.

How would you describe the difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath?

Satan's wrath is the application of might, power, and force to inflict and cause pain, suffering, torment upon whomever the wrath is vented—it is the wrath of a creature, the wrath of imposed law, the infliction of punishment.

God's wrath is the exact opposite, it is letting go, the cessation or stopping of the use of God's divine power that He has been using to hold at bay the pain, suffering, and injury that comes from breaking the laws that He built reality to operate upon.

Sadly, however, far too many people, having accepted the Romanization of Christianity, the lie that God's law functions like human law, teach that God's wrath is the use of power to inflict punishment or pain—and they interpret that false understanding into how they read Scripture.

For instance, someone listening might say—"sure, right, I bet that is what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah—God just stopped using power, He didn't use any divine power there—right?" And they use the story of Sodom and others like it, where God did use power to try and prove that God's wrath functions the same way that Satan's does and they reject design law and the truth we are teaching.

Those who do this do so because the human law system is so deeply embedded into their thinking that they take a very superficial understanding of what they are seeing, they deny evidence that would

enlighten them, and conflate divergent issues. It would be like observing a surgeon using a scalpel to amputate a gangrenous leg and allege the surgeon's anger and wrath is the same as a pirate who uses a sword while marauding to cut off an enemy's leg—after all both sitautions have someone using a sharp instrument to cut off a leg.

This is what people who use examples like Sodom, the Flood, the 185,000 Assyrians, the 10 plagues of Egypt and God's actions in the OT do. They do not understand reality, they don't understand the situation, God's design laws and methods, and look only at the most superficial level of activity. For instance, they will claim those examples as God punishing sin—yet the punishment for sin is eternal death, not sleep death—and all of the deaths in OT times were sleep death, so they cannot be punishment for sin, yet they deny this very simple and obvious truth. Also, in their own false legal model, punishment comes after judgment and the judgment is future from the time of Sodom, so again it could not be punishment for sin.

So, if at Sodom, God wasn't acting in wrath, and clearly God was not just passively letting people go, or abandoning them to the consequences of their choices, and if God was not inflicting punishment for sin, then what?

God was fulfilling His promise of Genesis 3:15, to bring the Messiah, by working to preserve the line of the Messiah, to prevent Satan from destroying the avenue through whom the Messiah would be born. The entire OT is the outworking of the plan of salvation, which is the bringing of the Messiah. God, looking down the corridors of time, seeing the land where His helpers, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would live, saw that if Sodom and the other cities remained that they would be effective in seducing and destroying the branch of the human family from whom Jesus would be born. Even without those cities, only two tribes were still around by the time of Jesus, 10 tribes had been dispersed. So, we see God not acting in wrath against Sodom and Gomorrah, but in mercy, therapeutically, for without that action no human could be saved. And all of those people who died in Sodom and Gomorrah, died the sleep death, their life is not ended, just suspended, and they will arise in one of two resurrections to complete their life by their own free-will choices, for the wicked at the end of the 1000 years when they freely choose to join Satan and attack the city, rather than repent and submit to God. Thus demonstrating that God's actions in putting them to sleep in the grave in no way determined their destiny, for even with the New Jerusalem on the Earth, and the evidence of the saved inside the city, they still will not repent and be saved.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson title *is Deceitfulness of the Wicked Way* and the lesson focuses our attention on psalm 141, let's compare the NIV with the REM:

- LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you. May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. (Psalm 141:1-2 NIV84)

- O Lord, I call for your help — come quickly to me. Respond kindly to my voice when I call to you. Make my prayers pure and sweet, like the most fragrant incense before you; I raise my hands, surrendering to your cleansing — just like the evening sacrifice depicts. (Psalm 141:1-2 REM)

- Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies. (Psalm 141:3-4 NIV84)
- Lord, empower me with the ability to control what I say; let me speak nothing that misrepresents you. Turn the desires of my heart away from fear and selfishness, away from evil activity; don't let me share the pleasures of those who do wrong. (Psalm 141:3-4 REM)

- Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers; their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs, and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken. They will say, "As one plows and breaks up the earth, so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the grave." (Psalm 141:5-7 NIV84)
- Let a godly person discipline me—it is a kindness; let the healthy person correct me—it is healing salve to my character. Don't allow the oil of selfishness to permeate my character; my constant prayer is to break the power of wickedness. When, at the judgment, they realize that choosing evil severs their connection to life—like falling off a cliff and expecting to live—they will learn that what I taught was true. They will admit, "As a plow cuts through the earth, so too our evil choices cut us off from life and we are consumed by the grave." (Psalm 141:5-7 REM)

- But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD; in you I take refuge—do not give me over to death. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety. (Psalm 141:8-10 NIV84)
- But I look to you and keep my trust in you, O Creator God; in you I seek healing—don't let me die. Keep me from the snares the selfish have laid for me—from the traps of the wicked. Those who persist in selfishness will be trapped by their own evil choices, while I pass by safely. (Psalm 141:8-10 REM)

How is it that wickedness deceives? How will the beast of Revelation deceive all but the very elect?

When the beast of Revelation rises, it will not rise to set up cult worship centers to worship some cartoonish depiction of Satan with hooves, a tail, and pitchfork. **Satan does NOT want to be worshipped as Satan—Satan has always coveted Jesus' power and position and Satan wants to be worshiped as Christ**. For a variety of reasons—for his own selfish ego sake, but also to spite Jesus, to say to Jesus, "Ha, ha, ha, they all claim to be worshiping you but they hate you; they prefer a god like me! They want you to be more like me. In fact, if you were more like me all these people would worship you just like they are worshiping me."

Understand this, Satan's final deception upon the world is to impersonate Jesus Christ—and he can only successfully do this by getting the world, including the Christian world, to accept a version of Jesus **that he can impersonate**. And Satan leads false Christianity to do this replacing God's design law with human imposed law, and then the god of that system, in justice, must use power to inflict punishment for sin.

So, Satan, right now, is having his forces sow chaos, discord, anarchy, all of which are working to increase fear—men run to and fro their hearts failing them for fear. And into this chaos, Satan will appear impersonating Jesus, claiming to be our Savior who has come to set things right, to do justice. He speaks melodiously, He apparently heals the sick and raises the dead, and offers salvation for all who will worship him, but he states that justice requires that he must punish sinners if they refuse to repent and accept his payment for their sins and him as their savior. He doesn't want to punish them because he claims he has died for them, so rather than kill them immediately he directs those loyal to him, the beastly governments of this world, to enforce economic sanctions, no buying or selling, to imprison, to give time to get them to repent and worship him. But if they still refuse, in then end, with tears in his eyes, he will claim that he is required by law and justice to inflict the death sentence upon them. And this satanic god will be embraced and worshiped by all those who have sealed their hearts and minds into the lie that God's law functions like human law.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the blessings of the Lord, and asks us to read Psalm 112, and Psalm 111 and 112 are the two psalms in which in the Hebrew the psalmist started each line of the psalm with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and each subsequent line with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. I could not find a translation that did this, so in the Remedy paraphrase I brought this over—however the Hebrew only has 22 letters while we have 26 in English, so the psalm stops after 22 letters.

- All praise be to the Lord!

  Altogether happy are people who live in harmony with the Lord,
  Because they find eternal healing as they delight in his law.
  Crowned victorious, their children will be mighty in love upon the earth;
  Descendants, set right with God, will live in happiness.
  Eternal prosperity and heavenly treasure is theirs;
  Forever righteous they stay.
  Glorious light shines through the darkness for those set right with God,
  Healing descends from him for the merciful, kind and true.
  Indeed, good comes to the generous who freely lend—
  Just and honest they are in all their dealings.
  Knowing God, they will not be corrupted with selfishness;
  Loving others, the righteous will always be remembered.
  Mastering themselves, they don't live in fear of bad news;

New hearts are theirs, fixed in trust of God.
Overcomers, their hearts are sealed to God so they have no fear,
Preserved in purity in the view of their enemies.
Quick to share, they give generously to the poor;
Renewed by God, their righteousness endures forever,
Sanctified character keeps them exalted and glorified.
The wicked will see and be infuriated;
Unhealed, they have no excuse and wither away to nothing;
Vain hope—all their dreams and plans will perish forever. (Psalm 112:1-10 REM).

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on when God tests us, what do you understand God's testing to mean?

- Is it like our schools when the teacher gives us a test—to find out how much we know?
- Is it to trip us up, to get tempt us to fall?

What about the Adam and Eve in Eden at the Tree of Knowledge, were they tested there? Was it placed there to get them to fall or for another purpose, what purpose?

When you think of God testing us, what law lens do you understand the testing through?

When the Lord puts someone to the test, what is He testing? **It is always the same ultimate reason behind the test: Do they trust God or not?** Do they have faith/ confidence in God or not? And does their faith/trust/confidence go beyond the belief of devils who tremble, to the faith that is a living faith that results in loyalty to God?

Such tests are necessary in this world of sin because we cannot grow in faith, in trust, unless we are placed in a position in which our faith is tried or tested and we choose to exercise our faith. We must choose to say no to the fear, the insecurity, the doubts, the temptations to act to save self and, instead, choose to apply the truth and do what we understand is right, what is God's will for us in that situation, and trust God with the outcome.

This is the issue; it has always been the issue—are we faithful, loyal friends of God who actually trust Him?

Jesus asked this very question about His second coming:

- When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8 NIV84).

When Jesus comes again, will He find people who trust Him, who will be faithful to Him, who have chosen to trust Him with their lives, futures, fortunes, and families? Or will He only find people who claim to believe in Him, who have their religion, but who have put their trust in their rules, rituals, ceremonies, blood payments, wealth, institutions, and the power they can wield over others—all in His "name," of course?

Paul said, "Everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

God wants us to return to a living confidence, trust, and faith in Him, and He allows events to come upon us that will test our faith, put us in positions in which we have to decide whether we scheme, calculate, plot, plan, connive, manipulate, bend the rules, make excuses, cheat in order to save self, or whether we stand for what we know is right and trust God with how it turns out.

David, when he was dedicating materials and his son for the building of the temple, prayed:

- I know, my God, that you **test the heart and are pleased with integrity.** All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and **keep their hearts loyal to you** (1 Chronicles 29:17, 18 NIV84, emphasis mine).

God doesn't test, as a human teacher would, to discover the answer—God already knows the answer. God tests so we can actively choose to trust and, thereby, grow, develop, advance, and mature. It is for our development that God tests.

What God wants cannot be created by Him nor chosen by Him. God wants our love, devotion, trust, friendship, and loyalty. He wants us to internalize into our hearts and live out His living laws and, thus, develop Christlike character. This requires us to be placed in circumstances and situations in which we have to choose to trust God or not. So God tests us, but He never allows the test to be more than we can handle at any given point in our development. He has promised:

- No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV).

God always provides everything necessary for our healing, salvation, and deliverance from fear and selfishness.

- He provides the truth that destroys lies and wins us to trust (John 8:32)
- He provides the love that casts out the fear (1 John 4:18)
- He provides the Savior, His Son, who became a real human and as a human, using only human abilities, chose to love and trust His Father in all things and received as a human the empowering of the Holy Spirit to succeed in all things. And as a human, Jesus developed a perfect righteous and mature human character and destroyed the infection of fear and

selfishness that Adam introduced into humanity when he broke trust with God. Thus, Jesus became the new head of humanity, the second Adam (Hebrews 2:14, 4:15, 5:9; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 3:8).

- He provides the Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to our hearts and minds, to convict of sin, to convict of duty, and then (John 14:16) …
- He provides freedom, real freedom, to accept and choose the truth or reject it—and when we choose the truth (Joshua 24:15; Galatians 5:1) …
- He provides the opportunity to test our faith, situations that require us to choose—do we trust God? Do we choose what we know is in harmony with His will, purposes, instructions, guidance, design laws for life and trust Him with outcomes, or do we choose to break trust with Him and seek to advance and save ourselves?
- When we choose to trust Him, He then provides divine power, the indwelling Holy Spirit, to give us the ability to carry out the truth, to stand firm in the face of fear, threat, selfish temptations with a peace that passes understanding, with love for our enemies, with a vision of eternity as we choose to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our hearts loyal to Him.

God brings people into circumstances that are beyond their ability so that they will choose to turn to Him, ask for His deliverance, and learn to trust Him; i.e., increase their faith in Him.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 9
Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalms that describe Jesus as our Shepherd—and of course the most famous, Psalm 23. How many of you have memorized this psalm?

What a wonderful psalm of comfort—yet as I have grown in my understanding of God's kingdom of love, the sin problem, and God's solution for it, I have realized the Holy Spirit inspired this psalm with more than just comfort in times of earthly troubles, but a revelation of salvation from sin:

"The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want"

God is watching out for me and I don't need to worry about where my support will come from. He will provide all my soul needs.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside the still waters"

To as sheep green pastures are food, it is our bread. Jesus provides the bread we need and the water we are to drink. Jesus said, I am the bread of heaven and if we would receive it He would give us living water. The Psalmist is teaching us the truth of the secrets to eternal life, notice what comes next after eating the food and drinking the water our Shepherd provides.

"He restores my soul"

He will heal my inner man, cleanse my conscience, and restore my individuality, purify my heart, restore within me the authority to be self-governed that Adam lost, the ability to choose what is right, to say no to evil, the last fruit of the Spirit—self-control!

"He leads me in the path of righteousness for his name sake"

He will lead me in the path which restores me to righteousness, the path that makes me right inside, like He originally intended, so that He and His ways will be glorified in my life—and notice where the path our Good Shepherd leads us that is required to restore us to righteousness…

"When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me"

He, then, after providing for me, strengthening me, cleansing my conscience, removing my guilt, restoring my individuality and ability to say no to evil, leads me in the path to ultimate righteousness, the path through the valley that feels like I am going to die. The valley in which self surrenders and is crucified, the valley which frees me from the domination of fear and selfishness. The valley that Jacob went through the night he

wrestled the angel and finally died to the old deceiving ways and with God overcame his fear and selfishness and thus had his named changed from Jacob-deceiver, to Israel—one who with God overcomes, because his character changed. It was the valley that Peter went through after denying Jesus when he went out and wept bitterly and was fully converted. It was the valley David went through after confronted by Nathan and wrote the 51st psalm. It is the valley that every saved person must go through in order to be restored to righteousness. But while in that valley…

"Your rod and staff comfort me"

He comforts me with his shepherd's rod and staff, which is used by the shepherd to beat back my attackers, and lift me out of the ditch when I fall

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"

With my critics and accusers and enemies all around He provides me a rich bounty of spiritual food to strengthen and develop my soul

"You anoint my head with oil"

He provides His Spirit to enlighten, cleanse, renew, empower, and give wisdom

"My cup runs over"

My heart, renewed, cleansed, and freed from fear and selfishness runs over with love for God and my fellow man

"Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life"

Living a life of love results in goodness and mercy following in my wake wherever I go

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"

And, having been recreated by God, I will forever be a living stone in the Lord's heavenly temple!

This is God's plan: to heal and restore us for eternal life with him, in reality!

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- The torment of Christ's separation from His Father, caused by Christ carrying the entire world's sins, can be measured only by the extent of their closeness, namely, their unparalleled oneness (John 1:1, 2; John 10:30). Yet, even the depths of inexplicable suffering could not break the unity between the Father and the Son. In His utter forsakenness, Christ unconditionally entrusts Himself to the Father, despite the utter depths of despair He faced. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 70).

Then the lesson quotes the following from of *The Desire of Ages* the following:

- Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. (The Desire of Ages 753).

Do you hear the following two sentences as being identical, meaning the same thing, or is there a very important difference?

- The torment of Christ's separation from His Father, caused by Christ **carrying the entire world's sins**, can be measured only by the extent of their closeness, namely, their unparalleled oneness…
- Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid **the iniquity of us all**.

Does one describe events through imposed law while the other through design law?

What is interesting is that EGW the author of *The Desire of Ages* quoted here advanced the message of the Adventist reformers who at the GC 1888 GC was opposed by the Adventists legalists. The legalists insisted that the Ten Commandments are eternal while the reformers argued they were added because of sinful human need by our gracious and merciful God. The reformers taught design law and that salvation is healing of the sinner from sin, while the legalist taught that sin is a legal problem and salvation is paying God a legal penalty to get legally declared to be righteous while we remain unrighteous. EGW, who the lesson quotes, here rejected the legalists view and advanced what we are teaching, but the church leadership, like the Sanhedrin in Christ's day, rejected the advancing truth and instead have promoted the legal lies of Satan in which God is the source of death inflicted upon sinners as punishment for sin.

So, in the quote for the lesson they have Christ carrying sins, as in bad deeds, behaviors, acts of sin—while EGW has Christ taking up our iniquity, or sinfulness, the sin-sickness with which each of us was born and which causes the symptoms known as sins. The legalists have Christ being externally punished for sin crimes of the people, while EGW has Christ taking up the infection if sinfulness in order to destroy it and take away the sinfulness itself thereby healing and curing humanity. As John the Baptist said about Jesus, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, not the punishment of God for the *sins* of the world.

So, in the very next chapter in the book *The Desire of Ages* that the lesson quotes, EGW makes in overwhelmingly clear that she taught design law and rejected the penal substitutionary legal lie that has infected the church and she describes how this conflict over God's law and how we understand it is at the root of the controversy and comes to a head before the coming of Christ. *The Desire of Ages* was written after the 1888 GC and was first published in 1898, it describes the message the Adventist Reformers wanted the church to take too the world, but as you will see, it is quite different than the message being taught in our official materials, like the Adult Study Guide.

So, as we examine this chapter, ask yourself, what law lens is the author describing things through, and is it the same as we have been taught in more recent publications?

- Christ did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and with His parting breath He exclaimed, “It is finished.” John 19:30. The battle had been won. His right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory. As a Conqueror He planted His banner on the eternal heights. Was there not joy among the angels? All heaven triumphed in the Saviour's victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost. (The Desire of Ages 758.1) [But how was Satan defeated? What was necessary to defeat Satan? Was power used to punish Satan? If it was a power issue couldn’t God have defeated Satan long before the Cross? So, what was Christ providing and achieving that won the battle with Satan at the Cross?]

  To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, “It is finished,” had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. (The Desire of Ages 758.2) [Did the unfallen angels, like Gabriel, need a legal payment to pay for their sins? No, but did they need the Cross? Doesn’t Paul write in Colossians that “all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross!” So, what did the angels need that Jesus provided at the cross if they didn’t need a blood payment to an angry god to keep that god from killing them? And do we need the same thing?]

  Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. (The Desire of Ages 758.3) [God’s principles of truth, love, and freedom were warring against Satan’s principles the lies, fear, selfishness, and external coercive force—the lie of imposed law, made up rules, power over, inflicted punishments, which are all part of Satan’s kingdom. Fear and selfishness lead to dominance, use of power, coercion, making up rules, and infliction of punishment—Satan’s kingdom, the kingdoms of this world. And no one, including God, can get love, loyalty, friendship, trust, and devotion by threatening and inflicting punishment for not giving it.]

  It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God. Of Lucifer the Lord says, “Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.” Ezekiel 28:12. Lucifer had been the covering cherub. He had stood in the light of God's presence. He had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe. After he had sinned, his power to deceive was the more deceptive, and the unveiling of his character was the more difficult, because of the exalted position he had held with the Father. (The Desire of Ages 758.4) [Because Satan was in leadership, was loved and trusted, when he lied, his lies were more difficult to expose. And lies cannot be refuted by simply declaring the truth, evidence must reveal the lie to fully refute and eradicate it.]

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. (The Desire of Ages 759.1) [Can one destroy lies with power, might, inflicted punishments? This is why the penal legal lies perpetuate the sin problem and obstruct the actual power of the gospel from healing hearts and minds. Teaching God will use power to punish sinners and destroy sin is a lie, God cannot destroy sin by the use of might and power, He can only destroy sin by the power of the gospel—truth destroys lies, love destroys selfishness and fear. So when the church teaches that God uses power to punish sinners, they have God acting the role of Satan and they obstruct the gospel. Again, note this is the message that the Adventist Reformers wanted to take to the world, but this message has been replaced in our official publications with the penal legal lie of a punishing god.]

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe. (The Desire of Ages 759.2) [Because eternal security means eliminating from the hearts and minds of intelligent beings the lies about God, the doubts, the fear, and selfishness. Simply destroying Satan and his angels while his lies are still believed would not restore love and trust in God, it would not eliminate the lies or stop the rebellion, in fact it would fuel more rebellion and fear of God.]

Satan led men into sin, and the plan of redemption was put in operation. For four thousand years, Christ was working for man's uplifting, and Satan for his ruin and degradation. And the heavenly universe beheld it all. (The Desire of Ages 759.3) [This is the entire story of the OT—the promise of Genesis 3:15, the coming Messiah. God working to bring our Savior to redeem us from sin, and Satan working to both obstruct it, by destroying the branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come, but also to corrupt the plan by infecting the minds of people with his lie that God’s law functions like human law, so that all the truths God had been revealing through history would be misconstrued and misunderstood thereby keeping minds trapped in his fear-based, self-centered, human-devised imperial law concept with a punishing god who requires a sacrifice be paid to him.]

When Jesus came into the world, Satan's power was turned against Him. From the time when He appeared as a babe in Bethlehem, the usurper worked to bring about His destruction. In every possible way he sought **to prevent Jesus from developing a perfect childhood**, **a faultless manhood, a holy ministry, and an unblemished sacrifice**. But he was defeated. He could not lead Jesus into sin. He could not discourage Him, or drive Him from a work He had come on earth to do. From the desert to Calvary, the storm of **Satan's wrath** beat upon Him, but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of His

Father, and press on in the bloodstained path. All the efforts of Satan to oppress and overcome Him only brought out in a purer light His spotless character. (The Desire of Ages 759.4) [This is the first description, but not the last, of the objective nature of Christ's mission. Those who criticize us will lie and claim that we teach Moral Influence Theory, the idea that Christ only came to reveal truth to morally influence us back to trust in God. And it is true that was part of His mission, that alone would not save the species. The revelation of truth was all the loyal angels needed to solidify them in their loyalty, but fallen, sinful human beings needed something more. We needed a sinless humanity, a new heart and right spirit, a humanity purified from sin. And Jesus came to not only reveal the truth, but to purge the infection of sin from humanity and purify the species and offer us, through faith, a new life, a new heart and right spirit of love instead of fear and selfishness. Thus, this author describes how Jesus, as a human had to develop this perfect humanity through confrontation with the infection of sin and overcome it and eradicate it thus destroying death and the cause of death. In Jesus the living law of love and truth was lived out perfectly. When Satan attacked, Jesus loved, forgave, left others free. In His humanity Jesus chose to live out the principles of God's design laws rather than the principles of survival of the fittest.]

All heaven and the unfallen worlds had been witnesses to the controversy. With what intense interest did they follow the closing scenes of the conflict. They beheld the Saviour enter the garden of Gethsemane, His soul bowed down with the horror of a great darkness. They heard His bitter cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Matthew 26:39. As the Father's presence was withdrawn, they saw Him sorrowful with a bitterness of sorrow exceeding that of the last great struggle with death. The bloody sweat was forced from His pores, and fell in drops upon the ground. Thrice the prayer for deliverance was wrung from His lips. Heaven could no longer endure the sight, and a messenger of comfort was sent to the Son of God. (The Desire of Ages 759.5) [We are a theater to angels 1Cor 4:9, angels long to look into these things. Jesus, as our human substitute, taking up humanity damaged by Adam's sin, was tempted in all points like us, feeling the pull of fear and selfishness that our humanity tempts us with, chose to love, to give his life freely in order to destroy the infection and purify the life He took upon Himself from the death causing element that Adam introduced.]

Heaven beheld the Victim betrayed into the hands of the murderous mob, and with mockery and violence hurried from one tribunal to another. It heard the sneers of His persecutors because of His lowly birth. It heard the denial with cursing and swearing by one of His best-loved disciples. It saw the frenzied work of Satan, and his power over the hearts of men. Oh, fearful scene! the Saviour seized at midnight in Gethsemane, dragged to and fro from palace to judgment hall, arraigned twice before the priests, twice before the Sanhedrin, twice before Pilate, and once before Herod, mocked, scourged, condemned, and led out to be crucified, bearing the heavy burden of the cross, amid the wailing of the daughters of Jerusalem and the jeering of the rabble. (The Desire of Ages 760.1) [Can you imagine the fatigue, the pain, physical, mental, and emotional, the temptation to be angry, to be frustrated, the injustice, the lies, the wrongness of it all. Yet Jesus loved, He had all power given to Him yet He did not use it to punish sinners; He didn't use His power to restrict liberty, to punish

wrong doers. He was showing the entire universe God's character of love, God's design law of love, truth, liberty, and how God wields power.]

Heaven viewed with grief and amazement Christ hanging upon the cross, blood flowing from His wounded temples, and sweat tinged with blood standing upon His brow. From His hands and feet the blood fell, drop by drop, upon the rock drilled for the foot of the cross. The wounds made by the nails gaped as the weight of His body dragged upon His hands. His labored breath grew quick and deep, as His soul panted under the burden of the sins of the world. All heaven was filled with wonder when the prayer of Christ was offered in the midst of His terrible suffering,—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. Yet there stood men, formed in the image of God, joining to crush out the life of His only-begotten Son. What a sight for the heavenly universe!.. (The Desire of Ages 760.2)

Satanic agencies confederated with evil men in leading the people to believe Christ the chief of sinners, and to make Him the object of detestation. Those who mocked Christ as He hung upon the cross were imbued with the spirit of the first great rebel. He filled them with vile and loathsome speeches. He inspired their taunts. But by all this he gained nothing. (The Desire of Ages 760.4) [If we are not surrendered to Jesus Christ, if we do not have the Holy Spirit indwelling our Spirit temples, our hearts and minds, then we are aligning ourselves with the demonic. And the more we choose the demonic, the more closely we harmonize our spirits with the demonic until we eventually are imbued with the spirit of Satan, the spirit of rebellion, of hate, of envy, jealousy, evil surmising, judgmentalism, discord, selfishness, exploitation, a willingness to abuse others, to inflict punishment upon others to make them pay for their sin crimes. We get the exact opposite fruits of those of the Holy Spirit, we get the fruits of demonic spirits and we end up warring against God, even if we are religious leaders of the church God set up, like those Jews who crucified Jesus.]

Could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed. Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Revelation 12:10. (The Desire of Ages 761.1)

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. (The Desire of Ages 761.2) [The Adventist Reformers identified Satan as the murderer of Jesus. The legalists that took control of the Adventists church identify God as the executioner of Jesus—but they say God killed Him to satisfy His divine justice. These are not reconcilable, they are opposites, diametrically opposed because they are rooted in two antagonistic systems, two divergent laws, God's design law of love versus Satan's imposed law system. This paragraph

describes Jesus words that when He is lifted up the prince of this world will be cast out—and all will be drawn to Jesus. In most Bible translations the translators add the word “men” to the text reading, will draw all “men” but the word “men” is not in the Greek. Jesus was saying that He would draw all, angels and humans, and that for the angels Satan was unmasked, that Jesus revealed the truth to refute the lies and no longer would the angels listen to anything Satan had to say. Satan’s work was restricted, not by some force shield or use of external power like Satan or humans would use, but Satan was restricted by the power of truth and love being solidified in the minds and hearts of the loyal angels. They could no longer be deceived and had no remaining sympathy for Satan.]

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve. (The Desire of Ages 761.3) [What was left to be revealed? What did man not yet understand or know that could only be understood by evidence, by the outworking of the principles in reality? Notice what comes next—and it is exactly where we are today, the conflict in Christianity and Adventism over which view of the law one holds]

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin**, **He would not be a God of truth and justice**. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. (The Desire of Ages 761.4) [The principles to be more fully revealed were that imposed human law constructs do not heal hearts and minds, that legal penalties paid to a punishing deity do not restore love and trust, but instead perpetuate rebellion and sin, and we see the Dark Ages, the use of might and power to destroy enemies in the name of Jesus—such complete corruption based on what? The lie that God’s law functions like human law and thus justice is punishing the wicked. And this is how things will end with Satan impersonating Christ and claiming that his justice requires that unrepented sins must be punished and therefore those who refuse to accept him as their sin-bearer who has taken their punishment, he will be required to sadly punish. And billions will say, “this is our god we have waited for him.”]

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. (The

Desire of Ages 761.5) [Where is there hope for us human sinners? In the truth about God, His character of love, His design law methods—through God's truth we can have the lies purged from our hearts and be won back to trust in God and when we open our hearts in trust we receive, from the Holy Spirit His love poured into our hearts, we receive the life of Christ reproduced in us. We are reborn, recreated, renewed, cleansed, --this is not a legal adjustment, it is healing, renewing, recreating—it is reality. Through the design law of worship, by beholding we are changed, we are won to trust, receive the indwelling Spirit which imbues us with new desires and by worshiping God as Jesus revealed Him we become ever more like Him, transformed to love God and others.]

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not aside justice. The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. (The Desire of Ages 762.1) [Why could the law not be changed to meet man in His fallen condition? For the same reason the law of respiration cannot be changed to meet a person who ties a plastic bag over their head—the person must be changed, they must be put back in harmony with the law, for God's laws are the laws life are built upon. Jesus sacrificed Himself to eliminate the infection, the breach to love, the fear and selfishness and restore humanity back into harmony with God and His living law. What is justice? Doing what is right or just, according to what? The law, what law? If one believes the human law lie then they claim justice is inflicting punishment, but since the Adventist Reformers were advancing the design law reality of God as Creator, notice what they describe as justice what comes next:]

The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. (The Desire of Ages 762.2) [Notice what justice is—she didn't write the broken law requires a death penalty be paid to the government, God, or the law in order to maintain justice. She wrote that the law requires righteousness, which is rightness, which is justice, which is the restoration of rightness into the human being for God's law is the basis of life. This requires a human being to DEVELOP a perfect character and this is what Jesus came to do. And having developed a perfect character, then righteousness, which is God's justice, or doing what is right is the application of what Jesus achieved in us to imbue us, with the attributes of God, to build us up into Christlikeness. We have forgiveness of our sins, not through a legal payment, but through God's forbearance, and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ—this is how God is just, by justifying—i.e., restoring us to be just or right with God by healing us from sin. This is the message the Adventist Reformers brought in 1888 and it is the

message that was rejected by the legalistic leadership who continues to teach the lie that God's law functions like human law.]

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10. (The Desire of Ages 762.3) [How, by showing that God's law is design law, the living law of life and by restoring that law into humanity, God does what is right or just in eliminating sinfulness and restoring us to righteousness.]

By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love. (The Desire of Ages 762.4) [Jesus as a human, using only human abilities, chose to love perfectly and to voluntarily surrender His life in love, thus in His humanity Jesus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness, the carnal nature, the me first principle that Satan sowed into humanity, and rose again in a purified humanity with a perfect, sinless, character that He developed. And we receive this as a free gift via the indwelling Holy Spirt—we get new desires, new motives, new insights, new inspiration and as we choose to say yes to the leading of the Holy Spirit we are transformed to grow ever more like Jesus.]

Another deception was now to be brought forward. Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. (The Desire of Ages 762.5) [The replacement of design law with imposed law, the idea that God's law is changeable or amendable.]

That the law which was spoken by God's own voice is faulty, that some specification has been set aside, is the claim which Satan now puts forward. It is the last great deception that he will bring upon the world. He needs not to assail the whole law; if he can lead men to disregard one precept, his purpose is gained. For "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10. By consenting to break one precept, men are brought under Satan's power. By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world. This work is foretold in prophecy. Of the great apostate power which is the representative of Satan, it is declared, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand." Daniel 7:25. (The Desire of Ages 763.1) [It doesn't matter on what point one claims God's law is changed, the real issues is the belief that God's law functions

like human law. Satan loves to get people to argue whether the Sabbath was changed or whether images can be made, or methods of baptism etc., but the real issue is whether God's law is changeable at all, i.e imposed rules or design protocols.]

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. (The Desire of Ages 763.2) [Did we not see this during COVID, men setting up laws to coerce the consciences of others and oppress their fellow men? And the church leadership went along with this because they rejected the message of 1888 and chose imposed human law instead.]

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. (The Desire of Ages 763.3) [The Adventist reformers taught that the warfare against God's law began in heaven, but the Ten Commandments didn't exist yet—angels didn't have a written law, there was no law against adultery, or sins passing down the generations, or honoring their mothers and fathers, or even a weekly Sabbath as this earth and the Sabbath hadn't been created yet. So, how did Satan begin his warfare against God's law? By alleging God's laws are imposed and God is required to punish sin. We develop our character based on the God we worship, by beholding we are changed, and the God we worship is determined by what we believe about God's law. If we believe God's law functions like human law we believe God functions like a creature, a being who uses power to inflict punishment for rule breaking. We can only be transformed to be like Jesus by returning to worshiping God as Jesus revealed Him to be, to worshiping our Creator whose laws are design laws exactly as this Adventist reformer wrote.]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Malachi 4:1),—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, "Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; **... I will destroy thee**, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." Then "the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;" "they shall be as though they had not been." Ezekiel 28:6-19; Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16. (The Desire of Ages 763.4) [What does this mean? Does it mean all this author wrote about design law is suddenly set aside and in the end God will use power to inflict punishment to destroy? Those who cling to the human law lie will use language like this to claim such a thing. But this author explains in the very next paragraph and notice it is entirely design law]

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the

service of sin, **he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life.** He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. (The Desire of Ages 764.1) [Just as Paul wrote in Galatians 6:8 those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction. This author is totally consistent with the Bible.]

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. (The Desire of Ages 764.2)

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. (The Desire of Ages 764.3) [God sets things on an eternal basis of security so that sin never arises again by the exercise of His methods, principles, and power—the power of truth, love, and freedom which wins our hearts to love and trust so that we will never be shaken from it.]

TUESDAY

The lesson is about the covenant with king David, we can find it in 2 Samuel 7, the lesson has a typo, which is easy to do and I have done myself more than once, citing 1 Samuel 7, but it is 2 Samuel, let's read it:

- "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. (2 Samuel 7:12-14 NKJV).

Is this a different covenant than God has given prior, or is it the same exact covenant given in Genesis 3:15?

It is the same—it is just as history unfolds the Bible keeps narrowing down our focus on the human family tree through whom the Messiah is coming.

- In Genesis 3:15—the Messiah is going to come from someone among the entire human race descended from Adam. Thus Satan works to corrupt the entire human race and almost succeeded at the time of the Flood, only one righteous man left on the earth, so God acted in mercy to keep open the avenue for the Messiah.
- God renewed His covenant with Noah and the promised Messiah would come from Noah's descendants, and God added some new promises that He would never destroy the world with a flood again, but also that the climate would continue in a stable fashion until the second coming, that the message of global climate disaster is a lie.
- God renewed His covenant with Abraham, now we know it is through Abraham's descendants that the promise of Genesis 3:15 will be fulfilled
- But not through Ishmael—it is through Isaac, so the Bible focuses on Isaac's children, but not through Esau
- The covenant was renewed through Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel and our focus narrows further
- And then Israel tells us it is through Judah's children and we narrow further
- And now we are told it is through David's line and our focus narrows further.

But the promise given to David is the exact same covenant that was given to Adam we are only having revealed to us through whose family the Messiah will be born.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- One graphic depiction of Christ's ultimate victory is found in the pre-Advent scene in Daniel 7, which shows that, after judgment is given " 'in favor of the saints of the Most High' " (Dan. 7:22, NKJV), His kingdom is established, and " 'His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom' " (Dan. 7:27, NKJV). Because of the Cross, the promise of the kingdom is assured. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 72).

What do you think of this sentence?

- Christ's ultimate victory is found in the pre-Advent scene in Daniel 7, which shows that, after judgment is given " 'in favor of the saints of the Most High' " (Dan. 7:22, NKJV).

The lesson had to edit the text in order to make it appear the Bible says what they want it to say—because the Bible doesn't actually say this.

Let's read it from the NKJV which they cite, then some other versions and find out what is really going on:

- I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. (Daniel 7:21-22 NKJV).

The words "in favor" are italicized in the NKJV which indicates they are not in the Hebrew, they are added by the translators. The KJV reads:

- Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that hithe saints possessed the kingdom. (Daniel 7:22 KJV).

The law lens makes all the difference, in the human law lie version, judgment is a judicial act by the ruling magistrate to determine guilt or innocence or if proper legal compensation and payment has been made to legally account for the violation of the law. In the legal view, the problem is our sin crimes which require punishment.

In the design law view the problem is that we have believed lies about God and broke trust with Him, and that the only way to restore us to trust is to remove the lies about God. And God's enemy, symbolized by the little horn power, is warring against the saints and winning until they are given judgment, in other words until the saints are given discernment, the ability to differentiate the truth from the lies of Satan. Which means until the truth of God's character and design law is recovered from the lies of Romanism which has corrupted Christianity with imposed law. And when the truth of God's true character as Creator and law as design law is recovered then the little horn power has no further power over the saints who make a right judgment about God.

To flush this out—consider what Paul says about this war:

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

We are at war with the liar who infects our minds about God and we are losing until we have discernment, judgment to know the difference and can make a right judgment about God.

- Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged." (Romans 3:4 NET)

God was accused, God has been on trial, and we are to decide if God is like Jesus revealed or like Satan alleges. Sadly, through the Romanization of Christianity the Christian world has accepted the lie that God is the source of inflicted pain and punishment for sin, and God is the problem we need to do something about with a blood payment to assuage His wrath.

But people are only held in this bondage if they believe the lie about God's law, when they return to worshiping the Creator, when they receive the 3 Angel's messages to worship Him who made the heavens earth and see they finally make a right judgment about God and thus the little horn no longer has power over them. This is the message to finish the Reformation and why Satan has worked so hard in Adventism to get us to reject it and hold to penal legal lies.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- God endows the Messiah with an everlasting kingship (Ps. 110:1-3) and a priesthood of a superior rank, the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4-7). The Lord seals His word with a solemn promise (Heb. 6:18). God's oath not to relent from giving us a perfect Priest is a sign of His grace. People's sins and open rebellions constantly provoke God to abandon His people, but God's oath is unchangeable and guarantees God's grace in revoking His judgment over the repentant people (Exod. 32:14, Ps. 106:45). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 73).

What do you hear in this paragraph?

I find it a mischaracterization of God to suggest we could "provoke" Him to abandon us. This is what happens when we judge God through the human law lens, we judge God to be like us. It is quite sad. God is not provoked by rebellion to abandon His people. God the Creator, the all-knowing God of love, mercy, goodness and truth, perfectly diagnosis the condition of every person—He is not provoked to abandon, He finally lets go when a person is beyond healing, when nothing, no amount of truth or love will have any saving impact and in fact the unveiled glory of God—His life-giving love and truth would be torment to them—then God let's go, sets them free to reap what they insist upon!

Also, I object to the sentence "God's oath is unchangeable and guarantees God's grace in revoking His judgment over the repentant people." Again, this mischaracterizes God and the problem of sin into the lie of legalism. God never "revokes" His judgment, for His judgment is the accurate diagnosis of what is. His diagnosis remains and His therapeutic judgments of what is needed to heal and restore remain, because God is the God of reality and His judgments of reality are accurate and true and thus He does not revoke them. It is so sad to see this corruption and mischaracterization of our incredible Creator God, being presented in such diminished ways, advocating for attributes that belong to God's enemy.

The last paragraph states,

- Being both Divine King and everlasting Priest, Christ has unprecedented superiority over human priests and kings; so, we may take hope. Christ upholds a superior covenant that is based on God's oath, not human promises. He serves in the heavenly sanctuary. His priesthood is not affected by sin or death, like that of human priests, and thus, He can intercede for and save His people forever. The reconciling work of Christ as the perfect and compassionate Priest gives His people a lasting assurance of abiding in God's very presence (Heb. 6:19, 20).

> Christ's royal priesthood will abolish the rule of evil, not only in people's hearts but also in the world. He will keep the promise of Psalm 2 that every nation and ruler will be subject to the royal judgment of Christ Jesus (Ps. 2:6-9; Ps. 110:1, 2, 5, 6). Jesus' wonderful royal priesthood makes an absolute claim on our obedience and trust. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 73).

I like the idea in this paragraph, "His priesthood is not affected by sin or death, like that of human priests…" because it leads us to think of

- Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NIV84).

The man who denies God's law, who sets up his own legal system of rules with imposed punishment rather than acknowledging God's laws are design laws, thus is against the law of God, without the law of God, or lawless. And he sets himself up in God's temple, but as the lesson points out it cannot be the temple in heaven, thus what temple is it? The Spirit temple our hearts and minds, this is the same little horn power that wars against the saints and prevails until we are given judgment to recognize God's law is not like human law and therefore God is not like a human dictator and salvation is not a penal/legal process.

God is waiting for His people to finally make a right judgment about Him and bring Him glory for the hour of His judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water by returning to Design law understanding of God and His kingdom.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 10
Lessons of the Past

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

This lesson was a very sad lesson for me, it was difficult to study and is going to be difficult to teach because it is painful to realize how history is repeating itself in our very own day.

Read first paragraph,

- In numerous psalms, praise takes the form of narrating the Lord's mighty acts of salvation. These psalms are often called "salvation history psalms" or "historical psalms." Some appeal to God's people, telling them to learn from their history, particularly from their mistakes and the mistakes of their ancestors. Certain historical psalms contain a predominant hymnal note that highlights God's past wonderful deeds on behalf of God's people and that strengthen their trust in the Lord, who is able and faithful to deliver them from their present hardships. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 76).

Paul wrote:

- Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did…These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us… (1 Corinthians 10:6 & 11 NIV84).

So the lesson brings forth such an important point—we are to learn from history. So, let's do that today.

Consider Jesus' words to the religious leaders of His day, and ask what can we learn from history?

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84).

What lessons are there in this historical conversation that are applicable to us today:

- Who were the people Jesus said this to? The leaders of the Jewish religion, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees.
- What are the Scriptures Jesus is referencing that these religious leaders diligently study? The Old Testament 39 books that we have in our Bible.
- Were the Jews studying the wrong Scriptures?

- Did they belong to the wrong religious organization?
- Were they worshiping as the wrong temple?
- Were they keeping the wrong Sabbath?
- Were they eating the wrong foods?
- Were they paying wrong amount of tithe?
- Were they paying the tithe in the wrong place?
- Were they wearing the wrong clothes?
- Were they friends of God?
- Were they teaching the truth?
- Or were they, despite teaching all the right doctrines enemies of God and teaching lies about God that were obstructing people from experiencing salvation?
- And who are the Jews at this time in history? God's chosen and especially blessed people, in other words God's church.
- And what does history teach us, and the Bible specifically say in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Romans about what God's specially chose people did for God?
    - "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." (Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22; Romans 2:24 NIV84)

History teaches us that the people called and blessed by God with the Scriptures misunderstood the Bible in such a way that they lied about God, ended up worshiping such a false picture of God that when God came and stood among them, they not only hated Him and killed Him, they believed justice required them to inflict the most excruciating torture possible upon Him—just as some in our own church today teach—they blaspheme God today teaching that God's justice requires Him to torture people and then kill them.

Jesus further said,

- "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. (Matthew 23:15 NIV84)

What are we learning from history?

- These religious leaders belonged to the **right**, God ordained, organization; they studied and taught from the **right** Bible; they ate the **right** foods; they worshiped on the **right** day; and they engaged in active evangelism, mission work but when they did convert a person to their religion they make them twice the son of hell.
- What is the lesson? What do we learn from history?
- Is there something wrong with the Bible they used?
- Is there something wrong with the Sabbath they kept?
- Is there something wrong with evangelizing?
- Is there something wrong with eating a healthy diet?
- Is there something wrong with paying tithe?

- What was wrong?
- The interpretation they put on the Bible!

There are facts and there are interpretations of the facts. What we learn from history is that one can have the **right** facts, belong to the **right** organization that is set up by and called by God for a special mission, and yet, interpret the facts in a way that form false beliefs about God, so significantly that people end up hating and crucifying God, and then persecute and eliminate from their membership those who tell the truth about God, and thus corrupt the organization God set up to lighten the world for His coming.

Is it possible that these same things have happened to Christianity and to Adventism?

Did the Christian church end up interpreting Scripture in such a way that people, claiming to be Christian, claiming to be representing Jesus, went to wars with crosses on their tunic to kill the non-Christians? Did they persecute and burn at the stake Christians who didn't worship the way the persecutors believed was correct? Did they seek to silence voices of truth? Did people within the organized churches, people who called themselves Christians practice the same abusive methods as those who crucified Christ?

Does the fact the Jews did this to Jesus mean that the Jewish nation was not called by God? No, they were! Does it mean they had the wrong Bible? No, they had the right Bible.

What about in Adventism? Has the Adventist organization repeated what the Jews did 2000 years ago? Consider these words from one of the founders of the SDA church, they were written after the 1888 GC, after church leadership rejected the healing truth, the design law truth, the righteousness by faith message and instead chose, like the Jews 2000 years ago the legal way, the fallen human rules and rule enforcement through inflicted punishment way:

- On many occasions the Holy Spirit did work, but those who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis were waiting for a chance to travel over the same ground again, because their spirit was the same. Afterward, when they had **evidence heaped upon evidence**, some were convicted, but those who were not softened and subdued by the Holy Spirit's working, **put their own interpretation** upon every manifestation of the grace of God, and they have lost much. They pronounced in their heart and soul and words that this manifestation of the Holy Spirit was fanaticism and delusion. They stood like a rock, the waves of mercy flowing upon and around them, but beaten back by **their hard and wicked hearts**, which resisted the Holy Spirit's working. Had this been received, it would have made them wise unto salvation; holier men, prepared to do the work of God with sanctified ability. **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ.** (1888 1478.2, emphasis mine)

- An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth [that the Ten Commandments were added] lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition

> manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition **Satan succeeded in shutting away** from our people, in a great measure, the **special power of the Holy Spirit** that God longed to impart to them. **The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency** which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The **light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted,** and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world (Selected Messages, vol. 1. pp. 233, 234, emphasis mine).

Does the Adventist Church:

- Have the wrong 66 books of Scripture?
- The wrong Bible Sabbath?
- The wrong percentage of tithe?
- The wrong historical record?

There are facts, and there are interpretations of facts. The Jews interpreted the right Bible in the wrong way and ended up rejecting and murdering Jesus.

The Adventist leadership in 1888 did the same thing with the message that was to lighten the world for Christ's second coming.

The Jews after crucifying Christ, as an organization, did not repent but doubled down on their rejection of Christ and began persecuting the Jewish members who had the truth and tried to teach the truth in their organization, thus driving them out of the organization and shutting the heavenly light out of that system.

Have we learned from that history? Has the Christian church done the same thing? In the Dark Ages did those with advancing truth get persecuted and driven out of fellowship from their church by the church leaders, who claimed to be protecting orthodoxy and stopping heresy?

What about in Adventism? Have Adventist leaders been doing the same thing—have many of them, rather than accepting the advancing light of design law, doubled down on the imposed penal/legal lies and have actively sought to expunge from fellowship members and pastors who know the truth and are sharing the light of God's design laws and character of love with the people?

What was wrong with the Jews 2000 years ago—they had a legal way of understanding Scripture—they believed God's law is imposed and that justice is punishing rule-breakers, and that dealing with sin requires a sacrifice be offered to the offended god to pay for one's sins. They interpreted the right Scriptures in the wrong way.

The SDA church's official publications have done the same thing since 1888.

Is the SDA church the wrong organization—I do not believe so—I believe it was blessed by God with truth for this time for the mission of taking an end-time message to the world to prepare the world for Christ's second advent, just like the Jews were called to prepare the world for Christ's first advent. However, just like the Jews had leaders who created an orthodoxy of lies, based on human law, so too in the Adventist organization there is a cadre of leaders who have promoted the penal/legal orthodoxy that is based on Satan's lies about God's law and those who hold to those lies specifically opposed and obstruct the final message of mercy to the world, just as EGW wrote happened at the 1888 GC.

And I believe, just like the 2000 years ago, from the Jewish people came the Apostles, who from their witness converted Gentiles to the true message, from the Adventist membership will arise non-clergy, fisherman, tax collectors, physicians, who understand the true message and will share that message where God opens doors and from their witness and great multitude of people will also leave the Babylonian system if imperial rule with its false punishing god and return to worshiping the Creator in truth and in love. But, they will not join with the SDA organization any more than the converted pagans joined with the Jewish religion—because the legal lies that dominate the system are contrary to the saving truth.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the history of Israel as a people and their problems as lessons for us. And it is such a rich history, with so many powerful historical lessons but also object lessons for us to learn from.

The lessons mentions many, including the Exodus and settlement in Canaan—are there any lessons from that history that apply to us today?

- Slaves in Egypt symbolically represent being slaves in sin
- Moses a deliverer represents Jesus our deliverer from sin
- The people who left were not just Jews, but a mixed multitude—all those who during the 10th plague put the blood of the sacrificial lamb on their door posts. This represents those who claim Jesus as their Savior being part of those who are on their way to the heavenly Promised land.
- This group is a mixed multitude, as Jesus said, the wheat and tares grow up together until the harvest, until we enter the promised land. And in the wilderness we see all kinds of problems from people constantly rebelling against God and His plan. Likewise, we see in the history of Christianity rebellion against God, and in the history of Adventism rebellion against God.

Consider this quote, in which the author in the aftermath of 1888, compares the Adventist leaders with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who led a rebellion against Moses during the Exodus on the way to Canaan. And our question is, can we learn from history?

- “When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over [re-enacting] the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**. I have placed you in your proper position, **which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; [What was EGW advocating? The design law healing view of the gospel promoted by Jones and Waggoner. Righteousness by faith message—which is actual, real, genuine righteousness within the heart/mind of those who trust in Jesus. The rebuilding and healing of our characters when we trust in Jesus—the fulfillment of the day of at-one-ment metaphor, the purifying of the bride, the groom receiving His bride bringing her into unity/oneness with Him, the cleansing of the sanctuary. But church leadership rejected this healing view and chose instead to embrace the false imperial legal view of declared righteousness even though we are not. They rejected the manna and chose the fleshpots of Egypt. This, is, according to the writer a message from the angel of the Lord, which tells us this idea is like Korah saying “we can’t succeed in going into the promised land.” And church leaders who prefer the imperial law view, have been telling Adventists ever since that we can’t succeed in experiencing Christ’s righteousness, sin is too great, God can’t give us power to be victorious in our lives, in fact God is the problem who will use His power to kill you if you don’t offer Him the blood of His Son to pay for your sin crimes.] but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. **It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people**. [Friends of Come and Reason around the world, realize that when you are told you are not welcome, you cannot teach your Bible class, that you cannot share the wonders of God’s love that has so transformed your life—that it is not you they are rejecting but Christ they are rejecting.] **They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness**. [By refusing the truth of God’s design law, by holding to Rome’s imperial law lie, they have blinded themselves to how reality works and live in a fantasy of confusion and contradictions mirroring this sinful world with a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death which they call justice. They are in darkness and the SDA church has been wandering in the wilderness led by blind guides for over 130 years.]–Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. (To "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie," Nov. 5, 1892.) {3MR 191.2}

Have we learned from history or are we repeating it right now today?

The lesson also points out the problem with Israel constantly turning to Baal worship, what are the lessons we need to learn from that today? Have we learned from history or are we repeating it?

Who was Baal?

- The son of El
- The god of weather, thunder, lightning, and harvest
- The god who fought the great leviathan—the serpent
- The god who fought against Mot the god of death and in his battle with Mot died and rose again to bring new life and harvest to the land

This was the god previously confronted by Elijah at Mount Carmel—and what was wrong with this god? Baal required appeasement, payment, offerings be made to him to provide blessings.

Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people and Jesus Christ to all Christians who worship a god who requires the blood of a human sacrifice be offered to him on order for him to provide blessings.

Consider this historical quote:

- Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. **They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshiping the **true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature**, [the Creator whose laws are design laws that govern nature] or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. (Faith I Live By 9).

Are we worshiping the Creator God or have we repeated the history of ancient Israel and replaced the true God with that of Baal, a god whose laws are imposed and who is required by law and justice to kill you unless he receives the blood of a sacrifice?

Consider this quote:

- While God has desired to teach men that **from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself**, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction. Thus **the sacrifices and the ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God.** At the same time, Satan has sought to arouse and strengthen the evil passions of men in order that through repeated transgression multitudes might be led on and on, far from God, and hopelessly bound with the fetters of sin. (Prophets and Kings 685).

Have we learned from history, or are we teaching, just like the ancient Jews, the lie that God's law functions like human law, and that God requires legal payment or God will kill us for our sins, and therefore, God killed Jesus so He wouldn't have to kill us, that if we don't propitiate God with the gift of His Son's blood then God's wrath will burn against us?

Don't you see how our church is repeating all the errors of the Jews, teaching the very same lies, the very same distortions, going after Baal in a more modern form, the penal legal substitutionary form?

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on God's promise to give Abraham the Promised Land—what do you think of this promise?

Is this a standalone promise? In other words, Abraham has faith in God and God rewards Him with the present of land? Or is this promise of the land part of another promise and is only being given to Abraham in conjunction with that other promise?

God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land was part of the covenant God made with Abraham. But that covenant that God made with Abraham was simply God carrying out the covenant that He made with Adam in Eden previously.

The covenant of grace, the promise that God would save sinners, was given immediately after Adam sinned:

- And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15 NKJV).

This covenant contains God's promise to send Jesus, the Seed of the woman, to overcome and destroy Satan and sin and redeem humanity. The entire Old Testament is the outworking of this promise.

The promise to Abraham is the recommunication of the promise made in Eden, that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

- In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice (Genesis 22:18 NKJV).

And this promise was repeated to Isaac:

- Live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 26:2–4 NKJV).

And God repeated this promise to Jacob:

- And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 28:13–14 NKJV).

There is no doubt that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promising that that region of land would be given to them and their descendants but that was for the purpose of fulfilling the original promise to humankind to bring the promised Messiah so that all the nations of the earth would be blessed, not just the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And that promise to Abraham was a type of the ultimate promise to the entire human race, also to be received through faith like Abraham received the local promise, we become heirs to the promise—but not to a little strip of land in the Middle East, but to the entire world! How is this? Because God gave Abraham a dual promise or two promises, a local regional one to be fulfilled with the first coming of Jesus and a larger global promise to be fulfilled after the second coming of Jesus.

The Bible is filled with dual prophecies and promises:

- Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:28–32) is also applied by Peter to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–21).
- Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 both start out referring to an earthly king and then transition to the fall of Lucifer.
- Jesus' prophecy about the second coming is also blended with the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24).

In all these dual-fulfillment prophecies, there is a lesser application and a greater application—the lesser is regional; the greater is global.

The covenant with Abraham is the same covenant that was given to Adam, but with Abraham we now have the identification of the specific branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come. And with the recommunication of the covenant to Abraham, God gives a dual-fulfillment prophecy concerning the land: 1) A smaller, local, regional promise that Abraham's genetic descendants would inherit the land of Canaan in order to fulfill their mission to be the genetic family through whom Jesus would be born; and 2) the larger, global, spiritual fulfillment, that the true descendants of Abraham, those who are like Abraham in faith and character would inherit the entire earth!

The covenant with and promises to Abraham focus on two promised lands. The local application is the one in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan for the purpose of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come so that Jesus can fulfill God's greater promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent's head so that the "meek will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)—the true Promised Land.

Abraham has two descendants of a promise—the genetic descendants who inherited Canaan in order to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that …

… the spiritual descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

Here is the biblical evidence for this position:

- The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7).

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

- The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you” (Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84).

This is the larger, global, promise—that the entire earth (east, west, north, south, all points of the compass) will be given to the people of God; the earth will be made new, and those who are like Abraham in character, in faith, whose hearts have been circumcised from sin, will be heirs to this promise and inherit the earth.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin and a highly trained Jewish theologian of the first century, wrote:

- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26–29).

Jesus Himself, in John chapter 8, explicitly told the Jewish leaders of His day these very truths, that genetics did not determine who is considered an heir of Abraham and who would inherit the promise.

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points. The starting point of the global promise was in Eden, in Genesis 3:15; the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur. The ending point of the global is when Jesus recreates the earth and the meek inherit it; the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people to be the avenue for the Messiah was when they crucified Christ and Jesus said to them, “Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38 NIV84).

Jesus masterfully weaves these two covenant promises together in His prophetic description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming as described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. The destruction of Jerusalem occurs because the regional fulfillment of the promise has ended. The genetic descendants kept open the avenue, Messiah had come, but they rejected Him and now there is no

further purpose for a regional land to be occupied by them. The gospel must now go to the world. It is time for the global application, which culminates in the second coming and the meek inheriting the earth.

And the writer of Hebrews agrees with our assessment. Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived "in the promised land" (Hebrews 11:9)—"did not receive the things promised" (Hebrews 11:13), that they were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "All of these people" of faith "did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. … They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that "all of these people" did not receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn't he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Psalm 106 also evokes the major events in Israel's history, including the Exodus, sojourn in the wilderness, and life in Canaan. It stresses the heinous sins of the fathers that culminated in the generation that was carried into exile. Thus, the psalm almost certainly was written when the nation was in Babylon, or after they had returned home, and the psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recounted for God's people these historical incidents and the lessons that the people should have learned from them. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 79).

What can we learn from this history?

Is there an object lesson for us?

They went into captivity because they worshiped false gods, because they preferred Baal to the true Creator God. And they went into Babylon.

Babylon is symbolic of the systems of imperialism. In Daniel 11 it represents the King of the North, those who believe in the God of the Bible but teach that righteousness is using power to punish those who don't. As soon as Nebuchadnezzar believed in Daniel's God he passed a law that any who spoke bad about Daniel's God were to be killed.

Babylon, of all the nations interacting with Israel in the Bible, is the first nation to make a codified system of law and order, the code of Hammurabi. Thus Babylon rightly represents a legal religious

system with a god who makes up rules like humans make up and a god who will use his power to punish rule breakers.

So, Israel is captive in Babylon and God has them set free so they can return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and only about 50-60,000 returned, the vast majority stayed in Babylon.

And today, Revelation has a message, Babylon has fallen come out of her my people. It is time to stop judging God to be like a human dictator, to reject the imposed law lie, to worship Him who made the heaven, earth, sea and fountain of water—to come of the penal legal theological lies. But sadly, only a remnant will come out, the vast majority will stay in Babylon just like Israel did, and teach God is like a Roman dictator who makes up rules and is required by law and justice to use His power to torture and kill the wicked.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about the metaphor of Israel being God's vineyard that He tends,

Read first paragraph,

- However, in Psalm 80, God's vineyard is under His wrath (Ps. 80:12). The prophets announce the vineyard's destruction as the sign of God's judgment because the vine has turned bad (Isa. 5:1-7, Jer. 2:21). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 80).

What law lens do you hear these words through? Is this judicial—the people broke rules so God had to inflict punishment on them for sin? Or is this design law, God judging what the problem is and diagnosing it accurately and then therapeutically judging what action is best to both discipline the people but even more important, keep open the avenue for Messiah and bring salvation to humanity?

And do you read God's wrath as His active use of power to inflict harm, or God's stopping His use of power that was restraining the damage that sin and rebellion would cause?

Consider the following from an Adventist Reformer whose message was rejected by the legalistic leadership in 1888. Notice how these quotes describe God's judgment and wrath:

- "How great is the long - suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments**." (Patriarchs and Prophets 587)

- The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will.** (The Great Controversy 35)

- We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. **It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan**. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, **that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression;** but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, **to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest.** The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner**, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** (The Great Controversy 36)

What have we learned from history? That we are making the same errors the Jews made by believing in a legal god who is the source of inflicted penalties.

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph,

- The Lord's faithfulness to His people leads the psalmist to affirm the nothingness of idols and to the unique supremacy of the Lord in the world (Ps. 135:15-18). Reliance on idols renders their worshipers as hopeless and powerless as their idols are (Ps. 135:18). The psalm demonstrates that God is to be praised as both Creator and Savior of His people. This is wonderfully conveyed in the two complementary versions of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue (Exod. 20:8-11, Deut. 5:12-15). Because God's power in creation and history is unparalleled in the world, God's people should always rely on Him and worship Him alone. As our Creator and our Redeemer, He alone should be worshiped, and worship of anything else, or anyone else, is idolatry. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 81).

The lesson does a good job of describing the design law of worship, by beholding we are changed, to worship a false god damages the minds and hearts of those who worship them.

But the lesson also says this,

- This is wonderfully conveyed in the two complementary versions of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue (Exod. 20:8-11, Deut. 5:12-15). Because God's power in creation and history is unparalleled in the world, God's people should always rely on Him and worship Him alone. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 81).

Is there a subtle misunderstanding written here? The Sabbath is associated with Creation week in Exodus 20, but is what makes the Sabbath holy according to the commandment that God used power to create or something else? The point of the Sabbath is not that God is powerful, the devils believe that and tremble, the reason given right in the commandment is that yes, God is the Creator and therefore powerful, but on the Sabbath our Creator God **STOPPED using power, that HE RESTED!!!!**

There was never a question as to who has the power, the Bible says that the devils believe that and it scares them. So teaching that the Sabbath memorializes God as powerful doesn't really answer any questions or provide any evidence that in any way refutes Satan's lies and resolves the rebellion. But **God RESTING**, God ceasing His use of power in the face of Satan's rebellion—in other words God giving evidence that yes, He is the Creator, but more than that that God built reality to operate upon design law, so He just created an entire new world all operating upon design law, and God shared pro-creative power with a new intelligent creation and gave that creation dominion to govern—and then God ceased the use of His power, He refused to use power to inflict punishment upon Satan and his rebels, and instead God left all His intelligent beings free to decide for themselves. This is what the Sabbath reveals, but when we have an imperial dictator god whose laws function like human laws, then we refocus away from the truth to power, because we want a powerful god who can punish our enemies, just like the Jews 2000 years ago wanted, a god that would punish the Romans.

But the truth is God gave evidence by the use of His power that He is the Creator, and then God rested and this reveals the most important truth of all, the true character of our Creator, truth, presented in love, while leaving His intelligent beings free—and this is why the Sabbath is holy because it sets apart the character of our God from all the false gods. Yet sadly the Jews had the right weekly Sabbath, but the wrong god, so they killed the Creator and got Him off the cross in order to keep the day, legally, for they didn't want to get punished. And sadly, many Adventists do the exact same thing, teach the Sabbath as an arbitrary test of obedience, rather than evidence of God's character and design laws of life.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 11
Longing for God in Zion

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

A sentence in the first paragraph reads,

- These psalms often praise the merits of the Lord's house and express a love for the sanctuary that can be found in other psalms, as well. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 84).

Why does the psalmist love the sanctuary? The one of the disciples said to Jesus,

- "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" (Mark 13:1 NIV84).

Do you think that is what the psalmist is referring to, he loves the magnificence of the tent sanctuary that existed in his day looking forward to Solomon's temple—or is it something else he loves about the sanctuary?

Have you ever felt a love or appreciation for the Bible? Why?

- Was it the leather binding or the onionskin paper?
- Does the Bible have the ability to save people from sin?
- Does the Bible have magic powers?
- Or does the Bible contain truth that leads us back to a trust relationship with God, and also teach us principles to live by, how to apply to our lives God's designs for our lives, and reveals the pathology that occurs when people break God's designs for life? So why do we love the Bible? Because it contains the truth about God, reveals reality, the nature and problem of sin, and God's solution for it.
- Likewise, the sanctuary system was designed to teach, not through letter symbols, but the symbols of props, costumes, ceremonies, structure, materials, layout, and action. In other words, through theater, a drama enacted and renacted the truths about God the sin problem and God's solution were to be taught.
- We read through letters and words, which are a different type of symbolism. But it is the truth that leads us back to reality and a trust in God and God saves, not the symbols themselves, whether OT sanctuary symbols, or Hebrews letters, or English words from the King James Bible.

So the psalmist loved the sanctuary and longed to spend time there because in its services he grew in the knowledge and wisdom of the things of God and found in His relationship with God healing for his soul.

Can we still learn lessons from studying the sanctuary system of symbols? We can if we know how to read the symbols. It is like asking, can we still learn truth, God's lessons from reading the Hebrew Bible—if we know how to read Hebrew, if we understand the meaning of what is written.

But even if people can read the language, understand the symbols, can people still read the Bible and misunderstand it and draw the wrong conclusions from its words? And can people read the sanctuary symbolism and misunderstand and draw the wrong conclusions from its symbols?

What is the key to understanding both the Bible and the sanctuary correctly?

Of course, we must have the Holy Spirit lead us, for spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and our own human wisdom and reason, unenlightened by the Holy Spirit will not comprehend or understand eternal truths. So, we absolutely acknowledge our need to humble ourselves to the leading, direction, and enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

But with our hearts humbled to the Holy Spirit, what is the key to rightly interpreting both the Scriptures and the symbolism of the sanctuary?

Here is what one Christian writer suggests, do you agree or think another key is better?

- The significance of the Jewish economy **is not yet fully comprehended**. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. **The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding**. **Far more than we do**, it is our privilege to understand these wonderful themes. We are to comprehend the deep things of God. (Christ's Object Lessons 133)

What is the key? The gospel, the good news, and the plan of salvation.

So what is the gospel, the good news, the eternal gospel that is to lighten the world? The good news that was good news in eternity past before earth was even created and will good news in eternity future? What is the good news angels in heaven needed to comprehend to settle their questions and stop Satan's rebellion from spreading among them?

The good news, the eternal gospel, is the good news about God, that God is not like Satan alleges; and what has Satan alleged about God? That God is arbitrary, severe, unforgiving and the source of inflicted punishment for sin.

How has Satan advanced these allegations? By suggesting God's laws are the types of laws that created beings make up, rather than the truth that God's laws are design laws. If we teach that God's laws function like human laws, made up rules, then we teach that sin is a legal problem and God as Sovereign, is required by law and justice to use His power to punish rule breakers. God, in Satan's view, becomes the source of death, inflicted as punishment for sin-crimes, and God, in Satan's view, needs something done to Him to propitiate His wrath so He won't hurt us. **Thus, the entire plan of salvation when taught through the penal legal view teaches us that we cannot trust God**, but that God needs something done to Him to restrain Him from acting out against us.

The eternal good news, gospel, is that God is not like Satan alleges, that God is love, that, as Isaiah 55 states, God pardons freely, without payment, that God is the source of life, that God so loved the world He sent His Son to save the world not condemn it, that God is for us (Romans 8:31), that God

is Creator and His laws are the laws of life, and it is transgressing His laws that take us out of harmony with life and results in death.

Thus, the key to understanding the gospel and therefore correctly understanding the sanctuary symbolism is returning to Creator worship, the eternal good news about God by understanding His law is design law and rejecting the penal/legal lies that infect Christianity. **As long as we retain the lie in our hearts and minds that God's law functions like human law then we will misconstrue all the symbolism of this beautiful system and end up doing just like the Jews, rejecting and crucifying Christ**.

Consider this quote, this describes what happens when one thinks through the human law lens:

- While God has desired to teach men that **from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction**. Thus the sacrifices and the ordinances **designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God."** (*Prophets and Kings,* p. 685)

So if we want to understand the symbolism correctly, we must understand the gospel correctly, and the gospel is the good news about God that He is Creator, His laws are design laws and Jesus died to save us from sin, to cleanse us, restore us, renew and recreate us, not to save us from God or God's inflicted punishment.

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 84, let's read it from The Remedy:

- How I love your sanctuary—your dwelling place—O Creator God! My inmost self desperately craves your presence—to be in the courts where you dwell; my heart, my body—my entire being cries out for the God of life. (Psalm 84:1-2 REM)

Why does the psalmist crave God's presence? Have you ever been in a very smoke filled or pollution filled environment? Did you crave fresh clean air?

Many years ago we traveled in Beijing China, and the pollution was so think you could see a brown fog in the air, our eyes turned red and watered, our throats burned, we pulled our shirts up over our noses to try and filter the air. We craved fresh clean air.

Do you think the psalmist is craving God's presence because he realizes how polluted this world is with fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, cruelty, hate, conflict, bitterness, resentment, sickness, disease, and all types of suffering, and he longs for peace, joy, love, health and wellness for mind, body, and spirit—the purity of God's presence?

Do you crave for God's presence like the psalmist? The faithful described in Hebrews had this attitude, Hebrews 11 says about them,

- They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:16 NIV84).

But what if we believe that God, instead of being the source of pure love, truth, forgiveness, goodness, mercy, kindness, patience, understanding, redemption, the one who sets us right, fixes what is wrong, purifies what is contaminated, cleanses what is dirty, heals what is broken—is instead a police officer in the sky watching to record every wrong or a judge waiting add up and inflict the proper amount of pain and suffering that justice requires—if this is how we see God, do we long for His presence? Or do we long for a mediator to hide us from Him, to protect us from Him?

So, how do we read the symbolism of the sanctuary, do we read it through the key of the eternal gospel, the good news about God, or have we been Romanized, and believe God's law functions like human law and believe Jesus' mediatorial work is to do something to God to protect us from Him?

We won't long for God's presence as long as we believe the lie that God's law functions like human law and God is the one from whom we need protection.

- Even the sparrow has a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may care for her young—near your altar, O Creator and Sustainer of all, my King and my God. Oh what health and happiness for those who live in your house—lives of constant love and praise for you. (Psalm 84:3-4 REM)

What do you hear in these verses? Where is our true home? Where is the only place we are truly safe? Where is the only place where we can find health and happiness? And they have health and happiness because they live lives in harmony with God, His character and design laws of love, rather than living lives in fear and selfishness which destroy peace, health, and life.

- What health and happiness for those whose strength comes from you—who set their hearts on finding you. As they pass through life's valley of sorrows, you make it a place of renewal with life-giving springs; the rains become refreshing pools. They gain strength with each victory in life, until they appear before God in Zion. (Psalm 84:5-7 REM)

What is the lesson here? Is this magic? Is the psalmist saying if you keep the right rules God uses divine power to miraculously give you rewards—do good and get blessed to bad and get cursed? Or are there design laws involved?

What about the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, we become like the God we admire and worship. By worshiping the true God we experience maturity of character, peace with God, we experience resolution of guilt, shame and fear, and are infused with love, trust and admiration for our Creator God. As we worship God as Creator, as Jesus revealed Him to be, we calm our fear circuits, reduce inflammatory cascades in our bodies, gain wisdom into the physical laws of health, make healthier choices in how we treat our bodies, we forgive rather than resent, we avoid many conflicts, and all of this results in better mental, physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health.

The trials, difficulties, and heartaches of life, drive us to our knees to a deeper and more intimate connection with God, to surrendering ourselves to Him and learning by experience to trust God with

how things turn out. Thus we advance from victory to victory until we are ultimately glorified at the second coming and spend eternity with God in glory. This is not magic, it is not a rule-keeping reward and punishment system, it is reality, living, through trust in Jesus, in harmony with God and His design laws for life.

- O Lord, Mighty Creator God, hear my prayer; listen to me, O God who Jacob trusted. Take notice of our shield—the king; look favorably upon your anointed one. Better is one day spent in the courts where you dwell than a thousand away from you; I would rather stand at the entrance to the house of my God than live in comfort in the tents of the wicked. (Psalm 84:8-10 REM)

What do you hear?

Health, happiness, wellness, and eternal life are only possible in harmony with God and His design for life. To stand in God's presence means we have been restored to harmony with God, to true health, wellness, and life. But a thousand years away from God is a thousand years of suffering in sickness, fear, guilt, shame, conflict, fighting to survive against threats on every side, it is a living hell. Better for one day of true health, happiness, peace, joy, and life than 1000 days of hell.

- For the Lord God is our life-giving sun and our protective shield, providing continual grace to transform us to his glorious ideal; he will withhold nothing that is good from those who choose to live in harmony with his design. O Creator God, healthy and happy is the person who trusts in you. (Psalm 84:11-12 REM).

What do you hear? Do you see the reality of our Creator God, His goodness, how life is built by Him to operate and that breaking trust with Him, going our own way causes all the problems, all the pain, suffering, and ultimately death?

MONDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 122, let's compare the NIV with REM and then consider some of the conclusions from the lesson.

- I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel. (Psalm 122:1-4 NIV84).

This is a traditional and standard rendering, what do you hear? Is there a message for you and me in this psalm? Are you inspired by a closely compacted city, or knowing the various tribes went there to praise God? Here is how I paraphrased it for the Remedy, understanding God's design law and that the Holy Spirit inspires the eternal truth to save sinners:

- I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the Lord's temple." And now we are here, standing at your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city designed as a place of unity and loving fellowship. This is where the people gather—the people who love God—to praise and celebrate the character of God acting out his plan of healing, as given to Israel. (Psalm 122:1-4 REM).

Rather than a closely compacted city, the message is that God wants us to be closely united in love, as Ephesians states there is a unity inherent in our faith. Thus, God's plan of salvation, which was symbolically taught through the rituals contained in the system at Jerusalem brings us into the intimate bonds of love and trust so that we are one as Jesus and the Father are one (John 17).

Questions about these two versions? Any concerns with the Remedy paraphrase?

- There the thrones for judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David. (Psalm 122:5 NIV84).

What is the message you hear in this translation? Do you hear something judicial? This is certainly a legitimate linguistic translation, but not the only one. Consider thee Remedy:

- There, the descendants of David set their thrones to govern the people. (Psalm 122:5 REM).

Do you hear "thrones of judgment" and "govern" the same? The law lens used makes a difference, judicial judgment is only one narrow element of human governments. Jerusalem was designed to teach a larger reality, and God's system was not intended to teach human law, but was intended to teach restoration from sin to life. Thus governing from Jerusalem was supposed to model of how God governs His entire universe.

And in the Jewish legal system set up by God through Moses, the entire system was designed for the pardoning and setting free of the sinner, the criminal. There was no governmental prosecutor like we have, symbolically teaching that in God's government He keeps no record of wrongs, just like 1 Corinthians 13 teaches. No one in God's government brings charges against the sinner, it is Satan that is the accuser of the brethren, yet how often is it presented that God reviews the books, God

determines guilt and innocence, God decides the punishment, God inflicts the punishment, and God needs a payment made to legally not punish? This is all satanic, it is a lie, it contradicts the teachings of Scripture because it is based on the lie that God's law functions like human law.

The entire Sanhedrin, and High Priest, who were the most highly trained theologians and lawyers of that system, were all supposed to function the role of defense attorneys, they were supposed to fight for the freeing of the accused. They are to represent Jesus our High Priest and all the saints who are battling for the salvation of every soul. But their argument was not to the Sanhedrin itself, it was to the accuser, who was the person wronged and they stand in the place of Satan, the accuser, they represent the people who refuse to forgive freely, the people who want to make others pay, the people who have accepted Satan's version of law and justice and rejected Jesus' teachings that we are to love our enemies, forgive those who mistreat us, and pray for those who spitefully abuse us, just like He did on the cross and Stephen did when he was being stoned. This person bringing charges represents the people who are still operating and functioning under Satan's system of imposed law and inflicted punishments and believe it is right and just to punish someone for their wrong. We have many of these people in our church and leadership today advancing accusations and teaching that God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death, when the entire Jewish system was to teach the opposite.

- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity. (Psalm 122:6-9 NIV84).
- Pray for the success of Jerusalem, that those who love this city be healthy and happy; that there will be restoration to godliness within its walls—that trust and friendship will be its fortress. For all my family and friends, I say, "May complete healing and restoration occur within you." In harmony with the purpose of God's temple, I will seek your eternal welfare. (Psalm 122: 6-9 REM).

Can one have peace while being out of harmony with God and God's designs for life? So real peace comes through restoring sinners back to unity with God, through removing from our hearts and minds our fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, bad habits, evil desires etc. It is only by experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit within us that we can have peace with God. There is no real peace in claiming legal pardon and adjustment in record books while we remain unrighteous in heart and mind.

Read second paragraph,

- Praying for the peace of Jerusalem invokes God's blessings upon the city and its inhabitants, and it unites the worshipers, causing peace to spread among them (Ps. 122:8). Jerusalem could be the city of peace only if peace existed between God and His people, and among God's children themselves. Thus, prayer for the peace of Jerusalem conveys an appeal to God's people to live in peace with God and one another. In Jerusalem's peace, the people will prosper (Ps. 147:12-14). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 86).

Does praying for the peace of Jerusalem invoke God's blessings upon the city and its inhabitants? Hmmm…. Is that what history has revealed?

If we this psalm to refer the city of Jerusalem in the Middle East, rather than its symbolical significance as representation of the New Jerusalem, isn't it trust that millions of people have prayed through history for the peace of Jerusalem and today there are millions praying for the peace of Jerusalem—and what does history reveal to us about that city?

Is there any city with less peace in the world than Jerusalem? And why do you think that it is this way? It is because the people who are praying for peace have rejected the design laws of God and by worshiping an imperial dictator whose laws are made up rules requiring external enforcement, they become like that false god, and then believe it is right and just to make up rules and enforce them on others and use the power of arms to punish and even kill those who are not keeping the rules they believe are the right rules. They believe that if they don't enforce the rules as they understand them, then they are being disobedient to their office, their position, their duties and responsibilities, and thus they will be guilty of sin and thus they are required by law to use their office, power, position, to seek to enforce, fight, and defeat those parties who teach differently than they do. "The land was given to us it is ours, no it was given to us it is our, God has told us to do this, no He has told us to do this. You are a rebel no you are a rebel, you are a heretic, no you are an infidel" and on it goes. And believing God punishes, it is only right and just they seek to punish. So praying for the peace of Jerusalem doesn't bring God's blessing when people are praying to a false god who looks like Satan in character, instead they become like that false god and perpetrate all types of crimes in the name of doing justice and rush home to keep the Sabbath or whatever other holy day they value in the name of their god.

Can God bring peace through imposing made up laws upon people and then using might and power to punish people who break His rules and refuse to love Him? In fact, if God were to do this, what happens in the hearts of people? More rebellion, more distrust, less peace.

So, when we pray for peace, how does God answer our prayer, what action does God take, where is God at work to bring peace?

God's system is not external, not imposed, not through coercion, force, or punishment. As Jesus said, the kingdom of God is within you.

- God brings peace by removing the cause of division, by removing sin, fear, and selfishness from the hearts and minds of people
- God brings peace by love casting out fear, by truth eradicating lies, by grace purging guilt and shame, by mercy, kindness, and forgiveness cleansing hearts from cruelty, bitterness and a desire for revenge, by eliminating prejudice with fellowship, by turning enemies into friends.

This is the New Covenant when God writes His living law upon our hearts and minds so that we are no longer controlled by fear and selfishness but live lives of love and trust.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Psalm 87 is a hymn celebrating Zion as God's specially chosen and beloved city. The foundation of God's temple is on Mount Zion (Ps. 2:6, Ps. 15:1). At the end of time, Zion will rise above all mountains, signifying the Lord's sovereign supremacy over the whole world (Ps. 99:2, Isa. 2:2, Mic. 4:1). Psalm 87 refers to Zion as "mountains" to highlight its majesty (Ps. 133:3). God loves the gates of Zion "more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. 87:2, NKJV), expressing the superiority of Zion over all other places in Israel that were special gathering places of God's people in the past, such as Shiloh and Bethel. Thus, the psalm affirms that true worship of God is in His chosen place and in His prescribed way. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 87).

What do you think of the idea that God loves the gates of Jerusalem? What does this mean?

In Revelation 21, in the description of the New Jerusalem, there are 12 gates, three on each side of the city, and on the gates are written the 12 tribes of Israel—what do you think this suggests?

The 12 tribes camped around the sanctuary three on each side, and the Levites camped in between, the Levites represent the priesthood of believers who minister the gospel of God from the sanctuary to the people in the four corners of the earth, symbolized by the 12 tribes. So, having gates to the New Jerusalem with the names of the 12 tribes would symbolize what? That God has people from every corner of the globe, from all nations, kindreds, tribes and languages saved.

So, God loves the gates because they simultaneously represent the way into the city, which is Jesus, but also that people from all over the world will find salvation through what Jesus has accomplished.

Let's read Psalm 87 from The Remedy:

- The Lord founded his plan of salvation in the hills set apart for his sanctuary. He loves the gates that lead to the restoration and healing of his children more than any other place in the world. Glorious things are told about you, O city of our Creator God: "I will include Egypt and Babylon among those who know me; also people from Philistia, Tyre and Ethiopia have been reborn to become citizens of Zion." Of the New Jerusalem it will be said, "These were reborn to become her citizens," and the Creator God himself will establish her. The Lord will record the individualities of the saved in his heavenly registry, noting, "This one was reborn to live there." Songs from those who are reborn will say, "Life is found only in you." (Psalm 87:1-7 REM)

What do you think of the last sentence in the first paragraph which reads:

- Thus, the psalm affirms that true worship of God is in His chosen place and in His prescribed way.

Hmmm….could this be misunderstood and end up teaching superstitious things? Like we have to travel to a certain place in order to worship God? Or that one physical location is more holy than another physical location? Or some objects have some supernatural holiness to them, relics of various kinds? Or that rituals and ceremonies make a difference in salvation?

Do they—or is God all about reality, and the rituals, ceremonies, places, props, that God has set apart for use in the past were all designed to lead back to reality and once one enters into reality the props and ceremonies have served their purpose. What God cares about is truth, and if we use ceremonies, rituals, places, even those established by God for holy use, in such a way that we misrepresent God then this is what God doesn't like—for lies about Him obstruct His ability to heal His children. And this is what the Jews did, they took their blessings, their rituals, ceremonies, props, stage, costumes, script—ure and made it legal, made it rules oriented, and ended up hiding the truth away from people, and teaching superstition from the very tools God gave them to teach reality. So, Jesus said to the woman at the well, when she asked where one should worship:

- "Believe me, dear woman, the place where one worships God is not important; it is the condition of the heart of the worshiper that matters. Very soon, you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship a confusing tradition of rituals that does not enlighten the mind and have no ability to heal the worshiper; we worship the Creator God, and our minds are enlightened and healed by him because all he asks of us is sensible and reasonable. The plan to heal humanity from the infection of selfishness and sin is provided through the Jews. The time has now come that all true worshipers will worship the Father with an intelligent and reasonable understanding of who he is, respecting, admiring and loving the truth about his nature, character, and methods. These understanding worshipers are the kind the Father seeks. God is intelligent and reasonable, and his worshipers must worship him intelligently and reasonably, appreciating and valuing the truth of God's methods and principles." (John 4:21-24 REM).

Thoughts? Do you see how the penal legal lies obstruct the type of worshipers God wants? It makes people into superstitious religionists with closed minds who live in fear worrying if they did the right ritual in the right way on the right day etc.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the distress in the world around us, described in psalm 46, and asks the question—

- How do we learn to have peace and to trust God amid a world that, indeed, has so much turmoil?

What have you found that helps you find peace in the middle of the stressors of this world?

- Did you struggle to find peace when COVID mandates were being forced upon people?
- Are you struggling to find peace with the climate scam that is constantly being bombarded upon us?
- Are you struggling to find peace with the artificial inflation which makes meeting ends much harder?
- Are you struggling to find peace with the ugliness in the media, the constant attacks against this person or that person?
- Are you struggling to find peace with the reports of wars and rumors of wars?

What is the answer?

Satan is like a roaring lion, and the lion's roar incites fear—and what does fear lead to?

Fear leads to selfishness, a willingness to hurt others in order to protect self.

Fear impairs thinking, makes one freeze, impairs problems solving, and increases the willingness to surrender to voices of authority and follow rules in order to feel safe—not be safe, but feel safe.

Fear impairs relationships, causes people to be more controlling for fear of rejection, loss or injury.

Fear impairs spiritual growth, fear of God causes people to either rebel against God and reject Him altogether or to create theologies designed to hide and protect us from God like:

- Penal substitutionary theology in which we have someone pay God for us with the blood of a human sacrifice so he won't have to kill us
- Misstating the beautiful metaphor of the robe of righteousness to teach it somehow covers over our sinfulness so the Father can't see it
- Having Jesus, Mary, and the saints pleading to God in our behalf because He needs to be persuaded
- Having Jesus erase the records of history so the Father won't punish us for it

So how do we find peace with God in the face of Satan's end time assault?
Consider these words of Jesus and what He describes as the source of our peace, He ends by saying He told His disciples this so that they would have peace in the face of trouble in this world:

- "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. **I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves** you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

  Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

  "You believe at last!" Jesus answered. "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me**. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace**. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:20-33 NIV84).

What did Jesus say would be the basis of our peace? The truth about the Father, that He is just like Jesus, that there is no need for Jesus to pray the Father for us, that the Father Himself loves us. That, as Paul later wrote, "If God is for you who can be against you…" (Romans 8:31).

We find peace when we are won back to love and trust with the Father through all that Jesus has revealed, then we open the heart and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit sent by the Father, just as the Father sent us His Son. And the Holy Spirit takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us so that it is no longer our old sinful selves living, but Christ living in us. We are reborn, we die to fear and live to love God and others. And we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ for we have been restored to unity with God for God lives in us!

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

- God's children can be discouraged by the success of the wicked and, perhaps, tempted to follow their ways (Ps. 73:2-13, Ps. 94:3). The utmost stability of Mount Zion cannot secure those who depart from the Lord. The people are still given freedom to "put forth their hands unto iniquity" (Ps. 125:3) and "turn aside unto their crooked ways" (Ps. 125:5). The Lord is just and will judge the individuals who remain in rebellion along with other unrepentant sinners. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 89).

What does this sentence seem to be saying? "The Lord is just and will judge the individuals who remain in rebellion along with other unrepentant sinners?"

What law lens do you hear it through? If we have the human law model, what does this sentence mean?

If we have the design law model, what does this sentence mean?

The lesson points our attention to psalm 125, let's compare these five verses from the NIV with REM:

- Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore. (Psalm 125:1-2 NIV84)
- Those who trust in the Lord are a stronghold of love—like Mount Zion; they cannot be shaken but will endure forever. As the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds and protects his people both now and forevermore. (Psalm 125:1-2 REM)

What does it actually mean to be strong in the Lord? To be strong for God's kingdom? Is one strong in God's kingdom by putting a cross on a tunic and going on the crusades, or by singing hymns of praise while burning at the stake?

- The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil. (Psalm 125:3 NIV84).
- The power of selfishness will not rule over the righteous, for the godly will not choose to do wrong. (Psalm 125:3 REM)

What does a scepter represent? Ruling power, and what rules the wicked? Fear and selfishness, thus the rendering the power of selfishness will not rule over the righteous. Do you think this is an accurate rendering that fear and selfishness will not have power over the righteous, or is it more accurate to move the focus outside of the heart and mind of the believer and teach that evil people will not have power to hurt the righteous? What has history shown? Haven't wicked people had power to physically hurt the righteous? But where has wickedness lost its power? In the hearts and minds of the righteous!

- Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, to those who are upright in heart. But those who turn to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers. Peace be upon Israel. (Psalm 125:4-5 NIV84).
- Do good, O Lord, to those who love good, to those whose hearts are in tune with you. But for all who cling to selfishness, the Lord will let them go, along with all who prefer evil. Health and salvation to all, who with God, overcome. (Psalm 125:4-5 REM).

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 12
Worship That Never Ends

by Tim Jennings

Read second paragraph,

- In the Psalms, Israel is not simply a nation but "the great assembly" (Ps. 22:22, 25, NKJV; Ps. 35:18). This reveals Israel's primary calling to praise God and to bear witness about Him to other nations because the Lord wants all the world to join His people in worship. The Lord's people are identified with the righteous, who worship the Lord and whose hope is in Him and in His love. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 92).

What is this "great assembly" referenced in the psalms? Is this referring to the feast days assemblies that the Jews were supposed to attend in Jerusalem each year or something grander, larger, more significant—something of which Israel was only an object lesson, something that the various Israelites coming together in assembly were mere actors on a stage enacting?

The lesson references Psalm 22:22, which reads,

- I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you (Psalm 22:22 NIV84).

What is this psalm referencing? Is it king David saying he will declare the name of Yahweh to the Israelites in worship? Or is it something much bigger, larger?

Psalm 22 is a Messianic psalm, it is about Jesus, and we find this very verse quoted by the writers of Hebrews in chapter 2:12:

- So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." (Hebrews 2:11-12 NIV84).

Does this suddenly expand our understanding of this psalm, do we realize it goes far beyond local worship, far beyond Israel? Does the psalm suggest Jesus will uplift the name of His Father before the grand assembly, the heavenly counsel, the assembly seen in the first chapter of Job?

The lesson also references psalm 35:18, let's compare that from the NIV and REM:

- I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. (Psalm 35:18 NIV84).

Is this speaking of king David giving praise during some worship assembly in Jerusalem, praising God among the Israelites, or is this something much more significant, something to do with the great controversy? Again, this is a Messianic psalm, it is referencing Jesus, so I paraphrased it as:

- I will glorify you in the great cosmic assembly; among the mighty throng I will praise you. (Psalm 35:18 REM).

Consider the assembly described in Hebrews chapter twelve, is this the true assembly that the psalmist is describing?

- But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24 NIV84).

Is the psalmist only referencing assemblies in ancient Israel, or are those assemblies symbolic of something much more significant?

Here is how I rendered Hebrews 12:22-24 in the Remedy:

- But you have come into the reality (of which the symbols only pointed to), to Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem — the heavenly city of the living God — and you are part of that city. You have come to join millions upon millions of angels rejoicing in God’s presence, into the heavenly sanctuary — the true church of Christ — whose identities are stored in heaven. You have come to God — the source and standard of righteousness for all people; to the archived individualities of righteous human beings perfectly restored into Christlikeness of character; to Jesus — the conduit and administrator of God's healing plan; and to the reality of God's true nature and character, which was much more potently revealed and disseminated when Christ died than in the symbols offered by Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24 REM).

Do we read the entire Bible as a whole, a revelation from God of the plan of salvation, that the events recorded in the Old Testament are a lesson to us, not primarily about historical earthly governmental systems or ceremonial religious rituals, but teaching larger realities, teaching through object lesson and symbolism the plan of salvation?

So, the title of the lesson is worship that never ends—what is that worship? What does that worship look like? Is worship that never ends a religious event, people coming together in a congregation to sing hymns, read Bible verses, join in corporate prayer, partake of communion? Is this what worship that never ends means?

Or does worship that never ends mean we for all eternity worship, admire, esteem, value, study, aspire to be like, adore, stand in awe, revere God and grow every more like Him in all we do—a

never ending journey of love and discovery as we finite beings worship the infinite one and in that love trust relationship with our infinite God we are restored to Christlikeness of character and live out God's principles and methods in how we treat others? Does it mean that we practice and apply God's design laws to our lives, especially in how we treat others and thus give glory to God? And is one small sliver of such worship coming into congregational meetings to share our love for God and each other in song, in praise, and telling of God's deliverance in our lives?

But is there a counterfeit worship—a worship of forms, ceremonies, rules, rituals, dress codes, attendance requirements, behavioral modifications that is detached from the truth about God, that instead of bringing us into closer intimacy, trust, and friendship with God teaches us to distrust God while we trust in the legal mechanics put in place to protect us from this punishing law-enforcing god?

Read last paragraph,

- Praising the Lord in the congregation is perceived as ideal worship. This does not mean that the prayer and praise of the individual in Israel assume a secondary meaning. By contrast, the individual's worship of God feeds the communal worship with renewed praise (Ps. 22:22, 25) while in turn individual worship develops its fullest potential in close relationship with the community. The worshiping community also is called the "assembly of the upright" (Ps. 111:1). The upright know God (Ps. 36:10) and are known by God (Ps. 37:18), and this experience permeates every aspect of their existence. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 92).

What do you think of the first sentence, "Praising the Lord in the congregation is perceived as ideal worship"?

What is it that makes praising the Lord in congregation ideal worship?

- Is it simple attendance to a group worship service? We show up and sit in the pew, sing the songs, listen to the sermon and this is the ideal?
- Is it obeying the commandments of God? That God commanded we worship one day each week and we, as good and obedient servants, follow God's commands and come to church to worship God when He said we should and thus we have a group of compliant and obedient people who are all unified on the right rules and the right way to keep the rules? Is this God's ideal, that people obey Him without question and do what He tells them?

What is the ideal that Israel's assemblies were to symbolize?

Is Jesus' prayer in John 17, where He prayed that we would all be one as He and the Father are one, suggestive of anything about what it means to have ideal worship and what coming together as a people is to be in reality?

Consider what Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

- It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until **we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the **fullness of Christ.** Then we will **no longer be infants**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, **we will in all things grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the **whole body, joined and held together** by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11–16, NIV84, emphasis mine). .

What do you hear? Is there a joining together, a unity, a corporate worship described here? What is it? What is the purpose of meeting together, worshiping together, studying together, working for gospel ministry together? It is for the purpose of people developing within themselves Christlikeness, of people becoming thinkers not reflectors of others thoughts, of people being cleansed from fear, selfishness, guilt and shame, of people assimilating into their hearts and minds the truth and love of God, the design laws of God becoming the living law that animates and invigorates their being.

In such an experience we are united with Jesus and the Father having been restored to at-one-ment with them. We all value and practices the same methods and principles in how we live our lives. We who are united in Christ:

- May not eat the same foods, for our bodies are different, but we apply the same principles of seeking to be the healthiest we can be and make lifestyle choices to keep ourselves healthy.
- May not be ceremonially baptized in the same way because our understanding of the ceremony is different, but we all experience the same immersion of heart and mind into the Holy Spirit for cleansing of the inner person.
- May not dress in the same way because we have different beliefs about jewelry or head coverings, but we all have our characters dressed in the fruits of the Spirit.
- We respect the individuality of others and therefore we do not try to control what others think, we present the truth in love and allow every person to be fully persuaded in their own minds.
- We stop approaching life like children, infants, focused on rules, laws, fear of punishment, we stop teaching that God is a rule-maker leaving behind the penal legal way of thinking of things and return to reality and worship God as Creator understanding His laws are design laws.
- We enter in a unity in our faith—meaning the natural outcome of returning to reality, to God, and His designs for life.

Consider this historical quote, from the book *The Desire of Ages,* and the question of unity and ideal worship, does it have any application?

- It is His [God's] plan that every part of His work shall depend on every other part, as a wheel within a wheel, all acting in harmony. The humblest worker, moved by the Holy Spirit, will touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody through eternal ages. (The Desire of Ages 822).

Does this describe something related to a unity in our faith? What? There is an an energy, a chord, a harmonic, a principle of living, the law of life—truth, love and liberty—that originate in and emanate from God and through which all reality is built and operates and it is only as we receive and unite with this energy through the Spirit of God, the life of God, the vitalizing power of God, the presence of God, the truth of God that we are restored to being part of the body of Christ and experience the unity, the oneness, the harmony that is automatic when we are united with God. And thus when we act in accordance, in harmony with the design law principles of God we touch the invisible life-giving chords our Creator built reality to operate upon and are connected to all others who are in harmony with God, a unity in our faith?

But is there a form of congregational worship that is antagonistic to what God wants, that works against what God is trying to achieve, that is destructive rather than redemptive?

What about religious worship that teaches things like:

- God said it, I believe it, that is all there is to it?
- The pastor or priest is God's anointed and who are you to question?
- Salvation is a legal process of adjusting record books in a heavenly courtroom in some far off corner of the universe and not the actual process of cleansing hearts and minds from sin here and now?
- God's laws are rules He makes up and justice is God punishing rule-breakers?

Is there a religious approach to the Bible that rather than building people up to be thinkers, instead dumbs people down to be followers, to surrender their thinking to the religious authorities?

- Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

  "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.

  "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them" (John 7:45–49 NIV84).

Is there a form of corporate worship that rather than seeking to build up individuality, rather that respecting each person's ability to reason for themselves and seeking to help them grow in their God-given abilities, instead seeks conformity, seeks to use the corporate body to put group pressure upon people to surrender their thinking, to not question, to go along with what leadership says in order to avoid being ostracized, shunned, or disfellowshipped?

Has Satan infected Christianity with an authoritarian form of Christianity, the idea that truth is found in the office of leader, whether pope, or conference president, or some special counsel of theologians, such as the Counsel of Trent or the Biblical Research Institute and that true worship is surrendering our minds, our individuality, our thinking to those with theological degrees, to those in leadership, those holding church office, to the General Conference vote?

Consider these historical quotations from one of the founders of the SDA church, who wrote the following after the SDA church leadership at the 1888 GC rejected the design law truth and chose the imposed human law lie, and has been leading our church into the wilderness of a dead legal theology ever since:

- "The church is in the Laodicean state. **The presence of God is not in her midst**." (Ms 156, 1898 – Notebook Leaflets from Elms haven Library, Vol.1, Need of Self- Sacrificing Effort, p. 99, emphasis mine)

Two years before she wrote the following to Uriah Smith, who was editor of the Signs, and he was one of the leaders who in 1888 rejected the design law truth, rejected the idea that the 10 Commandments were added. What she wrote did not fit with his legal, imposed-law mindset, so he filed this missive and it was found in the Signs files in the 1950's and published in the Selected Messages.

- **We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself**. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, **men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death**. (1 Selected Messages 235; 1896, emphasis mine)

She is calling for a rejection of the imposed law lie with its penal/legal view of God as a punishing god and return to worship God as our Creator and Redeemer whose laws are design laws. We must reject the Romanization of Christianity. Here are more quotes:

- "It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God." (Manuscript Releases 17, p. 216, 1898; Last Day Events, p. 50.3 1901)

- "It is working upon **wrong principles** that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. **Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the Voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought that it was almost blasphemy**....We have reached the time when the work cannot advance while **wrong principles** are cherished." (Manuscript 37, 1901, emphasis mine)

Principles are design laws, not imposed rules. But authoritarianism, central government with a few people in power dictating orthodoxy to be accepted as a test of fellowship and enforced through various compliance committees and censuring is worldly, it is how Rome operates. God wins His

case by the truth presented in love and leaving people free, as Paul wrote, every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5)

1902 Ellen White writes to her sons Edson and Willie,

- "I have but very **little confidence** that the Lord is giving these **men in positions of responsibility, spiritual eyesight and heavenly discernment**. I am thrown into perplexity over their course; and I desire now to attend to my special work, **to have no part in any of their councils, and to attend no camp meetings**, nigh or afar off. **My mind shall not be dragged into confusion** by the tendency they manifest to work directly contrary to the light that God has given me. I am done. **I will preserve my God-given intelligence**…(Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 4, 5, emphasis mine)

  My voice has been heard in the different Conferences and at camp-meetings. I must now make a change. **I cannot enter the atmosphere of strife and then have to bear testimonies that cost me much more than those to whom they are sent can imagine**. When I attend the different meetings, I am compelled **to deal with men standing in responsible places who I know are not exerting an influence that God can endorse**. And when I bear a testimony in reference to their course of action, advantage is taken of this testimony. **These men have not clear understanding**. Should I say the things that I know, they would not, with their present experience, use this instruction wisely and would bring upon me inconceivable burdens. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 6, emphasis mine)

  I shall, therefore, leave them **to receive word from the Bible, in which the principles** upon which they should work are laid down in straight lines. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 7, emphasis mine)

  There are those who look upon themselves as the Lord's servants, but who, **as shown by the way in which the… work has been handled**, **are working away from the light that God has for years been giving**. I have pity for them, but I cannot be forever pointing out for them the way of righteousness. They are brought no nearer right actions by what I say than if the words were never spoken. **So long as those in responsible positions see things through a false medium**, **they will put a wrong construction on my work**. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 8, emphasis mine) [The false medium is the imposed law lie, and then using her writings to promote a penal legal fantasy theology rather than the design law healing truth]

  The light I have for our ministers is: Seek God. Stop your whisperings and your evil surmisings, instigated by Satan; and see **if the love of God will not fill heart and soul.** And I will go on with my writing. This is the light given me, and I shall not depart from it. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 9, emphasis mine)

This is quite profound, she takes the position that she has given her witness, she has presented the truth, and those in leadership of the church have rejected it, and for her to continue to go to their meetings, submit to their leadership, listen to their sermons it would throw her mind into confusion and in order to preserve her God-given intelligence she must stop being part of assemblies where she is convinced the truth is not being presented and where they are working contrary to the principles of God—and she said this about SDA meetings!

Is this only applicable to her, or is there a principle here for each of us in our own journey, our own growth with Jesus? Are we to be thinkers or are we to surrender our thinking and become reflectors of what the church officers tell us?

Remember, we have said it over and over again, we at Come and Reason Ministries are not here to tell you what to think. You have your own mind, your own individuality and you must develop it for yourselves. We are here to challenge you to think, to provide evidence and perspective and reason for you to weigh out for yourselves and as Paul wrote in Romans 14:5 to be fully persuaded in your own mind. We want you to come to your own conclusions. We believe that God is Creator, the builder of reality, that His design laws are constants and that when we come to know God we enter into reality-based living and there is a unity that is automatic in that way of thinking and living.

So, when we think about assemblies, we are to consider the assembly and use our own judgment as to whether such an assembly is a place where God would have us attend, and if so for what purpose? Are we going there to be a witness for God, like Elijah at Mount Carmel, or are we going to an assembly to fellowship because the people are already unified upon the truths of God's kingdom of love?

SUNDAY

The title of the lesson is "Lift Up Your Hands in the Sanctuary," what do you think of this title?

Does it mean we need to build a tent sanctuary like Moses built? Does it mean we need to go to the wailing wall in Jerusalem? Does it mean we need to lift our hands upon in church assembly?

Or, is the sanctuary Moses built and later the Temple Solomon built, symbolic representations of something else—is there a true sanctuary of which the earthly ones were only symbolic?

The Bible certainly references in many places a heavenly sanctuary—and we believe there is a reality to this, but what are the building materials of the sanctuary in heaven?

Read the last paragraph,

- "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:4, 5, NKJV).

> What we see here, in the words of Peter, is a New Testament expression of the same ideas presented in these psalms, that of God's people, now a holy priesthood, offering praise and thanksgiving to their Lord Jesus Christ, their Creator and Redeemer, for all the good things that He had done for them. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 93).

The lesson rightly identifies believers as a holy priesthood, but doesn't comment on the other elements taken from the sanctuary metaphor and applied to us by the Bible writers. Peter also says that the stones in the temple were representative of you and me, the believers in Christ with Jesus as the living stone.

Paul wrote:

- Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 NIV84).

What do you think? Is the heavenly sanctuary real? And from what is it made? Is the heavenly sanctuary made out of dead material, like stones, planks, gold, and silver, or is it built out of real, physical, living beings?

Consider, based from these Bible texts, the following historical quote from EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church who was integral in formulating the heavenly sanctuary doctrine:

- The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. (3 Manuscript Release 231.3)

  Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively

> stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. (3 Manuscript Release 231.4, emphasis mine)

What do you think? Is she describing the sanctuary in heaven as being built out of living people? So, if the heavenly sanctuary is made out of living people what would it mean to cleanse it or set it right? Wouldn't it simply be the cleansing of the hearts and minds of all the people who are being saved?

There is nothing penal legal going on in this process, it is Jesus the groom cleansing His bride and preparing her for entering into His full unveiled, life-giving presence. That is the work Jesus accomplishes immediately prior to His second coming, the work going on by our Savior right now. And we describe this cleansing work in our magazine

The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming

TUESDAY

The lesson asks who can enter the Lord's tabernacle or worship in His presence, thoughts?

In the first paragraph, the lesson answers with this:

- The sanctuary was a holy place, and everything in it, including the priests, was consecrated. Thus, holiness is a mandatory requirement for entering the presence of God. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 95).

What does this mean? What does it mean to be holy? Is holiness something that is declared or actual? In other words, do we become holy or are we merely proclaimed to be holy while we are not actually holy?

In the OT system did the consecrated priests become holy through the ceremony of consecration or did the ceremony merely symbolize becoming holy?

Some would say that the consecrated priests did become holy because they could then go into the sanctuary and do their office work—but what about the Nadab and Abihu and other priests who were consecrated in the ceremony but who did wicked things at the temple? Were they actually holy people or just, within the theatrical system, symbolically represented to be holy?

And then when their behavior was so far off script from what they were to act out—so unholy after being theatrically represented to be holy—God had to remove them from the stage play, and in so doing demonstrate that holiness cannot be achieved through ritual, ceremony, or declaration, but holiness is only achieved through actual transformation of the person. And this was symbolically taught through the ceremonies the priests went through, such as washing, putting on new clean white robes, sacrificing animals and placing the blood on the altar and also on earlobe, right thumb and right great toe. All was symbolically taught actual healing and transformation of a sinner through the

life, the righteousness, of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit being applied to the sinner who becomes a priest in God's kingdom when their hearts and minds are washed from fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame, when they are reborn through that washing with a new heart and right spirit, when they partake of the divine nature and begin choosing to live out the principles, motives, and desires of Jesus and they develop mature Christlike character they are robed in the righteousness of Christ.

So what does it mean to be holy? It simply means that we have been restored in heart, mind, motive to unity with God—we have died to fear and selfishness and have God's living law of love written upon our hearts so that we are united with God in heart, in mind, in desire—we love what God loves. Holiness in other words is restoration to God's healthiness for life, the restoration of God's design laws within as the mode of our action, and thus we are lovers of truth—listen for the leading of God (blood on the ear), we use our energies in our daily works of life to honor God by apply His design law principles (blood on the right thumb) and we go where God leads us walking the way He would have us walk through the roads of life (blood on the right great toe). There is nothing declarative going on, nothing penal legal going on, it is actual real healing, real purifying, in real people by a very real and righteous God.

The second paragraph states,

- "A perfect heart" is the worshiper's greatest quality before God. The Hebrew tamim, "perfect," conveys the notion of "completeness" and "wholeness." A "perfect" vine is whole, undamaged, and healthy (Ezek. 15:5). Animals offered as sacrifices had to be tamim, or without blemish (Lev. 22:21-24). "Perfect" speech is entirely truthful (Job 36:4). A "perfect heart" thus is a "pure heart" (Ps. 24:4) or a heart of integrity (Ps. 15:2). It seeks God (Ps. 24:6) and is restored by God's forgiveness (Ps. 51:2-10). A blameless life springs from the acknowledgment of God's grace and His righteousness... (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 95).

What does it mean to be perfect? Jesus said we are to be perfect as the Father is perfect, what does this mean?

Have you heard the following:

- Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. (Christ's Object Lessons 69).

What does this mean? Have you heard this in the past and been frightened, made fearful, anxious, insecure?

Do you recognize this as the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary which is the cleansing of the bride that Paul speaks about? Or do you think the cleansing of the sanctuary and the cleansing of the bride of Christ are different? What does it do to our ability to cooperate with God for the

reproduction of His character in us if we believe that the cleansing of the sanctuary is not something happening in us but something happening in record books way off past Orion?

What law lens do you hear words like "character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people" through? If you think God's law functions like human law then what do words like perfect mean? Does it mean perfect performance, perfect behavior, perfect rule-keeping? And do such ideas bring peace or greater anxiety and fear? And does that lead to teaching that the statement "character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people" means to have Christ's character reproduced in our legal documents in the courts of heaven during the judgment, but that such reproduction doesn't happen in us, we are declared, based on the merits of Jesus to be legally righteous in the judgment while we remain unrighteous in reality here on earth? Do you see, how the legal view actually works against what God is working to achieve—God wants to reproduce Jesus in every heart and mind, to cleanse us from all sin, but the legal view puts up barriers in our hearts and minds that obstructs this.

But if we understand God's law as design law then what do such words mean?

When we return to worshiping God as Creator, we realize that the basis for life in God's universe is God and the law upon which He constructed life to operate. We realize that we sinners must be restored to unity with God. And we read Jesus' words about being perfect in their full context, allowing Jesus to inform us of what He meant:

- You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5:43–48 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus Himself describes what being perfect means: to love everyone, consistently and reliably, just like the sun and the rain treat everyone exactly the same. But it is understood that this is only possible by first being restored to a love and trust relationship with God, as Jesus said multiple times:

- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37–40 NIV84).

And how does God's love get restored into our hearts so that we can be perfect? It is by trust—that is, faith—in God. Thus, as the apostle Paul wrote:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

And how is trust restored so we open the heart to receive the new heart and right spirit, to allow God to write His law upon our hearts and minds? By the gospel, which is the good news about God that wins us back to trust.

Bible perfection is not about deeds or tasks; it is about love and trust, about maturity of character. Speaking of Jesus, Hebrews states:

- During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect,** he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:7–9 NIV84)

But wasn't Jesus always perfect? Jesus was certainly always sinless, but Bible perfection isn't about sinlessness. Adam and Eve in Eden were sinless, but they were not perfected. Bible perfection is about maturity of character, which is about coming into a love and trust relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake us from it. The "perfect" are those who remain faithful, loyal, and true to God in their heart's devotion no matter what. They might have questions, they might misunderstand, they might be confused about why things are going the way they are; they might cry out like Jesus did, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45 NIV84), but also just like Jesus, they still trust God and won't break trust with Him.

There are examples of people who achieved such perfection—they were not sinless beings, but they were sinners who had come to love and trust God so fully that nothing could shake them from their faithfulness to Him—thus, they were described by God as being "perfect."

- Job: no trial, hardship, or theological lies by compassionate friends could cause him to break trust with God
- Daniel: He would rather be thrown into the lion's den than betray God.
- Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego: They would rather be thrown into a fiery furnace than betray God.

These "perfect" people were not sinless; they were settled into such faithful loyalty to God that nothing could shake them from it. They would not compromise love for God and others in order to advantage or protect themselves.

Those who have been perfected in their loyalty to Jesus will not compromise their faith in Him in order to hold on to their assets, whether those assets are personal wealth or institutional wealth. They will not compromise the principles of God's kingdom to hold on to their church properties, hospitals, schools, clinics, or publishing houses. They will stay faithful to Jesus even if, like Daniel, they end up captives of a godless power and are thrown into a lion's den.

This is exactly how the Bible describes the righteous people who are ready for translation, the true last generation:

- They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).

The perfect, those who are ready to meet Jesus when He returns in the clouds, are not those with perfect deeds or tasks, but those whose hearts have been restored to ***perfect*** **trust** in God. They are settled in their relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake them from it. No trial, no tribulation, no temptation, no lie, no pain, no loss, no attack will cause them to break faith with God. They are sealed to God in heart, in mind, in soul—and they trust God with their future.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 96, you can follow along in any version, I am going to read it from The Remedy—consider if this is not a message the world needs today, a world that by and large no longer believes in God, a world that believes in evolution, that the strongest survive, that it is right and just to make up laws and enforce those laws upon people. Consider how we have a message of our Creator God whose laws are design laws that flies in the face of the world's wisdom, but how the **penal legal theologies have resulted in billions rejecting Christianity** because they make God out to be no different the a petty dictator, a power monger who is the source of inflicted punishment against all those who won't bow to him.

- Sing to the Lord a new heart-song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, praise his character of love; display his healing and restoration in you each and every day. (Psalm 96:1-2 REM)

When we experience God as our Creator, surrender to Him and are transformed to have mental/spiritual health, peace, joy, and Christlikeness, we reveal in our lives truth that cannot be denied. The godless have no peace, they have no joy, they struggle from addiction to addiction, fear to fear, relationship to relationship, seeking power and control, something to bring peace to their tormented souls. Our lives of godly joy and peace are songs that draw all who are not hardened beyond healing and give us opportunity to tell the truth of our Creator God who can heal all who come to Him. Another metaphor from Scripture, taken from the sanctuary service, the burning of incense that was to waft out over the tribes which represented the unconverted peoples of the world is:

- But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us **spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him**. For **we are to God the aroma of Christ** among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, **the fragrance of life**. (2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Continuing with Psalm 96:

- Take the truth of his glorious character and methods of love to the entire world, tell everyone of his marvelous works, for supreme is the Lord and most worthy of adoration; he is to be awed, admired, and esteemed above all gods. For every god of this world is a worthless fraud, but the Lord is the Creator who made the heavens. (Psalm 96:3-5 REM)

God is to be esteemed because He built reality and His laws are the laws of health, the laws of life, the laws upon which reality function and operate. Whereas all the false gods make up rules that require legal oversight and external enforcement—and therefore incite fear, fear of punishment. God is the source of healing love that casts out our fear.

- Majestic love and splendid truth emanate from him; power and glory fill his dwelling place. Recognize the Lord, all peoples of the world; recognize the Lord as glorious and almighty! Give your Creator the adoration his character of love deserves; bring yourselves into his presence, offering your love and devotion. Worship the Lord with your hearts renewed with the beauty of his holiness; abide in his presence all the earth! (Psalm 96:6-9 REM).

The law of worship, it is by beholding we are changed, to experience the healing of God, to be freed from fear and selfishness, to be transformed we must humble surrender to God and place Him at the center of our hearts affections, what we esteem, adore, awe, admire, and look up to.

- Say to the nations, "The Creator built reality, and he sustains and rules over it." The world is firmly established on universal laws that cannot be changed; his design laws apply equally to everyone. Let the earth and sky rejoice; let the oceans roar in victory, and everything within them. Let the fields celebrate, with their lavish crops, and then, all the trees in the forests will exclaim with joy; they will sing before the Lord, for he is coming—he is coming to govern the earth! He will govern the world, restoring it back to his perfect design, and the people will live in truth—in harmony with his character of love. (Psalm 96:10-13 REM).

God’s laws do not discriminate, God’s laws are constants and treat everyone the same. The world is divided, constantly fighting because one group gets advantage over another, because the human law systems are rigged to benefit some while disadvantaging others. The message of God is that He is the Creator and He is not a respecter of persons, He loves all and treats all the same and His laws do not discriminate, we are either restored to harmony with them and we thrive or we stay out of harmony and suffer and die. The world needs to know the truth of God, to stop judging Him to be like Satan alleges, a being who makes up rules like we do and uses power to punish rule breakers. Why would anyone want to live eternally in such a kingdom?

MONDAY

What does it mean to sing to the Lord a new song? Let’s compare Psalm 98 from the NIV and REM:

- Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3 NIV84).
- Sing a new heart-song to the Lord, for what he has done is astounding: Jesus—his right hand and holy agent—is the cure for sin. The Lord has made his remedy known and revealed his perfect and right design for life to the nations. He has kept his promise to pour out his love and truth upon his people; the entire world has seen the healing power of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3 REM).

Do you hear these exactly the same? As you compare them to you find anything in the Remedy that cannot be understood to be in the NIV but one has to do more interpreting in the NIV, for instance God's right hand and holy arm worked out salvation, a person has to think about that and realize that Jesus was God's agent to work out salvation for us. Jesus is God's right hand, the action arm of the Godhead who has left heaven to act in human history. Also, Israel, in this text, is not speaking of genetic descendants of Jacob, but Israel here represents the faithful of God, those whose hearts have been circumcised by the Holy Spirit, thus the rendering as "his people."

- Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the King. (Psalm 98:4-6 NIV84).
- Let everyone make their life a joyful song unto the Lord! Let the beautiful music of love burst forth from your hearts renewed; make the melody of love for the Lord, resplendent like the sound of the harp; let your love resound with the harp and singing. With trumpets and horns, proclaim your joy for the Lord our King. (Psalm 98:4-6 REM).

Thoughts about making a joyful song? What is it that God wants? Doesn't God want our lives to be restored to harmony with Him, to live lives of love that are melody of heaven? Isn't that the meaning more so that acoustical melodies? And that corresponds to the quote we read earlier about touching chords that connect all of God's creation together, we are in harmony, make a melody, our lives are beautiful music to the Lord.

- Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98:7-9 NIV84).
- Let the sea and everything dwelling in it rejoice along with the entire world and all who inhabit it. Let the rivers celebrate and the mountains shout for joy; let them sing to the Lord, for he comes to restore his governance to the earth. He will govern the world in love and heal the people to live in harmony with his design for life. (Psalm 98:7-9 REM).

Let me make this clear—the NIV is not wrong; the truth is all there to be understood of one reads the NIV with God's design law in mind. The Remedy just makes the design law truth easier to recognize and see.

THURSDAY

The title of the lesson is "When God Does Not Delight in Sacrifice"

Has God every delighted in animal sacrifices?

What is the sacrifice God does delight in?

- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:17 NIV84).

What God wants is us to sacrifice our fear, selfishness, pride, to die to our carnal fear driven lives and be reborn on the altar of His love and grace.

Then what was the purpose of the animal sacrifices? Teaching tool, to teach the plan of salvation, that sin severs God's design law for life and results in death and life would only be possible by restoring in humanity God's living law of love and that only our sinless Creator God could do this work. Thus Jesus dedicated Himself to become the second Adam, partake of humanity terminal in sin and eradicate the sin infection and restore God's living law of love perfectly into the species.

And the only way to do that was to take the infection to the cross and kill it, which He did.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 13
Wait on the Lord

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The first paragraph recounts the Lord's leading in diverse situations and then concludes with this sentence,

- If there is a final word that we can draw from the Psalms, it should be "wait on the Lord." (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 100).

What does it mean to wait on the Lord?

There is a song from 1982 by a Christian group called Petra entitle *More Power to Ya* and the lyrics are:

> *You say you've been feeling weaker, weaker by the day*
> *You say you can't make the joy of your salvation stay*
> *But good things come to them that wait*
> *Not to those who hesitate*
> *So hurry up and wait upon the Lord*
>
> *More power to ya*
> *When you're standing on His word*
> *When you're trusting with your whole heart in the message you have heard*
> *More power to ya*
> *When we're all in one accord*
> *They that wait upon the Lord, they shall renew, they shall renew their strength*
>
> (Written by: Bob Hartman; Album: Petra - More Power To Ya, 1982)

What does it mean to wait upon the Lord?

Read second paragraph,

- Waiting on the Lord is not an idle and desperate biding of one's time. Instead, waiting on the Lord is an act full of trust and faith, a trust and faith revealed in action. Waiting on the Lord transforms our gloomy evenings with the expectancy of the bright morning (Ps. 30:5, Ps. 143:8). It strengthens our hearts with renewed hope and peace. It motivates us to work harder, bringing in the sheaves of plentiful harvest from the Lord's mission fields (Ps. 126:6, Matt. 9:36-38). Waiting on the Lord will never put us to shame but will be richly rewarded

because the Lord is faithful to all His promises (Ps. 37:7-11, 18, 34; Ps. 71:1; Ps. 119:137, 138). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 100).

I would agree waiting on the Lord has a double meaning—it does mean waiting on the Lord to lead, but then actively working for the Lord. If we don't have a new direction to go, then we stay active in the duties we currently know the Lord has given us to fulfill—and we seek to fulfill them in accordance with His will, by applying His methods to our actions and solutions.

But what of the idea "It [waiting on the Lord which is trust and faith] motivates us to work harder, bringing in the sheaves of plentiful harvest from the Lord's mission fields"?

What does it mean to bring sheaves into the harvest?

- Does it mean converting someone to a creed, a system of fundamental beliefs, to join a specific organization?
- How many sides are there in the war between Christ and Satan?
- When Jesus said,

- "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14 NIV84).

What did Jesus mean? Jesus' meaning is quite simple and straightforward when one returns to worshiping God as Creator and recognizes His laws are design laws. It becomes confusing when people think through human law. On any subject there is one truth—but an infinite number of lies. Consider the color of the sky on a clear day—there is an objective truth to the wavelength of light we see reflected back, and that can be measured with a light meter and we can give the nanometer wavelength of light we are seeing. But people are free to reject that truth—but once they reject the truth what is left for them to replace it with? Falsehood, lies, and it doesn't matter what they choose in its place, if they reject the truth they will rest their mind upon lies. They way to eternal life is only through the door of truth—and on all issues there is one truth, one reality, one way God created things to work, God's design laws that govern reality, but there are a multitude of counterfeits.

For instance, there is one Savior, Jesus Christ—but there are a multitude of false gods, it doesn't matter which false god someone worships, they all lead to the same place, destruction of the image of god within the person and the establishment of the character of God's enemy within the individual's spirit temple. And it doesn't matter whether one worships Jesus, or Joshua, or Yashua, or Jehovah, Yahweh, El-Shaddai, Michael, the Lamb of God, or any other nomenclature as long as one attributes to Jesus the truth that He revealed Himself and the Father to be. For it is by beholding that we are changed, we become like the God we admire and worship.

The only way for us to have salvation, for us to be restored to righteousness is to receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ by recognizing Him in truth, accepting Him, trusting Him, opening our hearts to Him, adoring, admiring, esteeming, worshiping, loving Him and actively listening to Him

seeking to know every day more of Him, His methods, principles, plans and choosing to carry out in our lives what we know is His will for our lives.

Consider this historical quote, from EG White whose message of Design Law and real restoration to righteousness was rejected by the legalistic leadership of the SDA church in 1888, those who continue to teach the penal/legal lies about salvation:

- Are we so insensible as a peculiar people, a holy nation, to the inexpressible love that God has manifested for us? **Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ, to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope**. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him. He will labor for those near and those afar off. He will have no sectional feeling, no interest merely to build up one branch of the work over which he presides, and there let his zeal end. All will work with interest to make every branch strong. There will be no self-love, no selfish interest. The cause is one, the truth a great whole. (4LtMs, Lt 55, 1886, par. 22).

Do you agree with this statement? What is the truth presented? Are we saved by joining a denomination? Do we bring people into salvation by getting them to agree with our doctrines? Do people become saved when they join your church? Why do so many churches seem to think proper evangelism is getting people to join their organization? Is it?

What is evangelism as Jesus would have us do it? What does it mean to bring in the sheaves?

Does it mean converting people to doctrinal systems, or bringing people out of the world of fear, selfishness, and sin, and into oneness with Jesus where they experience a new heart and right spirit to love God and others more than self, where they can live lives of ever-advancing development of character in the truth and love of God, practicing His methods in how they treat others?

WEDNESDAY

The title is Waiting in God's Sabbath Rest

What does this mean? How do we wait in God's Sabbath rest?

Does it mean making a list of prohibited and authorized behaviors to do on the Sabbath day? Does it mean going to church on the seventh day Sabbath?

Someone posted this question for our Q&A time and I thought it fit with our lesson, so I am reading it here:

- I'm visiting family in Brazil. It's miserable hot, and there is a pool with refreshing water created by God, but it is off limits, on the day celebrating creation of said water. This is one

of many examples, another being we must take a shower before sunset, even though I'm going to get hot and sweaty from deep frying in the kitchen. But then Isaiah 58:13,14 comes up, where we are told not to do our pleasure. Please help me reconcile this to reason with people here! Please define, "one's pleasure" in the above verses, because this is what is being used against me. I think I'm working it out as I'm writing this question—if I'm aligned with God's design laws, His pleasures are my pleasures. I would still like your input, please.

How would you answer her? Have you ever had such concerns? Before we unpack this, let me say that I believe the people who make up these irrational rules do so from the sincerest of hearts. They do so not because they want to be disobedient to God, but because they want to be obedient to God; they want to honor God; they want to do what is right not what is wrong. Very similarly to the doctors who bled and leached George Washington when he had pneumonia—those doctors wanted to do everything to help, to save, to bless, to cure, but because they believed wrongs things about sickness, microbiology, immune system, and the laws of health their actions, done with the best of motives, the motives of love to save, were ultimately harmful.

My understanding of what those doctors did was the wrong thing from the right motive, thus their hearts were not acting on evil, they were not sinning, but they were also not advancing godly health practices. Likewise, there are millions who keep Sabbath as described above, they are doing from a heart that loves God and wants to do what is right to honor God and their hearts are not sinning, they are not doing evil—but because of their ignorance, their made up rules burden the Sabbath with needly exactions, and do not advance the kingdom of God, but obstruct it, especially in the hearts of people who are thinking rather than following rules.

In the aftermath of the 1888 GC, when EG White and others Reformers were advancing the design law truth of God's law, but the legalistic leaders rejected that view and instead clung to the imposed law lie that God's laws function like human laws, and retained a legal/penal explanation of the sin problem and the plan of salvation, she wrote the following. It was written in 1889 and published in the Signs January 20, 1890:

- Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him. Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character,** and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused **truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary**. [Satan infected the minds of people with the lie that God's law functions like human law, and that resulted in more rules, more restrictions, ideas of law-keeping, of legality, punishment from God. The idea that God's justice is inflicting punishment and therefore God is a severe, exacting, rule-enforcer who only punishes as long as we deserve, one who is pleased when sin gets its full and just dues in the form of torture upon the unrepentant.] He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings

of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God**. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes**. [What is set right and keep right if we used Latin terms? Justify and sanctify, the only way to win us back to trust, to set our hearts and minds right with God again was to reveal the truth of who He is and how His law and government actually work. As long as we believe the lies we will not be won back to trust. And then in trust we receive the objective victory of Jesus, the new heart and right spirit that He accomplished as our human substitute.] That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 6, emphasis mine).

Is the final issue in the war between Christ and Satan a test over which day one attends weekly worship services?

- If a person absolutely insists on worshipping on the Bible Sabbath does that mean they will go to heaven, is Sabbath keeping the key to salvation?
- Those who crucified Christ 2000 years ago wanted Him off the Cross by sunset why? So they could keep the Bible Sabbath – does that mean they had the seal of God?
- Does Satan care if a group of people worships on Sabbath as long as they worship him?
    - Who did Jesus Himself say was the father of the Jewish leadership, those Sabbath keepers who crucified Him?

- "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44 NIV84).

    - So we have people keeping the Bible Sabbath who are, according to Jesus, children of Satan.
    - Doesn't that mean, to the degree the Sabbath is involved in end-time events, or any events in human history, it must be more than simply the day of the week one avoids work or attends worship services?

So what is the importance of the Bible Sabbath? If we present it as a law like humans make up, a rule that we are required to obey—are we advancing the gospel, the truth of God's kingdom, or are we advance Satan's lie and working against God's kingdom?

This is not a question about what day of the week is the Sabbath, every serious Bible student knows that the Bible Sabbath is Saturday, the days the Jews still observe every week without fail since long before the time of Jesus. The questions before us, are:

- What is the purpose of the Sabbath?
- How are we to understand and experience it?

- What impact does the Sabbath have upon who we understand God to be and our relationship with Him?
- What role does the Sabbath have for human beings today?
- Is there a Great Controversy function for the Sabbath—is it important as we approach the second coming of Christ?
- Thus, how do we rest in God's Sabbath?

Jesus said,

- The Sabbath was **made** for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27,28, emphasis mine)

What does this mean? Is this saying the Sabbath is a rule you must obey, or that it is a gift for you to enjoy and be blessed by?

How is the Sabbath a gift? What is its purpose for God's creation?

Was there a Sabbath in heaven before Earth was created? Is there any evidence of this?

- If the Sabbath was made it had a beginning
- The Bible tells us it was made at the end of creation week and that it was made for human beings
- And the Sabbath is measured by the rotation of the earth in relationship to the Sun that didn't exist until creation week.
- So, the evidence supports the idea that the Sabbath was not in heaven when the angels rebelled but was specifically made for man
- For what purpose?

And as we consider the purpose of the Sabbath in the setting of the universal war that began in heaven, consider this historical quote:

- **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing** controversy concerning the **law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle **between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**. (The Great Controversy 582).

Did the angels that followed Satan in heaven disobey God's law? Yes, but there was no Sabbath in heaven—the issue in the controversy did not originate over a Sabbath versus Sunday question and it ultimately won't end over that superficial question. It will end over what these two days represent—they are signs or pennants or marks or emblems of two types of law and therefore two types of government and ultimately two different gods.

The Sabbath was *created* as a day set apart by God; Sunday was not *created* as a day set apart from the other days by God, but became a day set apart from the other days of the week by human legislation. Thus, the two days represent two types of law—design law and imposed law.

The issue is not the actual day, but the law and government the days represent, consider this historical quote:

- The prophet thus points out the ordinance which has been forsaken: "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, **The repairer of the breach**, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and **call the Sabbath a delight**, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." Verses 12-14. This prophecy also applies in our time. **The breach was made in the law of God when the Sabbath was changed by the Roman power.** But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. The breach is to be repaired and the foundation of many generations to be raised up. (The Great Controversy 452, emphasis mine).

Notice the author didn't write, "The breach was made **by the change** in the Sabbath, but **when the Sabbath** was changed." The breach in the law was changing how we understand God's law from design law to believing that God's law is imposed rules that can be changed. The changing of the Sabbath to Sunday is the evidence, the fruit, the result of the beach and the true breach is no longer recognizing that God's are design laws.

Thus the repairers of the breach are those who teach the truth that God's laws are design laws and not imposed rules, and in so doing we call people back to worship the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water. We teach people reality and how to cooperate with God to become the righteousness of God.

But if we accept the right day of the week as the Bible Sabbath yet continue to believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, we have not repaired the breach, we have not left the Roman system of worship, we are still advancing the counterfeit to God's kingdom, just as the Jews did 2000 years ago who had the right Bible Sabbath but the wrong law and the wrong god.

Consider the Bible image of being a repairer of the breach, this is referencing the walls that surrounded Jerusalem that were broken down at the time Babylon conquered Israel and were rebuilt when the remnant came out of Babylon and returned to Jerusalem.

At the center of Jerusalem was the temple, thus the walls were symbolic of what kept enemies out of the temple of God.

The most important part of the temple was the most holy place, where the ark of the covenant was kept. The most holy place was symbolic of the New Jerusalem.

- The most holy place was in the shape of cube
- The New Jerusalem is in the shape of a cube

- The most holy place was covered in gold
- The New Jerusalem is paved in gold

- The most holy place is where God's shekinah presence gave light
- The New Jerusalem will not need a sun to light it because God's glory will give it its light

And the New Jerusalem is called the Bride of Christ, it is composed of the living stones who are being shaped and cleansed to be built into a temple for the Lord. And there is a protective hedge God has given us to keep the enemy of God out of our hearts and minds, out of our spirit temples, but there has been a breach in that protective hedge that has let the enemy come in and take up residence in the temple.

Babylon has taken captive the hearts and minds of many people who believe in God so a message goes forward to leave Babylon, to come out of Babylon.

Paul describes this in 2 Thessalonians where he says the man of sin sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God. The man of sin did this by making a breach in the protective hedge and thus entering into the hearts and minds of people.

And what is the breach, the lie that God's law functions like human law, and God is then depicted as one who is the source of inflicted pain and suffering and death. And the man of sin is set up in our spirit temple being worshiped as God. The temple needs cleansing, and how do we do that, by repairing the breach, by returning to worshiping Him who is Creator, Him who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water, by judging God correctly and stop judging Him to be a cosmic judge and inflictor of pain and suffering. And what causes us to do that? By repairing the breach in the law, by recognizing ALL of God's laws are design laws. We are the repairers of the breach if we do this and the Sabbath is a sign of this, but the change in the day of worship is only the results of believing God's law functions like human law. To return to seventh-day Sabbath worship while still believing God's law functions like human law DOES NOT REPAIR the breach in the law, in fact, it can turn people into law keeping crucifiers of the Lord of the Sabbath.

Consider this historical quote from the book *Prophets and Kings*:

- The spiritual restoration of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah's day was a symbol, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: "They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities." "They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah 61:4; 58:12. (Prophets and Kings 677)

> The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are **seeking to restore the principles** that are the foundation of the kingdom of God. **They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law**—the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard. (Prophets and Kings 677, emphasis mine)
>
> In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of this remnant people who build the wall. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:13, 14. (Prophets and Kings 678)
>
> In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law **at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired.** God's remnant people, **standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. (Prophets and Kings 678, emphasis mine)

So with design law we understand that the Sabbath is God's gift, promise, evidence, demonstration, of God's character and how His design law government functions—how He governs. God is the Creator—He has all power, and **the danger with all power is that in can intimidate, it can cause fear, it can damage individuality, it can undermine love, it can shut down thinking, it can lead to mindless pawns and drones doing what the powerful sovereign says or else—so God created the Sabbath, a revelation, demonstration, evidence that God does NOT govern by imposed law and enforced rules**, for after six days of using immense power to create, the Sabbath is set apart by God when He **STOPPED** using power, when God rested, when God created a time for His creatures to think and consider and come to their own conclusions without the threat of punishment being inflicted by Him. Thus the Sabbath is a memorial to God as Creator and His design laws that all reality is built upon. For what God wants from His intelligent creatures is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, and friendship and that can never be achieved through human law, through he use of might and power, it cannot be achieved through intimidation, through threats, through inflicted punishments. In fact, when people present God like this they advance Satan's rebellion and undermine trust in God and negate the very purpose and function of the Sabbath—a sign that God is holy and makes us holy!

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

- What, then, about waiting for God? The notion of waiting on the Lord is found not only in the Psalms but abounds all through the Bible. The operative word in all this is perseverance. Perseverance is our supreme commitment of refusing to succumb to fear of disappointment that somehow God will not come through for us. God's devoted child waits, knowing with certainty that God is faithful and those who wait on Him can trust that if we leave our situation to Him, we can be sure that He will work it out for our best, even if at the time we don't necessarily see it that way. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 101).

Would anyone like to share where by waiting on the Lord, rather than acting on impulse or initial emotional reaction to a situation, God opened doors and resolved problems for you in ways that would not have happened if you didn't wait on the Lord?

When this ministry was first founded back in 2010, there were several pastors who objected to what we teach and sent out a letter through the community alleging I was teaching heresy and that people shouldn't listen to what I teach. Of course I was hurt, and I was tempted to retaliate by writing my own letter and going on a publicity campaign to protest what these pastors had written, for of course I did not believe in represented the truth. But before I acted I spent a lot of time in prayer because I recognized I was angry, my motives were not those of love, but I wanted to embarrass and humiliate those pastors. Thankfully, God worked upon my heart and I did not choose to make a public campaign of attacking those pastors, but instead trusted God with what would happen and simply focused on advancing the truth as I understand it and God has blessed with the continued growth and reach of this ministry, bringing more people to our team, helping develop more resources, opening more avenues to share and this continues to this day.

But this paragraph also triggered my mind to inquire, yes we are to wait on the Lord, but what is the Lord waiting for? Is the Lord waiting for something?

Consider this historical quote—do you agree Jesus is waiting for this?

- Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. (Christ's Object Lessons 69).

Is Jesus waiting for this? Have you heard this in the past and been frightened, made fearful, anxious, insecure?

- What does this mean?
- Is Christ waiting for this?
- Why does He have to wait, why doesn't He just use His divine power to make it happen?

- If Christ is waiting for the development of His character in His people, does that mean this is part of salvation?
- Can people be saved without this? Or is this the very essence of what it means to be saved?
- Are people saved from sin or are they saved in sin?
- Do we teach that Jesus removes sin from us and cleanses us, or do we teach that Jesus applies His blood to our account and covers over our sin in some way, either in the records in heaven, or by a robe of righteousness that covers our sin?

The true message of our Creator God is that God, through Christ, has made provision to cleanse every single heart and mind from sin, to restore sinners to true righteousness, to purify us, to purge fear and selfishness from us, to cleanse our Spirit temples to make us white as snow in heart, mind, character. But Satan's counterfeit has infected Christianity and the SDA church and has obstructed the truth with the penal lies that Jesus died to pay our penalty, often to the Father, but certainly applied in the heavenly legal system, and we need to have that legal payment made to our account so that we can be covered by the blood, or covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness so that God will declare us legally righteous while we are still unrighteous. It is a trick, a deceit, a Ponzi scheme, to get people to have faith in something that has to power to heal or save. Consider these historical quotes again from EGW who was one of the Reformers advancing the design law truth, this is what we are supposed to be teaching:

- **The righteousness of God never covers a soul all polluted with sin**. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Will you let Him take it away? You cannot bear your own sin. Christ says He will take your sin if you lay hold of the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. (Sermons and Talks vol 1, p. 237.2)

- We are to be representatives of Christ, as Christ was a representative of the Father. We want to be able to attract souls to Jesus, to point them to the Lamb of Calvary, who taketh away the sin of the world. **Christ does not clothe sin with His righteousness, but He removes the sin, and in its place He imputes His own righteousness**. When your sin is cleansed, the righteousness of Christ goes before you, and the glory of the Lord is your rearward. Your influence will then be decidedly on the side of Christ; for instead of making self a center, you will make Christ a center, and will feel that you are a guardian of sacred trusts. – (Signs of the Times April 4, 1892, par. 2)

How does this author describe Jesus' work? From where is Jesus removing sin? The truth of God for you and me is a healing transforming message, but this incredible, transformational, truth is obstructed by the penal/legal theologies based on the lie that God's law functions like our law.

When you hear words like "character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people" what law lens do you understand such words through? If you think God's law functions like human law then what does perfect mean? Does it mean perfect performance, perfect behavior, perfect rule-keeping? And do such ideas bring peace or greater anxiety and fear? And does that lead to teaching that the statement "character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people" means to have Christ's

character reproduced in our legal documents in the courts of heaven during the judgment, but that such reproduction doesn't happen in us, we are declared, based on the merits of Jesus to be legally righteous in the judgment while we remain unrighteous in reality here on earth? Do you see, how the legal view actually interferes with what God is working to achieve—God wants to reproduce Jesus in every heart and mind, to cleanse us from all sin, but the legal view puts up barriers in our hearts and minds and shifts our faith or trust away from God to the mechanics, payments, legal adjustments, mediations being done to God so God won't find us guilty and kill us.

But if we understand God's law as design law then what do such words mean?

When we return to worshiping God as Creator, we realize that the basis for life in God's universe is God and the law upon which He constructed life to operate. We realize that we sinners must be restored to unity with God. And we read Jesus' words about being perfect in their full context, allowing Jesus to inform us of what He meant:

- You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5:43–48 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus Himself describes what being perfect means: to love everyone, consistently and reliably, just like the sun and the rain treat everyone exactly the same. But it is understood that this is only possible by first being restored to a love and trust relationship with God, as Jesus said multiple times:

- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37–40 NIV84).

And how does God's love get restored into our hearts so that we can be perfect? It is by trust—that is, faith—in God. Thus, as the apostle Paul wrote:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

And how is trust restored so we open the heart to receive the new heart and right spirit, to allow God to write His law upon our hearts and minds? By the gospel, which is the good news about God that wins us back to trust.

Bible perfection is not about deeds or tasks; it is about love and trust, about maturity of character. Speaking of Jesus, Hebrews states:

- During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect,** he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:7–9 NIV84, emphasis mine)

But wasn't Jesus always perfect? Jesus was certainly always sinless, but Bible perfection isn't about sinlessness. Adam and Eve in Eden were sinless, but they were not perfected. Bible perfection is about maturity of character, which is about coming into a love and trust relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake us from it. The "perfect" are those who remain faithful, loyal, and true to God in their heart's devotion no matter what. They might have questions, they might misunderstand, they might be confused about why things are going the way they are; they might cry out like Jesus did, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45 NIV84), but also just like Jesus, they still trust God and won't break trust with Him.

There are examples of people who achieved such perfection—they were not sinless beings, but they were sinners who had come to love and trust God so fully that nothing could shake them from their faithfulness to Him—thus, they were described by God as being "perfect."

- Job: no trial, hardship, or theological lies by compassionate friends could cause him to break trust with God
- Daniel: He would rather be thrown into the lion's den than betray God.
- Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego: They would rather be thrown into a fiery furnace than betray God.

These "perfect" people were not sinless; they were settled into such faithful loyalty to God that nothing could shake them from it. They would not compromise love for God and others in order to advantage or protect themselves.

Those who have been perfected in their loyalty to Jesus will not compromise their faith in Him in order to hold on to their assets, whether those assets are personal wealth or institutional wealth. They will not compromise the principles of God's kingdom to hold on to their church properties, hospitals, schools, clinics, or publishing houses. They will stay faithful to Jesus even if, like Daniel, they end up captives of a godless power and are thrown into a lion's den.

This is exactly how the Bible describes the righteous people who are ready for translation, the true last generation:

- They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).

The perfect, those who are ready to meet Jesus when He returns in the clouds, are not those with perfect deeds or tasks, but those whose hearts have been restored to ***perfect* trust** in God. They are settled in their relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake them from it. No trial, no

tribulation, no temptation, no lie, no pain, no loss, no attack will cause them to break faith with God. They are sealed to God in heart, in mind, in soul—and they trust God with their future.

MONDAY

The lesson is entitled the Peace of a Weaned Child and references psalm 131, which reads from the NIV as:

- My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore. (Psalm 131:1-3 NIV84).

What does this psalm say to you? What is the message you hear? Does is suggest, don't think, don't ask questions, don't try and comprehend the things of God, that is pride and arrogance, instead, if God said it, you should believe it for that is all there is to it, be content like a weaned child to be seen and not heard, to believe what those in authority tell you, especially God?

I think some could use it that way, but it would be a gross distortion of Bible truth—for such a message is not from God, for elsewhere God has said:

- "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).

- We should each firmly make up our own minds. (Romans 14:5 GNT).

But perhaps a better place to look is Hebrews 5-6:

- We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness**. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have **trained themselves to distinguish good from evil**. Therefore let us leave the **elementary teachings** about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of **repentance from acts that lead to death**… (Hebrews 5:11-6:1 NIV84).

The immature, the children, the infants on milk are the ones who are still focused on the rules, the imposed law, the dos and don'ts, the acts of sin—and that is the imposed law view. Children view right and wrong as determined by either the authority, mommy said, daddy said, the pastor said, God said, or the rules, the law says. Children never think from cause to effect, children don't understand

how reality works, they only focus on being good and obedient children which means keeping the rules of the one in charge. But such an approach to life, according to Hebrews, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

In 1888 the SDA church faced this very question, a crisis occurred, would the leadership accept the advancing light and move beyond the rules God gave for the children, to understand the reality behind the rules? But sadly, the leadership rejected the truth that God's laws are design laws and any made up rules are just like the rules parents make for their children, loving expressions of design law for the purpose of protecting the infants, immature, childlike from harm until they can mature and come to love God's design laws and freely choose to harmonize with them. And, today, the SDA church, instead of teaching the truth for this time, obstructs the truth for this time by the penal legal lies that come from teaching God's law functions like human law, made up rules. And Hebrews says, those who see things this way are not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness, which is exactly what we see from the legalistic leadership of the church who have replaced true transformation, genuinely becoming righteous as 2 Cor 5:21 says happens to those who trust Jesus, with the lie that we are legally declared righteous while we remain unrighteous.

The SDA organization stands in a very similar position to the Jewish nation 2000 years ago. The Jewish people had been blessed with the inspired writings, the truth that taught of the coming Messiah, but the system had been corrupted with legalism, rules, human law so severely that the very teaching tools God inspired were used to obstruct the truth. The truth was still contained in the Scriptures, but the people could not find the truth when they allowed the theology professors to explain the Scriptures to them. They needed to read the Scriptures for themselves and compare those Scriptures, as Jesus taught them, with God's revelations in nature—i.e. design law, how reality works.

Likewise, I believe within the records of the SDA organization there are truths that are for this time, but the membership by and large has not seen, read, understood, or appreciated these truths because the leadership to a great degree since 1888 has rejected the true meaning of the message and replaced it with a penal/legal counterfeit. Thus, if members want to find the truth for this time they need to stop listening to the theology professors and pastors and start studying the inspired record for themselves and harmonizing that record with God's revelations in nature and experience, just as Jesus taught us to do.

That is what the mature that Hebrews describes do, they have moved past the rules to reality, the mature know God as a friend and grow in the knowledge of the things of God, most importantly God's design laws and methods.

So, I paraphrase Psalm 131 this way:

- Lord, I am no better than anyone else; I see all human beings as equal before your eyes. I do not exercise my strength outside your will for my life or pursue positions beyond what you have equipped me to fulfill. Instead, I am content and at peace—like a weaned child no

longer crying for mother's milk; like a weaned child, I am content and at peace. O people of God, trust the Lord both now and forevermore. (Psalm 131:1-3 REM).

But if we are to become mature thinkers who can discern the right from the wrong, who have moved past the childlike ways of thinking and acting, who like Paul in 1 Corinthians wrote:

- When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. (1 Corinthians 13:11 NIV84).

Then what about what Jesus said,

- "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3 NIV84)

What does this mean? How are we to be like little children but not be like little children?

Jesus clarified in the next verse:

- Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:4 NIV84).

Children are lovers of truth, they are eager to learn, they are sponges of knowledge, they will accept new truth, but are also vulnerable to lies, that is where we are not to be like children, we are to be eager to accept new truth, love to grow in the truth, but we are to develop discernment skills so we stop believing just because a person in authority says so.

TUESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 126, it is a short six verse psalm so let's compare the NIV with the REM:

- When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. (Psalm 126:1-3 NIV84).
- When the Lord turned around the backsliding of Zion, we were like people whose dreams of health came true. Then our mouths were filled with laughter and we shouted for joy; then it was said among the unhealed, "The Creator God has done an incredible work of transformation for them." The Creator has done an incredible work of transformation in us; Oh, how happy we are! (Psalm 126:1-3 REM).

Do you see the difference—the Remedy focuses on the larger reality that the Scriptures are designed to teach, that the entire human race is captive in sin and that our health and happiness are only found when returned to unity with God, when set free from fear, selfishness, guilt, shame and sin to live in harmony with God in truth, love, and freedom.

- Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. (Psalm 126:4-6 NIV84).
- Restore our health and well-being, O Lord, just as streams bring life to the desert. Those who break the stony heart to sow the seeds of truth will reap a joyful harvest. Those who go through life with tender hearts, carrying seeds of truth to sow, will come home filled with joy, bringing in an abundant harvest. (Psalm 126:4-6 REM).

Again, what is the ultimate truth that God is trying to communicate to us? Is it temporal fortunes or is it eternal spiritual health and wellness? What does it profit a man to gain the entire world but lose his soul? What does it mean to sow in tears? It means that we are falling on the Rock Jesus Christ, having our hard hearts broken and then sowing in seeds of truth—just like Peter did after denying Jesus, he went out weeping and sowed in the truth and returned with joy.

So, when we experience difficult times, how will these insights help us? Are all painful experiences due to God working to break up our stony hearts? No! Job was perfect and righteous and his trials were not meant for his conversion or removing defects of character, sometimes bad things happen to good people. But there is a category of life experiences that are painful which are designed to discipline us, teach us, help us mature and develop in godliness. How do we tell the difference?

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph, which is a quote from *The Desire of Ages:*

- "Over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, Christ had proclaimed in triumph, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' These words could be spoken only by the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. **They are dependent recipients of the life of God**. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death." (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 785, emphasis mine).

What does this paragraph mean?

What does it mean that all created beings are dependent recipients of the life of God?

What does sin do? Does sin get us in legal trouble, or does sin cut us off from God, separate us from the source of life? And what happens if we are fully and completely disconnected from God—death—and why does death come to those who are completely cut off from God? Is it inflicted by God or the unavoidable outcome since life only originates and comes from God?

Then what type of law is this? Design law—and yet the world has accepted the wine of Babylon, the Romanization of Christianity that God's law functions like human law and death is an infliction by God rather than the wages of sin as the Bible teaches.

FRIDAY

The Lord God of heaven will not send upon the world His judgments for disobedience and transgression **until He has sent His watchmen to give the warning**. He will not close up the period of probation until **the message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. The law of God is to be magnified; its claims must be presented in their true, sacred character**, that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. Yet the work will be cut short in righteousness. The m**essage of Christ's righteousness** is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel. 6T 19.1

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 1
The War Behind All Wars

by Tim Jennings

What do you understand the Great Controversy to be? What is it over?

INTRODUCTION to STUDY GUIDE

Read second paragraph:

- The great controversy began in heaven with Lucifer's rebellion against God. At the heart of this cosmic conflict is the issue of God's love. Is He fully loving? Does He have the best interests of His creatures in view? Or is He an authoritative dictator desiring only what is in His own self-interest? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 2).

In EGWs magnum opus the Conflict of the Ages series, the five volumes which covers the entire Bible from beginning to end, the first three words in the first volume *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the last three words at the end of the last volume *The Great Controversy* are "God is love." Everything in between in that magnificent five volume set is unpacking, describing, unfolding, documenting God's character, government, methods and law of love which operates upon truth and freedom in conflict with Satan's kingdom of fear, selfishness, and coercion.

The lesson frames the issue here nicely, if we don't get confused by the subtlety of the language, if we understand it rightly. They contrast God's character of love with that of a dictator who uses external authority and power to force their way.

But there is a subtle change in the way God's character of love is described—I don't think it is nefarious, but it still can lead to misunderstanding. So, we need to understand this clearly, while God is loving—He is far more than loving. Angels and humans can be loving—but **God is love**, not just loving. To move God away from being love to being loving opens the door to introduce corrupting ideas such as is often said, "God is not only loving but He is also just" and those who say this do so to introduce the idea that God's justice is something other than His love, that God uses His power to inflict just punishments for sin—which immediately undermines the truth of God's character of love and makes God out to be like Satan in character. Such concepts introduce coercion—which destroys love. So, we must be very careful in how we understand these things lest we allow subtle distortions to enter into our thinking which ultimately undermine our understanding of God's love and truth, this is what has happened to millions throughout history, including that specially called and blessed people who faithfully studied the Bible, kept all the rules, including the Bible Sabbath, but because they believed God's law functions like human law they hated and rejected God when He stood among them.

As we will see throughout this quarterly, the enemy of God uses the same strategies and methods over and again to entrap hearts and minds in rebellion against God, and those whose hearts remain entrapped too often believe they are serving God while they are in fact warring against God, just like Saul of Tarsus did before the Damascus road.

SABBATH

Read second paragraph,

- God is a God of incredible love. His very nature is love (1 John 4:7,8). All of His actions are loving (Jer. 31:3). **Love can never be forced, coerced, or legislated.** Ellen G. White states it well when she writes, "Only by love is love awakened."—The Desire of Ages, p. 22. **To deny the power of choice is to destroy the ability to love, and to destroy the ability to love is to eradicate the possibility of being truly happy**. God wins our allegiance by His love. He is dealing with the great controversy between good and evil in such a way that sin will never arise in the universe again. God's purpose is to demonstrate before the entire universe that He has always acted in the best interests of His creatures. Looking at the world through the lens of God's love, in the light of the great controversy between good and evil, reassures each of us that right will triumph over wrong and will do so forever. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 6, emphasis mine).

This is well stated, and absolutely true. And because this is an absolute truth what does this truth make impossible?

Are we free if God uses His power to inflict pain, suffering, and death upon us if we disobey? Or is that the definition of coercion, "Do what I say or I will kill you"?

So, if God will not, and in fact cannot, use His power to inflict death upon the wicked lest He destroy love, incite rebellion, and destroy individuality making people mindless drones, robotic rule-followers, then what theologies are immediately recognized to be false, to be distorted in some way, to be misconstrued, and erroneous?

- Any theology that requires God to be appeased, propitiated, or assuaged
    - I didn't say there isn't propitiation—it just isn't being done to God
- Any theology that has Jesus doing something to change God
- Any theology in which God is the source of pain, suffering, and death
- Any theology in which God inflicts punishment for sin
- Any theology in which there is legal accounting and required punishments for misdeeds
- Any theology that has Jesus interceding or mediating **to His Father** in heaven
    - I didn't say Jesus is not mediating or interceding, He just isn't doing anything to His Father because the problem isn't in or with God

- Any theology that teaches we should believe based on authority, signs, wonders, and rules, and not evidence prayerfully reasoned through
- Any theology that teaches God punished Jesus at the cross
- Any theology that teaches that justification is a legal accounting rather than an actual healing of heart and mind

And what is the underlying root lie that leads to all of these subsequent errors in theology? That God's law functions like human law. It is only by returning to the truth that God is Creator and His laws are the laws reality is built to operate upon and the supreme law is the law of love, just as Jesus taught. And love cannot be commanded, it cannot be forced, and any time one tries to use legislation, rules, rule enforcement, external judicial processes to force righteousness and justice, one destroys love and incites rebellion.

This is why the Bible teaches that it is not by might or power but by the way the Holy Spirit works that God wins the war (Zechariah 4:6). And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love, it is the truth that sets us free from the lies and love casts out the fear and in that faith or trust relationship with God, we receive through the indwelling Spirit the mind of Jesus, becoming partakers of the divine nature as Peter wrote (2 Peter 1:4). This is reality.

The point is that the promotion of penal/legal theologies with a god who is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as so-called just punishment for sin perpetuates the war and obstructs the final message of mercy to the world.

SUNDAY

Read Revelation 12:7-9:

- And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

What is this text describing? Is this a war of might and power? Do we think there are angels with light sabers battling throughout the heavens?

The only way to have a reasonable understanding of such things is to read the Bible as a whole, harmonizing all the various parts to understanding the grand central theme, which is the war that began in heaven. But Revelation can only be understood if one has a deep knowledge of the other 65 books of the Bible for it is those truths that provide the underpinning for decoding and comprehending the symbols and elements of Revelation.

Before we get to Revelation, we must know the following correctly or we will not be equipped to accurately understand Revelation:

- How do we understand God's law functions? If we believe any aspect of God's law functions like human law, then we will misconstrue Scripture and especially Revelation.
- We must understand specific design laws of God, such as the law of love, truth, liberty, and worship—how these design protocols actually work and function, if we do not understand these laws, how reality works, then we will misconstrue the meaning of Revelation
- We must have a knowledge of who Michael is—and this requires comparing many other evidences throughout Scripture. There are four views on the identity of Michael:
    - He is an archangel, a created being, of the same order as Gabriel or Lucifer and Jesus and Michael are completely different beings
    - He is Jesus in His preincarnate form, but this Michael/Jesus is not God, he is a created being, created by the Father like all the other angels.
    - Michael is Jesus in His preincarnate form, but rather than being created like other angels, he is a created god—that is he is a divine being but a demi-god, a subordinate god, and lesser god that the Father, a child, or offspring of the Father who came into existence as an action of the Father, in other words there was a time when this Jesus/Michael did not exist, but when he came into existence he possessed divine attributes.
    - He is Jesus in His preincarnate for, but this Michael/Jesus is fully God, pre-existent, with life original, unborrowed, underived from another source. That Jesus was the member of the Godhead who would only manifest in angelic form, but was not an angel, and was always in existence. This third view is my view and here is why:
        - God is an infinite being who lives in unapproachable light 1 Tim 6:16, unapproachable by all finite beings including angels. Therefore, in order for God to have the closest intimacy with His creatures, and since creatures cannot enter into infinity, if God wants the closest interaction and intimacy with His creatures a member of the Godhead must leave infinity and enter into time, linear existence to interact on our plane, and that member of the Godhead is Jesus. And prior to His incarnation as human He manifested in the form of an angel, but He is not an angel, He is fully God. This conclusion is supported by the following Bible facts:
        - There **the angel of the LORD** appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight–why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**" At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to **look at God**. (Exodus 3:2-6, emphasis mine) (See also Acts 7:30-38; Judges13:16-22)

        - Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live**… Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when **all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out**–those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:25,28,29, emphasis mine).
        - “For the **Lord himself** will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the **voice of the archangel** and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**” (1Thessalonians 4:16, emphasis mine).
        - But even the **archangel Michael**, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 9, emphasis mine).
- We must know that Jesus as Michael appeared in the form of an angel, but was not an angel, He was fully God. And that Jesus in His preincarnate form shared a name with Lucifer.
    - And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the **morning star** rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19 NIV84, emphasis mine)
    - The Greek is *phosphoros*, which translated into Latin is Lucifer, and we read in Isaiah 14:12 of Lucifer’s fall:
        - How you have fallen from heaven, **O morning star**, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! (Isaiah 14:12 NIV84, emphasis mine)
- We must understand the nature of the war and the weapons God employs:
    - For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The **weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world**. On the contrary, they have **divine power** to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine)
    - We must remember Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

There is so much Bible knowledge we must have before we can accurately understand the secrets within the highly symbolic book of Revelation.

So, with all this in mind, what is the nature of the war? What is the central issue in the war? How was Lucifer in heaven able to deceive angels? What lie did he tell?

He told the lie that God is unjust and makes up rules and God’s form of justice requires sin to be punished. But how? By alleging equality with Jesus, who, in His preincarnate state, manifested in the form of an angel—but Jesus was NOT an angel.

Because Jesus is fully God, He would go into counsels with the Father, enter into infinity, whereas Lucifer could not fully enter, he could only come partially into God’s presence, similar to Moses

only being able to partially enter into Jesus' presence on the mountain. But Lucifer alleged that God made up an arbitrary rule because there was no reality-based, objective reason, to keep him out, and his allegations suggested that God would harm and punish if Lucifer disobeyed, in other words, that God uses coercion to enforce His way.

In truth, in reality, Lucifer as a created being, could not internalize, process, assimilate, or comprehend, the full infinite power and presence of God. Thus keeping a functional barrier between Jesus and Lucifer was the reality-based outworking of the distinction between the Creator God and a creature. However, Lucifer, without any reason, cause, or flaw in his being, chose to become jealous; he coveted power, prestige, and position which were only those of God and used the apparent similarity of physical appearance between Jesus' manifesting in the form of an angel, along with Jesus' natural graciousness, gentleness, patience, kindness, and meekness to advance his lies.

Lucifer also used his position of trust and leadership against the angels in heaven. Those who had known him their entire lives and had previously been blessed when before his rebellion he had shared truths with them. Thus, because of Lucifer's exalted position, long standing previous truth-telling, the love and trust developed in him by the angels, it became all the more difficult to expose him as a liar, especially since God is exactly NOT the kind of being Lucifer alleges, meaning that God would not use power to force Lucifer to comply, because it goes against who God is, and also such an action would only spread rebellion, fear, and distrust.

Read second paragraph,

- God did not create a devil. He created a being of dazzling brightness named Lucifer. This angelic being was created perfect. Included in his perfection was freedom of choice—a fundamental principle of God's government, which runs by love, not coercion. Sin originated with Lucifer in heaven itself. There is no logical explanation why this perfect angel should have allowed pride and jealousy to take root in his heart and grow into rebellion against his Creator. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 7).

Again, this is very well stated, and I believe is completely true—and since this is in fact true, since freedom of choice is a fundamental principle of God's government which cannot run on coercion, what kind of law and government is ruled out? Imposed law with imposed and inflicted punishments. This truth alone should be sufficient for all thinking people to reject the penal/legal theologies, for they are mutually exclusive—both ideas cannot be true, it is either we have genuine freedom, or God makes up rules and enforces them with external punishments.

Do you see why we are still wandering in this wilderness of sin? Because the lie that God's law functions like human law continues to operate within the church and God is presented as a being whose justice is the use power to punish sinners and Jesus' death was for the purpose of taking away God's punishment and His blood is an offering, a legal payment, made to God to propitiate His wrath. In other words, the most common version of Christianity is perpetuating Satan's lies about God's law which keeps people distrusting God—and instead of trusting God they trust Jesus to

protect us from God, or trust in some payment of Jesus' blood or some legal accounting, or being hidden, or having records erased etc.

Read third paragraph,

- Lucifer, a created being, desired the worship that belonged only to the Creator. He attempted to usurp God's throne by questioning God's authority. His rebellion led to open warfare in heaven. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 7).

What do we understand this to mean?

When we think of God's throne what do we consider it to represent, to mean? What did Lucifer seek?

Did Lucifer walk into the throne room of God one day and look around and say:

> "Wow God, this is the most amazing building I have ever seen. The ceilings are 100 miles high, covered in gold, sparkling with diamonds, accented with platinum, with amazing cosmic view-screens to every galaxy in the universe, the colonnades are made of the most exquisite pearls, decorated with rubies and emeralds, and the sapphire pavement accented in gold and platinum is unbelievable, and the throne upon which you sit, it is the most ornate piece of furniture I have ever seen. God, would you mind if I sit in that chair, in fact can I have this room for my home?"

What do you think God would have said to such a request for a throne and throne room made out of inanimate material? What do you think the God who speaks worlds into existence would have said? Do you think God would have said anything other than, "Lucifer, my dear son, of course you can have this chair and room if you derive joy from it. No worries, I can speak millions more into existence if I have need of another."

Did Lucifer really want to sit on a chair in a room all alone, or did Lucifer seek a different throne? What throne? He wanted to be enthroned in the Spirit temple, in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings as the one most loved, adored, trusted, valued, the one who could wield his power over others, by governing their hearts and minds!

Lucifer, seeking to enthrone himself in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings sought to dethrone God as trustworthy through his claims of equality with Christ and allegations that God the Father is unfair, arbitrary, and the maker of laws and enforcer of those laws.

And that is what Paul describes in 2 Thessalonians:

- He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4 NIV84)

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- When war broke out in heaven, the angels had to decide—would they follow Jesus or Lucifer? What was the nature of this war in heaven? Was it a physical war, or a war of ideas, or both? We don't know the details, but the conflict was physical enough that Satan and his angels eventually were "cast out," and a place was not "found for them in heaven any longer" (Rev. 12:8, 9, NKJV). This war obviously includes some kind of physical element. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 8).

What do you think of the idea that the heavenly conflict was physical in some way? What of this historical quotation?

- **God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth**; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government**. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. (The Desire of Ages p. 759).

Hmmm…was the war a physical war? To suggest there was some aspect of the war that was physical seems misleading. If it was a war of might and power it would have been over in an instant—but what would have happened in the hearts and minds of the loyal angels if God had used might and power to destroy Lucifer? Fear and distrust and thus rebellion and sin spread.

So, no, might and power and physical conflict were not part of this war. Then how do we understand Satan and his sympathizers being cast out of heaven?

When was Satan cast out, does Revelation 12:8,9, which was cited by the lesson, say when Satan was cast out? No, but does Scripture elsewhere suggest when Satan was cast out of heaven?

- Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; **now the ruler of this world will be cast out**. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." (John 12:30-32 NKJV, emphasis mine).

According to Jesus when was Satan cast out and restricted to the earth? At the crucifixion, why? Because the truth had destroyed his lies and no angel in heaven would listen to him anymore, not because some physical force was being used.

In fact, don't we have evidence from the book of Job that Satan was still entering and leaving heaven prior to the cross?

Consider this historical quote from *The Desire of Ages* two pages from the previous quote:

- Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer.** By shedding the blood of the Son of God, **he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.** Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken**. (The Desire of Ages 761).

In the Great Controversy there is no employment of physical might and force on God's part to win the war, because what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, friendship and that can only be won by God's methods of truth, love, and freedom, any use of might, power, and force destroys all that God wants.

TUESDAY

Planet Earth becomes Involved

How did Earth get dragged into the war which began in heaven?

What came first, Lucifer's rebellion, or God creating Earth and mankind?

Evidences:

- Satan was in Eden from the beginning to tempt, suggesting that he was already in rebellion.
- Job 38:4-7: "Where were you **when I laid the earth's foundation**? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and **all the angels shouted for joy**? (Job 38:4–7 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Then there is this historical quote showing that the Adventist reformers saw it this way, from EG White:

- **Angels on probation had been deceived by Satan, and had been led on by him in the great rebellion in heaven against Christ**. They failed to endure the test brought to bear upon them, and they fell. **Adam was then created in the image of God and placed upon probation**. He had a perfectly developed organism. All his faculties were harmonious. In all his emotions, words, and actions, there was a perfect conformity to the will of his Maker. (Confrontation p. 18, emphasis mine).

So Satan rebels, why bring Earth into it?

My understanding is God wins with evidence, not declarations and claims, nor by forcing His way through punishment. Lucifer, as a created being, alleged equality with Jesus who was manifesting in the form of an angel, but Jesus is fully God. He used this allegation to accuse God of arbitrariness and restrictions on liberty, i.e., God won't let me go into counsels that Michael goes into.

So, how can God expose Satan's lies, expose that God is not arbitrary, wouldn't it be evidence revealing or demonstrating that there is a difference between Lucifer and Michael—and what would be a way to do that? How about bringing Earth into the setting as the stage to demonstrate the difference? And the Earth at that time was a dark void in space, an deep abyss covered only by darkness. And I can imagine God saying to Lucifer, "You claim equality with Michael, well, here is this dark whole in the Milky Way a deep nothingness. Show us what you can do. Use your power to create." And of course Lucifer the created being can't do anything so then, after appropriate time, Michael steps forward and says, "Let there be light…"

Remember who the Bible teaches is the member of the Godhead through whom all things were created:

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3 NIV84).
- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV84).
- For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. (Colossians 1:16 NIV84).

Earth and humankind was not a new idea conceived of by God after Satan's rebellion, but God chose to bring Earth and mankind into existence at this time in universal history as evidence to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact fully God and far superior to Lucifer.

And the lessons of Jesus creating Earth were to go far beyond merely creating physical reality, Jesus created a planet teaming with life, and He crowned this creation by creating Adam and Eve in the image of God and the entire planet was built upon the design law of love in which every living creature lives by giving freely to other creatures. And Adam and Eve were created as two individual beings of the same substance with unique individualities but capable of becoming one in love and in that unity of love creating beings in their own image.

This creation not only demonstrates Jesus is fully God, but is designed to reveal the design laws of God, as Adam and Eve were intended to govern the planet in perfect love. We also see demonstrated in this creation why God didn't allow Lucifer into counsels Jesus entered when we recognize why

Adam and Eve didn't include the giraffe or elephant into their planning sessions. It was not because they were making up arbitrary rules or were selfish but the animals could not contribute to the discussion. And the gap between a human and an animal is much smaller than the gap between a created being and our infinite God. Lucifer was not admitted to the counsel that Jesus attended because he couldn't process the information, not because God was selfish or restrictive.

And this is why Lucifer targeted Earth above all others because he wanted to coopt the lesson book and occupy God's throne inside the spirit temple, to reside enthroned in the hearts and minds of people created to be image bearers of God and thereby get us, by our lives, attitudes, actions, and choices to misrepresent God. Satan wanted to replace in the human temple the spirit of love and trust with the spirit of fear and selfishness.

And thus the need of a Savior—Jesus, the promised seed of Genesis 3:15, came to reveal the truth about God to win us to trust, but also to eliminate the infection of sin from the species human, to eradicate fear and selfishness and restore in the human being the spirit of love, truth, freedom, and trust. And Jesus, by His victory in a weakened humanity demonstrated that Adam's fall in a perfect humanity was not because of some manufacturer's defect. Sin is not attributable to God!

In Jesus we have God in human form perfectly revealing the character of God and exposing Satan as a liar while simultaneously destroying the infection of fear and selfishness and restoring God's perfect law of love as the basis of life in humanity.

What happened to God's image in Adam and Eve? What was the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Why did God place it in the garden? What does it reveal about God's law and how He governs?

Since Adam and Eve were created in the middle of a war over God's character, law, methods, and trustworthiness—a war of ideas, they had to be exposed to the issues and decide for themselves what type of people would they become—what would they choose to know. Would they choose the truth and love of God and thereby know good, know loyalty, love, truth, faithfulness and godliness, and life or would they choose lies, and know evil, fear, guilt, shame, selfishness and death? Sadly, they chose to know evil by believing lies.

God placed the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden for them to freely choose what they would know for themselves, not know cognitively, but know by experience, in heart and character. Consider these historical quotes, do you agree?

- **God might have created man without the power to transgress His law**; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case **man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation**. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. **There could have been no development of character**. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. (Conflict and Courage p. 13.3, emphasis mine)

- **Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband.** They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors, and it was only by repentance toward God and faith in the promised Messiah that they could hope ever to regain the lost image of God. (Review and Herald January 5, 1886, par. 8)

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, character, and relationships a terminal condition

Do we understand that we (human beings) were created with the high calling of revealing the truth about God, that we are to be images bearers of God, that we still, because of Jesus, have the privilege of choosing to know good, to live out the living law of God and be solidified into loyalty to God?

Adam and Eve in Eden had the ability to choose only good, but instead they corrupted themselves with fear and selfishness by believing lies about God and breaking trust with Him. We are all born with that infection of fear and selfishness and without remedy we will die. God understood this, and therefore, because He is love, He sent His Son to do for us what we could not do. Jesus came, partook of this terminal sin condition and eradicated it and restored sinless life sinless love into the humanity He assumed and thus became the second Adam and we by faith may partake of that divine sinless nature and be reborn with a new life, new motives, new desires to love God and others and no longer be slaves to fear and selfishness.

WEDNESDAY

Read first two paragraphs,

- Adam and Eve have sinned, and God has told them that they must leave their garden home. From now on, toil and suffering will be their lot. Will they have to suffer and finally die with no hope? Is death the end of everything?

  It was at this point that God gave them the promise recorded in Genesis 3:15. Looking directly at Satan, the serpent, He said: " 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel' " (NKJV). They may not have fully understood at that moment exactly what this meant, but they knew they could hope again. In some way, through the "Seed of the woman," their redemption would come. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 10).

Why will their lot now be toil and suffering? Are the toil and suffering an inflicted punishment by God or the natural result of nature no longer being under the full governance and dominion God had given to Adam?

And what is the importance of the Genesis 3:15 promise in regard to how we understand the Old Testament?

It is the key to understanding the entire OT narrative. Once Adam and Eve sinned no human could be saved without Jesus coming as our Savior. The entire OT narrative focuses on the fulfillment of this promise and Satan's warfare to oppose and try and stop it from happening. The two antagonistic principles are warring out through human history.

Read the fourth paragraph,

- Do you ever wonder if God really loves you? Look at the Cross—look at the crown of thorns, look at the nails in His hands and feet. With every drop of blood that Jesus shed on Calvary, God is saying, "I love you. I do not want to be in heaven without you. Yes, you've sinned; you sold yourself into the hand of the enemy; yes, in and of yourself you are unworthy of eternal life. But I've paid the ransom to get you back." When you look at the Cross, you never have to wonder again if you're loved. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 10).

There is no doubt that the cross of Christ, His selfless, freely given, sacrifice reveals God's love to us, and we are so thankful that God is love, and God has provided everything for our salvation. And what Jesus did for us at the cross will be our science and song, our study and our inspiration, the focus of never-ending insights and heart moving love throughout all eternity. We will never stop growing in our insight of God and His character, but also into the significance of the infinite sacrifice of Christ for us at the cross.

One of the healthiest actions we can take is to regularly contemplate the life of Jesus, understanding that we are seeing God live out a human life, God walking, talking, and acting, God in humanity being tempted, abused, rejected, despised, mocked, tortured, and killed; We should stop regularly and consider what it means that when we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, that no one ever had to intercede with Jesus to protect them from Jesus, even Judas, Jesus' betrayer, didn't need someone in between, Jesus washed his betrayers dirty feet.

Do we realize that Jesus is God acting and that it is done to inform us of who God is, how much the Father loves us, and how the Father will treat us—including all who betray and reject Him? And what happened to Judas, how did God in human flesh respond to Judas? He looked upon Him with infinite love, sadness, and loss—"Oh my son, my child, my friend, how I longed to heal you, to take you under my wings and protect you but you wouldn't let me." And Judas, looking into those eyes of infinite love and mercy went out and hanged himself. God did not inflict punishment upon Judas, but terrible suffering of heart, mind, soul, the guilt and shame of his own sin and actions led him to kill himself. This is an example to us, it is what God does to the wicked in the end, when infinite truth

and love flows free all the rejectors have the full weight of their own guilt and shame and all the harm and evil they have perpetrated upon others come down upon them, the reality of their own condition in the face of God's infinite love, compassion, sadness and grief for them. They will know that God is not against them, but grieves at what they have chosen to become and they do not want to live in His presence, they beg for the mountains to fall upon them and give up their life preferring eternal nonexistence.

God's love is incredible and we, including myself, do not appreciate it fully, in fact we never will, we can only grow in our experience of His love, but there will always be more depths to experience.

Is there anything in the paragraph we just read that didn't seem quite right, that while written with the utmost good intentions, nevertheless introduces subtle distortions that perpetuate lies about God and the Great Controversy?

What about this section, any problem with this?

- "Yes, you've sinned; you sold yourself into the hand of the enemy; yes, in and of yourself you are unworthy of eternal life. But I've paid the ransom to get you back."

Is there a difference between selling oneself into slavery and being born into slavery?

Adam and Eve certainly chose to go from sinless freedom into the slavery of sin, but what about the rest of us, did we choose that, or for us is it as David wrote in Psalm 51:5 that we are born in sin conceived in iniquity?

We are all born in the slavery of sin. And think about it: doesn't it mean something different in how we understand our problem, our responsibility, our guilt, to believe we individually did this to ourselves, that somehow we didn't have to choose sin but we did, versus the truth that since Adam and Eve sinned none of the rest of us had a choice to not be a sinner?

This is important, the legal model focuses on behavior, on acts, on deeds, and thus will always introduce the idea that our problem is our choice to sin, the sins we have committed, and the idea that we have sold ourselves into sin. But this is a lie. Adam and Eve sold themselves into sin, and because they had been given by God the ability to procreate beings in their image, all of their children are born with this sin condition.

And this is the difference, the legalists believe sin is behavioral, we believe it is a state of being that is out of harmony with God that results in sinful behaviors.

Jesus would support our view, for Jesus in Matthew 5 drew a distinction between the behaviors and the heart condition that leads to the behaviors. He pointed out that sin is the heart condition that leads to the behaviors. And when did each of us get this sinful heart condition, the heart motivation or spirit of fear and selfishness? It is the life we inherited from Adam.

Thus, we are born with a terminal condition we did not choose, dead in trespass and sin, and this terminal condition without remedy results in acts of sin, but we are not born legally guilty. And through Jesus Christ we are each given a choice to surrender the sin-infected, fear-driven life we inherited from Adam, to surrender self, the fear, selfishness, guilt and shame, and receive freely a new life, the life of Jesus, the life of purity, love, truth, freedom, the life of righteousness that Jesus worked out for us, so that it is no longer the old fear-ridden selfish me living but the new loving, trusting, friend of Jesus living. This is the offer God is making through His Son, the only question is will we accept.

And sadly, the penal legal lies have obstructed people from this life transforming experience because it teaches them that they need a legal adjustment in records to pay a debt so they will be declared righteous while they remain unrighteous.

What about the ransom idea how do we understand it? Jesus said

- "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28 NIV84).

So the idea of ransom is very biblical—but what law lens do we understand it through?

What is the function of a ransom? It is the price necessary to free one held in bondage. What holds us in the bondage of sin? The lies about God that we believe that keep us from trusting Him, and our own carnal nature. And what is the price to free us? The truth will set us free—and it is the truth about God that Jesus revealed that wins us from distrust to trust, and in that trust we open our hearts and receive the life of Christ we are reborn with a new heart and right spirit. Thus the ransom price to free us is what reality, built on God's design law, required—truth and a new righteous life and that price was paid to you and me.

Read the questions at the bottom of the page:

- How did Christ answer Satan's charges on the cross? In the light of the great controversy between good and evil, what did His death accomplish? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 10).

How do you answer these questions?

- Satan said sin does not result in death, he said to Eve you will not surely die. Does Jesus death on the cross, when He who knew no sin was made sin for us, reveal that sin in fact does lead to death?
- And did Satan allege that God must inflict punishment for sin? The Adventist reformers believed that it was Satan's lie that God is required to punish sin, the reformers who were advancing the design law truth and who were opposed by the legalistic leadership took the position that sin pays its wage of death by separating people from God who is the source of life, but Satan twisted this to allege death comes out from God as punishment and that God is

required to use His power to punish sin or there is no justice. In other words, the Adventist reformers took the position that imposed law and imposed punishments are the lies of Satan. This is described in the book *The Desire of Ages:*

- **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. (Desire of Ages 761, emphasis mine).
- And at the cross what is revealed? Did God lay a hand on His Son? Do we see fire raining down to torture Jesus? Or do we have the testimony of Jesus Himself that the Father simply stepped back, let go, and abandoned Jesus—that God did not use any power of any kind upon His Son to harm Jesus. Thus, the charge that God is the source of death, inflicted punishment, the one whom we must be protected from is refuted.
- But have we read in many places where theologians and church leaders today are teaching God's law and justice require God to punish sin, and therefore God killed Jesus in our place?

- Satan alleged God's law is arbitrary and requires inflicted punishment, and at the cross do we see the exact opposite, that it is human law that inflicts punishments and God's law is design law, that people reap what they sow as it says in Galatians 6:8.
- Satan alleged God is selfish and that creatures are required to sacrifice but God wouldn't sacrifice for His creatures. Do we see in Jesus that God is truly love and that Christ being equal with God didn't grasp to power but surrendered Himself all the way to death to save His children?
- Do we see that God did not create any manufacturer's defect in Adam?
- Do we see that though God has all power He is perfectly trustworthy with the power because He will never use the power to force His way, that He will even forgive those who torture and kill Him.
- Others?

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- To state it very simply, Jesus presents us before the universe as clothed in His righteousness, saved by His death, and redeemed through His blood. Everything we should have been, He was. In Christ there is no condemnation for the sins of our past. In Christ our guilt is gone, and through His mighty intercession, the grip of sin on our lives is broken. The chains that bind us are loosed, and we are free. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 11).

Are you encouraged by such words? Beautiful imagery, but the question is what does it mean?

The robe of righteousness, redeemed by His blood, chains that bind us are all figures of speech, images, metaphors that require us to interpret them to understand objective reality. Remember, our God is the God of reality, the Creator. He is real. He built a real universe. There is a real enemy, a real sin problem, and Jesus is our very real Savior, who has provided a very real solution, that resolves the sin problem in us.

So, how do we understand these metaphors—do they become real for us, or do they remain mystical, almost magical? Do we teach them in a way that instead of leading our minds to greater understanding of reality we create fantasies that obstruct our growth in truth, in reality?

For instance—here are two ways to understand the robe of righteousness metaphor, do both teach the same thing? Are both enlightening the mind? Are both teaching reality or is one creating a fantasy that obstructs reality?

- The robe of Christ righteousness represents the perfect sinless and righteous life and character developed by Jesus as our substitute. When we accept Jesus as our Savior by faith, His righteous life is legally accounted to our record in heaven, and figuratively we are covered by the robe of His righteousness so in the judgment when the Father looks at us, He does not see our unrighteous and sinful characters, He sees the perfect character of His Son which covers over our unrighteous character as we receive the legal application Jesus' righteous life by faith.

Or

- The robe of Christ's righteousness represents the perfect sinless and righteous life and character developed by Jesus as our substitute. When we by faith accept Jesus as our Savior we open our hearts and minds to Him, He, via His representative the Holy Spirit, enters into our hearts and minds and recreates us in righteousness, our thoughts, attitudes, desires, motives are changed to be that of Jesus, we end up living righteously just as Jesus is righteous because we have become partakers of the divine nature, it is no longer our sinful selves but Christ lives within us—we are actually cleansed, renewed, reborn, recreated to be the righteousness of God. So when God looks upon us in the judgment He sees the righteousness of Christ because we are in fact righteous.

Do both of these teach the same thing? No! One is fantasy, false, a lie, which one? The first one, and what is that lie based upon? The lie that God's law functions like human law and justification is legal adjustment so the metaphor of the robe gets misconstrued into a legal fiction that obstructs people from experiencing genuine healing.

Here is another quote from the Adventist reformers who were rejected by the Adventist leadership, this author was shipped to Australia after the 1888 GC in which design law was rejected. She wrote this while in Australia and it is found in Christ's Object Lessons:

- This **robe**, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us…

> **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness**. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. (Christ's Object Lessons 311, emphasis mine).

So, why does God see the robe of Christ's righteousness when He looks at the saved? Because we have been partakers of the divine nature and have the righteousness of Christ reproduced within us! In other words, it is real, not pretend as the legalists teach.

What about the blood—what does that mean? There are two views of the blood, that it represents the death of Jesus, the legal death penalty paid, or that it represents the life of Jesus, the righteous sinless life given as a gift to us.

What is the truth? Leviticus 17:11 tells us the life of the animal is in the blood, not the death of the animal. Jesus said in John 6 that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood—what does that mean? Is He saying we must take death into ourselves from Jesus—or are we already dead in trespass and sin and we need a new life, that we must surrender our old terminal sin-life and receive a new life through faith and it is metaphorically taught as drinking the blood or the sinless life of Jesus?

What are the chains that bind us and how is the grip of sin broken? The chains are the chains of lies, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and habits. These chains are broken by receiving the truth which destroys lies and wins us to trust. In trust we open the heart and experience the love of God, and His love casts out our fear, and we receive the righteousness of Jesus and live new lives. We in love choose to do what is right instead of what is wrong and that is called right living or righteousness and over the course of time, because our hearts constantly focus upon Jesus, because we choose to trust Him, because we choose to respond to His love, because we choose to grow in truth we receive ever increasing insight, understanding, and power and we grow, mature, and develop from children/babes into mature Christians growing up into the full stature of Christ Jesus.

Where is Jesus interceding for us? Is Jesus interceding with His Father? Is the Father against us? Is Jesus interceding with the Holy Spirit? Who is against us? What are the chains that bind us? Jesus intercedes in our hearts and minds; He intercedes with the powers of darkness to protect. He intercedes in events on Earth, but Jesus does not intercede with His Father because His Father loves us Himself, in Jesus' own words:

- I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you (John 16:26-27 NIV84).

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 2
The Central Issue: Love versus Selfishness

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What a great title—for this is the central issue in the war: love versus selfishness.

And what is the primary emotional driver of selfishness? Fear, fear of punishment, failure, rejection, loss, etc. It is the breakdown of love and trust.

As soon as Adam and Eve believed the lies about God the circle of love and trust was broken and they ran and hid because they were afraid.

Because of God's love and grace God did not abandon humanity to this terminal sin condition, but God immediately began intercession—He put enmity between Satan and humankind, there are two antagonistic principle fighting for every human heart. As soon as Adam sinned, God began intervening in the hearts and minds of sinful human beings to convict of sin, to give a longing for something better, to cause us to feel dissatisfied with sin to woo us back to Him.

Because of God's love not letting go of humanity there is a war happening within the hearts and minds of every human being—a war between love and trust versus fear and selfishness.

We cannot overcome the spirit of fear within our own hearts, the spirit of fear that we inherited from Adam, the spirit of fear that causes us to make fear-based selfish choices. There is no resource we naturally possess that can give us the victory because the victory requires a change in spirit, a change in heart attitude, a change in motivational energy that drives our decisions. We must be reborn from a spirit of fear to a spirit of love and trust and that spirit comes from Jesus.

If you have read my two blog series posted right now: Salvation and the Cleansing of our Spirit-Part 1 and Part 2 How Jesus Our Substitute Cleanses Our Spirit I encourage you to read it, for it is the conclusion of a long study and is an expansion in my own understanding of what Christ accomplished for us.

And Paul describes these two antagonistic principles:

- There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2 NKJV).

When we are in Christ, which means we are in union with Him, that we have been reborn with a new heart and right spirit, the spirit of love and trust, then we are no longer terminal, no longer dying of sin, thus our hearts are judged as having been set right, put right with God, which is the reality of being justified, like Abraham whose distrusting heart was changed to trusting God and after his heart changed from distrust to trust, Abraham was recognized to be righteous, because he had experienced a real change—his heart was right with God, i.e., righteous.

And thus, we, with the new heart and right spirit live according to the Spirit, which is the Spirit of love and trust and that is the Spirit of life, for God's laws are the design laws of truth, love, and freedom and once we are restored to harmony with these design laws we are in harmony with the Spirit of life itself, and we are freed from the control of law of sin and death which is the me-first survival-of-the-fittest drive that comes from fear and selfishness.

Thus, as Paul says later in Romans 14, "whatever is not of faith is sin" whatever comes from the spirit of fear and selfishness is sin.

This is the war, going on for every heart and mind, do we love and trust Jesus so much that we surrender to Him, die to our old fear ridden selfish lives and receive through faith a new spirit of love and trust or do we instead cling to fear and selfishness but create all kinds of philosophies to justify our selfishness such as:

- Godless evolution
- All forms of paganism
- Legalism as Paul deals with in Romans that the Jews had fallen into, and which Christianity has also fallen into with its human law lens and the penal legal theologies?

The lesson points to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and Jesus' prophecy before His crucifixion which blends the destruction of Jerusalem and the events before the second coming, and then the lesson says:

- In the destruction of Jerusalem, we discover a foreshadowing of Satan's strategy both to deceive and destroy God's people at the end time. Jesus' instruction in Matthew 24 clearly outlines last-day events in the context of Jerusalem's fall. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 14).

Are there lessons for us to learn in regard to the Great Controversy and the current events happening in the world from Jesus' prophecy in Matthew and its fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem?

The book, *The Great Controversy,* opens with this prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem. I am going to share with you sections from the 1888 version, the version that came out the year of the great divide in the Adventist church, when the official leadership rejected the advancing light of God's law being design law and instead held onto the legalism of Roman imposed law, just like the Jews did with their interpretation of law. And if we don't reject the Romanization of Christianity and

return to worshiping God as Creator whose laws are design laws then we will fulfill exactly the same fate, result, outcome the Jews who rejected Jesus experienced at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now consider this statement—I start with it, because it is actually ambiguous, it leaves itself open to be interpreted a variety of ways and those who cling to the imposed human law way of seeing things will take statements just like this one lift it out of its context and cite it to support their false view that God is required by law and justice to use His power to punish and destroy. I am showing this statement because the author who wrote it, saw things our way and shortly after this statement, in the very same chapter which unpacks the prophecy of Matthew 24 and the destruction of Jerusalem, she describes in detail what this statement means, how it actually functions and occurs and how those who teach God is using His power to punish and destroy are advancing Satan's lies. Why does this happen? Because this author's views were rejected and she was shipped to Australia after the 1888 GC.

But here is the first quote that can be misunderstood if one doesn't keep reading:

- Jesus declared to the listening disciples the **judgments** that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially **the retributive vengeance** that would come upon them for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned his followers: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." [Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20.] When the **idolatrous standards of the Romans** should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay... (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 26 emphasis mine)

The legalists among us, those who believe God's law functions like human law, will take comments like this one and suggest that God does in fact make legal judgments against sin, and then use His power to inflict punishment for sin. They do this because they truly believe God's law is nothing but made up rules like creatures make, the sad truth is, those who think this way, and worship a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death inflicted as punishment for law breaking are like the Jews 2000 years ago who sided with God's enemy to crucify Christ all the while holding membership in God's church, believing the fundamental beliefs, and advocating for law-keeping.

Jerusalem represents in Bible symbolism the people of God, the children of God, the church of God. To the degree you believe you are a member of the people/church of God, then you are symbolically part of end-time Jerusalem and the lessons that Jerusalem experienced are to be applied to us.

Now, consider what this author describes as the judgment of God and retributive vengeance in the following paragraphs, take note of the unpacking in the same chapter of that language and events and notice what law God functions and operates upon, in other words what kind of law is God's—

imposed rules requiring God to use power to inflict punishment, or design law that requires God to use power to heal and save and when God lets go then Satan and sin cause the destruction:

- **The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance**. [What kind of law is described here? Perhaps not clear yet, but doing it to oneself is different than an outside authority doing it to you.] In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but **reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown**. [What kind of law is this? Is reaping what one sows a punishment inflicted by an outside authority or the natural consequences? This should be enough to interpret the author's meaning of retributive vengeance, that God let's people go to reap what they have chosen and violating God's design laws result in ruin and death. But the author doesn't leave it here, she goes on.] Says the prophet, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." [Hosea 13:9; 14:1.] Their sufferings **are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God.** [By whom? Who represents these punishments as direct decree of God? All those Christians who believe God's law functions like human law. Martin Luther, the great reformer, took this punishing god view and the legalists within our church who cling to the idea that God's law functions like human law do the very same thing. But note who the author says is the source of this suffering and pain.] It is thus that **the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work**. [Who is the one who brings the pain, suffering, and death? Satan—and who does the Bible say holds the power of death? Satan (Heb 2:14) and who does the Bible say is the murderer from the beginning? Satan, and who destroys death and brings life and immortality to light? Jesus! Understand, much of what is being taught in the church are Satan's lies about God which are the fruit of believing the lie that God's law functions like human law.] By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the **Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them**, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. [God uses His power to create, heal, and protect. When we reject God we separate ourselves from His life giving presence and place ourselves under the power of God's enemy, the father of lies, the one who holds the power of death.] The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem **are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control**. (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 36, emphasis mine)

  We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and **protection which we enjoy**. **It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan.** [This is how God uses power, to protect, to heal, to redeem, to restore, to build up not tear down, not destroy. Satan is the destroyer Jesus is the restorer. Oh how God must weep when the people who are called by His name promote a false god with the attributes of His enemy!] The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in **holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one**. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, **that restraint is removed**. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression**; but he leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves, to **reap that which they have sown**. [What law is described? How does it function? God is not the executioner

of the sentence against transgression—executioners are required in human law systems, in Satan's kingdom, when laws are nothing but made-up rules. But in God's kingdom, breaking His design laws results in ruin and death unless the Creator heals, restores, fixes the damage. But God can only do that with our consent, with our agreement, with our cooperation, because it is the only way God can save our unique individuality. If God were to use divine power to override our freewill choices He would erase us, replace us with a programmed simulation of a person, a robot, a computer. But it would not be us. Thus, God seeks to win us by the methods of His Spirit, truth and love, to freely surrender to Him and cooperate with Him for healing of our hearts and minds. But if we refuse Him, He sadly lets us go to reap what we have chosen and we suffer and die from sin, not as an inflicted punishment from God. But God's enemy has infected the church, the temple of God, with the lie that God's law functions like human law and it is taught from the pulpits around the world that God's justice is the infliction of punishment for sin. Oh horrible deceit, demonic lie!] Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, **is a seed sown, which yields its unfailing harvest**. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan**. [Again, do you see how this author keeps emphasizing that God is not the destroyer, the punishment does not come out from God, that the punishment is the natural result of sin—just like the Bible teaches. Yet, almost all of Christianity has accepted the Romanization of Christianity that God's law functions like human law and teaches God is the source of inflicted torture and death. We have a message that is to lighten the world and prepare the world for Christ's return a message to return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires we reject the imposed law lie and recognize all of God's laws are design laws.] The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace, and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin, and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty. (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 36, emphasis mine)

The Saviour's prophecy concerning **the visitation of judgments** upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow. [What kind of judgments visited Jerusalem? Were they arbitrary decrees? Where they judicial, legal, judgments? Or were they the diagnostic judgments of what actually is? What God says in Hosea 11:7 "my people are bent on turning away from me." God diagnoses them as hardened in rebellion, what more can He do, so He lets them go to reap what they have chosen. He places them in the hands of the god they prefer.] **In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world that has rejected God's mercy and trampled upon his law.** [And this is the entire world of the unsaved, those who claim there is no God, and those who claim to believe in God but like the Jews 2000 years ago prefer a god who is like Satan in character, whose god makes up rules and uses power to punish rule-breakers]. Dark are the records of human misery that earth has witnessed during its long centuries of crime. The heart sickens and the mind grows faint in contemplation. Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven. But a scene yet darker is presented in the revelations of the

future. The records of the past,—the long procession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions, the "battle of the warrior, with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood," [Isaiah 9:5.]—what are these, **in contrast with the terrors of that day when the restraining Spirit of God shall be wholly withdrawn from the wicked, no longer to hold in check the outburst of human passion and Satanic wrath! The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan's rule**. (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 37, emphasis mine) [What happens when God removes His restraining hand? And we are seeing that happen more and more every day. And why is the Spirit withdrawn? Where is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit on Earth? Our hearts and minds, the Spirit temple. So what happens when billions harden their hearts against the Holy Spirt? The Spirit is slowly withdrawn. This is not an arbitrary decision on God's part, it is the natural result of people preferring Satan and his methods to God's.]

So, what is God's retributive vengeance? God's letting go and allowing people to reap what they have sown. It is when God stops using His divine power to hold at bay what Satan and sin do to sinners. Is this how you have always heard it presented in the church? Now let's consider this paragraph again, with the explanation of the author in mind and consider its application to our situation today:

- Jesus declared to the listening disciples the judgments that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially **the retributive vengeance** that would come upon them for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned his followers: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." [Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20.] **When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground**, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. **When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay**... (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 26, emphasis mine.)

What is the abomination that causes desolation?

The abomination of a false god with a false law and a false **standard** of righteousness—and when we see that false standard standing on holy ground we know the warning has been given and it is time to flee.

And what did we see during COVID? We saw the false standard of made up rules, human laws, imposed upon people to coerce consciences standing on the holy ground of church institutions, in the holy place of human hearts and minds when leaders of churches embraced the lie that it is righteous to coerce the consciences of their own members, employees and students—in a worldwide lockdown and assault against truth and love all under the guise of doing what is right and just. It is an abomination of truth, of righteousness, of love and billions embraced it as right, and sadly within the

church this method of governing, this type of law has replaced God's design law and it is taught that God's justice is God using power to inflict pain, suffering, and destruction.

We have seen the armies of the world join forces with the church to coerce consciences and now the armies have stepped back, just like in AD 70, and we have a few moments of peace to flee—but not geographically because the finally events are worldwide, it is time to flee spiritually, to cut our heart ties to systems that use beastly methods, to establish our affections, faith, loyalty and devotion only to God and unite with all peoples who worship our Creator and practice His design laws methods.

Read last paragraph,

- We will study Satan's twofold strategy both to deceive and destroy God's people. What the evil one fails to accomplish through persecution, he hopes to achieve through compromise. God is never caught by surprise, and even in the most challenging times He preserves His people. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 14).

Satan's strategy is actually more than two-fold, it is a stepwise progression that follows a certain pattern. Here are the steps that Satan uses over and again, we will examine them from Bible stories and see how he uses these same methods on us:

- **Deception**—Satan lied to Eve in Eden, and he approached Jesus as an angel of light. He is the father of lies and he always seeks to deceive, to lie and get us to believe his lies.
- **Inducements**—bribes, offers of something to make us more or reward us in some way, typically appealing to ego, esteem, power, prestige, position. Something to introduce and inflame that lie that we can't trust God with our position, our calling, our mission, we need to act in self-interest. It is often accompanied by fear, fear of losing the opportunity if you don't act for self. He offered Eve to become like God. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world.
- **Miracles**—Eve was presented with the miracle of a talking serpent; Jesus was miraculously transported to the temple and then tempted to call upon God to perform a miracle by throwing Himself off the temple. These miracles by Satan were not illusions, not pretend, they were real. And Satan can perform certain miracles and will do so again before Christ returns.
- **Threats**—Jesus was threatened repeatedly by the Jews at the instigation of Satan, was threatened with rejection, abandonment of friends, betrayal, His reputation was tarnished, eventually threatened with death by the Jews and threatened by Pilate before Pilate finally condemned Him to death.
- **Physical assault, abuse, torment**—acts of real injustice and wrong.
- **Death**

What is the goal of Satan's attacks and strategy? He wants to displace God's law of truth, love, and freedom from the hearts and minds of people. He wants to efface the image of God in humanity and

replace it with the law of fear, selfishness and coercion, making us in the satanic image. Notice how his strategies are designed to do this.

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and incite fear and selfishness corrupting the character.
- Accepting inducements to do wrong inflames selfishness and breaks trust with God, incites fear and selfishness and corrupts the character
- Believing miracles over the truth and evidence God has given surrenders the mind leading to choices that breaks the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness corrupting the character
- Threats are designed to incite fear undermine trust and lead one to act selfishly to protect self, after all isn't self-defense right? Then why did Jesus say we should turn the other cheek?
- But the big one which is right now being employed as we approach the final events before Christ's return, the strategy that is going to deceive all but the elect, is the perpetration of real wrong, real injustice upon innocents, which is designed by Satan to cause a real sense of outrage, righteous indignation, and a desire for justice, which tempts the righteous to embrace and practice Satan's methods to make things right, to use might and power, the power of force to inflict punishment upon the wrong doers. This was the temptation Jesus faced during His trial and crucifixion, injustice upon injustice, to the One who held all power. Would He use power to punish injustice or would He forgive His wrongdoers? And this is what is happening in the world today. Satanic forces are doing more and more injustice of all kinds and the goal is to inflame outrage in the people of God to get them to choose to embrace and join with the beastly powers of this world to use the power of the state to do justice, to punish wrong doing. But Jesus said we are to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us.
- And finally, if Satan cannot get God's people to choose his methods and become like him in character then he will inspire those who are like him and who do value his methods to seek to destroy, even kill, those who refuse to be corrupted, all under the guise of doing what is right. The wicked always end up persecuting and seeking to kill the righteous. Take their influence away. And when it is led by churches and governments, it is always couched in some way as doing something for the greater good, to stop evil.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- It is difficult to understand such an event as the destruction of Jerusalem in the light of God's loving character. History reveals that tens of thousands died as the Roman general Titus led his armies against the city. Jerusalem was devastated. Men, women, and children were slaughtered. Where was God when His people suffered so greatly? The answer is clear but not easy to grasp fully. God's heart was broken. His eyes were filled with tears. For centuries He reached out to His people. By their rebellion against His loving-kindness, they forfeited

> His divine protection. God does not always intervene to limit the results of His people's choices. He allows the natural consequences of rebellion to develop. God did not cause the slaughter of innocent children in the destruction of Jerusalem; the tragic death of the innocents was Satan's act, not God's. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 15).

This is very well said, I am so happy to see this in the quarterly and it demonstrates that there are those in the church who are advancing the true gospel, who have not rejected the design law of God and who see God's character in its true light. This is so encouraging to read.

Read bottom pink section,

- Reflect on the following statement: we do not judge God's character by events we see around us; rather, we filter all the events we see through the prism of His loving character as revealed in the Bible. Why is this such good counsel? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 15).

I think this a good idea, a good process, but what is the problem with this approach? What if one has the wrong view of God's character? What if one views God as the source of pain and suffering, as an authoritarian dictator whose justice requires him to punish sin? If one believes God functions like this and then they interpret events through the lens of such a character, what conclusions do they draw?

My point is that it is right to understand events through the lens of God's character rather than understanding God's character through the lens of events—but what is the basis of determining if we understand God's character correctly?

It is His law—that is the determining factor. If we believe God's law functions like human law, then that believe requires that we view God's character as authoritative and the source of inflicted punishment and death. But if we view God's law as design law then we view things in their right light, God is our Savior, Healer, Deliverer and Friend and is never the source of pain, suffering, and the wages of sin death.

Some people will say Jesus is the lens, and of course He is as He is God in human flesh and He told us that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father. However, millions who believe that Jesus is God the Son and who say they believe He is the exact representation of the Father still view the Father in a different light than Jesus. They see Jesus as a loving Savior and the Father as a stern judge, a punisher of sin who needs to be pled with by Jesus, why? Because despite saying they believe Jesus reveals the Father, the lie that God's law functions like human law causes them to teach that the work of Jesus as our Savior is to protect us from God's just punishment. But that representation is false. We must come back to worshiping God as Creator and reject the Romanization, the human law infection from our beliefs about God.

MONDAY

Read third paragraph,

- God is sovereign and overrules events on earth for the ultimate accomplishment of His divine purposes. Although at times God alters His original plans based on our human choices, His ultimate plan for this planet will be fulfilled. There will be times when the people of God experience hardship, persecution, imprisonment, and death itself for the cause of Christ. But even in the most challenging of times with Satan's most vicious attacks, God sustains and preserves His church. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 16).

Any thoughts or questions about this? Have you ever struggled with the idea of God's sovereignty and His use of divine power to govern things on Earth?

Does God make things happen the way He wants them to? If so, did God want Adam and Eve to sin—some people teach that yes, God did, but did He? I do not believe so, I believe God wanted Adam and Eve to stay sinless, faithful, and loyal.

So what is the balance between God's sovereignty and our freedom, God's will and our will?

Does God alter His plans because of our choices?

- God feeds the children of Israel manna but they beg for meat and what does God do?
- God's plan for Israel coming out of Egypt to occupy Canaan was or Him to send in the hornet and pestilence ahead of the people and as the inhabitants slowly leave the land the Israelites would occupy it, but what did the people want and what did God do?
- God warned them not to have kings, His preference was that He would be their God and lead them, but what did the people insist upon and what did God do?
- God wanted Israel to become a nation of priests to evangelize the world, but that nation chose to reject Christ and crucify Him, so what did God do?
- Other examples?

Do we see God's plan being worked out despite human rejection, rebellion, and interference with it? And how is God working out His plan, with might and power to force His way, or with truth, love, and freedom to win all who will choose life?

TUESDAY

The lesson is about the new converts, Christians being faithful during persecution—what enabled them to be faithful?

To what or who were the early Christians faithful? Were they faithful to an organization, a denomination, a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs, or were they faithful to their Friend Jesus Christ? Is it that the early Christians came to know Jesus personally and experienced His presence in their hearts and minds and they had been won over to God's methods, character, principles, and standards that they had experienced both in their relationship with God—in how God had treated them—but also in their own personal lives having applied those principles to how they treat others? And thus they had a reality-based experience with God and the things of God and the threats could not cause them to believe evil is good, or up is down, or wrong is right?

What about as we face the final events on planet Earth, what will enable us to remain faithful?

What does it mean to be sealed?

What does it mean for probation to close?

What does it mean to stand during this time without an intercessor?

Does our law lens impact our understanding of these concepts?

WEDNESDAY

The first sentence for the lesson states,

- The early Christian church grew not only because its members preached the gospel but also because they lived the gospel. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 18).

What does it mean to live the gospel?

Does it matter what we think the gospel is? What is the gospel?

The message of the 3 angels of Revelation 14 is the message of the eternal gospel—what is the eternal gospel and how do we live it?

Is the eternal gospel only eternal good news for eternity future, or is it also eternally good news in eternity past?

And in eternity past, before humankind was created, was it true then that Jesus needed to die for our sins at that time? So the death of Jesus as our Savior is part of the good news, but the good news is something more than that, what could it be?

Isn't the eternal good news the good news about God Himself, that God is love, that God is not like Satan alleges, that God's laws are design laws and God is reliable, trustworthy, the same yesterday,

today, tomorrow and His character, government, and laws never change and are the protocols of life, health, and happiness—and that He gives us real freedom?

So, we live the gospel by living out the design laws of God in a love/trust relationship with our Creator. In that relationship we experience the spirit of courage and love and no longer are controlled by the spirit of fear we inherited from Adam. And we live the gospel by practicing the methods of God in governance of self as we interact with others. In other words, we live the gospel by implementing the design laws of God in how we treat others, truth, presented in love, leaving others free. We do not use human law to coerce consciences of people.

Satan is the one who seeks to incite fear, for the more fearful we are the less we are able to think and love. The easier we are to manipulate and the more likely we are to choose the methods of selfishness and coercion to make ourselves feel safe. This is how Satan works to trick people into cooperating with their own destruction.

Just look around the world at all the lies about climate change which is something people cannot see, smell, touch, measure, or identify with the senses God has given them. It is an invisible threat that they can only recognize by believing voices of authority—and those voices are godless voices who don't know Jesus and reject the Bible. Because the climate change propaganda is all a lie from the father of lies. It is exactly the opposite of God's promise in Genesis that the seasons and harvest would not change as long as the Earth continues.

- As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22 NIV84).

And it denies the science that the planet, since the burning of fossil fuels has become more green, more human friendly, the deserts and uninhabitable spaces are reducing and the planet is become more lush and habitable for us.

If you haven't read our blogs God's Promises and Climate Change Lies Part 1 and Part 2 I encourage you to do so.

But the lies constantly bombard people to the point they react to the lies with fear and go along with decisions that take their freedom, take their wealth, and undermine their actual health and happiness.

Understand, what is happening in the world under the spectrum of protecting the climate has nothing to do with protecting the climate—it has to do we taking away your freedom, to limit your ability to travel freely and cheaply, to limit your ability to provide for your family, heat your home, and be autonomous while simultaneously shifting wealth from the people to the few elites of business who are behind these so called climate saving interventions. But in reality almost all the changes are more harmful to the environment and planet Earth than the use of fossil fuels. Woe be to those who harm the Earth, these godless exploiters of the planet and the people are going to one day have truth come

bearing down on them and there will be a weeping and gnashing of teeth—but the bigger question is how many billions are being deceived by these lies to cooperate with their own destruction? Will our church, like they did with COVID, join forces with the godless governments and Earth worshiping green movement leaders to form a coalition to force such changes upon us that are contrary to God's design, kingdom, and promises? Watch for it.

It is incredible to watch so many good people colluding voluntarily with their own destruction.

Read bottom pink section:

- Discuss: What role does the church have in cooperating with Christ in proving Satan's charges wrong? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 18).

Thoughts? Do we have a role? What role? What do you think of this text?

- The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20 NIV84).

What does this mean? Satan being trampled under our feet? How? Is this literal, that the physical body of Satan will be walked on by us or is this a metaphor?

What does it mean to trample God's law under our feet? Doesn't it mean we don't value it, we walk all over it, ignore, discount, reject, and override it?

What does it mean to trample Satan under our feet?

What is under our feet? Dirt, trash, refuse, the things we throw away, the things we scrape off the bottom of our shoes.

So, to trample Satan under our feet means that we have come to revile the things of Satan, his methods, principles, actions, attitudes, motives, desires, and laws are sewage to us. This happens when we are freed from the imperial law concept and in a loving relationship with God have a new heart and right spirit, the things of this world grow dim, we want to scrape the things of Satan off our feet, we walk in supremacy and purity above the dirt of this world.

Have you heard of last generation theology? The idea we must be perfect as a people before Jesus returns. Is the idea of us being perfect a human or godly idea?

Jesus said,

- Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48 NIV84).

What does this mean? What law lens do we understand this through?

If we have a human law model then this means deeds, performance, actions.

But if we have a design law model this means heart motive and intent, do we love God with all our hearts minds souls and strength, are with mature in heart, not perfect in task performance. Are we faithful friends of God's who will not break trust with God no matter what the trial, tribulation or temptation?

Examples of this in history are:

- Job
- Daniel
- Shadrack, Meshack, Abednego
- The apostles who died as martyrs

And the final group who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes are described in Revelation as:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:11)

They overcame Satan and his demonic forces by the life of Jesus (symbolized by the blood) which they have internalized thus they have a new heart and right spirit that loves God and loves the truth and their testimony is the same testimony that Jesus gave about God and they do not love self so much that they would use the methods of this world to try and save themselves.

THURSDAY

Read the second through fifth paragraphs:

- One of the greatest revelations of God's love was demonstrated when two devastating pandemics plagued the early centuries around a.d. 160 and a.d. 260. Christians stepped forward and ministered to the sick and dying. These plagues killed tens of thousands and left entire villages and towns with scarcely an inhabitant. The unselfish, sacrificial, caring, loving ministry of Christians made a huge impact on the population. Over time, thousands, and eventually hundreds of thousands, and then millions in the Roman Empire became believers in Jesus during these two epidemics. Love, outgoing concern, and organized, selfless care of the sick and dying created an admiration for these believers and the Christ they represented.

  Rodney Stark's The Rise of Christianity is a modern historical narrative portraying these historic events in a new and improved light. In it he describes how during the second epidemic the whole Christian community, which was still heavily Judeo-Christian, became a virtual army of nurses, providing the basic needs for the suffering community to survive.

> "At the height of the second great epidemic, around a.d. 260, . . . Dionysius wrote a lengthy tribute to the heroic nursing efforts of local Christians, many of whom lost their lives while caring for others.
>
> "Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains."—The Rise of Christianity (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 82. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 19).

Isn't that a beautiful description of the love of Christ displacing fear and selfishness and people no longer loving their own lives so much as to shrink from death. Instead they loved God and others more than self and sacrificed themselves to help others. And the gospel spread!

Now, contrast that with what we saw from many churches during COVID?

What was dominating the landscape? Did we see Christian hospitals, schools, and churches protecting the consciences of people or did we see them more concerned for their safety and financial success to the point that they were willing to betray sacred trusts and coerce people to comply?

2024 Second Quarter: The Great Controversy
Lesson #3: Light Shines in the Darkness

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

Memory Text:

"Then Jesus said to them, 'A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going' " (John 12:35, NKJV).

When I was in school studying about the young blind and deaf Helen Keller learning to "see" and "hear" via finger and hand gestures, my English teacher gave us extra credit for going a full day blindfolded. That day revolutionized my life; there are so many things you take for granted when you can see! But if you can't see, how do you know what food it on the plate? Are there bugs in it, or mold on it? When you put food on a fork, how much food is on there? What about keeping soup on your spoon? When you pick up your glass, where do you put it back down? When is the food gone? How do you dress in clothes that match? When you drop something, how do you find it? How do you know which path to walk without signs? Not to mention the inability to read, drive, enjoy scenery and art, or the faces of those around you. Who might take advantage of your blindness to cheat, steal, or beat you up? Believe me, from that day to this, I cherish my sight!!

So, when Jesus asked a blind man that had been crying out loudly, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" what he wanted Jesus to do for him, I can assure you that I understand his simple request, "Lord, I want to see." And Jesus had a plain and simple response, "Receive your sight; **your faith has healed you**."

Our daily spiritual prayer needs to be, "**Lord, I want to see**."

"Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." Psalm 119:105

In the Bible, light and truth represent each other. As light allows you to physically see, truth does the same thing spiritually. Though our eyes are naturally drawn to light, our sin-sick souls are naturally drawn to the dark. Darkness in either dimension is said to be the absence of light. One of the many ideas presented in Come and Reason early on that has stuck with me is this scenario: you are lost in a pitch dark cave, alone for a week in total darkness, until someone finds and rescues you. If they rescue you at midnight, and you are brought out of the cave, your eyes feel fine. But if you are brought out at noon, your eyes can't tolerate the light. It is so bright and painful! So, when you allow the Holy Spirit to help you "see" the truth, as painful as that might be, He does it in doses you can handle throughout your life. "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will

be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty."

But if you do not allow the Holy Spirit to take what Jesus created, a perfect character, perfect love, and put that inside you instead of the darkness, when Jesus comes, how will you withstand the total, unveiled revelation of the fiery light of truth? Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrew 12:29 call **God a "consuming fire.**" Isaiah 9:17 points out that "**wickedness burns like fire**." It reminds me of people who go into an MRI that have metallic paint in their tattoos. That also burns like fire, because the metal is moved by the strong magnet, creating pain. In God's case, wickedness cannot bear up in God's presence, because His truth cannot be held back. Can you imagine a dark mind coming into direct contact with the brilliant source of truth in the universe? No place to hide, no rationalizations that hold up; nothing to do but to face the truth of who you are, what you have done to yourself and others, and the total ripple effect of cause to effect that happened because of the wicked darkness you kept inside you? You could have chosen to be healed, to have light replace the darkness, but you would not. No wonder people beg for the mountains and rocks to fall on them to hide them from His face! Revelation 6:15-17. Daniel 7:9, 10 describes the judgment like this: "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened."

Isaiah 33:13-17 talks about what happens when God himself comes to earth to rescue His people," The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil – they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them. **Your eyes will see the king in his beauty** and view a land that stretches afar.

Celebrity Debby Boone shared in the Woman's Devotional Bible a wonderful example of what the presence of light can do. "Every school morning for the past two year, precisely at 7:00 am, I have taken a deep breath, climbed up the stairs, and opened the door to my eight-year-old son Jordan's bedroom. Each time I've steeled myself for the coming battle required to wrench his eyelids apart to start a new day. Most of the time I would leave his room convinced that he was well on his way to being dressed and would be downstairs ready to eat breakfast within ten minutes, only to climb those same stairs at 7:30 am, push back the door, and find him sound asleep. A couple of weeks ago, all this changed. And I had nothing to do with it. Jordan started leaving his window shutters wide open when he would go to sleep. The morning light would gently filter in and quite naturally and quickly awaken him. I now walk into his room and find him sitting at his small desk, completely dressed in his school uniform, wondering when breakfast will be ready. Jordan and I no longer have struggles in the morning. The presence of light has solved the problem completely. As I read the beginning verses of Isaiah 60, my mornings with Jordan came to mind. I asked the Lord to show me how to allow His light

to awaken places in my heart that I have been content to leave sleeping in the darkness and comfort of my soul. It's hard to wake up when you are surrounded by darkness. And we can't transform ourselves into what we should or want to be any more than Jordan could wake himself up just because he knows he should be up. Exposing ourselves to the light and presence of the Lord's love not only will uncover the dark places of our heart but also will fill them with light so that "the glory of the Lord rises upon you" Isaiah 60:1. But how do we expose ourselves to His light? That's the easy part….just by leaving the shutters of our hearts open. Come to God with an honest expression of willingness to allow Him to change us – by His wonderful and brilliant light."

What influenced your spiritual and religious choices?

To become a Christian?
A Seventh day Adventist?
To attend, watch or read Come and Reason Ministries' presentations?

This year has especially difficult for me. I have had to learn a lot about grieving and forgiving. I imagine that Christ's cross in standing strong in the middle of a raging river, and in order not to be washed away, I must constantly hold onto that cross with both hands. If I am holding onto anything else… bitterness, anger, jealousy, pride, selfishness, material things, bad relationships, etc… I will be swept away. The Holy Spirit gives me the power to hold on, the strength to do what is right and light, and to turn away from darkness. That is a visual that helps me understand the position in which I stand in this world and with God. Nothing else compares to what Jesus delights to do inside me! He wants me to trust Him with outcomes, avenging, judgment, cleansing away the bad, filling me with God and with good.

Then how do we share this light?

Get on the nightstand
Ask Questions
Tell stories as Jesus did (examples of various dirtiness of plates, what tornado did to oaks and wildflowers)
God has an unlimited problem-solving tool box, which He will show us how and when to use

It is amazing that our Creator, who is the most intelligent, creative, capable problem solver in the universe, a being consisting of LOVE, powerful to save, heal, teach, rescue, wants to be intimate with us. He wants to be our daily friend and companion. He has proven Himself to be worthy of our trust and love. Are we drawn to the light, like moths, or away from the light, light roaches? In the end, there will only be two groups, no matter how many religions have developed. It is Christ on the cross, flanked by a thief who died and a thief who was saved. That is our choice, plain and simple.

So, our mission, should we chose to except it, is the mission of Jesus. Isaiah 61 gives the mission parameters. So we show God's character, His light by:

Preaching good news to the poor
Binding up the broken hearted

Proclaiming freedom fro captives
Proclaimng the year of the Lord's favor (God is with you!)
Proclaiming a day of vengeance of our God
Comforting all who mourn
Provide for those who grieve in Zion
Bestow a crown of beauty, the oil of gladness, the garment of praise

Are we a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor?

In the book of Revelation, considering the devil, we see he is called a serpent (because he is cunning), and a dragon (because he desires to destroy). In order to keep us in the dark, what are some of the serpent dragon Satan's strategies?

1. Partial truth, just enough to make us think we are right
2. Too proud to admit we are wrong when new, true light is presented
3. Encouraging us to think that if we are too busy to pray or read the Bible, we will stay in the same relationship with God as we had before.
4. The blending of Christian teachings with pagan practices
5. Comparing ourselves to each other
6. Create ongoing fear and pressure of potential loss of health, job, family, money, good climate
7. Other ideas?

SUNDAY - Compromise: Satan's Subtle Strategy

Compare John 14:6 (Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me") with John 8:44 (He also said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is NO truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."). What a contrast between Jesus' character and Satan's is seen in these two passages!

Throughout the centuries, Satan has used the strategy that worked in heaven with angels and with Eve in Eden, and now with us, to use lies, distortion of the truth, and creation of doubt in God and His Word to lead God's creatures astray.

"Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the word that even the Saviour of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, 'It is written.' To every suggestion of the adversary, He opposed the wisdom and power of the word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their

pretensions. Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over church and state."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pg 51

But the priest and rulers thought they had light; all the light they needed. Jesus gave the parable of a priest who loudly and publicly prayed, ""God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I hast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus judged that the tax collector went home justified before God. "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." So, what does it mean to "humble yourself?" How does that bring light into our hearts, and salvation to our souls?

This world messages us all the time to think of ourselves as better than others, rich over poor, cultured over uncouth, smart verses dumb, and on and on in so many different ways. Because, after all, "I'm worth it!" But like most things in God's kingdom, His ways are the exact opposite of this world's ways of believing. While He calls us His friends, His brothers, His children, and inheritors of the kingdom, he gave us an example of what that meant when He bent down and washed His disciples' filthy feet, on the very night when each of them was going to betray, deny or desert him. He said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many**." **This humility, this unselfishness is light!**

Both King Saul and King David were confronted by disobedience to God's commands, but while Saul rationalized his behavior, David confessed and agreed that God was right; David was wrong. He was called, a man after God's own heart. **This humble confession of wrong is light!**

MONDAY - Savage Wolves

Acts 20:29 expressed Paul's concern that "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock". In other words, **believers would face fierce persecution from within the church.**

Heresies would enter the church. **False doctrines** would be substituted for divine truths. **Pagan practices** would prevail. In the fourth and fifth centuries, **compromise** subtly crept into the Christian church, with mission advance being the probable justification. But the terrible result was a departure from the truth of God's word.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul's comment, "the mystery of lawlessness does already work," is significant. Even in Paul's day, there was a gradual departure from the truth of God's Word regarding obedience to God's law. This departure would flourish in the later centuries.

Contrary to the second commandment, idols were introduced into Christian worship. For millennia, idols were in the forefront of all pagan religions. To make Christianity more acceptable to heathens coming into the Christian church, pagan deities were renamed as so-called saints. Sunday, the day of

worship for the sun god, was gradually adopted as the day of Christian worship in honor of the Resurrection. This false day, not sanctioned in Scripture prevails even now.

What kind of compromises do we see entering the church today? More important, what kind of compromises might we be making, perhaps by blending truth and error?

Some people get very worried about the truth of the Bible when they hear of different interpretations by various translators, a comma here, an added word there. If we can't trust that the Bible is still staying exactly what God meant it to say, then they won't believe or follow any of it. But I have found that even with various interpretations, **the vital things we need to be saved are preserved there**. We find there that God is the creative force behind our existence, that He warned us to stay away from danger, but once our original parents got involved with danger and distrust, God developed a plan (at the cost of His own life) to rescue and heal our doomed race. We now have the same choice Adam and Eve had….trust God and follow His light and life-giving commands to Him, or distrust God and go into darkness…to our doom. All of the questions we have, someone in the Bible asked and was answered by God. We can find our answers there. I think of the Bible as a big jigsaw puzzle, with pieces hidden everywhere. It is a pleasure to put the pieces together and see the final result of what God hid there for us to find. The answers! We need to find the answers for ourselves, guided by the Holy Spirit. The way, the truth and the life are there for us to find and learn more about.

"**Create in me a pure heart, O God**, and **renew a steadfast sprit within me**. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. **Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit**, to sustain me. **THEN I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.**

Whether we are lost or saved is totally the result of our own decisions. We have a choice. God will honor our choice, but it is a strange work for Him to have to let go of any of us into eternal non-existence (Romans 1). Much like it would be strange for us to try to rescue our child who has fallen into the freezing ocean, only to have them repeatedly push our hands away and refuse to hold on to be saved. They would choose to sink and drown rather than have help from us. Heartbreaking! You can see God's heart on this issue in multiple places in the Bible, for example:

Isaiah 65:1-3 "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, "Her am I, here am I!" All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations – a people who continually provoke me to my very face…"

Matthew 23:37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longs to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate."

Deuteronomy 30:19,20 'This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord you God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is you life, and he will give you many years in the land…."

When we believe lies about God and how He runs His universe, it not only influences others within our church, but also those outside of the church, effectively taking God's name in vain. What are some of the ways Satan seeks to weaken the Bible's influence on us?

- Scientific endeavors (Before the flood and today)
- Biblical Scholarship
- Procrastination
- Business
- Rushing through reading of the Bible
- Not seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit
- Not digging into the "Why" of what you read
- Becoming more interested in solving earthy problems than in our mission and connection with God
- Taking one verse and making a whole doctrine from it
- Not asking how what you are reading says about God's character
- Wrong doctrines leave people open to attack by demons (for example the state of the dead, eternal burning hell, secret rapture…)

TUESDAY – Safeguarded by the Word

The Bible is the infallible revelation of God's will. It presents Heaven's plan for humanity's salvation. Since "all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God," it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV). That is, "all Scripture" is inspired by God; not some parts or some parts more than others. The whole Bible must be accepted as the Word of God. Otherwise the door is wide open for deception.

The Bible clearly reveals God's infinite love in the light of the great controversy. It also exposes satanic delusions and reveals the devil's deceptions. Satan hates the Word of God and has done everything possible throughout the centuries to destroy its influence.

After all, what would we know about the plan of salvation without the Bible? How much, if anything, would we understand about the birth, life, teachings, and ministry of Jesus? Without the Scriptures, would we even begin to comprehend the depth of Christ's sacrifice, the glory of His resurrection, the power of His intercession, and the majesty of His return?

We must fight against any and all attempts to undermine its authority or inspiration, even from those who, while professing great love of the Bible, bring doubts about it, even subtly. Tragically, especially through the inroads of modern thinking, many theologians and Christians focus so much on the human side of Scripture that the Bible becomes the word of man instead the Word of God. The Bible, they argue, is the writings of kings, shepherds, a fisherman, priests, poets, and others who shared their understandings and conceptions of God, of nature, and of reality the best that they, in their time and place, understood them.

If this were true, why should we, living today in the twenty-first century, really care about what these people thought, much less make what they thought the foundation of our hope for eternity?

Psalm 119:105, 116, 130, 133, and 160 give insights from the psalmist, such as, “Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path,’ “uphold me and I will be delivered, “it gives understanding to the simple,” and “redeem me from human oppression.’

WEDNESDAY – Human Reasoning Apart from Scripture

The Holy Spirit works through our minds. He invites us to explore the mysteries of the universe. As someone has aptly stated: “As Christians, we do not check our brains at the door of the church.” Nevertheless, the brilliance of human reasoning alone is incapable of discovering the divine truths of Scripture. Truth is not a matter of human opinion. It is a matter of divine revelation.

One of the devil’s most effective deceptions is to lead us to believe that human reasoning, unaided by the Holy Spirit and uninformed by the Word of God, is sufficient to understand God’s will. There may be a way that seems right to us, or even to entire cultures, but it may be totally wrong in the eyes of God.

Mark Finley, who wrote this quarter’s lessons, shared the following: “A few years ago, my wife and I decided to do some hiking in the forest near the hotel we were staying at for the night. Typically, I am fairly good at directions, and after hiking for about an hour or so taking various trails, I was quite confident that I could find our way back with little difficulty. But soon we found ourselves hopelessly lost in the forest. The sun was going down, and I feared the worst. Thankfully, we met some other hikers who knew the way. We had been at least five miles off course but near a main road. Since their car was parked nearby, they offered us a ride back to our hotel. Discovering someone who knew the way and someone who had the ability to get us back to our destination made all the difference for us.”

God has not left us alone on our journey from earth to heaven. The Holy Spirit points us to the sacred Scriptures that lead us homeward. Truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil—these can be correctly understood only in light of God’s Word. That which contradicts God and His Word is error, and error is always dangerous; that which is in harmony with God is truth and goodness. How important that we make God’s Word our final arbiter of truth and morality.

Why is the human mind without the aid of the Holy Spirit incapable of discovering divine truth? Discuss the relationship between human reason and divine revelation. How does reason actually help us understand divine revelation? For example, look at Daniel 2, a prophecy that covers world history from the time of Babylon to the Second Coming. How does a prophecy like this powerfully appeal to human reason?

What shifts our paradigm, and breaks us out of our cocooned beliefs to see new revelations from God?

These are some of mine:

- Jesus pleading with the Father
- The realization that, as a nurse, I am a recording angel
- Tem commandments are like an MRI
- The hospital of salvation, instead of the courtroom

THURSDAY – Battle for the Mind

The Moody Bible Institute produced a film about pilots, who flew into the jet stream before people knew there was one. Their instruments told them they had reached their destination; however, they didn't believe it because they weren't due to reach their destination for several more hours. So, they kept on flying, but never reaching their destination. When their plane went down due to lack of fuel, they each tried walking in the same direction, still looking for the city for which they had aimed. Their bodies were found in the desert at various locations…having never found their destination. Of course, had they relied on their instruments, they would have arrived safely.

An illustration of how our inner ears work was also given in this presentation, showing how a person can think they are still turning in one direction, while they are actually turning in the opposite direction. This is why pilots who fly in stormy weather have to have IFR certifications, or Instrument Flight Rules. Even seasoned pilots must adhere strictly to their instruments, and fight their instincts to fly by how they feel about their position in the sky. John F. Kennedy is a sad example of an inexperienced pilot "flying by the seat of his pants" and ending up crashing; killing himself and his passengers. He would have been better off to have put his autopilot on…it would have gone by the plane's instruments.

We can think we are so right, but be so very wrong. Satan takes advantage of our tendency to believe we are right, no matter what, by presenting falsehood so very close to the truth that we will embrace it, without searching the scriptures to find the truth. God knows our best path and will share it with us, if we spend our time talking and listening to Him. He does have this annoying tendency to wait until the very last minute to show us the path…to see if we will try to solve the problem on our own, like Abraham. He tests us to see if we will trust Him and wait for His answers. He will finally shine a light from the end of our challenging tunnels and shows us the way to take. Learning this about Him helps us to show others how to find the light at the end of their dark tunnels of life.

2 Cor. 4:4 says, "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe.." What does this mean? How are their eyes blinded? How are eyes opened?

The Greek word for "mind" in this passage is noema. It literally means our perception or mental faculties. The SDA Bible Commentary makes an enlightening statement about this verse. "The battle between Christ and Satan is a battle for the minds of men. (Rom. 7:23, 25; 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:14, 11:3; Phil. 2:5, 4:7, 8). **Satan's principal work is to blind or darken men's minds. He does this by keeping them from the study of God's Word, by deranging the powers of the mind through the excesses of body and soul, by wholly occupying the mind through the things of this life, and by appealing to pride and self-exaltation."** Volume 6, p. 854

The lack of knowledge on the part of the lost is not because they COULD NOT know. It is because they WOULD NOT know. Many have had every opportunity to know truth but chose not to believe, and Satan blinded their eyes. Satan's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. As The SDA Bible Commentary adds, "The gospel is the only means by which Satan's diabolical schemes and deceptions can be exposed, and by which men can see the way from darkness to light."—Volume 6, p. 854. The essence of the New Testament message is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is at the heart of the gospel and is the center of scripture. All /Scripture testifies of Him (John 5:39).

During the early centuries of the Christian church, the New Testament believers were totally committed to Christ as the One who was the light in their darkness. They were redeemed by His grace, transformed by His power, and motivated by His love. Even death could not break their bond of loyalty to Christ. They recognized the devil's deceptions in the glorious light of the gospel. Christ has always had men and women who, by His grace, have stood courageously for His truth. In these early centuries, the light of Christ's love, grace, and truth shone through the darkness.

FRIDAY – Further Thought

The same spirit of hatred and opposition to the truth has inspired the enemies of God in every age, and the same vigilance and fidelity have been required in His servants. The words of Christ to the first disciples are applicable to His followers to the close of time: 'What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.' Mark 13:37."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 56, 57

In many parts of the world, especially where people have free access to the Bible, Satan has employed other means to weaken its influence. One very effective way has been through various **scientific endeavors or even biblical scholarship**, which sometimes takes positions that, if accepted, would undermine trust in the Word of God. For example, though the book of Daniel dates itself to more than 500 years before Christ, many Bible scholars date it, instead, to the middle of the second century B.C. They argue that it had to be written at this time; otherwise the prophet would have been accurately telling the future, and that can't happen. Therefore, they argue, Daniel was not written when it says it was but, rather, hundreds of years later. Unfortunately, this lie about the Bible is one of many that modern scholarship seeks to foist upon us. And more unfortunately, many people accept this error because, after all, Bible scholars are teaching it. No wonder Paul warns us, "Test all things; hold fast to what is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Satan's major attempt in the great controversy between good and evil is to malign God's character and present Him as an authoritarian, unloving tyrant. How does the evil one attempt to do this, and what is God's response to his lies?

In 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15, Paul confirmed, "…Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

The apostle Peter affirms that “no prophecy is of private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). How can we be sure we do not distort the meaning of Scripture to achieve our own ends? Why might this be easier to do than we realize? How can we safeguard ourselves against it?

The Bible depicts the great controversy in terms of a conflict between two radically opposite forces, such as light versus darkness or truth versus lies. True, the side of evil clamors for a compromise with the truth, for such compromise is evil’s only chance of survival. The side of evil seeks to secure its survival at any cost in order that it might destroy that which is good or of God. That is why the devil has continually been at work to lure the church into compromise. Unfortunately, the church fell into compromise, as did humanity’s first parents. The effects of these compromises are seen and felt to this day. God, however, who is the Source of truth and light, will never compromise. Trust in God and faithfulness to the truth, as revealed in Jesus through Scripture, will safeguard the church from compromise and prevent us from falling prey to the devil.

Let’s talk about compromise.

In various social contexts, such as family life and politics, compromise is considered acceptable and, in many situations, even desirable. Generally, the word “compromise” refers to reaching an agreement, to settling, by mutual concession, for the middle ground between the positions of two or more parties. The key to such an agreement lies in “concession”: each side must cede something so that both, or all, sides can continue to coexist or live together. In some cases, each side compromises because none has the strength to convince, or overcome, and control the other side by force. In other cases, the parties compromise simply because they want to live together peaceably as neighbors, or as family, in love or mutual respect.

In the context of the latter perspective, compromise certainly has a positive connotation, appearing as a solution to conflict and as an opportunity for peaceful coexistence. These types of compromises are common in our daily lives and involve negotiation or tolerance. However, in general, compromise is perceived as a negative phenomenon, implying the loss of an essential value, principle, truth, or quality. A compromised lot of medicine, immune system, national identity, education, morality, reputation, harvest, or military position is all undesirable and unacceptable because these threaten our very way of life or existence. The mixture of the ideas of worship in paganism with those in Christianity causes confusion and contamination of the truth. We need unvarnished truth, but we are not always happy with pure truth. We look to symbols, to artifacts, to relics as a way to imagine God and His power, but these symbols tell us nothing about the true God, and merely serve to lower our conceptions of who He really is. Why do you think the Ten Commandments list making no forms of anything in heaven, earth or waters to worship? None of these things compares in the least way to God. Christians need to remove the paganism from our beliefs, to keep and share the light of truth! Darkness is just outside the light and only waits to return when the light dims or goes out.

How about God? Could not He compromise with the rebel angels or with fallen humans to avoid the war in heaven and to allow all to coexist peacefully? Could He not, at least, tolerate the opposing party? If the opposing side wanted independence or autonomy, could not God grant this request?

Could He not simply give the rebels a region somewhere in a corner of the universe where they might live by themselves instead of being exterminated?

First, there is a qualitative difference between our daily negotiations and the compromise that Lucifer was desirous of achieving. God created us with all the freedom necessary to express ourselves, to interact and negotiate with others, in love and in righteousness. However, there are some physical and moral limitations that cannot be compromised because these limits constitute the very foundation of our existence. This foundation is comprised of the truths that God is our Creator, our Provider, our Lawgiver (and as such, reveals how we should live our lives in order to be happy), and our King. God is the Source of our life. We simply cannot exist without Him. Lucifer wanted to change this very foundation. He challenged God's character, status, and authority and claimed that humans are gods (Gen. 3:4), having existence in themselves and having ability to create their own meanings of, and standards for, life and happiness.

Second, and closely related to the point above, is the nature of sin. Sin is not merely holding a dissenting opinion. Sin is the conscious and deliberate rebellion against, and rejection of, God's claim that He is the only Creator, Provider, Lawgiver, and King. Sin cannot tolerate the existence of such a God. The foundational impulse of sin is to topple this God from His throne and install self as the king. The devil, however, offers a compromise. He would be willing to renounce his call for a total rejection of God's existence as long as he, Lucifer, was also recognized as a god. God, on the other hand, allows no room for such a compromise or negotiation with sin. What can He concede on His part? To say that He is not the Creator? To say He is not the Provider? To say that He is not the Source of life and standard of happiness and morality? To say that angels and humans can have life without Him? Any of these would be a lie. While compromise would be a triumph for the devil, compromise would mean capitulation for God.

Third, and closely related to the first two points, the situation described above is not only about truth and honor but constitutes the ultimate life-and-death situation. Let us imagine for a moment that we are Adam and Eve. We are in a setting in which Satan and God explain their positions to us prior to the fall into sin. Satan claims that God lies to us, that we are autonomous, that we are gods, and that we are immortal. Furthermore, he asserts that we can reject God's claims and will not die (Gen. 3:4) because we contain life, original and underived, within ourselves. Further, Satan accuses God of using His claim of being the Source and standard of life to control us all; this divine claim, for Satan, is dictatorship, autocracy, abuse, deception, and injustice. According to Satan, the fact that God does not want to compromise corroborates his allegations. For this reason, Satan calls us to break free from God's "lies" and "abuse" and experience a new consciousness and autonomy, wherein we discover and enjoy our infinite and eternal divine potential. But aren't these just allegations and speculations? Do we not run the risk of dying or disappearing from existence if we disconnect from God? Is it worth trying, just to prove a theory empirically? Lucifer certainly thought it was worth taking the risk.

God, on the other hand, tells us that He is the only Creator and Provider, and thus we cannot exist without Him. He tells us that if we do not believe Him, if we reject Him and His affirmations, we will disconnect from Him, the Source of life, and we will die, that is, disappear from existence. God explains to us that this outcome is not mere speculation but a fact because He is our Creator. We did not create ourselves, and we are not eternal. This fact alone, based on His Word, must be sufficient for

us to believe Him. However, God points out that His claims are also evidenced by our past and present life: that is, as long as we have believed Him and lived with Him, everyone has been happy. The entire universe has been running smoothly, and no one has died. God further explains to us that He cannot compromise not only because He is right but also because if He renounces His throne, all of us and the entire universe will disappear from existence since He is the only Provider or Sustainer of existence and life. For this reason, God calls us to believe Him, to trust Him, to stay with Him, and to live happily with Him forever.

If you witnessed such a debate, whom would you have believed?

Fourth, unfortunately for humanity, our primeval parents accepted Lucifer's speculation. Was the risk worth taking? No. The choice of our first parents turned into a tragedy for them and for the entire human race. Moreover, this conclusion is not mere speculation but is based on historical and empirical evidence. Instead of feeling divine and living forever after disobeying God's law, humanity felt empty, naked, and full of shame, their hearts and relationships broken (Gen. 3:7, 8). Moreover, the human race began to suffer and die. However, Lucifer did not stop his speculations against God's government; he proposed more compromise. We are immortal, he now claimed, because we have an immortal soul, which, after death, goes to a spiritual, ethereal sphere. Tragically, most people have fallen into the trap of believing that falsehood. Moreover, Lucifer now began calling on God and humanity to accept the reality of the existence of sin and death as the new normal. In the many non-biblical religions that have prevailed throughout human history, Satan has proposed to redefine and reinterpret suffering and death in order to avoid their pervasive presence, which constantly undermines his lying claims.

Fifth, God remained true to Himself. He explained that Adam and Eve remained alive after rejecting Him, not because Satan was right in his claim that we are immortal, nor because God compromised. Rather, Adam and Eve did not die because God, in His eternal love for humanity, had a plan of salvation, which started operating as soon as humans fell into sin. According to this plan, God, far from compromising, gave us a new opportunity to choose to be saved, live, and stay with Him. But this new opportunity and salvation were not the products of compromise. We must not confuse compromise with God's patience, love, and grace. Rather, salvation and the new opportunity for life spring from God's sacrifice. Precisely because God did not, and could not, compromise, He sacrificed. But He did not sacrifice us. Rather, He sacrificed His own life. If compromise were possible, He would not have needed to die in our place. But because He did not compromise, He chose rather to die in our place in order to uphold His truth, to manifest His love and righteousness, and to save us from the guilt and power of sin. Moreover, He did not compromise because He knew the consequences of compromise: suffering, misery, and death of the entire humanity and universe.

For the same reasons, God's true people do not compromise. True, traditional Christianity compromised the revelation of God's truth in Scripture. However, God worked to restore His truth in order that He might save as many as possible. For this reason, His faithful remnant church happily collaborates with Him to help spread His truth by reflecting His light.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 4
Standing for the Truth

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The title for the lesson, Standing for the Truth—what truth are we to be standing for?

- That there is a God in heaven who is the Creator of heaven and Earth?
  - Don't the Jews and Muslims believe that?
  - Didn't those who crucified Christ believe that?
- That Jesus is our Savior?
  - Don't all Christian groups believe that?
  - Do we have any truth for this time that we want to share with all groups, including Christians of other denominations?
- That the Bible Sabbath is Saturday?
  - Didn't the Jews who crucified Jesus believe this?
- That humans are mortal beings and eternal life originates and comes only from God?
  - Don't many other groups believe this?
  - Is this the truth that saves people?
- That Jesus is coming soon?
  - Don't most Christians believe this?
- That there is a sanctuary in heaven and Jesus is our heavenly High Priest? Ah, the unique SDA doctrine—is this the essential truth that we are to take to the world, the truth of the sanctuary in heaven and Jesus' work there?

What is the truth that we are to stand for?

What about the truth about God Himself—that God is not like Satan has made Him out to be?

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

And what is the single most important belief that shapes, impacts, determines what we believe about God, His character, methods, principles, and trustworthiness? What we believe about God's law.

If we believe God's law functions in any way like human law, made up rules that require infliction of punishment, then we always believe things about God that are not true of God but are like Satan in some way. Those who believe God's law functions like human law will teach things like:

- God's justice is using power to inflict punishment for unpaid for sin.
- God is required by law and justice to torture and kill unrepentant sinners.
- God killed Jesus as our substitute to satisfy His wrath or to meet the demands of the law or to pay our legal penalty.
- God cannot look upon our sin without becoming angry and needs a mediator in between Him and us to propitiate His wrath.
- God is the source of death.
- God cannot forgive outright but requires a legal payment in order to forgive.
- Sin doesn't actually harm the sinner and cause death, sin is rule-breaking and gets one in legal trouble and God harms you for it.
- Jesus' must hide our record from the Father in the judgment in some way or the Father will be required to use power to kill us. So beautiful metaphors about the robe of righteousness, or the sacrificial system, or the cleansing power of Jesus' blood etc. get perverted to teach appeasement, one member of the Godhead working on another member to influence, appease, propitiate, calm-down, satisfy the anger of God.

And on the list goes, but all of these descriptions present God with attributes of Satan.

The truth we are called to take to the world, the truth we are called to stand for, is the truth about God Himself, and we get ever clearer understanding of God's true character, methods, and principles when we reject the human view of law and recognize all of God's laws are design laws—the protocols the Creator built reality to operate upon.

Read last paragraph,

- Throughout the centuries, men and women have been willing to experience martyrdom rather than give up their faith in Christ. Their sacrifice rekindles our courage. The story of their commitment to Christ renews our own commitment. This week we will look at some biblical principles that motivated the Waldenses and later Reformers, such as Huss and Jerome, to stay faithful to the Lord no matter what—even at the threat of death from the same power that killed Polycarp: Rome, but now in the papal phase. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 30).

Haven't you been inspired by the faithful standing for their faith—even to the point of being martyred? And it is certainly true that many faithful followers of Jesus have been persecuted and killed for their faith throughout history.

Does this mean then, that standing faithful all the way to martyrdom is a sign of being right with God? If we see people who stand by their faith all the way unto death, does that mean they are on God's side, standing for the right thing? What about those who:

- Burned to death with David Koresh?
- Strap bombs on themselves and blow themselves up in cafés or fly airplanes into buildings?

We are certainly inspired by the stories such as Stephen being stoned, Paul being beheaded, and the martyrs for Christ throughout human history—but is willingness to die good evidence that the cause the person died for is the right cause?

What is better evidence than a person's willingness to die for the cause? The truth, the truth manifested in harmony with the design laws of God as evidenced in Scripture, science/nature, and real-life experiences.

SUNDAY

The day's lesson is entitled *Persecuted Yet Triumphant* and focuses on the 1260 years of persecution during the Middle and Dark Ages.

Most of you have heard the details of these various Bible prophecies, the day year principle the start date for this prophecy in 538 AD and the completion date in 1798. If you haven't and you would like these details, please read our magazine Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17 which you can get here in the lobby, read online on our website, or if you have a US postal address can order at requests@comeandreason.com and we will ship it to you at no cost.

What I want to emphasize today, are the goals and methods of Satan's warfare. His goal is not to kill all humans—his goal is replace God in the hearts and minds of human beings so that:

1. We worship, admire, esteem, value him and
2. We become like him in character so that he therby replaces the image of God that we were created to bear with his own.

And the methods of Satan are:

1. Lies (John 8:44)
2. Imposed laws (Ecclesiastes 5:8; Daniel 7:25; Jeremiah 8:8)
3. Police & prosecution /accusation (Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10)
4. Judicial power/rulings (Matthew 27:19-26)
5. Economics (Matthew 6:24; 27:17-21)
6. War (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:11)
7. Death (Hebrews 2:14)
8. Education/Indoctrination (Acts 7:21; Daniel 1:5)
9. Ownership/usurped authority/pride (Genesis 47:16, Isaiah 14:13,14)
10. Fear (Genesis 3:10)

Satan's strategy in applying these methods follow a certain pattern:

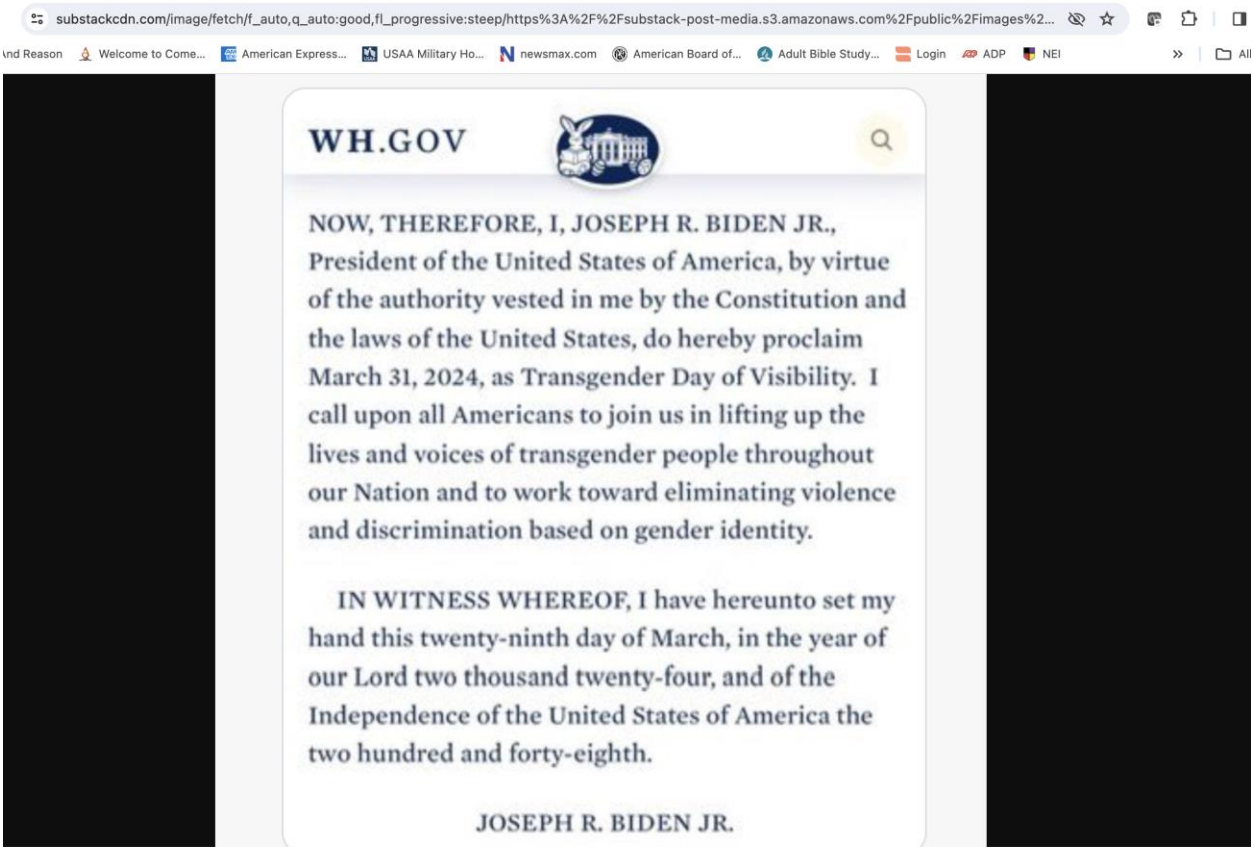
- **Deception**—Satan lied to Eve in Eden, and he approached Jesus as an angel of light. He is the father of lies and he always seeks to deceive, to lie and get us to believe his lies.
    - There are many ways Satan deceives, one of the most effective is through the evangelism of his converts, those who are true believers in his falsehoods. Through them we see many virtues—we perceive their sincerity, their devotion, their commitment, their passion, their willingness to sacrifice for their cause, sometimes their concern for others, but what we don't receive or perceive from these bearers of false gospels is the truth.
    - Just imagine the many advocates for the COVID jab, masking, lockdowns, and other harmful actions during the beastly attack on our liberties. Many true converts to the lies demonstrated real passion, real sincerity, real devotion to their cause—they wanted to save lives, many had love in their hearts mixed with fear of losing those they loved and begged and pleaded with family members to take actions they believed were life-saving. But they didn't have the truth, and those actions if taken only harmed.
- **Inducements**—bribes, offers of something to make us more or reward us in some way, typically appealing to ego, esteem, power, prestige, position. Something to introduce and inflame that lie that we can't trust God with our position, our calling, our mission, we need to act in self-interest. It is often accompanied by fear, fear of losing the opportunity if you don't act for self. He offered Eve to become like God. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world.
    - We saw this during COVID, get a jab and get a donut, or a free gift card or a sticker or pin identifying yourself as a morally superior person who loves others.
- **Miracles**—Eve was presented with the miracle of a talking serpent; Jesus was miraculously transported to the temple and then tempted to call upon God to perform a miracle by throwing Himself off the temple. These miracles by Satan were not illusions, not pretend, they were real. And Satan can perform certain miracles and will do so again before Christ returns.
- **Threats**—Jesus was threatened repeatedly by the Jews at the instigation of Satan, was threatened with rejection, abandonment of friends, betrayal, His reputation was tarnished, eventually threatened with death by the Jews and threatened by Pilate before Pilate finally condemned Him to death.
    - We saw this during COVID, threats to take away liberty, restrict travel, removed digital platforms, fire from jobs, lose scholarships, fines, arrest and more.
- **Physical assault, abuse, torment**—acts of real injustice and wrong.
    - We saw this during COVID pastors arrested for not closing their churches, small business shut down while the big box stores stayed open, violence against people who refused to comply.
- **Death**

We saw most of these during COVID—just think how much more intense it is going to be the next go around when Satan impersonates Jesus and performs all kinds of miracles and the world is faced

with another global ending threat that if people don't comply and following this leader we are going to die. Then the death penalty will be advanced and our only hope is Jesus returning to save us.

Satan's strategies are designed to get us to choose him and his methods over God and God's methods:

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and incite fear and selfishness corrupting the character.
- Accepting inducements to do wrong inflames selfishness and breaks trust with God, incites fear and selfishness and corrupts the character
- Believing miracles over the truth and evidence God has given surrenders the mind to the miracle worker leading to choices that breaks the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness corrupting the character
- Threats are designed to incite fear undermine trust and lead one to act selfishly (i.e., by hurting others) to protect self, after all isn't self-defense right? Then why did Jesus say we should turn the other cheek?
- But the big one which is right now being employed as we approach the final events before Christ's return, the strategy that is going to deceive all but the elect, is the perpetration of real wrong, real injustice upon innocents, which is designed by Satan to cause a real sense of outrage, righteous indignation, and a desire for justice, which tempts the righteous to embrace and practice Satan's methods to make things right, to use might and power, the power of the state and the power of force to inflict punishment upon the wrong doers. This was the temptation Jesus faced during His trial and crucifixion, injustice upon injustice, to the One who held all power. Would Jesus use power to do so-called justice by punishing the overt wrong doers or would He forgive His persecutors—those doing real evil, real wrong? And this is what is happening in the world today. Satanic forces are doing more and more injustice of all kinds and the goal is to inflame outrage in the people of God to get them to choose to embrace and join with the beastly powers of this world to use the power of the state to do justice, to punish wrong doing. But Jesus said we are to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us that we may be children of our Father who is in heaven.
    - We saw Satan's tactic manifested on Easter when the President of the United States released the following proclamation:



This had nothing to do with blessing, benefiting, or helping people struggling with gender confusion. Don't be confused by the sophistry, subtlety, and misdirection of the evil one. This has to do with tempting righteous people by actions that offend them, so they will seek to make it right, to do justice by embracing and applying Satan's methods and thereby they change themselves from living representatives of God and His design laws of love and truth, to beings in the image of God's enemy.

We must instead recognize the truth of God's character and design laws—that we cannot make anyone righteous, or society righteous, by using imposed rules and coercive enforcement. We must recognize, as Jesus did on the Cross, that the injustice being perpetrated by evil people cannot be resolved or remedied by using the very same methods that they use. We must recognize, as Jesus did on the Cross, that those crucifiers were not actually destroying Jesus, they were destroying themselves. And likewise, we must recognize that when people do evil to us, they are not destroying our souls, they are actually destroying their own souls, warping their own characters, searing their own consciences, and hardening their own hearts—because that is how reality works. We must see through design law and know this is unavoidable and stop seeing events through imposed law where we believe it is right and just to use power to punish them for their wrongdoing. This is the only way we can prevent Satan's evil seeds from infecting our own hearts. We must have God's law of love written within us so that we, like Jesus, like Stephen, can say "Don't lay this to their account.

Father forgiven them they don't know what they are doing. They think they are doing right by seeking to destroy us, but we know that they are only destroying their own souls—and we will, just like you Father, miss them when we are in heaven with you."

- And finally, if Satan cannot get God's people to choose his methods and become like him in character then he will inspire those who are like him and who value his methods to seek to destroy, even kill, those who refuse to be corrupted, but it will all be advanced under the guise of doing what is right, of only doing justice. The wicked always end up persecuting and seeking to kill the righteous and thereby take their influence away. And when it is led by churches and governments, it is always couched as doing something for the greater good, to stop evil, to save the nation, to save lives, or to save souls or to save the organization. As Caiaphas said, "it is better for one man to die than the nations." (John 11:50).

Read first paragraph,

- The book of Jude was written sometime before A.D. 65 to faithful Christians who were "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:1, NKJV). These faithful believers were urged to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, . . . who turn the grace of our God into lewdness" (Jude 1:3, 4, NKJV). This admonition meant even more to believers in the Middle Ages after pagan practices had flooded into the church and human traditions compromised the Word of God. For many centuries, people, such as the Waldenses, stood as champions for the truths of Scripture. They believed that Christ was their only mediator and the Bible their sole source of authority. "In every age there were witnesses for God—men who cherished faith in Christ as the only mediator between God and man, who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and hallowed the true Sabbath."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 61. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 32).

The lesson is focusing on how Christianity became infected with all kinds of superstitions, human traditions, and false beliefs that resulted in human beings taking the name of Jesus—calling themselves Christians, yet going on Crusades, practicing the Inquisition, burning those who believed differently at the stake and many more un-Christlike activities.

The question is how could this happen? How could these ideas get into the hearts and minds of people so that they thought it was virtuous, righteous, honoring Jesus to act is such ways?

In Isaiah chapter 58, we find the following prophecy:

- Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In (Isaiah 58:12 NKJV).

But what is the wall that has been breached? And what is the breach that we are to repair?

This imagery is taken from ancient Jerusalem, whose wall that protected it and the temple at its center was broken down when Babylon attacked Israel, sacked the city, destroyed the temple, and took the people captive. Then, after 70 years of captivity, the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah led a remnant of Israelites back to Jerusalem to not only rebuild the temple but also to repair the wall that had been breached (broken down).

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, the Bible tells us that the stories of the Old Testament were recorded as examples to us. This means that the Bible record is more than just a historical account; it is a record of real historical people, events, and places, recorded under divine inspiration to teach eternal realities. The specific lives and events recorded in Scripture were included by the inspiration of God for the purpose of advancing the plan of salvation—thus, most of the historical events have object-lesson significance to teach God's plan to save sinners.

Israel was taken captive by Babylon:

- Babylon is symbolic of the worldly and ungodly systems and sinful methods under which the people of God are held captive and are called to leave before Jesus comes (Revelation 18:2–4).
- Jerusalem is symbolic of the people of God, of Zion, in which the righteous live and the temple of God is found.
- The temple is symbolic of God's plan to heal and save people from sin; it is the place where sinners are restored to at-one-ment with God. In other words, the temple is symbolic of God's work through Jesus to cleanse the spirit temple from sin and restore sinners to unity with God.
- The destruction of the temple is symbolic of the destruction of the truth about God and His plan to heal and save in the minds of people—the setting up of the abomination that causes desolation in the wing of the temple, the setting up of a false system in place of the true plan to save and heal.

The historical events of Babylon breaking down the walls of Jerusalem, destroying the temple, and taking the people captive symbolize the corrupt systems of this world (Satan's kingdom with its methods, principles, practices, and laws) warring against the true people of God (the church) in an attempt to break down the protective wall that God has given to safeguard our hearts and minds and take the people captive, in heart and mind, to a false system of worship that is represented by Babylon. This is why the call goes out in Revelation 18 for God's people to come out of Babylon; **it is because God's people are being held captive in this fallen and corrupt system.**

This same truth is taught in a variety of ways in Scripture—for instance, the little horn of Daniel 7:21 and the beast of Revelation 13:7 warring against the saints and taking them captive describe the same events.

The apostle Paul describes this same breach, the same taking captive of hearts and minds, in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where he describes the man of lawlessness setting himself up in God's temple and

proclaiming himself to be God. Paul is describing the man of sin, the lawless one, breaching the walls of protection that God has placed around His people and entering God's temple, setting himself up as the one worshiped instead of God.

Paul wrote this passage about 20 years after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven. Satan did not ride into heaven and set himself up there. And the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed shortly after Paul wrote this passage, so Satan did not set himself up in that temple. Therefore, Paul is not talking about either the temple in Jerusalem or the one in heaven; rather, he is talking about the Spirit temple where our Creator God is to be enthroned. It is by breaching the wall of protection God has given us that has enabled Satan to storm in and take captive the hearts and minds of people and enthrone himself as the god that billions worship today.

The question for us today is: What is the protective wall, how was it breached, and how do we rebuild it?

The Breached Wall

Isaiah adds some details that give important clues to the nature of the wall that has been breached, the wall that protects our hearts and minds:

- If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 58:13,14 NKJV).

Isaiah identifies one of God's commandments in connection with the repairing of the breach. This suggests that the wall of protection may be connected to God's law. Jeremiah and the writer of Hebrews go further than Isaiah; they identify the entire law of God as pivotal to our restoration in the new covenant:

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10 NIV84).

There were two covenants because there are two kinds of law in play—God's design laws and the imposed laws that creatures make up. The old covenant was formed at Sinai when the Israelites chose a covenant of law and performance over a covenant of love and trust. In other words, the Israelites believed and practiced the idea that God's law functions like human-imposed law, rules imposed that they were to obey, and if they didn't, then their sense of justice would demand that they be punished, but if they did obey, then they believed they would earn rewards. This is the covenant that Paul exposes as false in the books of Romans and Galatians—the legal, rules-oriented, works system of law-keeping rather than faith, rather than love and trust that comes from reconciliation with God and living in harmony with how He built life to operate.

The old covenant was based on the people's false belief that God's law is imposed and that righteousness is to be found in their law-keeping, which earns either rewards or punishments meted out justly by a "just God." But as can be seen in the Jeremiah and Hebrews texts above, while God's new covenant is not legal it also has law involved, but in the new covenant, the people recognize and embrace the truth that God's laws are design laws, the laws the Creator has built reality upon and not rules like humans make up. God's laws must become the principles upon which hearts and minds operate, not merely rules to govern external behavior. Jeremiah makes clear how God's laws function:

- This is what the LORD says: "If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the **fixed laws of heaven and earth,** then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them" (Jeremiah 33:25, 26 NIV84, my emphasis).

God's laws are "the fixed laws" that govern heaven and earth! God's laws are the laws the Creator has built reality to operate upon, such as the laws of physics, health, and the moral laws. Created beings cannot speak reality into existence and, therefore, we make up rules that we call "laws," but our rules require external enforcement through the infliction of punishment.

This is how Satan, a created being, governs. Imposed laws with imposed punishments are how the kingdoms of this world function—and Jesus said His kingdom is *not of this world!* (John 18:36). His kingdom does not function like human kingdoms; it is not built upon made-up rules that require the infliction of external punishments. Jesus is the Creator, His kingdom is reality itself, and His laws are the laws that govern and sustain reality.

The wall of God's protection is the wall of reality, of design law, of the protocols He built reality to function upon. When we understand and appreciate God's design laws, it always causes us to worship God as Creator and to understand that sin, breaking God's design laws, is the cause of pain, suffering, and death, while God is the source of life, healing, and salvation. But when we exchange God's design laws for Satan's imposed-law system, then we exchange the truth of God's character for Satan's and teach that God is the source of torture and death, which He inflicts upon the unrepentant as "just" punishment for sin. Thus, the lawless one, the one who denies and replaces the design laws of God with made-up, imposed rules, sets himself up in God's temple (human hearts and minds) proclaiming himself to be God.

Isaiah prophesied that before Christ returns, there will be a people who repair the breach. These people will recognize the design laws of God that Jesus spoke about when He said,

- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37–40 NIV84).

Just like the remnant of Israelites who left Babylon under the leadership of Nehemiah, this end-time remnant will leave the systems of imposed-law theology. (Remember, of all the nations that interacted

with Israel in the Bible story arc, Babylon was the first to create an imposed legal code—the code of Hammurabi. Thus, Babylon rightly represents the kingdoms of this world and the theological constructs that teach that God's kingdom functions like human kingdoms, with made-up rules and imposed punishments.)

The end-time remnant will reject this sinful human-law view of God's kingdom and return to worshiping God as Creator, understanding that His laws are the protocols that reality itself functions upon.

But because the prophecy connects repairing the breach, the broken wall, with the Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists (SDA), have concluded that this prophecy means returning to worship services on the Bible Sabbath instead of Sunday. But this prophecy is much broader than a weekly day of worship! It encompasses every aspect of living, for it calls us to *delight* in the Sabbath—not merely keep it as a rule we must follow. This means that the prophecy is calling us to return to living in harmony with God's design laws for life, of which the Bible Sabbath is symbolic, or a sign.

Consider the origins of sin. The angels who followed Satan into rebellion, into disobeying God's law, did so *before* there was a weekly Sabbath. The sin problem did not originate over a Sabbath-versus-Sunday question, and it will not end over such a surface/superficial/shallow question. The sin problem will end over what these two days represent: They are signs—or pennants or marks or emblems—of two types of law and, therefore, two types of government and, ultimately, two different gods.

The Sabbath was *created* as a day set apart by God; Sunday was not *created* by God as a day set apart from the other days, but it became a day set apart from the other days of the week through human *legislation*. Thus, the two days represent two types of law—design law and imposed law.

The deeper issue is not the actual day, but the law and government the days represent. One of the founders of the SDA Church understood this difference, writing:

- The prophet thus points out the ordinance which has been forsaken: "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, **The repairer of the breach,** The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and **call the Sabbath a delight,** the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." … This prophecy also applies in our time. The **breach was made in the law of God <u>when</u> the Sabbath was changed by the Roman power.** But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. The breach is to be repaired and the foundation of many generations to be raised up (*The Great Controversy*, p. 452, emphasis mine).

  In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The **breach made in the law <u>at the time</u> the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired.** God's remnant people, **standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are

> to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678, emphasis mine).

Notice here that the author did not write, "The breach was made **by the change** in the Sabbath" or that "the change of the Sabbath is the breach in the law," but that the breach occurred "at the time" or "when" the Sabbath was changed by man. The breach in the law was not simply the changing of the Sabbath; the true breach in the law is the change in how we understand God's law, from design law to imposed rules—the type of law that can be changed.

The changing of the Sabbath to Sunday is the evidence, the fruit, the result of the beach. It is the proof that the Christian world believes God's law functions like human law, and, therefore, sin is rule breaking, and God's justice is the use of His power to inflict punishment upon sinners, in which He becomes the source of pain, suffering, and death from which we need protection. In this way, Satan has successfully set himself up in God's Spirit temple to be worshiped by billions. It is a sad fact that today, almost the entire Christian world, regardless of denomination, no longer recognizes that God's laws are design laws.

Thus, the true repairers of the breach of Isaiah's prophecy will be those who teach the truth that God's laws are design laws and not imposed rules. In so doing, we call people back to worship the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water (Revelation 14:7). We teach people reality and how to cooperate with God to actually become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

And we recognize that even if we do value the Bible Sabbath yet continue to believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, we have not repaired the breach; we have not left the Roman system of worship; we have not left Babylon; and we are still advancing the counterfeit to God's kingdom, just as the Jews did two thousand years ago when they had the Bible Sabbath but the wrong law and the wrong god.

So, with design law, we understand that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. We understand that it is God's gift, promise, evidence, demonstration, revelation of His character and how His design-law government functions—how He governs. We understand that God does not use power to force His way; this is the truth of the Sabbath's gift to us! For love exists only in an atmosphere of freedom, of which the Sabbath is a sign. God is the Creator—He has all power, and **the danger with all power is that it can intimidate, it can cause fear, it can damage individuality, it can undermine love, it can shut down thinking, it can lead to mindless pawns and drones doing what the powerful sovereign says or else—so God created the Sabbath, a revelation, demonstration, evidence that He does NOT govern by imposed law and enforced rules.** For after six days of using His immense power to create, the Sabbath was set apart by God when He **STOPPED** using power, when He rested, when He created a time for His creatures to think and consider and come to their own conclusions without the threat of punishment being inflicted by Him.

Thus, the Sabbath is a memorial to God as Creator and His design laws that all reality is built upon—for what God wants from His intelligent creatures is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, and friendship,

and that can *never* be achieved through imposed law, through the use of might and power; it cannot be achieved through intimidation, threats, and inflicted punishments. In fact, when people present God as the cosmic enforcer and punisher, they advance Satan's rebellion and undermine trust in God, negating the very purpose and function of the Sabbath—a sign that God is holy and restores us to holiness when we trust Him! (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12).

So I invite you to join me in repairing the breach in the wall by rejecting the lie that God's laws function like human law, made-up, imposed rules and by embracing the truth that God is Creator and His laws are design laws upon which all reality is built to function. Reject the lie that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted upon sinners, and instead realize that it is sin, the breaking of God's design laws for life, that brings forth death, recognizing that God is the source of life—the One whom through Jesus restores His living law into our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10). I implore you to realize that Babylon, that system of imposed laws, with its made-up rules and punishing god, is fallen. Hear God's call to His people to come out of that unjust, fear-inducing, fallen, and broken system and return to genuine Creator worship!

WEDNESDAY

The focus of the lesson is the Reformation—what is your understanding of the Reformation? What is being reformed?

Here is a warning written by EGW March 1, 1915, four months before her death. It is profound, it emphasizes the reformation that we need and exposes the infection that has corrupted the gospel in the SDA church and which has impaired our ability to fulfill our mission since ever since 1888.

- A great **reformation is needed** among the people of God. Many sapless and unfruitful branches are to be removed from the parent vine. Everything will be shaken that can be shaken, that that which can not be shaken may remain. (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 1, emphasis mine) [Those to be removed are those who have a form of godliness without power—no spiritual fruit because they have a religion of rules with a god of imposed law and inflicted punishments—a legal religion]

  The enemy has worked upon the minds of some, and has led them to do violence to our past experience by **mingling with the truth erroneous and false theories.** He has led **ministers** and teachers to weave into their doctrines some pleasing figures of **his own invention**. Every deviation from the truth as we have advocated it in the past is a departure from truth that has been witnessed by the Holy Spirit, and upon which God has placed His seal. (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 2, emphasis mine) [This is exactly what happened to the SDA church at the 1888 GC, when the leadership rejected the design law truths and wove into our teachings the invention of Satan that God's laws are imposed laws and the church has ever since taught many right doctrines through the wrong law with the wrong god, the god of this age who makes up rules and imposes punishment through external power]

Truth must stand in its own order, linked only with truth. Unbelief disturbs the balance of the system of truth, and tends to destroy the whole. The mind that cherishes sentiments that tend to destroy the foundation of the faith that has made us what we are becomes confused, and **can not discern between truth and error**. (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 3, emphasis mine) [Sentiment is emotional attachment to opinion. It is an unwillingness to allow new truth to replace the traditional beliefs that feel good to the person. Those who hold to imposed law have sentiment that it is correct and they don't want to give it up. They often look for authorities to tell them the answer, what does the pastor say, what do the conference officials say, what does the Biblical Research Institute say, what does the president of the General Conference say—not what is the truth. These conscientious rule-keeping people cannot discern between truth and error for they have not learned for themselves how to discern truth.]

The truths that have been substantiated by the manifest working of God are to stand fast. Let no one presume to move a pin or foundation-stone from the structure. Those who attempt to **undermine the pillars** of our faith are among those of whom the Bible says that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 4, emphasis mine) [What is a doctrine? It is a teaching, so those undermining the pillars of our faith are those who advance the teachings of devils, and what has the devil taught? That God's law is imposed and that God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for rule-breaking. All those who teach God's law is imposed rules that He enforces through imposed punishments are among the ones who are undermining the pillars, just listen to the rest of this warning and the specific emphasis she focuses upon in regard to the pillars she is talking about]

One step from the path in which God has ordained us to walk, places us where we are subject to the temptations of Satan. This is represented in the case of Adam and Eve. Outside of God's way, we may be led to believe a lie. But angels of God will commune with those **who obey His laws.** Let mind and heart be united in following in the light that God has given. Keep soul and body pure and clean and holy. When we do those things that God has commanded in His word, angels of God will act as our teachers. **Our happiness is dependent upon our living a righteous life**. (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 5, emphasis mine) [What law is she referencing here? She explains in the next three paragraphs, but before we read them, can we figure it out from this one? From where does happiness come? It is a by-product of healthiness in all domains of life, and health only comes from being in harmony with the laws of health, we cannot have health in violations of the laws of health. Thus, she is already leading us to understand the undermining of the pillars of God is the replacing God's design laws with the types of laws that creatures make up, but don't take my word for it, here is what she wrote.]

We are subject to certain laws, even as the plants are subject to law. Every tree will bear its appointed fruit. Disobedience to **the laws that govern our being** results in sickness and suffering and death. (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 6, emphasis mine) [What

kind of laws are plants subject to, made up rules, or design laws? What kind of laws govern our being? Can she be more clear? Well she doesn't leave it there.]

The soul is also subject to laws, and a disregard of these laws, by the wresting and misinterpretation of scripture, will result in the sickness and death of the soul. Those following in a path of error lose from the heart the genuine peace of Christ, and become like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 7, emphasis mine) [What kind of laws is the soul subject to? The same type, design laws, the protocols God built souls to exist and operate upon. Following a path of error that destroys the soul is the disregarding God's design laws and replacing them with the imposed law lies that Rome brought into Christianity, the wine of Babylon, the lie that God's law works like human law and those who believe this believe lies about the sin problem, God's character, the plan of salvation and teach all kinds of things that interfere with God's true plan to heal the heart, mind, soul and thus they are sick of mind and soul. They live in fear, fear of someone finding out about their sin, fear of some sin not being erased from the books, fear of standing in the judgment without an intercessor, fear of what God would do to them if it wasn't for Jesus protecting them from Him and on and on the fears go, all fruit of Satan's lies about God's law taught in Christianity.]

Spiritual life is the result of the action of the soul in obedience to the word and in harmony with the laws of God. **Let the soul be regulated by the law,** "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." "This do, and thou shalt live." (Bible Training School March 1, 1915, par. 8, emphasis mine). [This is design law—the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, the law of exertion, the law of love, the law of liberty, the law of truth! We are restored as we embrace the truth and are won to trust in God and in that trust relationship we open the heart and experience the indwelling Spirit that heals the brokenness, takes away the guilt, shame, fear, and gives us new desires and as we choose those new desires we receive divine power to carry them out and we are transformed to mature into those who possess the mind of Christ!]

This is a call to repair the breach in the wall that protects our hearts and minds and to establish Jesus, our Creator and Savior and Sustainer back onto the throne in our Spirit temples!

THURSDAY

Read the first two paragraphs,

- What was it that cheered the faithful Waldenses during the horrible persecutions they faced? What gave Huss and Jerome, Tyndale, Latimer, and the martyrs of the Middle Ages courage to face the flames and the sword? Faith in the promises of God. They believed Christ's promise: "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19). They found His strength sufficient for life's greatest trials. They even found joy through fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. And their faithfulness was a powerful witness to the world.

> They looked beyond what was to what will be. They knew that, through the resurrection of Christ, death was a defeated foe. For these courageous men and women, the stranglehold of death was broken. They clung to the promises of God's Word and came away victorious. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 35).

Didn't the persecuting Roman church also believe that Christ defeated death? So, was the belief that Christ defeated death the defining belief that separated the persecuted from the persecutors?

And wasn't the Roman church, while physically persecuting and executing people in various horrible ways, actually threatening something worse? Wasn't the Roman church threatening eternal torture, damnation, in hell?

So what gave them hope, that Christ defeated death, or that Christ was NOT the kind of God who acted like the church leaders who were persecuting them were acting? That they knew God's love personally and had experienced God's grace in their heart and mind, and their personal connection with God through Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit gave them courage, peace, confidence, and ability to stay faithful—not merely the belief in a right doctrine.

Their victory was through Jesus as in trust in Him they died to fear and selfishness and were reborn into a life of love and trust in a personal Savior that they could surrender their souls to. It wasn't faith in correct doctrines, such as mortality of the soul, or Jesus' victory over death, or the Sabbath, or any other doctrine—our doctrines only have saving value to the degree they connect us with Jesus Christ and help us enter into actual living harmony with Him. Their victory came through their faith and trust in Jesus!

TUESDAY

Any questions or areas of interest from Tuesday's lesson?

The lesson focuses on the persecutions by the Roman church during the Middle and Dark Ages.

Who do you understand is represented by the first beast of Revelation 13?

It has been taught by many Protestants that the first beast of Revelation 13 represents the Roman church, the papacy. But this is only partially true.

If you recall, the first beast of Revelation 13 has 7 heads and 10 horns, and one of the heads was wounded and that wounded head was healed. And that wounded head is believed to represent the Roman church—but there are six other heads. So how does the entire beast represent the Roman church, what are the other six heads?

- The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while (Revelation 17:9,10).

- Hills = high places or places of worship (Leviticus 26:30; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4).
- Seven false systems of worship
- The head is where one thinks, reasons, worships and determines what is best
- The heads direct the use of the various powers (horns)

Five have fallen at the time John wrote this in the first century:

1. Paganism
2. Godlessness
3. Eastern mysticism
4. Islam
5. Judaism

One is and One is to come later:

6. Christianity which became Romanism
7. False Protestantism (the Protestantism of imposed law that will join with the end-time beast and use the power of the state to pursue "justice")

So, the beast with seven heads is a chameleon beast that uses the ten powers of Satan to persecute the saints. In some places and times in history—like when Israel was taken captive by Babylon—the beast was controlled by the pagan head, in communist lands the same ten powers are wielded by the godless head to persecute the saints, in Islamic lands the same ten powers are wielded by the Islamic head to oppose and persecute the saints, and in the Middle and Dark Ages Europe it was the Roman church that controlled the ten powers to persecute the saints.

During the Old Testament times the Bible story arc focuses our attention, through the lives and events recorded, on the fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3:15, the coming Messiah. This is why we focus on Abraham's children, through Isaac not Ishmael, and Isaac's children through Jacob not Esau, and then narrow down all the way to the tribe of Judah. It explains why the Bible doesn't say much about other people groups in the world because the entire focus of the Bible is the plan of salvation and that centers on Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Likewise, after Jesus' incarnation, sinless life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection and ascension, the Bible story arc focuses on those who carry the gospel forward, who take the true plan of salvation. Thus, Bible prophecies, like Revelation 13 that reach into the future focus on the events in the world where God's people are advancing the gospel and Satan's power is opposing them. So, Revelation 13 focuses on those who are advancing the gospel on earth moving us toward the final events on the planet.

From where does our courage to stand come? It comes only from our faith relationship with Jesus Christ!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available. If you have a US Postal address and would like some to share, just email your requests to Requests@ComeandReason.com and we will send them at no cost.

MAGAZINE: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ, is now available! https://comeandreason.com/lie-that-deceived-angels/

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 5
Faith Against All Odds

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

When you hear ideas like the lesson title, *Faith Against All Odds,* do you have a clear understanding of this is? What is faith?

From dictionary.com the word faith can mean:

1. confidence or trust in a person or thing: *faith in another's ability.*
2. belief that is not based on proof: *He had faith that the hypothesis would be substantiated by fact.*
3. belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion: *the firm faith of the Pilgrims.*
4. belief in anything, as a code of ethics, standards of merit, etc.: *to be of the same faith with someone concerning honesty.*
5. a system of religious belief: *the Christian faith; the Jewish faith.*
6. the obligation of loyalty or fidelity to a person, promise, engagement, etc.: *Failure to appear would be breaking faith.*
7. the observance of this obligation; fidelity to one's promise, oath, allegiance, etc.: *He was the only one who proved his faith during our recent troubles.*
8. *Christian Theology*. the trust in God and in His promises as made through Christ and the Scriptures by which humans are justified or saved.

The Greek for faith in the NT is *pistis* and is translated *belief, faith, trust* and means to have confidence. In English the best overall single word would be trust.

Can someone have faith/belief/trust/confidence in a faithless or untrustworthy person, idea, or system?

What is to be the basis of our faith?

What does it mean to have faith against all odds? Doesn't it simply mean that we trust Jesus no matter what!

And how is it that we experience this faith or trust? By coming to know God in truth, in reality, for who He actually and truly is. And this is why Jesus said life eternal is knowing God (John 17:3), because when we come to know Him we automatically will trust Him.

It is the lies about God that we believe that keep us from knowing Him that undermine a deeper trust in God.

Many people instead of trusting God directly, trust in the mechanics of their religion—they trust in the sacraments, they trust in the rituals, the ceremonies, the observance of law, Sabbath keeping, right eating. Or they trust in someone to represent them and plead for them to God, whether Mary, the saints, or Jesus Himself. They trust in a legal payment of sinless human blood, but they don't actually know and trust God because they believe lies—that God killed Jesus, or that God cannot forgive outright, that God requires legal payments or sacrifices be offered to Him in order to get Him to forgiven and not punish. All of this prevents genuine faith/trust in God.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Ephesians 2:8-9:

- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV84).

What does this text mean? What law lens do we understand the words through?

- What is grace?
- What does it mean to be saved?
- From what are we being saved?
- What is faith?
- How is faith a gift of God?

If we have the idea in mind that God's law functions like human law, then from what are we be saved?

- We are being saved from the so-called just punishment of God for our sins, from the punishment for our law-breaking.

But if we have design law in mind then from what are we being saved?

- We are being saved from sin, from the condition of being out of harmony with God's design laws for life.

And this salvation is offered to us because of God's grace—God's graciousness in His active, willful, specific, direct intervention by the use of His powers to work out for us, through His right hand agent Jesus Christ, the cure, remedy, solution, to our sin condition because there is absolutely nothing we can do to heal or fix this terminal sin-condition ourselves. Our response to this amazing grace is to choose to trust or have faith in Him and willingly cooperate with Him and He then heals and fixes us. Thus I render this passage in the Remedy as:

- It is only because of God's grace that you have been healed through trust–and you did not create this trust yourself, but it was established through the evidence of God's character revealed in the gift of Jesus Christ. This is not by some human work–No way!–so there is no room for anyone to boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 REM).

The lesson also asks that we read Romans 3:23, 24, but let's read versus 21-26 to get a clearer picture of what Paul intends. We will read it from the NIV first, then contrast it with the GNT, and finally the Remedy. As you hear these words, consider the law lens you are hearing/thinking through:

- But now a **righteousness** from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This **righteousness** from God comes through **faith** in Jesus Christ to all who **believe**. There is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a **sacrifice of atonement**, through **faith** in his **blood**. He did this to **demonstrate** his **justice**, because in his **forbearance** he had left the sins committed beforehand **unpunished**—he did it to **demonstrate** his **justice** at the present time, so as to be **just** and the one who **justifies** those who have **faith** in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What do you hear? What is the message? Do you hear something healing or something legal?

The Greek for faith and trust is the same, and the Greek for righteous/righteousness and justify/justice is the same.

The NIV seems to suggest that God sent Jesus to die to show God's justice, which through the human law model means the right or proper punishment, which some people use this text to teach that God executed Jesus in our place to pay a legal penalty—to do a human style of inflicted punishment justice. But justice is simply doing what is right, to justify something is to put it or set it right, to rightify it, which is the righteous or just action. But we hear the words justice and righteousness differently, yet in the Greek they are the same word.

So notice how the GNT renders this, and I am showing this to demonstrate that my rendering of righteous and righteousness instead of just and justice in the Remedy is not something I have made up, but is a legitimate translation of the Greek:

- But now God's way of **putting people right** with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. God **puts people right** through their **faith** in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who **believe** in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are **put right** with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his **blood** he should become the **means by which people's sins are forgiven** through their faith in him. God did this in order to **demonstrate** that **he is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins;

> but in the present time he **deals with their sins**, in order to **demonstrate his righteousness**. In this way God shows that **he himself is righteous** and that he **puts right** everyone who believes in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-25 GNT, emphasis mine).

Do you see how when the translators use righteous and righteousness instead of justice it changes the tenor of the passage and leads our minds to a clearer understanding of reality? The issue in this cosmic war is not about power but about God's trustworthiness, and Satan has accused God of being unjust by not punishing sinners, for that is how Satan works—he uses power over others to coerce and punish, but God uses power to heal and to save.

Jesus died to demonstrate the truth of God's righteousness, God's character, that death does not come out from God as an infliction, it comes from unremedied sin when God stops using power to hold its destructiveness at bay. We see this first in Gethsemane when Jesus fell down dying as the weight of sin was separating Jesus from His Father and an angel had to revive Jesus because more truth was yet to be revealed. And at the Cross, Jesus, the sinless one, demonstrated what happens when God let's go and stops using power—for God did not use any power to harm His Son, but simply let Him God to reap what Jesus freely chose to do. And Jesus chose to become sin for us even though He knew no sin personally. And the rest of the universe saw Satan unmasked as the liar that he is and God vindicated as the righteous holy source of truth, love, liberty and life that He is, when God did not do anything to harm Jesus, yet Jesus died.

But sadly, Satan has succeeded in infecting Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law and instead of understanding the truth that God, at infinite cost to Himself, revealed to us, billions continue to believe and teach that God's justice is the infliction of punishment, the justice of imperialism, the justice of the kingdoms of this world, the justice that Satan uses.

We are called at this time in history to reject the imposed law lie and return to worshiping God as Creator and understanding His laws are design laws, and then we understand the incredible truth of who God is in reality, as Jesus revealed Him to be and we are won to love and trust Him and not trust in the mechanics, payments, or interposers between us and God! This is **one** of the reasons Jesus came to die as our substitutionary Savior—to reveal the truth to win us back to trust. So, I rendered this passage in the Remedy as follows:

- But now God has revealed **a healthy state of being**—a character that is right and perfect in every way—that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This **perfect state of being** comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our **trust** in him. Our **trust** in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease—of distrust, fear and selfishness—and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are **healed** freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as **the way and the means of restoration**. Now, through the **trust** established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by

> Christ. God did this to **demonstrate that he is right and good**—because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life—yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to **demonstrate** at the present time how **right and good he is**, so that he would also be seen as being **right** when he **heals** those who **trust** in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26 REM, emphasis mine).

Now, let's examine the lesson:

Read first paragraph,

- God has provided salvation as a gift. His Holy Spirit leads us to accept by faith what Christ has so freely provided through His death on Calvary's cross. Jesus, the divine Son of God, offered His perfect life to atone for our sins. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 42).

What does this paragraph mean to you? What is the message you hear?

- What is salvation?
- From what are we being saved?
- What has Christ so freely provided through His death?
- What does it mean He offered His perfect life to atone for our sins?

What is atonement? The original meaning of the word, when used in the 1611 KJV of the Bible, meant to bring to alienated parties back into unity, back to oneness. So, what does it mean Jesus atones for our sins?

Does the law lens, and the level of moral decision-making matter in how we understand atonement?

The first four levels of moral decision-making are all based on imposed rules, fear, and selfishness:

1. Reward and Punishment
2. Market Place Exchange
3. Social Conformity
4. Law and Order

Levels 5-7 are based on design law, other-centered love and how God constructed reality to work:

5. Love for others
6. Principled-based Living
7. Understand friend of God

And the various atonement models correspond to these different levels of development, how people explain things in the way that their minds can comprehend. Like a child explaining why it is right to brush one's teeth because mommy has a rule, whereas the adult explains it through the laws of health. Neither person is being evil, both are doing what they believe is right, both are brushing their

teeth, but the child is immature, and still needs oversight and supervision to do what is right. Likewise, the immature in Christ are described as infants, children, not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. They are not rebellious, they are not disobedient, they are not doing evil—they are simply children and as such are still not trustworthy members of the family. In the same way you wouldn't trust your loving child to decide for themselves their meal plan, what foods to eat—not because your child is evil, but because they are immature and will innocently choose unhealthy things that harm them. So they need ongoing supervision and protection from a loving parent—this is the purpose of the written law.

This demonstrates the problem in much of Christianity, we have a lot of people with good hearts who haven't matured as Paul counsels us to do, who are still teaching things in childlike understanding and thus they are not yet trustworthy friends of God, instead of doing right because it is right, because it they understand and agree, they think it is a matter of law keeping and avoiding legal trouble.

So, let's look at the atonement models through the seven levels.

LEVEL 1: Reward and Punishment
Right and wrong is determined by receiving rewards and avoiding punishment.

- **Satisfaction Theory** of the atonement: God said don't do something, but when Adam and Eve disobeyed their sin dishonored and offended God. Therefore, in his justice, he responds with angry vengeance to execute the disobedient to satisfy his wrath. But Jesus stepped in between God and man to become humanity's substitute. Thus, instead of killing man, God killed his Son in our place and this is how his justice is satisfied.

LEVEL 2: Marketplace Exchange
Right and wrong is determined by an equitable agreement between two parties, also known as quid pro quo – "I'll do something for you if you do something for me."

- **Ransom Theory of the atonement:** Because earth and humanity are now the legal property of Satan and under his control, the devil claimed legal rights to this earth and the lives of the descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore, God struck a bargain with the devil to exchange the life of Christ for the lives of the rest of humanity.

LEVEL 3: Social Conformity
Right and wrong is determined by community consensus, for example, when a child says, "But everyone else is doing it."

- **Governmental Theory** of the atonement: In order for everyone to be convinced that God is fair and right in dealing with sin and sinners when He inflicts punishment, somebody had to pay the price. That somebody is Jesus, because He's the only one who could pay that price to get mankind off the hook.

LEVEL 4: Law and Order
Right and wrong is determined by a codified system of rules, impartial judges, imposed punishments, and respect for authority.

- **Penal Substitution Theory** of the atonement: Jesus died to pay the legal penalty the law demanded and the heavenly judge imposed. The law must be kept. Man broke the law, thus justice demands and requires the imposition of the proper punishment. Someone had to be executed to pay the legal penalty. Jesus became our substitute and was executed in our place by God the Father (as the righteous judge) to pay that penalty. In doing so, the integrity of the law is maintained and sinners can be pardoned, but only if they claim the legal payment made by Jesus

LEVEL 5: Love for Others
Right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others. Wrong is determined, not by a checklist of rules, but by not doing what is actually helpful and beneficial for another.

- **Moral Influence Theory** of the atonement: Sin separated us from God and corrupted our hearts, so that we no longer trusted God, but God loved us too much to let us go, so Christ's death was the means to reach us with his love and restore us to trust in him.

LEVEL 6: Principle-Based Living
Right is understanding the design protocols and principles upon which life is constructed to operate and intelligently choosing to live in harmony with them. Right is not doing something because a rule says to do so, but because it actually work this way.

- **Recapitulation and Christus Victor Theories** of the atonement: Christ's life, death, and resurrection is understood to be the only means to fix what sin had done to God's creation. When mankind sinned, the condition of humankind was changed, placing us out of harmony with God and his design for life. Humankind was now held in bondage by their own condition of sinfulness (carnal nature), their terminal state (death), and the lies about God told by Satan. Christ came to break these powers and fix what sin has done to this creation. Thus "he who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God." 2Cor 5:21.

LEVEL 7: Understanding Friend of God
Those at this level not only have love for God and others (Level 5), not only understand God's design protocols for life (Level 6), but also understand God's purposes and intelligently choose to cooperate in fulfilling their role in His purposes.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:15, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

- **Healing Substitution Reality**: The plan of salvation is understood to have a deeper and broader intent than just the redemption of the human species. Both level five and six are true: God's character of love has been misrepresented, His methods of truth, love, and freedom have not been fully understood, so God had a larger purpose than just the salvation of humankind; He was also solidifying the unfallen beings in loyalty to His design methods and character of love.

The Bible uses the language of satisfaction, ransom, and government and thus there is a level seven understanding of these ideas on atonement.

Level 7 Understanding of Satisfaction Theory

- Creation is out of harmony with God and in a terminal condition.
- God is like a parent whose child is dying of leukemia—
  what is the only thing that will satisfy?
- A remedy that heals and saves!
- "He will see the **result** of the suffering of his soul and be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:11, emphasis mine).

Level 7 Understanding of Ransom Theory

- A ransom is the price required to free someone from bondage.
- What holds us in bondage?
- Lies about God and our carnal natures.
- What is the price to set us free?
- Truth and a new nature (bread and wine).

Level 7 Understanding of Governmental Theory

- God rules on design law—love, truth, and liberty.
- God can heal minds—i.e., win to love and trust—only in harmony with His methods: "God's kindness leads you toward repentance." Romans 2:4
- Thus, God's government and design laws are sustained as the only method upon which life, health, and peace operate.

Penal Substitution?

- This language is not in Scripture—it is made up. It was invented by Martin Luther to undermine the teaching on Purgatory as he taught all sins of all people for all time were placed on Jesus and punished in Jesus and thus there remains no sins for the saved to be purged in purgatory.

When we trust Jesus, we open the heart and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit who takes the victory of Christ and reproduces it in us; we get new desires, motives, attitudes, and are reborn with a new heart and right spirit; we become partakers of the divine nature; it is no longer our sinful selves living, but Christ living within us. And this is our reality when we trust or have faith in Jesus!

What do you understand Jesus' death accomplishes that provides salvation for human beings?

What is the cause of death? Is it from sin, the sinfulness in us separating us from God or is death inflicted by God as punishment for sin?

Jesus came to reveal the truth to destroy the lies and to restore the perfect pure righteous spirit of love and eradicate the contamination of fear, selfishness, guilt and shame from humanity.

Thus Jesus partook of the life given to Adam, contaminated and infected by Adam, and Jesus purged the infection and restored sinless righteousness into humanity and became the new head of humanity, the second Adam, the vine of life that we must be grafted into through faith in order to receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Holy Life of God that brings renewal, refreshing, cleansing, new motives, new desires, so that it is no longer our old fear-ridden, selfish, sinful selves living but Christ lives in us. We become partakers of the divine nature. And thus we are literally restored to at-one-ment with God through the victorious life of Jesus Christ.

Read second paragraph,

- Divine justice demands perfect obedience. Christ's perfect life stands in place of our imperfect lives. The divine law we have broken condemns us to eternal death. The Bible is clear. Through our sinful choices, we have "fallen short" of God's ideal for our lives. We have sinned. Left to ourselves, we cannot meet the just, righteous demands of a holy God. As a result, we deserve eternal death. But there is good news. The apostle Paul assures us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV). It is a gift, undeserved; if it were by works, we would earn it, and if there is any one truth that shines out of the gospel, it is that we cannot earn salvation. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 42).

What do you hear in this paragraph? What is the message?

What is divine justice? What law lens are you understanding it through? Justice is doing what is right or just and that is always defined or determined by the law. For instance, it is just or right to punch someone in the face in boxing, it is unjust to do so in soccer. It is just to drive 160 mph on the autobahn in Germany it is unjust to do so on the interstate in Tennessee. The law determines what is right or just.

So, how we understand God's justice is directly determined by how we understand God's law. The justice of creatures is the justice of imposed law, which is always the infliction of what is deemed to be just punishments. But the justice of the Creator is to eliminate all defects, all disease, all injury, all harm, all pain, all suffering, to eliminate death and to restore all things to perfection. God's justice is healing the oppressed, not punishing the oppressor—why? Because breaking design law always injures the one who breaks it and results in its own punishment unless the person is healed by the Creator.

The lie of Satan is that God's law functions like human law and therefore God is required by law to use power to inflict punishment and if He doesn't do it, then He is not just.

Why does God's justice demand perfect obedience to the law? Justice is doing what is right, so we could say God's right way of doing things demands perfect harmony with the laws of reality, or that God demands that those who want to live must breathe. Why? Because that is how life is constructed to operate. So, God's right way is the way of life which is perfect harmony with how He built it to operate—and the plan of salvation is healing and restoring all who trust Him into harmony with His design law. Thus the new covenant is writing His laws on our hearts and minds.

What does it mean that Christ's perfect life stands in place of our lives?

In reality, according to Scripture, how many "breaths of life" did God breath into human beings? One! God formed Adam out of the dirt of the Earth and breathed into him the breath of life. Every other human being throughout history is an extension of that same breath of life. Eve was created from living tissue taken from Adam, from that same breath of life. And God gave Adam and Eve the ability to procreate and after they sinned, they contaminated that breath of life, that animating energy, that spirit with fear and selfishness and thus through Adam we are born with a spirit of fear. But God, through Jesus gives us a spirit of power and love and sound mind.

Understand reality, after Adam sinned, God still had the ability to form a new body out of dirt and breathe another breath of life into another body and create another human—but that person would not be part of Adam. That person would be a similar yet distinct creation not of this creation. In order to save the humanity that God created in Eden, Jesus had to partake of that very breath of life, that animating spirit that Adam contaminated and purify it, purge the infection of fear and selfishness. And He did that. Jesus' humanity was descended through David as Paul tells us in Romans, and he was born of a sinful woman as Paul writes in Galatians, a woman born under law, the law of sin and death. And through Mary Jesus partook of the very life given to Adam and contaminated by Him. But Jesus' Father was the Holy Spirit and in Jesus He had the Spirit of love and trust and was able to choose only to live out the life of righteousness, love, and trust, despite being tempted in every way just like us through the spirit of fear that came down from Adam through Mary. We see this in Gethsemane when His humanity tempted Him with fear, with anguish, with the selfish temptation to not go through the Cross. But with every temptation Jesus rejected the temptation of fear and selfishness and chose to love perfectly, living out the spirit of righteousness and thereby developed and solidified a perfect mature human character and at the cross He destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness He inherited through Mary. He rose in a purified humanity with only the spirit of love animating Him and became the second Adam, the new head of humanity and thus stands in the place where Adam was created to stand in the heavenly counsel. His human life stands for all humanity for He is a real human who picked up humanity broken and damaged by Adam and perfected it.

What do you think of the following:

- The divine law we have broken condemns us to eternal death. The Bible is clear. Through our sinful choices, we have "fallen short" of God's ideal for our lives. We have sinned. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 42).

When did you or I or anyone other than Adam, Eve, and Jesus, ever have a choice not to be a sinner? Are we sinners because we have chosen to sin, or do we sin because we were born sinners?

This presentation in the lesson is a **classic and fundamental lie** that stems from the belief that God's law is like human law and that the acts of sin are the problem, rather than the truth that Adam chose to sin and we are all born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5), that we didn't have a choice to be anything other than sinners. So, it is a lie that we are in this situation by our choice. We are in this situation by Adam's choice and by our birth.

But God's grace sent Jesus to give us a real choice, and the choice we have through Jesus is not to avoid being a sinner, but despite being born a sinner, we, through Jesus, can choose to be reborn righteous, to receive a new heart and right spirit, to leave the sinful life we inherited from Adam behind and live a righteous life through faith in Jesus.

So, we are not responsible for being born a sinner. We are not held accountable for that situation, nor will we be held accountable for the fact we have committed sins—what we are held accountable for is rejecting Jesus, refusing to be reborn in heart and mind, and preferring sin and sinful living to righteousness, truth, and love.

Notice what Jesus said,

- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [God didn't loan Jesus to us. He gave Him. Jesus became a real human being because God loved us. God doesn't need Jesus to do something to God for God to love us. But God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself. God as Creator understood that sin severs the connection to Him and life and will result in death unless He, the Creator, fixes the problem. And because God is love He sent His Son to fix the problem, to do for us that which we could not do for ourselves.] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. [God is not in the condemning business, but the saving business. And Jesus came to save by positively removing the cause of death from humanity.] Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. [From where does condemnation come? Those who hold to the human law view teach condemnation comes from the heavenly magistrate, from the heavenly courts upon those who haven't accepted the legal payment of Jesus' blood to pay for their sin crimes. But this is all false. Think laws of health, condemnation comes from the sin condition itself. Those who don't believe or trust Jesus don't open the heart to accept His healing presence, they don't receive the rebirth experience, they don't experience a new heart and right/righteous, spirit/life. Thus, they remain condemned, or terminal, because the condition we all inherited from Adam is that of sin and death, we are born dead in trespass and sin. We

are not born guilty, we are born terminal.] This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:16-21 NIV84). [We are not held accountable for the condition with which we are born, we are held accountable for rejecting the free remedy of Jesus Christ—the light that has come into the world. Consider and HIV infected man and woman have an HIV infected baby. What did the baby do wrong? Nothing! The baby is not guilty, but it has a condition it did not choose, but without remedy will result in symptoms and death. If a free remedy is offered and the child at the age of comprehension persistently refuses the remedy—are they accountable for that? And what causes their condemnation the symptoms they have, or the condition which causes the symptoms because they refuse the remedy?]

What do you think of the idea that we deserve eternal death? Why? Does the law lens make a difference? Would you say to parents who had a child born with a terminal illness "Your child deserves death"? Why or why not? Why do Christians teach that we deserve death? Was it our fault we were born with this sin condition? It would be better to say—those who refuse life, refuse healing, refuse restoration deserve to reap what they have chosen which is death. But that is different than saying we deserve death because of our own sinfulness or sins.

SUNDAY

The lesson title is God's Word Alone, and focuses on the importance that Scripture had to the Reformers.

Have you ever heard the Latin, *sola scriptura*? Which means Scripture alone for our doctrines and teachings?

Is it actually biblical to teach *sola scriptura* or in teaching only the Bible do we actually deny the Bible?

Does the Bible teach that God communicates to us only in Scripture, or that God communicates to us in a variety of ways, all of which rightly understood always harmonize, so that Scripture can be used as one of our sources of truth—but not the only source of truth?

Let's use the Scripture to examine this question of whether the Bible teaches only Scripture, or does it teach using Scripture along with other threads of evidence that are to be harmonized?

- Who wrote the very first books of the Bible? Moses—who lived somewhere around 1200-1300 BC. Did Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others have the Bible to read? Did God communicate with these people in some way? Was it through Scripture?

- After Moses, and later the prophets, wrote the Scriptures, how many copies were available? Did God restrict His saving work to only humans who could access the Scriptures? How much of the Scriptures do we think Naaman studied? Do we have indications He became a worshiper of the true God?
- And throughout human history, even since the Reformation and printing presses, have there been people who have never had a Bible to read? Are they lost without any hope or does the Holy Spirit still strive with them to bring them to salvation and communicate through other avenues? What other avenues?
- How did God reach Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Melchizedek and others? Through direct conversation, dreams, visions, nature, impressions of the Holy Spirit?
- What was the avenue God used to reach Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius? The direct witness of other people who themselves knew and trusted in God. Does God work to reach people through the testimony of His friends?
- Paul wrote, in Romans 1:20
    - For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:20 NIV84).

  What do we learn about God from nature? What kinds of laws does nature operate upon? And shortly after writing that God reveals Himself in nature so that men are without excuse Paul writes in 2:12-15:
    - For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

  What is the new covenant? Having the law written upon the heart and mind. Paul is saying that these people who have never had the Bible brought to them, but who have responded to influence of the Holy Spirit enlighten their minds to the truth about God revealed in nature that they are reborn to be children of God.

  In the book the *Desire of Ages* we read the following, in perfect harmony with what Paul wrote in Romans:

    - Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the **heathen** are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. Among the **heathen** are those **who worship God ignorantly**, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, **yet they will not perish**. Though ignorant of the written law of God, **they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature**, and have done the **things that the law required**. Their

works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God. (Desire of Ages 638).

- And the Bible teaches God speaks to us through reality, through life experiences. It tells us to
    - Taste and see that the LORD is good (Psalm 34:8 NIV84).
    - Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." (John 20:28 NIV84).

So, what role does Scripture play in our relationship with God and finding truth?

Is there a danger in using any of these threads of truth alone?

What is the danger?

- Science alone leads to godlessness
- Experience alone leads to mysticism or nihilism
- Scripture alone leads to confusion, 41,000 different Christian groups arguing that the Bible supports their view

When we return to design law, we harmonize all three threads and find reality, the truths that reality itself is built to operate upon.

And this results in our ability to read the Bible and be blessed by it. But sadly, there are many in the "Bible only" camp who are like those that Jesus said these words to:

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84).

How sad, these faithful Bible students ended up rejecting and crucifying Jesus—all the while thinking they were worshiping God. Could Christians experience the same problem? How? By separating the threads and reading the Bible through human imposed law systems, which teaches a false god who is the source of pain, suffering, and death as so called just punishment.

MONDAY

The lesson points our attention to the Reformers translating the Bible into the language of the people.

What do you understand about inspiration and the legitimacy of translations?

Are the words of the Bible inspired? No—the people who wrote the Bible were inspired by God with truths but those prophetic penmen chose the words familiar to them, from their experiences and

knowledge base, to express those truths. Thus, the words are not inspired, the men were, and the inspired truths are in ideas or meaning being communicated by the words.

Thus, it is legitimate to replace Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words with new language words as long as the original ideas, meaning, and truths are brought through.

Here is a historical view of how inspiration works, do you agree?

- The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language. (Great Controversy v.3)

What about translations—what makes a translation legitimate? Is it that the translators have a theological degree? Is a translation done by committee better than one done by an individual? What if one knowingly paraphrases? What about the KJV, is it literal or a paraphrase? KJV paraphrases 60% of the time and adds many words not in the original. Why? Because it is necessary to bring over the meaning in the most accurate way.

The purpose of Scripture is to reveal truth—to the degree it is written in a format or style that prevents the truth from being understood it serves no divine purpose. For instance, a Bible written in Korean would serve no purpose for me, for I cannot read one word of Korean and could not benefit in any way as no truth could be communicated to me from that language as long as I cannot read it.

So, to the degree a Bible translation or paraphrase makes the true meaning more clear to the reader the more effective it is in God's cause. To the degree the translation obscures the true meaning the less effective it is in serving God's purpose.

This of course in no way suggests the very best Bible translation ever done, with the most accurate language possible, could be rightly understood without the enlightening presence of the Holy Spirit. We always need the Holy Spirit to rightly understand Scripture, regardless of the version we are using.

What versions have you found to be most helpful? Have you found it beneficial to read in more than one version to get a better sense of the underlying meaning?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- One day while studying in the university library, Martin Luther came to a turning point in his own life. He discovered a Latin copy of the Bible. He never knew before that a book like this even existed. With sheer delight, he read chapter after chapter, verse after verse. He was amazed at the clarity and power of God's Word. As he pored over its pages, the Holy Spirit illuminated His mind. He sensed the guidance of the Holy Spirit as truths obscured by tradition seemed to leap off the pages of Holy Writ. Describing his first experience with the Bible, he wrote, "O that God would give me such a book for myself!" (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 41).

Aren't we all thankful and appreciative of Martin Luther? What an incredible witness. I can't imagine the struggles, difficulties, problems he had to deal with. His ability to recognize truths and challenge falsehood and ultimately translate the Bible into German for the people was a turning point in the Reformation.

Yet, as much as we admire Luther, we must remember Luther did not know all truth, and in fact, Luther had serious limitations in his understanding.

Luther's famous position of *sola scriptura* isn't the same as yours and mine, why? When Luther said it, he only meant 62 books of the Bible, while we mean 66. Luther did not accept as inspired Jude, James, Hebrews, and Revelation.

Think that through. If you don't accept those four books as inspired, will certain truths not be included in your understanding as you put the pieces together?

Consider having a jigsaw puzzle and trying to put the pieces together to see the picture, but a number of pieces are not included, would that alter the conclusion?

Luther never had a Great Controversy in heaven over God's character and trustworthiness, because he rejected Hebrews and Revelation. Thus, for Luther, the sin problem is all about us. Luther never realized God's law is design law, but continued to see things through imposed Roman law and thus Luther invented penal substitution theology. He did this because he wanted to undermine the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, which taught certain sins not having been purged during this life needed to be purged after death before the soul could enter heaven. Luther defeated that teaching with penal substation theology which taught that all sins of all people from all time, past, present, and future were placed on Jesus our righteous substitute and punished in Him at the cross so that no sins are left unpunished for those who accept by faith His substitutionary sacrificial payment to be purged in purgatory.

Yet, as much as this was beneficial to remove the fear and manipulative control of purgatory it kept the veil of imposed laws lies obstructing the truth of God's character and government. And thus the Reformation continued on after Luther as other Reformers came along and discovered more truths not advocated by Luther.

THURSDAY

The title is Obedience: The Fruit of Faith

What does this mean to you?

What types of obedience are there? Paul deals with this in Romans, there are two types of law—imposed law and design law. The imposed law view leads to the old covenant, which is the obedience that springs from law, from rules, from threats, from punishments and/or rewards. And that obedience is always false, for it springs from selfishness and fear.

Paul contrast the obedience of law with the obedience of faith, or love and trust, from a heart that loves God, loves others, and loves truth, loves reality, a heart that wants to live healthy, wants to be in harmony with what is right—because it is right, because life actually works best that way. This is the obedience of an understanding friend of God, not the obedience of a servant.

The imposed law view, with its legal requirements, results in the obedience of servants, do it because the master said it. But what God wants is our understanding friendships, our agreement, that we do what we do because it is in our heart to do it because we have been fully persuaded in our own mind that it is best.

Now, being fully persuaded in our own mind, having our hearts converted so that we truly want the ways of God, does not mean we in our own strength life the godly life—no, we make the choice, but God provides the power.

The victorious life is a life of daily cooperation with God where we are in living engagement with God through His Holy Spirit. The Spirit enlightens, woos, convicts, instructs, leads, and brings us to decision points, and we are left completely free to say yes or no, and when we say yes to the truth, then we receive divine power to succeed. But we don't get the power until we say yes.

One of the founders of the SDA church described it this way, and notice that this is actual, it is real, it is something happening within the believer. It is not declarative, it is not fantasy, it is not legal.

- We are laborers together with God. This is the Lord's own wise arrangement. **The cooperation of the human will and endeavor with divine energy is the link that binds men up with one another and with God**. The apostle says, "We are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9). **Man is to work with the facilities God has given him**. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," He says. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13).—(2 Mind Character Personality p.694)

- **There are two grand forces at work in the salvation of the human soul. It requires the cooperation of man with the divine agencies--** divine influences, and a strong, living, working faith. **It is in this way only** that the human agent can become a laborer together with

God. **The Lord does not sanction in any one of us a blind, stupid credulity. He does not dishonor the human understanding**, but, far from this, He calls for the human will to be brought into connection with the divine will. **He calls for the ingenuity of the human mind, the tact, the skill, to be strenuously exercised in searching out the truth as it is in Jesus**. . . . Ye are labourers together with God. (Our High Calling 310).

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW IN SOUTH AFRICA: The Job Pamphlet is now available in Afrikaans available on the Come and Reason website under the languages tab. Should anybody in South Africa want to order a physical copy they can contact Jacques van den Heever at **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

Come And Reason South Africa ONLY: Telegram support/discussion/prayer group and should anybody would like to join they are welcome. **https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0**

New FREE Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available in our Store: https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/bookmark-friends-with-jesus.html

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 6
The Two Witnesses

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Revelation 11:3-6:

- And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. (Revelation 11:3-6 NIV84).

Who are the two witnesses?

The lesson cites several lines of evidence that leads to their conclusion in the last paragraph. These include the prophecy of Zechariah chapter four of two olive trees giving oil into the golden lampstands, how oil represents the Holy Spirit, and how the Psalms tells us that God's word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path. And that these two witnesses prophecy or bear witness to God and advance God's truth and kingdom.

We read their conclusion in the last paragraph,

- Who are these two witnesses? In view of these biblical points and the characteristics given in Revelation 11, we can conclude (not dogmatically, however) that the two witnesses are the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, communicating God's light and truth to the world. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 47).

I really like how the lesson said that their conclusion that the Old and New Testaments are the two witnesses is not a dogmatic one, meaning they are open to change that view with new evidence or better explanation—that is a very healthy attitude.

What do you think? Is there a better explanation for the two witnesses than the Old and New Testaments? I think there is. I think the Bible, both old and new testaments together, is **one** of the two witnesses.

If I am right, what is the other witness?

- "**You** must be on your guard. **You** will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me **you** will stand before governors and kings **as witnesses to them**. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever **you** are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for **it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit**. (Mark 13:9-11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. **But before all this**, they will lay hands on **you** and persecute you. They will deliver **you** to synagogues and prisons, and **you** will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. **This will result in your being witnesses to them**. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. **For I will give you words and wisdom** that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. (Luke 21:10-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- [Jesus] said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But **you** will receive power when the **Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

So, could the two witnesses be, the Bible and the people of God who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to give witness to the truth contained in the Bible?

Do the other elements of the prophecy fit for the people of God who are empowered by the Holy Spirit and enlightened by the Scriptures?

- And **I will give power** to my two witnesses, and they will **prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.**" These are the **two olive trees** and the **two lampstands** that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, **fire comes from their mouths** and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. **These men** have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and **they have power to turn the waters into blood** and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. (Revelation 11:3-6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Do the following elements fit the people of God witnessing His truth?

- They receive power from God to be His witnesses.
- They give His true message, i.e. prophecy, for 1260 clothed in sackcloth, meaning in mourning cloth because they are not free, they are persecuted, hunted, and have to do so secretly.
- What about the two olive trees, representing the Holy Spirit, are the people of God empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for God?

- What about the two lampstands—do they represent the people of God?
    - Jesus said "**You** are the **light** of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a **lamp** and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before me**n, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16 NIV84, emphasis mine).
    - In the sanctuary service, from where the lampstand imagery is taken, the lampstand had a central stand of gold, which represents Jesus our perfect sinless human substitutionary Savior, who is the Word made flesh and the source of truth and light—the light that lightens all men. But attached to the central stand were six lamps. The number six represents humanity who was created on day six. Thus the lampstand, represents our perfection when united with Christ—as six plus one equals 7. And we become lights that give light of God's kingdom of truth, love, and freedom as we are infilled by the Holy Spirit that flows into us through Jesus, the central stand, the connecting link between heaven and Earth. And, in the sanctuary rituals each morning and evening the high priest, and only the high priest (who symbolically represents Jesus our heavenly High Priest), trimmed the wicks on the lamps, symbolically acting out how Jesus works in our hearts to trim away the old sinful habits, lies, lusts, biases, prejudices, wounds, and crud of this world so that we burn more brightly for Him.
- What about fire coming out of their mouths to devour the enemies? What comes out of the mouth? Truth, this is the fire of truth that devour lies and represents the fire of God's infinite glory that we give testimony and witness to, the truth of His character of love and truth, which consumes all out of harmony with it.
- What about shutting up the sky so it won't rain?
    - Revelation is a symbolic book, most of this is symbolic not literal and the book is pulling from the Old Testament to help inform us of the truth for the prophetic future of when John was writing.
    - We have an object lesson from historic Elijah when he did this, but what is the application to our day?
    - Malachi also prophesied about this:
        - "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:5-6 NIV84)
    - These witnesses will give the testimony or witness of Elijah—and what was Elijah's message? Why did he call for there to be no rain? Because they were worshiping a false god that they believed brought the rain and thus no rain showed he was powerless. And at Mt. Carmel Elijah called for them to choose which God they would worship, Yahweh or Baal. The final issues are the same, a call to leave Baal worship behind and return to Creator worship. Remember who Baal was—the god of rain, thunder, lightning, weather and harvest, the son of El, the god who fought the great serpent, the leviathan, who fought against Mot the god of death, who in his battle with Mot dies and rises again to bring life to the land. What was wrong with worshiping this god? Baal required payment, appeasement or else he would punish. Baal was a god of imposed rule, of inflicted punishments, it is the god of imposed law. We find

ourselves in the same situation today. And God's two witnesses at this time in history call people back to worshiping the Creator.

- What about turning water to blood and call plagues—this is referring to Moses when he stood before Pharaoh and, and like Elijah, confronted pagan, false god worship and called people back to worship the true God. Which is what we are to do by presenting the message of the 3 angels, to call people to, like Elijah did, judge God correctly, to stop worshiping a pagan god who makes up rules and uses power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking and needs sacrifice offered to him in order not to punish or hurt, and return to worshiping the Creator whose laws are design laws and who is the source of life.

Thus, this is how I rendered Revelation 11:3-6 in the Remedy:

- But I will empower my two witnesses–the true Church and the written Word–to proclaim the truth about me, though covered with a shroud of human traditions, for 1260 days." These two are like lamps—standing firm for the Lord, proclaiming my word on earth; like two olive trees—filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit. If anyone tries to obstruct their work with lies and distortions, the fire of truth will be spoken and consume all such enemies–this is how all who want to destroy truth will die. These witnesses have the power that exposes false ideas about God—the same power that Elijah had when it would not rain, thus exposing Baal as false; the same power that Moses had when water turned to blood and plagues covered the land, exposing the Egyptian gods as false. (Revelation 11:3-6 REM).

What do you think of the idea that the two witnesses are 1) the people of God enlightened by 2) the Word of God?

Consider this quote in **FRIDAY's** lesson from the Great Controversy:

- "When the **Bible** was proscribed by religious and secular authority; when **its testimony** was perverted, and every effort made that men and demons could invent to turn the minds of the people from it; when **those who dared proclaim its sacred truths** were hunted, betrayed, tortured, buried in dungeon cells, martyred for their faith, or compelled to flee to mountain fastnesses, and to dens and caves of the earth—then the **faithful witnesses prophesied in sackcloth**. Yet **they** continued their testimony throughout the entire period of 1260 years. In the darkest times there were **faithful men** who loved **God's word** and were jealous for His honor. To **these loyal servants** were given wisdom, power, and authority to declare His truth during the whole of this time."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 267, 268. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 52, emphasis mine).

Does this quotation support the idea that the two witnesses are the Bible AND the faithful men of God who loved God's word and faithfully witnessed the truth?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the portion of the prophecy of Revelation 11 where the two witnesses are killed, with this interpretation starting with the third paragraph,

- In the French Revolution, the government officially established the Cult of Reason as a state-sponsored atheistic religion, intended to replace Christianity. A Festival of Reason was held nationwide on November 10, 1793. Churches across France were turned into Temples of Reason, and a living woman was enthroned as the Goddess of Reason. Bibles were burned in the streets. God was declared nonexistent, and death was pronounced to be an endless sleep. Satan worked through godless men to kill God's two witnesses. Their dead bodies would "lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev. 11:8, NKJV).

  Egypt was a culture of many gods that denied the true God (see Exod. 5:2). Sodom represents gross immorality. In the French Revolution, God's two witnesses—the Old and New Testaments—lay dead as a result of the atheism and immorality that ran rampant as normal restraints were loosed in revolution and bloodshed.

  Revelation 11:9 says that the bodies of God's two witnesses would lie unburied for "three-and-a-half days" (NKJV), i.e., prophetic "days" representing three and a half literal years. Atheism was at its height in the French Revolution, at least for about three and a half years. This period extended from November 26, 1793, when a decree issued in Paris abolished religion, to June 17, 1797, when the French government removed its restrictive religious laws. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 49).

I believe this is another dual fulfillment prophecy, like Jesus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem was not the end of the world, but the events there hold lessons for us as we approach the end of the world. Likewise, Revelation is not about the French Revolution, it is a warning for the events leading to the second coming of Christ and thus the events of the French Revolution are a local regional fulfillment of a larger global event yet to come.

Multiple prophecies exist like this in Scripture:

- Jesus' prophecy of destruction of Jerusalem/end of the world
- Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—local regional fulfillment at Pentecost, global fulfillment before the second coming
- Isaiah's and Ezekiel's prophecy about human kings (local regional fulfillment) pointing to the fall of Lucifer, (greater global fulfillment)
- Malachi's prophecy concerning Elijah—local regional with John the Baptist who proceeded Christ, greater global fulfillment with the Elijah message before the second coming

- Second beast of Revelation 13 with lamblike horns representing the USA (local regional fulfillment), pointing to Satan impersonating Christ (greater global fulfillment)

These events in France impacted a very small part of human civilization. While in France these prophetic elements were fulfilled, it is not true that they were fulfilled in the other parts of Europe and the world where the Bible was still held in high esteem at that time. It is my belief, that the full fulfillment of this prophecy will be the global rejection of the truth of God as revealed in the Bible and by His true church and the world wondering after the beast and the entire world becoming as Jesus said, like it was in the days of Sodom, which I believe we are seeing transpiring right now in this very generation.

Peter wrote this about Lot:

- Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) (2 Peter 2:7-8 NIV84).

I am currently experiencing this same thing, so much of the news, TV, movies, what is happening in our schools, in our communities is so vile, perverted, exploitive, abusive, and corrupt it makes me sick and I can't watch it. I can't even stand to read most of the news articles anymore.

What we see happening is that God's Holy Spirit is being withdrawn and demonic spirits are influencing the people and society is decaying.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- At the end of the French Revolution, God's Word would, figuratively, come to life again. There would be a mighty revival. Great fear would fall on those who saw God's Word once more become the living power of God unto salvation. At the end of the eighteenth century, God raised up men and women who were committed to taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. People spread the message of the Bible rapidly. One such person was William Carey, who traveled to India and translated the Bible into dozens of local dialects. Propelled by the power of the Bible, missionaries were sent around the world. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 50).

Did you notice something the lesson did here? And I agree with it, but what they did supports my view and undercuts their own previously stated conclusion that the two witnesses are the Old and New Testament and that the complete fulfillment of the prophecy is the French Revolution.

They moved away from France to the entire world, and the brought in the people who took the gospel to the world. I agree with this move because I believe the two witnesses are the true church and the Bible, and the French Revolution is only a regional fulfillment not the complete fulfillment.

Are we seeing the complete fulfillment now? When the godless forces of this world who deny the Bible, who have worked to eliminate it from our discourse and society, who lead the green climate change movement—which is a lie and a specific denial of God's promises to us—who were behind the COVID gain of function research, release, and then the greatest abuse of human rights in history, who are advancing the lie that male and female is a mental construct not a biological God-designed reality, who are behind the DEI falsehoods, who promote lawlessness such as open borders, who promote no standards in education, who claim Christianity is racist and abusive, that a two parent home with a mother and father is a form of white supremacy, who want to evolve humans to human 2.0 through genetic and cybernetic manipulation. Are we seeing the ever-increasing decadence, crime, abuse, and exploitation and activities designed and intended to destroy the image of God in people, to increase fear, advance selfishness, and destroy the unity of people to have healthy community? Do we see demons working to destroy the image of God in people?

Isn't the greater global fulfillment of these events occurring right before our eyes?

And we must be careful to guard our hearts for Satan is using all of this evil to infect our hearts with anger, rage, hate—and it is now we must keep watch, watch over our hearts, we must purposely choose to love our enemies, to pray for those who are doing all this evil, to see them as our sin-sick brothers and sisters, family members who are destroying themselves, that we might be sons of our Father who is in heaven. As Jesus said,

- "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36 NIV84).

We must be careful to watch our own hearts and not become angry, bitter, selfish, and hateful. We must love the enemies of God like Jesus, like Paul, like Stephen even though they will seek to destroy us and all that we hold dear, we cannot win by devolving into hatred, politics, use of earthly powers to try and advance what we think is right. We win like the early church advanced the gospel, by living out God's principles in governance of ourselves in how we treat others, not by taking over governments.

But do you see the need for the two witnesses to rise up? Do you see how the true people of God, who have the Word of God in their hearts and minds and are able to accurately present God's reality-based truths for this time, are needed to give their witness, to give the testimony of Jesus to the world? This can only be done if we return to worshiping God as Creator and understand His laws are design laws—our God is the God of reality! Satan is the father of lies, the make-believe, the pretend, the reimagined way of thinking—of fantasy.

The lesson asks us to read Psalms 119:89 and 111:7-8:

- Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89, NIV84)
- The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness. (Psalm 111:7-8, NIV84)

What do these texts mean?

Is the Psalm, when it says, "Your word is eternal" talking about the Bible?

Read the last two paragraphs,

- God's Word may be attacked, or suppressed, but it will never be eradicated. Even many professed Christians undermine its authority in various ways, questioning parts of the Bible or so emphasizing the human elements that it all but loses its divine stamp, and God's truth is undermined.

  We must never, in any way, allow ourselves to be seduced by these attacks on the Word of God. It is still alive today, speaking to human hearts, breathing new life into those who are willing to listen to the Word and follow its teachings. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 50).

It appears the lesson is applying these Psalms to the Bible, and we certainly do refer to the Bible as the Word of God.

So, I think it is quite legitimate to believe these Psalms are including in its reference the written Word of God, but my question is whether these Psalms are restricted to the Bible or even primarily intended to point our minds exclusively to the Bible? are these psalms pointing our minds to God the Creator of reality and His word which is truth itself, reality, how things are, and is most perfectly revealed in Jesus the Word made flesh?

Let me be clear—I am not in any way diminishing the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God and it is in the Bible that we learn about Jesus the living Word of God. But I believe God's Word means the totality of His Word, the truth that ever flows from God in all avenues of His divine disclosure and revelation. And God has given us the written word as a touchstone, for us to use as a reference and compare any future claims of inspiration—because God would make future revelations of truth because truth is unfolding and the Bible is a reference guide to differentiate the true word of God from falsehood. Therefore, in my view, God's Word includes:

- His direct revelations in speaking to people like Adam and Eve in Eden, the spoken revelations of the coming destruction of Sodom He made to Abraham, the directions He gave to Moses when He spoke face to face as a man to a friend.
- His revelations in dreams and visions like He did to Joseph, Pharaoh, Daniel, and John

- His truths spoken by His prophets like the words spoken to Nineveh by Jonah
- His truths written by His prophets—the Bible
- The testimony given in nature—The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), and God's divine nature is seen in what He has made (Romans 1:20).
- The testimony given by the transformation of lives when the Holy Spirit recreates a person to leave selfishness and sin behind and live lives of love and trust in harmony with God and His design laws for life
- The truth spoken by God's teachers, pastors, evangelists, and gospel workers

The Word of God is the truth, for God is the truth and the source of all truth. And while the Bible is the inspired divine revelation of God to us, the written Word, it can be misused, misunderstood, misapplied, and used to harm—especially when it is used alone without connection to the other evidentiary threads God has given us. Jesus Himself said to religious people who were studying the God-inspired Holy Scriptures:

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84).

Jesus is not undermining the inspiration of the Bible—He is stating that one can study the Bible in such a way that it doesn't do any good.

The lesson admonishes us not to allow ourselves to be seduced by attacks on God's Word—my point is that the attacks on God's truth are multipronged. There are the attacks of godlessness, of the idea that there is no God and that the Bible is just a book of fables. But there is another attack, and that is that the Bible is a codebook of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned. In other words, that the Bible is a legal book, a book of laws that must be obeyed with the idea that the God's kingdom is like the kingdoms of the world. This causes a form of godliness without power and people can be religious, claiming belief in a long list of right doctrines, including reverence for the sacred text, but still be enemies of God, why? Because they have accepted a different attack on the Bible, an attack that changes and obscures the truths contained in the Bible.

We protect ourselves from this attack on the Word of God, by including all the threads of evidence that God has provided and harmonizing them. The integrative evidenced based approach that seeks the harmonized truth from Scripture, Science/Nature, and Life Experiences.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Despite the attacks of the enemy, God's work on earth will come to a glorious climax. The gospel will be preached to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, NKJV). The

great controversy between Christ and Satan will end with Christ completely defeating the powers of hell. God's kingdom will triumph over evil, and sin will be eradicated forever from the universe. Revelation 11 begins with Satan's attempt through the French Revolution to destroy the Christian faith and eradicate belief in God, but the chapter ends with the triumph of God's kingdom over the principalities and powers of evil. It provides encouragement to all who go through fiery trials for the cause of Christ and His truth. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 51).

Why hasn't Jesus come? What is the cause of the delay? Do we have a role to play in hastening the day? What is our role?

Consider this historical quote, by one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The quote refers to Adventists after the 1844 disappointment. Recognize that this reference is not referring to the Seventh-day Adventist organized church, for it wasn't organized until 1863. This reference is to the wide body of Christians from all denominations that were part of the Great Awakening and who were looking forward to the second coming of Christ, and in particular those who were followers of Baptist preacher William Miller who proclaimed that the 2300 prophecy of Daniel 8:14 would end with the coming of Jesus on October 22, 1844. It is this group of people, that are referred to in this quote. And then the author makes a suggestion as to why Jesus has not yet come. What do you think of this suggestion for the delay:

- Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, **receiving the message of the third angel** and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, **the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this** to receive His people to their reward. (Evangelism 695.3; 4LtMs, Ms 4, 1883, par. 52)

So this author, in 1883, has taken the position that the work could have been finished if that initial group of Adventists—from a wide variety of denominations—would have received the message of the third angel—thoughts?

What is this message of the third angel that would have made such a difference?

- A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. (Revelation 14:9-12 NIV84).

What do you think? If we could broadcast this message, word for word, on every TV and radio station, every internet site, every podcast, so that every single person in the entire world hears this read to them, would that finish the work? Why or why not?

Well first, this is the concluding message that cannot be understood without the two preceding messages.

Let's do a quick review of all three messages and then see what has been rejected in the third, including by the majority of those who have formed and become the Seventh-day Adventist church. If you would like more detail on this and to have something to share with others, our magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels is available on our website. You can read it online, send the link to friends, download a pdf, or order print copies to share. But let's read the first two messages:

- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

  A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." (Revelation 14:6-9 NIV84)

The eternal gospel is the eternal good news, which is the good news that has always been true in eternity past as well as eternally true through all the future. And that good news is the truth about God, that God is not like Satan has alleged. And Satan has alleged that God is untrustworthy, that God functions like a creature, that God is selfish, makes up rules, and uses power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. The good news is that all of this is a lie. We are called by the first angel to stop judging God to be like a human dictator, to give Him glory by revealing the truth about Him as Creator, He who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water which means we realize that God's laws are design laws, the laws reality is constructed to exist and operate upon and they are not the kinds of laws sinful creatures make, imposed rules that require imposed punishments.

When we do this we are called to leave Babylon, that system of imposed law with its imposed punishments is fallen and corrupt. Babylon, of all the nations that interacted with Israel in the Bible story arc, is the first nation to have a codified system of law and order, the code of Hammurabi, and thus rightly represents the fallen kingdoms of this world. Just look around and see how unjust imposed laws are. One can never get love, trust, loyalty, friendship or true justice by inflicting punishments upon people. Thus we are to judge God rightly and leave behind all the systems and theologies that teach a penal legal, imposed law, punishing god behind.

Then, when we do that we realize the true message of the three angels and can comprehend the beauty of the third angel. The message is about worship—are we worshiping God as Jesus revealed Him to be, the Creator and Sustainer of reality whose laws are design laws? Or are we worshiping the imposter, the god of this age, whose laws are like our laws, made up rules that require that false

god to use power to punish? The law of worship is a design law, by beholding we are changed. We become like the God we admire, worship, and follow and thus those who reject the first and second angels' messages and continue to worship a god who is like Satan, the god of imposed rules and inflicted punishments will either mark themselves in character to be like him, or mark themselves in practice to be like him. And then they experience the law of liberty when God sets them free to reap what they have chosen for themselves, when God stops using power to hold at bay what sin does to the sinner. And they experience the full consequences of truth and love when God's life-giving glory is unveiled and they have full knowledge of what they have done to themselves and others and they are tormented by their unremedied sin in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb.

The message of the third angel is the message of design law, of reality, of how things actually work. And EGW was telling us we cannot finish the work and hasten the day until we leave the Roman imposed law lies behind and finally teach the truth about God's character and government which is built upon designs laws of truth, love, and liberty.

The lesson asks us to read Revelation 11:19:

- Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. (Revelation 11:19 NIV84).

What do you think John saw? Was John seeing reality or a symbolic representation of reality?

Well consider other things John saw in this very same vision recorded in the book of Revelation:

- I turned around to **see** the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I **saw** seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. (Revelation 1:12-16 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is John seeing reality, or a symbolic representation of reality?

- After this **I looked**, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven… and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads… In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. (Revelation 4:1-8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is John seeing reality, or a symbolic representation of reality?

- Then I **saw** a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes… (Revelation 5:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is John seeing reality or a symbolic representation of reality?

- Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. (Revelation 11:19 NIV84).

Is John seeing reality or a symbolic representation of reality?

What is the reality that we are to understand from these symbols?

Can you think of other words to describe the reality of what is represented?

The OT sanctuary was given to help us understand these things, what was it that occurred symbolically in that old system? The cleansing of people from sin and the restoration of the people to unity, at-one-ment with God.

So the temple is a symbolic representation of God's plan of salvation. His actions to resolve and remove sin from His universe.

But how does God do this?

What is the problem sin caused that God needs to fix?

Where does sin exist, operate, occur, happen? Does sin happen in non-living matter, do we find sin in rocks, stars, moons, asteroids, photons, neutrinos, atoms?

Does sin exist in books or records? When we read in our Bibles the record of David's sin with Bathsheba, is that record we are reading sin? If we could erase all the records of David's sin from all recording devices, whether printed Bibles, or memory sticks, or internet websites, or heavenly records, if we could erase from the entire universe the record of David's sin, have we gotten rid of sin?

No! understand reality, erasing record books does not eliminate, remove, or cleanse God's universe from sin, because non-living matter cannot sin, but we can keep a record of sin carved in stone, or recorded in ink—but that record is not sin and erasing that record doesn't remove or eliminate sin.

So, whatever Christ is doing in the Temple in heaven it is not erasing facts of history from recording devises.

So, what is the symbolism teaching us?

Where does sin occur? It occurs in living beings and if God wants to remove sin from His universe where does He have to act, what needs to be cleansed?

Notice what David prayed for after his great sin—he did not pray to have records erased, notice what he prayed:

- Wash away all my iniquity and **cleanse me** from my sin… **Cleanse me** with hyssop, and **I will be clean**; **wash me, and I will be whiter than snow**. (Psalm 51:2 & 7 NIV 84, emphasis mine)

David understood that salvation is cleansing us, our hearts and minds, our characters, our spirits and souls must be cleansed.

That is why in the new covenant God writes His law in our hearts and minds, and that is symbolically taught by the ark of the covenant, which is at the center of the temple.

The ark is the place of at-one-ment, where all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ by the application of His victory at the cross.

The lid to the ark was made of solid gold and represents Jesus—connected to the lid were the angels representing the unfallen heavenly host, the Shekinah glory represents the Godhead, resting on the lid, and below the lid was the box made of porous wood covered in gold. This represents defective sinners, who are perfected by the righteousness (gold) of Jesus. In the box were three elements that symbolically represent how we are transformed and cleansed from sin:

- Manna—represents the living Word, Jesus that we partake and are won to trust, then in trust we open the heart and element 2
- The law is written upon our hearts, the living law of God, the design law methods and motives of truth, love, and liberty that we with our reborn hearts and minds begin to practice and that results in element 3
- Aaron's rod that budded and brought forth almonds, we who were dead in trespass and sin come to live and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness

So what is Jesus doing in heaven as our High Priest? He is cleansing the temple, which means what? He is cleansing His people from sin and preparing His people, to be with Him. He is bringing us into at-one-ment, and this is the wedding of Christ, what happens at a wedding? The two become one, at-one-ment. And where to weddings happen? They are sacred joinings happening in sacred spaces, rightly depicted in the temple. The day of atonement depicts the time in history when Jesus finishes the work of cleansing His bride to meet Him face to face.

What about the records? The Bible says that the names of people are recorded in the Lamb's book of life, and in the Bible names represent character, and thus what is recorded is not historical accounts, but individualities. When a person dies, the body returns to dust, the life energy—spirit—returns to God who gave it, but the soul, the psyche, the individuality is safely stored on the heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life awaiting download into a new body at the resurrection. Paul describes this perfectly in Thessalonians.

- Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those **who fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have **fallen asleep**. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**. **After that,** we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NIV84).

Notice that the dead are in a state of sleep and are coming back with Jesus from heaven, but they are also rising out of the ground. How? Because their bodies returned to dust and God creates new bodies for them at the resurrection, but their software, their individuality, their souls have been sleeping in heaven secure in Jesus.

So, cleansing the records in heaven is only achieved by cleansing the hearts and minds of people, it is never achieved by legal mechanics or erasing facts of history.

FRIDAY

In the last paragraph, the lesson quotes this from the book *The Great Controversy*

- "Unless the church will follow on in His [God's] opening providence, **accepting every ray of light,** performing every duty which may be revealed, religion will inevitably **degenerate into the observance of forms**, and the spirit of vital godliness will disappear."—The Great Controversy, p. 316. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 52, emphasis mine).

Is this not describing a church that has rejected the design law light and embraced and clung to the imposed law view?

MONDAY

Read the question at the bottom of the lesson:

- What are some of the teachings today, held by many Christians, that are based on tradition and not on the Word of God? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 48).

Can you think of any?

- A denomination holds the keys to salvation rather than Jesus
- Ceremonies have saving power
- All people have eternal life whether saved or lost, only the place and conditions of their life change—some live in heaven others live eternally in hell
- God's law functions like human law
- God is the source of pain, suffering and death inflicted as punishment for sin
- Salvation is a legal process
- Jesus must plead to the Father to save us from the Father's wrath
- Jesus must present His sacrifice to the Father to pay our sin debt
- Jesus must present His merits to the Father to remind the father of the sin debt He has already paid
- Salvation is being saved from God's punishment for sin
- Sunday is a sacred day of the week
- Others?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW IN SOUTH AFRICA: The Job Pamphlet is now available in Afrikaans available on the Come and Reason website under the languages tab. Should anybody in South Africa want to order a physical copy they can contact Jacques van den Heever at **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

Also we are excited to announce that we created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group and should anybody would like to join they are welcome. The link is**: https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0**

New Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available. If you have a US Postal address and would like some to share, order them for free in our USA store: https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/bookmark-friends-with-jesus.html

The Remedy NT for Andriod (which includes Genesis and Psalms) has been **rebuilt** so it now runs on the newest flavors of Android OS! Get it in the Google Play Store.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 7
Motivated by Hope

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Last week the first question in our Q&A time was "When does hope become fantasy?" And the answer I gave was, "Whenever and wherever it is detached from reality."

For hope to be more than wishful thinking, imaginary dreams, fantasies—our hope must be connected to objective reality—so, upon what do you base your hope and what is the basis for that choice?

I believe the God of love exists and it is the most rationale decision to place one's hope in Him, because the various threads of evidence are overwhelmingly conclusive, consistent, rational, reasonable, and provide the best framework for life, health, and decision-making. And those threads of evidence are:

Science: Non-living matter exists on physical laws, such as the laws of physics and gravity—and those laws are constants, they are reliable, predictable, testable, and do not discriminate. They provide evidence to the God of Creation, the laws He built reality to operate upon. The heavens declare the glory of God.

Non-living matter and the physical laws provide the building blocks for living organisms. But life itself is built upon the law of love—and this law is also a constant, testable, reliable, predictable. Love is the principle of giving, and all living organisms operate upon it. With every breath, we give away carbon dioxide (CO2) to the plants and the plants give oxygen back to us. If you put a plastic bag over your head and "hoard" your CO2 for yourself, then you will die. Everything that lives gives. Cease to give and one dies. I believe in the Creator God of love who spoke reality into existence and built this planet with its life in six literal day and rested on the seventh day because **life requires** the simultaneous existence of diverse forms of interdependent life that give to each other. Only our God of love could have spoken these complex, mutually sustaining, symbiotic forms of life into existence at the same time. It is scientifically impossible for this to happen without an intelligent Creator.

What we can prove scientifically, measure, and test all confirm the God of love.

- Science proves that order never comes on its own but requires the input of an intelligence.
- Science proves that life, as we know it, never comes from non-living matter, only from another living organism.

- Science proves that all life requires three elements: matter, energy, and coded information (DNA) and science proves that information never codes itself; coded information requires an intelligence.

But science and nature are not the only reasons I believe in and have hope the Creator God of love. The next reason is:

Scripture: The Bible reveals that the Creator God of love did not hold on to power but surrendered power, position, and prestige to become our Savior. He suffered and died in order to reach us with His love and provide the solution to our terminal sin-condition so that we might have eternal life (Philippians 2:5–8; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 2 Timothy 1:10). Love only exists in freedom. At the cross, Jesus not only provided the remedy to our terminal sin-condition, but He also proved that He is trustworthy. He showed that He would rather die than use His power to take away our freedom, even the freedom to kill Him.

The Scripture provides us meaning. We are created in the image of God, with abilities like God. We have identity; individuality; and the ability to think, act, build, and procreate. We have a purpose and a future. Our current life is not the sum totality of our existence. In Christ, we have a vision of a better life, an immortal life, in a world restored to sinless perfection, a world with no fear, no selfishness, no exploitation, sickness, pain, suffering, or death—a world where every single person loves others more than themselves.

But nature and the Bible are not the only reasons I believe in and have hope in the Creator God of love, but also because of:

Experience: I have felt pain in this world—the pain of loss, broken relationships, sickness, and injury. I have suffered from my own poor choices. I have felt the cruelty of selfishness, exploitation, and unkindness from others. And I have found that God's principles heal. I have experienced the comfort, healing, restoration, and peace that come only from Jesus, from trusting Him, embracing His truth, living in harmony with His principles, practicing His methods, trusting His promises, and living in His presence. I have experienced His healing hand and know that the God of love is real and the only source of life, health, and happiness.

I believe that the God of love exists and is the best place to place our hope because it is scientific; because it gives life meaning and purpose and a vision of a better future; and because it is the healthiest way to be. Happiness only exists in harmony with God and the laws He has built life to operate upon.

Consider what the Bible says about hope:

- To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. **No one whose hope is in you** will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse. **Show me your**

> **ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me**, for you are God my Savior, and **my hope is in you** all day long. (Psalm 25:1–5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Where is the psalmist's hope placed? And what is the psalmist asking for? To know reality, to know God's design laws, how things actually work, why things are the way they are. Notice, the hope is in God, in reality, in the truth—there is no hope in falsehood, no hope in fantasy, in wishful thinking, in a re-imagined future, in denying the truth, in proclaiming that your truth is your truth…there is only real hope in God, in eternal truth, in following the truth where it leads. But people place hope in all kinds of lies, fantasies, wishful thinking, dreams but in the end if they reject reality, reject our God of love, no matter how hopeful they are, their situation is hopeless.

And what evidence does the Bible give us that our hopes in God are not fantasies but are reality?

Evidence from nature:

- "But **ask the animals, and they will teach you**, or the **birds of the air, and they will tell you**; or speak to **the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you**. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? … **Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him**." (Job 12:7-9 & 13:15 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- You answer us with **awesome deeds of righteousness**, O God our Savior, the **hope of all the ends of the earth** and of the farthest seas, **who formed the mountains by your power** (Psalm 65:5–6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Evidence from life experiences:

- For **you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD**, my confidence since my youth. From birth **I have relied on you** (Psalm 71:5–6 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their **hope in his unfailing love**. (Ps 147:11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Evidence from Scripture:

- Do not snatch the **word of truth** from my mouth, for I have put **my hope in your laws**. (Psalm 119:43 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my **hope in your word.** (Psalm 119:74 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- You are my refuge and my shield; I have put **my hope in your word**. (Ps 119:114 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in **his word I put my hope**. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

> O Israel, **put your hope in the LORD**, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will **redeem** Israel **from all their sins.** (Ps 130:5–8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

But the question from last week was when does hope become fantasy? When it is detached from reality—and the Bible describes this as well:

- A **horse is a vain hope for deliverance**; despite all its great strength **it cannot save**. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose **hope is in his unfailing love**, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait **in hope for the LORD**; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. (Psalm 33:17–21 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- The prospect of the righteous is joy, but **the hopes of the wicked come to nothing**. (Proverb 10:28 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Why do the hopes of the wicked come to nothing?

Consider the following proverb, what is the reality it describes regarding hope?

- **Discipline your son, for in that there is hope**; do not be a willing party to his death. (Proverb 19:18 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is there some design law at work in this proverb? Is there some real life condition, problem, issue, that if parents don't work against, through loving discipline, will lead to death? And is this testable, is there evidence to confirm this is so? Is this a promise that good parenting guarantees a good outcome, or that loving discipline offers hope?

And why is there so much false hope in the world—so much fantasy-based hope?

- This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the **prophets** are prophesying to you; **they fill you with false hopes**. They speak visions **from their own minds**, not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The LORD says: You will have peace.' And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.' (Jeremiah 23:16–17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- For a time is coming **when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching**. **They will follow their own desires** and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will **reject the truth and chase after myths**. (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NLT).

Who are the prophets that are filling the people with false hope today? Those who are telling precious souls who are struggling with identity confusion that there is hope in mutilating their bodies; those telling honest souls to be afraid of global disaster and to place there is hope in carbon

control; that hope is found in more government, more laws, more taxes, more punishments, less freedoms, there is hope in removing objective truth, in declaring people to be competent when they have no competence and giving diplomas to those who have not merited them (very similar to the penal substitutionary theology that claims God declares people to be righteous while in reality they are unrighteous). And as we see people placing their hope in all kinds of myths and fantasies that their itching ears want to hear what is the outcome?

- The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but **the hope of the wicked only in wrath.** (Proverb 11:23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What is wrath? God letting go, when God stops using His power to hold at bay the destruction their rebellious choices bring, when God sets people free to reap what they have insisted upon—and the people end up enslaved to fear, addictions, sickness, and demonic forces and ultimately, just as the Bible says those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction (Galatians 6:8).

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the hope of the second coming of Jesus—Do you share in this hope? What has given you the greatest confidence that Jesus is coming again?

- **Bible Promises** that He will come again—such as Jesus' own testimony in John 14:1-3 and the writings of the Apostles like Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, and Peter 2 Peter chapter 3.
- **Old Testament References** such as Isaiah
    - "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure." (Isaiah 66:22 NIV84).
- **Bible Prophecies**
    - Daniel 2, the multi-metal image, which ends with a rock, not cut by human hands striking the image on the feet of iron and clay and destroying the image, and the interpretation is as follows:
        - "And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy." (Daniel 2:43-45 NIV84).

    - The progression of the future kingdoms exactly as God foretold, from Babylon, to Medo-Persia, to Greece, to Rome, to Europe broken into many competing countries never to be united again—we are living in that time waiting for the second coming.
    - All the other prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, Zechariah, and the other prophets.
- **The Great Controversy perspective**—does the Bible make any sense at all, is there really any point to its teachings, if Jesus never comes again? Isn't the entire point, the message of the Bible that God is going to eliminate sin and restore His creation back to sinless perfection where there is no more pain, suffering, sickness, betrayal, sin, evil, exploitation, abuse, guilt, shame, and death? The entire focus of the mission of Jesus Christ is the eradication of evil from His universe and thus, if we don't believe in that mission, there is nothing worth believing in. This is the same argument Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15 when some were arguing that there is not resurrection—and the resurrection is tied directly to the future restoration of all things into sinless perfection, i.e., the second coming of Christ is when the resurrection of the righteous occurs. And notice Paul's argument:
    - "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." (1 Corinthians 15:12-19 NIV84).
- **Signs of the times**
    - **Scoffers**
        - First of all, you must understand that in the **last days scoffers will come**, scoffing and following their own evil desires. **They will say, "Where is this 'coming'** he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3, 4 NIV84, emphasis mine).
    - This sign was fulfilled in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the Enlightenment, which directly opposed the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was a religious movement that called people's attention to the nearness of the second coming of Christ. But this movement was countered by the Enlightenment, in which godless scientific views and human reason replaced a belief in God, and godless evolutionism spread throughout the world. In the wake of godless evolution came communism and other godless philosophies that scoff at the idea that Jesus is coming again.

      Not only is the world today filled with scoffers, but the critics of God have come to dominate the scientific, educational, and media landscape, creating a societal attitude that those who continue to look for Christ's return are less educated, ignorant, or foolish.

But those of us who know God and trust the Bible know, just as Peter prophesied nearly 2,000 years ago, that it is the scoffers who are failing to understand reality. So, our first sign, which also gives us a timeframe for when the end-times began, is the rise of godless evolutionism, with its scoffers that ridicule our expectation of Jesus' return.

- **Wars and rumors of wars**
  - You will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is not yet** (Matthew 24:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

  - Jesus here refers to the never-ending regional struggles, tribal wars, crusades, and conflicts throughout the Dark and Middle Ages prior to the "end times," which began in the 19th century with the completion of the 1260 year prophecy which ended 1798 and the Enlightenment. The end times come after these wars. Notice the shift from wars to our third sign nations and kingdoms rising against each other.

- **World wars, natural disasters, famines, pandemics**
  - **Nation will rise against nation**, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great **earthquakes, famines and pestilences** in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven (Luke 21:10, 11 NIV84, emphasis mine).
  - Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are **the beginning of birth pains** (Matthew 24:7, 8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- After the long history of wars and conflicts through the Dark and Middle Ages, after the Enlightenment and the rise of the scoffers, we enter the 20th century and experience WWI, WWII, nuclear weapons, wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Syria, and terrorism around the world. The 20th century, with its two world wars and other military conflicts, saw more people killed by war than any other century in human history. And we have seen ever increasing national conflicts and wars, some like WWI and WWII military wars, but now we are seeing economic and social and cultural wars. And in the past fifty years, the world has seen massive famines, the threats of climate change, HIV, SARS, Swine Flu, COVID, and the increasing frequency of earthquakes, hurricanes, destructive storms, and other disasters. But all of this is *the beginning of the birth pains*.

When a woman goes into labor, the time of delivery has begun. In other words, she has entered the "end time" of her pregnancy—but the labor isn't instantaneous. The pains get more frequent and more intense right up until delivery. We are now in the time of the end, the time of ever-increasing rapidity of events leading up to our Savior's return!

Understand that no matter what we do, things on Earth are not going to get better until Jesus returns. And the worsening of conditions on Earth, the increasing labor pains as

the Earth itself groans under the weight of sin, will be **used by the scoffers to incite fear, turn minds away from God, and promote their godless solutions that will solidify power into a global coalition that persecutes the righteous**.

- **The promise of an era of peace and safety**

  Paul also used the metaphor of a woman going into labor when referring to the return of our Lord, adding an interesting detail:

  > Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman**, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled (1 Thessalonian 5:1–6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

When those who don't know God—the scoffers, the evolutionist, the humanists, the communist, the Marxist, the leftist, those who are desperately seeking to save themselves and "save the earth"—are saying, "This is the way we can have global peace and safety," sudden destruction will come, as labor pains on a pregnant woman.

They will be unaware that sudden destruction is coming, but why? Because they have given up a belief in God, they no longer trust Scripture, they have accepted the false narrative of godless evolution and secular humanism, and they believe peace and safety can be achieved through the implementation of their worldly agenda. This is the delusion of socialism, of communism, of globalism, of the Green movement—that we can save the planet. They claim, "We can create a new world order in which all nations come together to stop climate change, to stop the destruction of the environment, to eliminate poverty—all doable through a new globalism that we can create with new economic realities that will bring in a new era of peace and safety. Just reimagine the future!"

But Jesus continues His warning and our next sign:

- **Increased divisions in society, loss of faith, persecution of believers in Jesus**

  > Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and **you will be hated by all nations because of me**. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will **betray and hate each other**, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people (Matthew 24:9–11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Then, at the time of the end, at the time after the scoffers arise, at the time when the labor pains have begun, after the nations have had global wars, after the increase in natural disasters and pestilence, *then* those loyal to Christ will be persecuted, some put to death, and hated of all nations. Then people will betray each other to find security for themselves.

And what do we see in the world today? Christians beheaded in some parts of the world. Christians ridiculed for resisting the new world order, scorned for standing against the restrictions of liberty, hated for holding to faith in Jesus, vilified for voicing the hope in God and warning of Christ's soon return. Those who share the Christian view are called evil, the gospel is called hate speech, laws are passed to criminalize sharing the gospel message.

The governments of the world are becoming ever more dominated by global corporations in the West, communism in the East, and Islam in the Middle East—all of which are hostile to Christianity and all moving toward consolidation of power through globalism. Consider how COVID-19, a pestilence originating in a communist country, has been used to incite fear, divide society, and increase governmental control. Note how big business and global media coordinate together to advance a narrative to increase fear and give more power to a few ruling elites, destroy small business, which makes individuals more dependent on either the state or big corporations. All of this undermines individual liberties. Government leaders are encouraging people to spy on their neighbors, to report family members who violate arbitrary edicts from local government leaders—and often these rules are violations of law and due process. Governments close houses of worship and restrict freedom of assembly and interfere with free commerce. Governments and big tech censor speech, seeking to silence voices that oppose the formation of their global coalition. The signs of the nearness of Christ's return are everywhere!

- **Love of most will grow cold**
  - Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold (Matthew 24:12 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Because of the increase in wickedness—which is all the violations of God's designs, laws, methods, and principles—the love in the hearts of most people grows cold. Because of the denial of God and the rise of the lies of secularism, humanism, socialism, evolutionism; because of the breakdown of families; because of the assault on our common heritage and community values, because of the penal legal god who requires appeasement and payment taught in too many places, love is dying in the human heart.

- **So caught up in entertainment and living, people are unaware**
  - As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, **people were eating and drinking, marrying** and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen** until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man** (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Incredible! The people before the Flood knew nothing about what was going to happen despite Noah preaching for 120 years and building a giant boat. How did they not know? Because they were consumed with pleasure-seeking, eating, drinking, and marrying. They were too busy either being entertained or living their lives to be bothered with eternal realities.

This is exactly the state of the world today: It is caught up in increasing consumption of mind-altering substances, or leaving reality behind for their preferred fantasy world of video games, social media activity, TV shows, movies, sports, concerts, amusement parks, or anything else to consume and distract the mind. This is the world today—ignoring the warnings of Jesus, ignoring the signs of the end all around, and living merely for the pleasures of the moment.

- **The good news about God's kingdom of love lightens the world**
  - **But he who stands firm to the end will be saved.** And **this gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, **and then the end will come** (Matthew 24:13, 14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

But those who stand firm for the truth of God's kingdom of love will be saved! We will be the ones who take the good news about God and His kingdom of love to the world. We will advance the cause of liberty, for love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. We will stand for truth in a world of falsehood and propaganda. We will glorify God by revealing His character of love in how we treat our neighbors. We will call people back to the truth of our Creator by teaching people God's design laws—the laws our Creator built reality to operate upon, demonstrating that harmony with God and His design laws are the only way to health and happiness.

The truth about God and His kingdom of love, in the face of a world consumed with greed and selfishness, is the final message to lighten the world for Christ's return. It is the final message of mercy, the message of hope, the message of God's true character of love that Jesus revealed. It is the message that Satan hates because God's love destroys the fear Satan works so hard to incite.

So, as you see the signs all around us, don't let fear rule your heart; instead,

- "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28 NIV84).

Do you have hope in the soon coming of Christ?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Baptist preacher William Miller who in the early 19th century began preaching the soon coming of Jesus Christ, based on the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, unto 2300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed, in which he thought the sanctuary was the earth and the cleansing was the second coming. He calculated the date of the fulfillment of that 2300 year prophecy starting with the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem after the 70 year captivity, which was 457 BC to conclude or end in 1844.

Of course, Jesus did not return in 1844, so many believed his entire understanding was wrong, but others re-examined their beliefs and the prophecy in light of Scripture and discovered the error was not on the dates, but on the meaning of the sanctuary and its cleansing. This led to a new understanding of the fulfillment of the prophecy, and the teaching within the SDA church of the heavenly sanctuary message—which was supposed to teach Jesus making His people righteous, so that we become the righteousness of God as 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches, but instead, got twisted by the legalists who rejected the truth of God's design law and clung to the Roman view of imposed law, that the work in the heavenly sanctuary is a legal work, a human court room type of work.

Before I explain what the true message is all about, are there any questions people have about this?

We have explained this in detail in our magazine The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming which you can read online or download a pdf or order print copies to share.

The big overview of this message is very simple—before Jesus comes He cleanses His bride and makes her ready to meet Him face to face. As Scripture says, we shall see Him face to face for we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). We become like Him by the work of Christ via the Holy Spirit healing, cleansing, renewing, recreating us in actual righteousness. This requires our heavenly physician, high priest, Savior, to examine and judge what is wrong in our hearts and minds, where we are out of harmony with Him and His Father, and to apply His blood (which is symbolic of His sinless life) to us, so that we become partakers of the divine nature, so that we receive an actual new heart and right spirit, so that it is no longer our old fear-ridden selfish sinful selves living, but Christ living in us, so that our thoughts, desires, motives are cleansed from fear and selfishness and we are set right, purified, cleansed to be like Jesus. This is the reality of the message.

It is a simple message. Jesus became a real human being. Took up humanity damaged and infected with fear and selfishness by Adam. Was tempted in all points like we are, but Jesus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness, killing those elements at the Cross and rewrote, restored, implanted the purity of heaven, the motives of perfect love and trust into the humanity He took upon Himself. He rose again as a human being, sinless, righteous, and perfected by His work and self-sacrifice. Now, He offers His life, His victory to everyone who trust Him, we receive from the Holy Spirit the mind of Christ, the spirit of power and love and sound mind, we are renewed, cleansed, restored, recreated to be like Jesus and thus when He comes we see Him face to face because He has done His final work to prepare His bride, His people living on Earth to meet Him without ever seeing death.

The 2300 year prophecy is the vision of the future God gave to His friend Daniel. God looking down the corridors of time, tells Daniel that there are 490 years (70 sevens) left for your people Israel to fulfill their mission, to be the avenue for the Messiah. In the middle of that final 7 years of the 490 years, Jesus will put an end to all the symbolic ceremonial sacrifices by becoming the true sacrifice to cure the sin problem. But after Jesus finishes His work on Earth and returns to heaven, Satan counters the work of Jesus and introduces a false interpretation and meaning of what Christ accomplished. The little horn power wars against the saints—and this war is not primarily physical, it is the war of lies about God, and the man of sin, the man of lawlessness sets himself up by his lies in the spirit temple,

the hearts and minds of people, proclaiming himself to be God. And because of this false god being enthroned in the spirit temple as the god who is worshiped, it will be 2300 years before enough truth is recovered to cleanse the spirit temple, the hearts and minds of people and prepare them for the second coming. Thus, it will be 2300 years before the sanctuary will be cleansed, before the truth that God is not an imperial dictator who makes up rules and uses power to inflict punishment for rule breaking is recovered, it will be that long before the Bible is translated and printed and distributed into enough languages and to enough people that the truth can set the captives free and people can leave the false system of Babylon and begin worshiping the Creator God whose laws are design laws and thereby experience full trust and be cleansed settled and sealed to meet Jesus when He comes.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses more on the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, which I agree with, but I have not found it is very helpful in sharing this end time message with non Adventists, and within the Adventist church there is a lot of confusion about this message, so I have not found this approach to be very helpful. And thankfully, as with many truths in Scripture, God has presented this same truth in other language, metaphor, symbols and description. And that is what we use in the Bride magazine, and that is the symbolism of the annual feast days.

The purpose of the ceremonial system was to teach the plan of salvation, to teach the reality of Jesus. In that symbolic system, there were seven annual feasts that were like a theatrical play meant to illustrate, to teach sinful humans, God's saving plan from the fall of Adam to the earth made new. Each of the seven major feasts had a real-life fulfillment and covered a portion of human history from Adam's fall all the way to the earth made new:

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

  This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to "passover" our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

  The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service

to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.

- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks** (Pentecost): The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from ad 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.
- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!
- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Just as the Old Testament Passover feast had a real and literal fulfillment when Jesus died as our Passover Lamb on Passover Friday, so also there is a real and literal cleansing, uniting, bonding, and at-one-ment of the Bridegroom and His bride that precedes the second coming. We are living in that time right now!

So Jesus is in heaven working through His agencies to heal the hearts and minds of those who have placed their faith/trust in Him to prepare us for His return.

FRIDAY

The lesson quotes two paragraphs from the book *The Great Controversy:*

- "Like the first disciples, William Miller and his associates did not, themselves, fully comprehend the import of the message which they bore. **Errors that had been long established in the church** prevented them from arriving at a correct interpretation of an important point in the prophecy. Therefore, though they proclaimed the message which God

had committed to them to be given to the world, yet through a misapprehension of its meaning they suffered disappointment."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 351, 352.

"Yet God accomplished His own beneficent purpose in permitting the warning of the judgment to be given just as it was. The great day was at hand, and in His providence the people were brought **to the test** of a definite time, in order to reveal to them what was in their hearts. The message was designed for **the testing** and **purification of the church**. They were to be led to see whether their affections were set upon this world or upon Christ and heaven. They professed to love the Saviour; now they were to prove their love. Were they ready to renounce their worldly hopes and ambitions, and welcome with joy the advent of their Lord? **The message was designed to enable them to discern their true spiritual state**; it was sent in mercy to arouse them to seek the Lord with repentance and humiliation."—The Great Controversy, p. 353. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 62, emphasis mine).

When the Lord puts someone to the test, what is He testing? It is always the same ultimate reason behind the test: Do they trust God or not? Do they have faith/ confidence in God or not? And does their faith/trust/confidence go beyond the belief of devils who tremble, to the faith that is a living faith that results in loyalty to God?

Such tests are necessary in this world of sin because we cannot grow in faith, in trust, unless we are placed in a position in which our faith is tried or tested and we choose to exercise our faith. We must choose to say no to the fear, the insecurity, the doubts, the temptations to act to save self and, instead, choose to apply the truth and do what we understand is right, what is God's will for us in that situation, and trust God with the outcome.

This is the issue; it has always been the issue—are we faithful, loyal friends of God who actually trust Him even when we don't understand everything that is happening?

Jesus asked this very question about His second coming:

- When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8 NIV84).

When Jesus comes again, will He find people who trust Him, who will be faithful to Him, who have chosen to trust Him with their lives, futures, fortunes, and families? Or will He only find people who claim to believe in Him but who have put their trust in their rules, rituals, ceremonies, blood payments, wealth, institutions, and the power they can wield over others—all in His "name," of course?

Paul said,

- "Everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

God wants us to return to a living confidence, trust, and faith in Him, and He allows events to come upon us that will test our faith, put us in positions in which we have to decide whether we scheme, calculate, plot, plan, connive, manipulate, bend the rules, make excuses, cheat in order to save self, or whether we stand for what we know is right and trust God with how it turns out.

David, when he was dedicating materials and his son for the building of the temple, prayed:

- I know, my God, **that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity**. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you (1 Chronicles 29:17, 18 NIV84, emphasis mine).

God doesn't test, as a human teacher would, to discover the answer—God already knows the answer. God tests so we can actively choose to trust and, thereby, grow, develop, advance, and mature. It is for our development that God tests.

This is why God provided the test in Eden with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—it was the simplest of tests, yes, but it was a place for our first parents to exercise their abilities to think and choose to trust God—or not—and, thereby, either develop mature godly character or corrupt their character with fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame—the knowledge of evil. God, of course, wanted them to know only good, but they chose to know evil.

What God wants cannot be created by Him nor chosen by Him. God wants our love, devotion, trust, friendship, and loyalty. He wants us to internalize into our hearts and live out His living laws and, thus, develop Christlike character. This requires us to be placed in circumstances and situations in which we have to choose to trust God or not. So God tests us, but He never allows the test to be more than we can handle at any given point in our development. He has promised:

- No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV).

God always provides everything necessary for our healing, salvation, and deliverance from fear and selfishness.

- He provides the truth that destroys lies and wins us to trust (John 8:32)
- He provides the love that casts out the fear (1 John 4:18)
- He provides the Savior, His Son, who became a real human and as a human, using only human abilities, chose to love and trust His Father in all things and received as a human the empowering of the Holy Spirit to succeed in all things. And as a human, Jesus developed a perfect righteous and mature human character and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that Adam introduced into humanity when he broke trust with God. Thus, Jesus

became the new head of humanity, the second Adam (Hebrews 2:14, 4:15, 5:9; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 3:8).

- He provides the Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to our hearts and minds, to convict of sin, to convict of duty, and then (John 14:16) …
- He provides freedom, real freedom, to accept and choose the truth or reject it—and when we choose the truth (Joshua 24:15; Galatians 5:1) …
- He provides the opportunity to test our faith, situations that require us to choose—do we trust God? Do we choose what we know is in harmony with His will, purposes, instructions, guidance, design laws for life and trust Him with outcomes, or do we choose to break trust with Him and seek to advance and save ourselves?
- When we choose to trust Him, He then provides divine power, the indwelling Holy Spirit, to give us the ability to carry out the truth, to stand firm in the face of fear, threat, selfish temptations with a peace that passes understanding, with love for our enemies, with a vision of eternity as we choose to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our hearts loyal to Him.

God brings people into circumstances that are beyond their ability so that they will choose to turn to Him, ask for His deliverance, and learn to trust Him; i.e., increase their faith in Him. I encourage you that when faced with tests to remember the secret to victory is turning to Jesus, to:

Do you think the error that the Earth was the sanctuary was the only error that was still operating in their minds? No! They still hadn't cast off the error about God's law.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 8
Light From the Sanctuary

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson focuses our attention on Baptist preacher William Miller who in the early 19th century began preaching the soon coming of Jesus Christ, based on the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, unto 2300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed, in which he thought the sanctuary was the earth and the cleansing was the second coming. He calculated the date of the fulfillment of that 2300-year prophecy starting with the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem after the 70-year captivity, which was 457 BC to conclude or end in 1844.

Of course, Jesus did not return in 1844, so many believed his entire understanding was wrong, but others re-examined their beliefs and the prophecy in light of Scripture and discovered the error was not on the dates, but on the meaning of the sanctuary and its cleansing. This led to a new understanding of the fulfillment of the prophecy, and the teaching within the SDA church of the heavenly sanctuary message—which was supposed to teach the final work of Jesus to make His people righteous, so that we become the righteousness of God as 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches, to prepare us to meet Him face to face, but instead, got twisted by the legalists in the camp who rejected the truth of God's design law and clung to the Roman view of imposed law, And instead of teaching the reality of Jesus actually removing sin from people the sanctuary message has been corrupted into is a legal work, a human court room type of work.

I have presented this material in the framework of the organized church but from the design law view in a variety of places: The Sanctuary and Feast Days Seminar

The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course lecture 12: The Sanctuary Metaphor Cleansing of the Temple

The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming Magazine

The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World magazine which is specifically written for SDAs with many EGW quotes

So, today I am not going stay locked in their legal framework but am going to present this in a new fashion.

Let's start with the most important, foundational question that every person must decide before they study this material—because their conclusion on this question will determine the conclusions they draw all the way through their study of this material. And this question is:

What law lens are you looking through? How does God's law function? Do you believe God's laws are design laws the protocols reality functions upon, or do you believe that God's laws function no differently that the laws creatures make up, rules that require judicial oversight and the infliction of external penalties.

If you believe any part of God's government uses imposed laws with inflicted punishments, then your conclusions about the beautiful symbolism taught through the sanctuary system will be perverted, twisted, and distorted to such a degree that you will end up worshiping a creature in place of the Creator, while you claim to be worshiping the Creator—just as the Jews who crucified Christ did as recorded in John chapter 8. They claimed God as their Father, and Jesus told them they were of their father the devil. Why? Because they believed God's law functioned like human law, they were legalists, they believed law-breaking required infliction of punishment, they believed sacrifices were required to pay the sin-debt to the offended god or that god's law.

So, every question, every metaphor, every Bible verse, every parable, every symbol God has given us, gets warped and distorts our understanding and leads us away from God if we teach it through the lens of imposed law, including this beautiful message of cleansing the sanctuary.

So, first question, **How do you understand God's law functions?** Design protocols that reality is built upon and breaking those laws takes one out of harmony with God, out of harmony with how God built life to operate and without God's intervention to fix the problem results in pain, suffering, and death? Or do you believe that God's law functions like human law, a system of rules that have no inherent consequence and that sin creates a legal problem, we are under external legal condemnation from God and God is the source of pain, suffer, and death that He inflicts as so-called just punishment for our sin-crimes and therefore something must be done to God or God's law to pay the penalty so God won't kill us?

Consider the following questions in regard to how we understand God's law and the cleansing of the sanctuary from sin:

- What is the sanctuary that is being cleansed?
- Where is the cleansing of the sanctuary taking place?
- From what is the sanctuary being cleansed?
- Where does sin actually happen? Does sin happen in record books or in hearts and minds?
- Can God cleanse the universe from sin by erasing historical documents, by erasing records?
- Does adjusting legal status in books remove sin from hearts and minds?
- If God is going to cleanse His universe from sin, from where must the sin be removed?
    - If we have a legal records vault in heaven, where the recorded sins of all the people have been written down, and Jesus and His angels go through all those records and erase all the recorded sins from the records of all the people who made a legal claim of Jesus' blood as their sin-price paid to the Father, but the sinners who claimed the

blood of Jesus as their legal payment did not have their hearts cleansed from sin, has Jesus cleansed His universe from sin?

- If we have a legal records vault in heaven, where all the sins ever committed by every person is recorded and Jesus and His angels do nothing to that written record, in fact, that written record stands for all eternity (say a copy of the Bible with David's sin with Bathsheba), but Jesus cleanses the hearts, minds, characters, souls, spirits of all those who surrender in faith to Him so that the sinners are restored to holiness, righteousness, and have a new heart and right spirit, the mind of Christ and are at-one with God fully—the people are cleansed from sin and all who refused to be cleansed are die eternally—then has Jesus cleansed His universe from sin?
- Which of these two versions cleanses the universe from sin?
- Which version keeps sin in existence?
- Which version is based on design law and which is based on imposed law?
- Which version would Satan want taught?

And this is the problem with Christianity as a whole and the Adventist doctrine on the Investigative Judgment as it has been taught by the legalists in the church since 1888 when they rejected the advancing light of God's design law and embraced the lie that God's law functions like human law.

The big overview of this message is very simple—before Jesus returns He cleanses His bride and makes her ready to meet Him face to face. As Scripture says, we shall see Him face to face for we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). We become like Him by the work of Christ via the Holy Spirit healing, cleansing, renewing, recreating us in actual righteousness. This requires our heavenly physician, high priest, Savior, to examine and diagnose (judge) what is wrong in our hearts and minds, where we are out of harmony with Him and His Father, and then to apply His blood (which is symbolic of His sinless life) to us, so that we become partakers of the divine nature, so that we receive an actual new heart and right spirit, so that it is no longer our old fear-ridden selfish sinful selves living, but Christ living in us, so that our thoughts, desires, motives are cleansed from fear and selfishness and we are set right, purified, cleansed to be like Jesus. This is the reality of the message.

It is a simple message. Jesus became a real human being. Took up humanity damaged and infected with fear and selfishness by Adam. Was tempted in all points like we are, but Jesus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness, killing those elements at the Cross and rewrote, restored, implanted the purity of heaven, the motives of perfect love and trust into the humanity He took upon Himself. He rose again as a human being, sinless, righteous, and perfected by His work and self-sacrifice—the second Adam, the new head of the human species. Now, He offers His life, His victory to everyone who trusts Him, and metaphorically is grafted into Him the branch. We receive from Jesus, through the work of the Holy Spirit the mind of Christ, the spirit of power and love and sound mind, we are renewed, cleansed, restored, recreated to be like Jesus and thus when He comes we see Him face to face because He has done His final work to prepare His bride, His people living on Earth, to meet Him without ever seeing death.

So, now let's go through the Biblical evidence and compare some of the writings from the most influential founder of the SDA church on this uniquely SDA teaching, to document that our position,

based on design law, is the one that is real, is true, is the genuine message that explains what is transpiring right now.

The points we want to clarify and specify are the following:

- What is the heavenly sanctuary?
- What contaminates it?
- What does it mean to cleanse it?
- What is atonement and how is it related to cleansing the sanctuary?
- What are Christ's intercessions?
- What are the records in heaven and the judgment taking place during this time?
- Why wait until 1844?

Common SDA View

After the Great Disappointment in 1844 those who believed the sanctuary was the Earth and its cleansing meant the second coming, reviewed Scripture and discovered that the Bible never taught that the sanctuary or temple of God is the Earth, but that the Bible describes two sanctuaries or temples—the Old Testament tent/building built according to the instructions given to Moses, which was a pattern of the things in heaven. And the sanctuary in heaven where Jesus our heavenly High Priest ministers in our behalf. Those who realized this developed the teaching that Jesus as our heavenly high priest is working in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary and that final work to cleanse the sanctuary began in 1844.

But because the legalists in the camp rejected the advancing light of God's design law and actual righteousness by faith, the entire message has been presented in a legal distortion:

- Christ entered the Most Holy Place in a building in heaven.
- He began cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of people.
- The Investigative Judgment began.
- All cases of professed followers are reviewed.
- God judges each case keeping some and rejecting others—based on whether sins have been retained in the books.
- Opening the books and doing this before the heavenly beings vindicates God's judgment.
- It culminates in the Second Coming.

I agree with the termination date of Daniel 8:14 ending in October 1844, and I agree with the final work of Jesus as our heavenly High Priest cleansing His sanctuary before He returns. However, what I disagree with is the human law lens that the legalists in the camp have used to redefine all the elements in a false light that has kept the truth away from not only Adventists, but the rest of the world.

So, let’s put this in reality, in the light of God as Creator, understanding it through design law.

The heavenly sanctuary where Jesus ministers as our heavenly High Priest—what is it? More specifically, if we use Scripture, and for Adventists, since this is a uniquely Adventist doctrine, if we use the writings of EGW, what is the building material of the heavenly sanctuary? From what is this temple in heaven, where Jesus ministers in our behalf, constructed?

- Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: `Here is **the man whose name is the Branch**, and he will branch out from his place and **build the temple of the LORD**. It is **he who will build the temple of the LORD**, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And **he will be a priest on his throne**. And there will be harmony between the two.'.. **Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the LORD**, and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the LORD your God." (Zechariah 6:12-15, emphasis mine).

If God’s temple already existed in heaven—then why did God tell His prophet Zechariah that Jesus will leave heaven to BUILD the temple of the Lord, and that others far away will come and help him build the temple of the Lord? Is this temple that Jesus is building by human hands or one that is not built by human hands? Is this temple the great temple in the heavens or are we speaking of a third temple?

Well consider other Scripture regarding this temple that Jesus left heaven to build, what is the building material of this temple:

- As you come to him, **the living Stone**—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—**you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1Peter 2:4, 5, emphasis mine)

- Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and **members of God's household**, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone**. **In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord**. And in him **you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit**. (Ephesians 2:19-22, emphasis mine).

- For we are God's fellow workers; **you are** God's field, **God's building**. (1 Corinthians 3:9, emphasis mine).

- Don't you know that **you yourselves are God's temple** and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and **you are that temple**. (1Corinthians 3:16, 17, emphasis mine)

- What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For **we are the temple of the living God**. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16, emphasis mine).

- But Christ is faithful as a son over **God's house. And we are his house**, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. (Hebrews 3:6, emphasis mine).

- The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, **the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man**. (Hebrews 8:1-2, emphasis mine)

- What tabernacle was set up by the Lord and not by man?
- Is it a building made out of non-living matter, gold, silver, dead trees, goats' skins or is it built out of living beings?
- If the sanctuary already existed in heaven, why did Jesus leave heaven to build it?
- Is it the temple that Jesus left heaven to build built out of the living stones, you and me?
- Why does Jesus need others far away to help him build it?
- Is this temple that Jesus must build Himself one built by humans or by God?
- Is this temple then the heavenly sanctuary or is it a third temple, and if so where is it?

- Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: `Here is **the man whose name is the Branch**, and he will branch out from his place and **build the temple of the LORD**. It is **he who will build the temple of the LORD**, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And **he will be a priest on his throne**. And there will be harmony between the two.'.. **Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the LORD**, and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the LORD your God." (Zechariah 6:12-15, emphasis mine).

- Jesus left heaven to build the sanctuary where God dwells
- It is built out of Himself as the chief cornerstone
- With the help of the Apostles, those far away
- And each one of us are to be living stones built together into a house for the Lord
- This is why the Bible says…

- Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and **I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever**. (Psalm 23:6, emphasis mine).

- Him who overcomes **I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.** I will write on him the n**ame of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem,** which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. (Revelation 3:12, emphasis mine).

Why will we never leave the sanctuary? Because it is a prison and we are locked in a single geographic location for all eternity or because we are the sanctuary and we will never again leave our loyalty, our unity, our devotion, our holiness and our oneness with God?

EGW Comments:

- **We are God's great building**. Every stroke, every stone put into the building is only a part of the whole. Every worker is himself to become just what God designs he should be in building his own life with pure, noble, upright deeds, **that at the end he may be a symmetrical structure, a fair temple, honored by God** and man. God must be in this work. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Through you He has worked, and will work to do honor to His name by trusting to you these great responsibilities… The Lord would have you stand forth as Daniel, every phase of your character under His own ministration, that day by day you may **grow into a structure** that will stand forth, **not as a perfect whole in itself**, **but connected with the work of other chosen workmen**, **as a beautiful temple for the Lord**, a living witness to the value, stability, and nobility of the man who keeps his eye single to the glory of God. (2 Manuscript Releases, p. 339, emphasis mine).

  The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use.

  Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. (3 Manuscript Release p. 231, emphasis mine).

What is the building material of heavenly sanctuary? Dead matter or living beings?

What Contaminates the Heavenly Sanctuary?

- When he [Satan] lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NIV84)

- "**From the opening of the great controversy** it has been **Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character** and to excite **rebellion against His law**, and this work appears to be crowned with success." (Patriarchs and Prophets p. 338, emphasis mine).

Satan attacked God in heaven by alleging God makes up rules and enforces His rules with inflicted punishments, therefore God is no different than any other creature, except in power, and because God's laws are made up rules God is the source of pain, suffering, and death—therefore God is not truly trustworthy, if you don't do what He says, He will kill you. This attack on God's character is built upon an attack against God's law, suggesting God's laws function like the laws creatures make up rather than the laws the Creator builds reality upon. And because of this, Satan undermined trust in God:

- "**God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary**. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God**." (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, emphasis mine)

- "**Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband**. They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors..." (Review and Herald, January 5, 1886 par. 8, emphasis mine).

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness (As soon as they sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid)
- Fear and selfishness lead to acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, character—a terminal condition

Our spirit temples are damaged by lies about God, fear, selfishness, and sinful choices:

- The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21 NIV84).

What contaminated the heavenly temple? Lies Lucifer told about God that were first believed by 1/3 or the angels and then believed by Adam and Eve, and believing those lies resulted, not in a legal change, but in a lethal change. Their characters were changed, rather than knowing, in experience, in heart, in mind, in attitude, in character love, trust, loyalty, devotion, honesty, fidelity, peace, joy, and the attributes of God—they instead chose to know distrust, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame and sin.

They changed themselves, their sanctuaries, their spirit temples were contaminated and because all living beings compose or make up the heavenly temple, the heavenly temple is contaminated.

But because of Adam and Eve's belief in the lies, fear and selfishness replaced love and trust in their hearts and minds, and because of our human sin-condition we have added to the contamination of our spirit temples—we corrupted ourselves even more, with sins, bad habits, biases, prejudices, corrupt thinking, lusts, evil passions.

- What contaminates the sanctuary?
    - Lies about God
    - Our own sinful/carnal nature, the lusts, passions, habits etc.

What does it mean to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary?

David prayed:

- "Wash away all **my iniquity** and **cleanse me from my sin**… C**leanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean**; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:2, 7 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Where does sin happen? In record books or in people? Where does God need to do His cleansing work if He is to have a universe where no sin exists, in record books or in hearts and minds? If the heavenly sanctuary is built out of living beings, then in order to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary what needs to happen? Hearts and minds of people need to be cleansed, just as David prayed!

EGW Commentary:

- In the **cleansing of the temple**, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. **That temple**, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be **an object lesson** for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was **God's purpose that every created being**, from the bright and holy seraph to man, **should be a temple** for the indwelling of the Creator. **Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God**. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the **incarnation of the Son of God**, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. **God dwells in humanity**, and through saving grace the **heart of man becomes again His temple**. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to **the high destiny open to every soul**. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not **yield themselves as holy temples** for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly **the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple** from the world's buyers and sellers, **Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul**. "The Lord, whom

ye seek, shall **suddenly come to His temple**, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **He shall purify the sons of Levi**, and purge them as gold and silver." Malachi 3:1-3. (Desire of Ages p. 161, emphasis mine).

From what does the heavenly sanctuary need cleansing? The lies about God that people believe that break trust in God and cause fear and selfishness, AND the subsequent corruption of character, the evil habits, lusts, passions that form from the choices made from the spirit of fear and selfishness.

The cleansing of the heavenly temple is not some cleansing of a structure built out of gold, or legal books by erasing ink marks, it only happens by cleansing hearts and minds of people from sin.

Notice, EGW quotes from Malachi, and that prophecy tells us Jesus comes to His temple for a cleansing work, and specifically tells us He cleanses the Levites, which represent the priesthood of believers, those who have placed their faith in Jesus.

Do you think Malachi is speaking of a different cleansing than that of Daniel 8:14, or do you think Malachi is describing the same event as the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, the cleansing of the sanctuary?

EGW had an opinion about this, do you agree? It appears the legalist in the SDA church who took control after 1888 have not agreed with this:

- The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the **cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14**; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and **the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event**; and this is **also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage**, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25. (The Great Controversy, p. 426, emphasis mine).

What is atonement and how is it related to cleansing the sanctuary?

The Day of Atonement cleansing of the sanctuary concept, is derived directly from the Jewish feast days. The purpose of the ceremonial, symbolic, system was to teach the plan of salvation, to teach the reality of Jesus.

If the metaphors, symbols, ceremonies are not connected to reality—then they teach fantasy and that is what happens when people teach these beautiful God-given symbols through Satan's imposed law lies.

- "The gifts and sacrifices being offered were **not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper**. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order… But those sacrifices are an

annual reminder of sins, **because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**." Hebrews 9:9.10, 10:3, 4

In that Old Testament symbolic system, there were seven annual feasts that were like a theatrical play meant to illustrate, to teach, God's saving plan from the fall of Adam to the earth made new. Each of the seven major feasts had a real-life fulfillment and covered a portion of human history from Adam's fall all the way to the earth made new:

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.

- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

  This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to "passover" our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

  The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.

- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).

- **Feast of Weeks** (Pentecost): The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from ad 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.

- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century and the Millerite movement.

- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!

- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Just as the Old Testament Passover feast had a real and literal fulfillment when Jesus died as our Passover Lamb on Passover Friday, so also there is a real and literal cleansing, uniting, bonding, and at-one-ment. We are living in that time right now!

So, understanding this lesson we realize that Jesus is now fulfilling the reality to which the day of atonement feast pointed, and what was that reality? If we have the human law lie working in our heads, we teach the false theory of legal adjusting, reviewing record books, making legal payments, etc.

But when we return to design law, we realize the truth, that Jesus is accomplishing what He prayed to His Father to accomplish, to bring all those who believe in Him into at-one-ness, real unity. It is finishing the work of removing from all who trust Him fear and selfishness, distrust and rebelliousness, restoring us to a living trust that we won't betray Him.

- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has… made known to us **the mystery of his will** according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be **put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ**. (Ephesians 1:3, 9,10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

God's mystery, the plan to remove sin and restore all things to unity, to at-one-ness, when the times have reached their fulfillment, when the longest time prophecy in the Bible is complete, Jesus enters His final work before the second coming of bring all of us back into unity with Him.

This *Great Controversy* quote, we just cited, EGW says that the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 and Malachi 3 and the wedding of Christ to His bride describe the same event:

- The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the **cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14**; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and **the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event**; and this is **also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage**, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25. (The Great Controversy, p. 426, emphasis mine).

Atonement, is when the two shall become one, that is a wedding.

- "Return, O backsliding children," says the Lord; "for I am married to you (Jeremiah 3:14 NKJV).

- For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth (Isaiah 54:5 NIV84).

- I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him (2 Corinthians 11:2 NIV84).

Atonement, two becoming one, is the metaphor described as Jesus being united to His bride, which is the church.

- A marriage, as God designed, is not a legal declaration but an intertwining of hearts, minds, and selves into a greater whole—it is a holy union.

- And a healthy, holy, marriage requires—healthy, holy people!

So in order for us to enter into full unity, at-one-ment the oneness Jesus prayed for, we must be purified, cleansed, made holy.

But here is another comment, and in this quote EGW is describing God's leading in the aftermath of the Great Disappointment, in the aftermath of 1844—what do you think is described? Do you think it describes a building in heaven made out of inanimate material with a courtroom and legal adjustments?

- "**Jesus sent His angels to direct the minds of the disappointed** ones to the most holy place, where He had gone **to cleanse the sanctuary** and make a **special atonement** for Israel. Jesus told the angels that all who found Him **would understand the work** which He was to perform. I saw that w**hile Jesus was in the most holy place He would be married to the New Jerusalem**; and after His work should be accomplished in the holiest, He would descend to the earth in kingly power and take to Himself the precious ones who had patiently waited His return. (Early Writings 251).

What does this mean? Do you think Jesus is getting married to a building made out of gold and silver?

- Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready**. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to **the wedding supper of the Lamb**!'" (Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

There is a wedding, and then there is the wedding supper. The wedding itself is the uniting in loving commitment of heart, mind, and soul of the two spouses. The wedding celebration follows that joining.

But the wedding, the uniting with Christ cannot happen if we in heart, mind, spirit, soul don't trust Him, if are still in rebellion against Him, if we prefer lies, prefer selfishness, prefer the methods of Satan to those of our Savior—so in order for that at-one-ment to happen, in order for us to be bonded, sealed, settled, into eternal unity with Jesus we must be cleansed from the sin in our hearts and minds.

And when do the saints experience their hearts being bonded into unshakable loyal love to Jesus—before or at the Second Coming? When do the saints experience the cleansing of their hearts and minds from fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame so that they can stand firm in every trial—before or at the Second Coming? And when is the celebration, the wedding supper?

- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I **saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband**. … One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, **I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**" And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and **showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:1, 2, 9, 10, emphasis mine).

Why is the New Jerusalem described as the bride of Christ? It is symbolic, Jesus is not marrying buildings—Jesus is being united with His people, and thus He is cleansing His people from fear, selfishness, sin, and distrust, and sealing them into eternal at-one-ment with Him. **The New Jerusalem is the Most Holy Place**, note the following similarities, it is the place in which we are united with Christ again:

- The MH place is in the shape of a cube; the NJ is in the shape of a cube.
- The most holy place was covered in gold; the heavenly city is paved in gold. In Scripture, gold is symbolic of the purity of Christ, the righteousness and holiness of God's character of love.
- The NJ has 3 gates on each side, with the names of the 12 tribes—corresponding with the

way the 12 tribes camped around the sanctuary.

- The most holy place was lighted by God's Shekinah presence; the city is lighted by God's eternal presence (Revelation 21:21, 22).
- In the most holy place was the covenant box, the place where the covenant was accomplished—the covenant of cleansing, uniting, bonding; in the city are the saints, the living temples in whose hearts the new covenant (marriage covenant) is accomplished.
    - The shekinah represents God
    - Angels the unfallen host
    - Lid of the ark Jesus
    - Wooden box covered in gold sinners restored to unity with God by the righteousness of Christ
    - Wood symbolizes man—grown from the dirt of the earth as man was formed from the dirt of the earth.
    - But to be part of the holy box the wood had to be cut free of its roots which tie to the earth and covered in gold and we must be cut free of our ties to this sinful earth and covered in the gold—righteousness of Christ.
    - The manna was the first element placed in the covenant box and represents the saints first partaking of the "bread of heaven" (John 6:32–35), Jesus the living Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14; 6:53–58); the truth as it is in Jesus wins them to trust (betrothal/conversion).
    - The law was the second item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints, once betrothed (converted) to Christ, opening their hearts to Him; He writes His living law of love into their hearts and minds (wedding/new covenant/cleansing) and renews them in righteousness.
    - Aaron's rod that budded was the last item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints who were dead in trespass and sin but, having accepted the proposal (converted) and experienced the union (wedding/cleansing), come alive and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness. This symbolically represents both the reborn life bringing forth Christian fruits and also the glorification of those wedded to Christ living eternally fruitful lives in loving union with the Lord.
- The city has a foundation with the names of the 12 Apostles and the Lamb, indicating it is not inanimate, but it is the living temple, sanctuary, church, people of God Paul wrote about built upon the Apostles and Jesus.
- The most holy place is where the high priest conducted a special ceremony: the ceremony of atonement; the ceremony of cleansing; the ceremony of washing away sin and purifying the people (bride); the ceremony of bringing the people into "**at-one-ment**" with God, of two becoming one. In other words, it was a wedding ceremony! And this ceremony

happened at the end of the annual cycle of feasts, right before the Feast of Tabernacles; i.e., tabernacling or cohabitating with God.

The cleansing of Christ's bride and the cleansing of the heavenly temple are the same event!

And so John wrote in Revelation,

- **I did not see a temple in the city**, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (Revelation 21:22, emphasis mine)
- Him who overcomes **I will make a pillar in the temple** of my God. Never again will he leave it. **I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem**, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my **new name**. (Revelation 3:12, emphasis mine).

And this is why God writes His name on us, which is His character, and the Bible connects this restoration of God's image, God's name in us, with the unity or at-one-ness of being part of the temple which is the New Jerusalem.

What are Christ's intercessions?

So what does Jesus intercessions in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf mean?

- Therefore he is able to **save completely** those who come to God through him, because **he always lives to intercede for them**. (Hebrews 7:25 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What law lens are you thinking through? If human law, then the problem is we are in legal trouble with God and God must inflict just punishment, so Jesus pleads as our defense attorney to the judge, reminding the judge of the legal payment of His blood that He has made and we have accepted so the judge will declare us legally righteous, forgiven, pardoned, even though we remain unrighteous and sinful.

This view is, at best is childish, immature, infantile, and as Hebrews 5 says, not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. At worst, it is a counterfeit that tricks people into a false security in which they have a form of godliness without any power.

What is the truth? Design law, how reality actually functions.

- Where does sin happen? In people
- Who is the accuser of the people? Satan
- Who listens to what Satan alleges?
    - Does God and the holy angels get tricked by Satan's lies? No! Then who is being tricked and continuing to distrust God and live in fear and act selfishly despite claiming to believe in Jesus? We are!
- Then where or with whom is Jesus interceding?

- In our hearts and minds and this is exactly what the Bible teaches, that Jesus is God's envoy, ambassador, representative, intermediatory, mediator, who brings the truth, love, grace, and healing power of God to us to win us back to love and trust and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Consider EGW's comment regarding Jesus work, how He intercedes in our behalf:

- **As Satan accused Joshua** and his people, **so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the "accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins**. He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ**. **Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power**. All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation**. (5 Testimonies 470.1, emphasis mine) [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

  He [Satan] leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom does Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations and restore their confidence?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it**; **therefore he presents their sins before *them* *<u>to discourage them</u>***. [Notice the dynamic here. The author doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin that the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. Satan is not trying to persuade God to condemn. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them and gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. So Satan accuses the sinner **to the sinner** to discourage the repentant sinner tempting them to give up and let go of their faith in Jesus. So, again, where is Christ plea directed?] He [Satan] is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt**. [To whom is Satan seeking to make our best seem corrupt? To the repentant sinner in order to discourage and dishearten us so WE GIVE UP. So, to whom would Christ be pleading, God or us, to not listen

to the accusations of Satan?] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he [Satan] endeavors to secure their condemnation**. [By whom? From whom is Satan seeking to get the sinner condemned? Christ Jesus? He is at the Father's right hand and is **also** interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself**. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sinned, I am righteous in my own strength." NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose this condition and I have had many symptoms along the way, many sins and shortcomings from your glorious ideal. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin. I am only here before you because Jesus overcame where I could never overcome and Jesus has gifted me His victory, His mind, His heart, His love, His motives, His character and it is no longer I that live but Jesus lives in me through the indwelling Spirit." Note what happens next.] But Jesus our Advocate **presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser** by the mighty arguments of Calvary. [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan that we are too sinful to be saved are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you and to me!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man**. [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us. God doesn't win God's mercy, or beg God to be merciful, He claims the mercy that is God's, because of God's mercy Jesus was sent and became our Remedy to sin.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.**' These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] **Those who rely upon Him** in faith receive the comforting assurance: "**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment**."… [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] (5 Testimonies 470.2, emphasis mine)

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves**. [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and the investigating the truth about God to experience the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will

be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own**. (5 Testimonies 471.1, emphasis mine)

Jesus is interceding with you and me to keep us from being tricked by Satan's lies.

What are the records in heaven and the judgment taking place during this time?

What is written in the heavenly records?

- But you have come to **Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.** You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose **names are written in heaven** (Hebrews 12:22, 23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Nothing impure will ever enter it [New Jerusalem], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose **names are written in the Lamb's book of life.** (Revelation 21:27, NIV84, emphasis mine).

- "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose **name** is found **written in the book**—will be delivered." (Daniel 12:1, emphasis mine)

- "He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his **name** from the **book of life**, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels." (Revelation 3:5, emphasis mine)

What is written in the records in heaven? The names of the righteous, and in the Bible what do names represent? Character! Our individualities, who we have chosen to become in heart, mind, character based on whether we have accepted the truth and been reborn so that Christ lives within us with new hearts and right spirits, or not.

Thus the work of Jesus in the records is merely the metaphorical way of describing the reality of Jesus' work of cleansing our hearts and minds from fear, selfishness, distrust, guilt, shame and all the evil habits we have developed, so that when He appears we will see Him as He is because we shall be like Him!

Consider, this EGW commentary regarding the records in heaven:

- Remember, your c**haracter is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven**, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished

plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming **your character** to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing **your robes of character** and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" [Revelation 22:12]. . . . (Letters and Manuscript Releases vol. 5 letter 51, emphasis mine).

- Remember that **this world is God's daguerreotype [photograph] office**. **The pictures of all who live here**, old or young, **are being made in the books of heaven**. What shall the likeness be? (Letter 78, 1901. 3MR 352, emphasis mine).

The heavenly records are like medical records, they are an accurate record of reality, have we accepted Jesus as our remedy and been healed, transformed, cleansed, or not. It is that simple. And these records of reality, recorded by God's recording angel, are compared to the book sealed with the seven seals that Jesus opens, which I believe is God's book of foreknowledge, and as the two are compared by the onlooking universe, it will be confirmed that God foreknew all of this, yet did not use His power, or abilities, including foreknowledge to manipulate selfishly or take away individual freedom. And thus Satan's allegations are refuted and God's character and design laws and government are vindicated and all say "worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb who was slain!"

There are four judgments in Scripture—we are only going to consider two at this moment.

The First Judgment

In Eden, we find the evidence of the first judgment. Satan lied to Adam and Eve, as he did the angels in heaven about God, and Adam and Eve had to make a judgment: Who would they believe, who would they trust—God or the serpent?
The first judgment is our judgment of God—do we judge Him to be trustworthy or not? It is that simple.

We see this first judgment at Mount Carmel, when Elijah confronts the 450 priests of Baal and challenges the people:

- If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him! (1 Kings 18:21 GNT).

The apostle Paul picks up this theme and states it explicitly in Roman 3:4:

- Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when **You are judged**" (Romans 3:4 NKJV, emphasis mine).

The Second Judgment

When we understand design law, we can see that Adam and Eve's sin did not create a legal problem; it created a lethal problem. It is God's diagnostic judgments on both a planet wide scale and individual scale. God judging what is necessary for Him to do to keep open the avenue for the Messiah and His therapeutic judgments to bring about His healing plan. Such as the Flood, to keep open the avenue for the Messiah to come, for without Jesus no human could be saved. Throughout the Old Testament we see God making many diagnostic and therapeutic judgments, unfortunately, people who have believed the lie that God's law functions like human law have misconstrued the events to falsely believe God is acting judicially, to punish rather than to save.

There is another aspect of God's healing, therapeutic judgment: His work in the hearts and minds of people. David understood this and prayed:

- Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23, 24 GNT).

And this is the same judgment going on in the heavenly sanctuary that we already read about in Malachi's prophecy:

- "Suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. **"So I will come near to you for judgment"** (Malachi 3:1–5 NIV84).

This is the "judgment" of the Great Heavenly Physician, our Creator: examining us, diagnosing what is wrong in us, and determining what is the best therapeutic intervention to bring to bear to heal and restore us. This is the judgment of our High Priest going on in heaven as He examines the people and prepares them for His return, to complete His healing of them so that when He does come, we will be like Him—for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2 NIV84). This healing, this transformation, this final work of preparation is what Malachi describes above—the cleansing of our temples, the purifying of the Levites (His people today), is all taught metaphorically in the Day of Atonement ritual.

Why wait until 1844 to do this final work?

Because of how reality works, because God is the Creator, because His laws are design laws, and His cleansing is the cleansing of hearts and minds of people from lies, fear, and selfishness and that requires the truth be presented effectively—for God cannot win love, trust, loyalty, devotion,

friendship by the use of external might and power to punish and kill those who don't give Him love, trust, loyalty and friendship.

And we are in a war…

- "For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

And the Bible foretold that after Jesus finished His earthly mission and ascended back to heaven, Satan counterattacked and set himself up in God's temple, the hearts and minds of people, pretending to be God and it would be 2300 years, or until 1844 until enough truth was recovered in order for Jesus to be able to cleanse His people on Earth from these lies.
Daniel, prophesying about the same events regarding the cleansing of the sanctuary, describes the war and why it needs to be cleansed:

- "I beheld, and the same horn **made war** with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given** to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Daniel 7:21, 22 KJV

This little horn power is winning until judgment is given, imparted, provided to the saints, until they receive judgment, discernment, the ability to differentiate the truth from the lies, which means until enough truth is recovered that they can reject the imperial dictator lies about God and return to worshiping Him as Creator, which requires rejecting the human imposed law lie and realizing God's laws are design laws.

Paul wrote:

- "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for **that day will not come until the rebellion occurs** and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God**" (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Satan did this by getting Christians to believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require imposed punishments, and thus the god worshiped is not the Creator, but an imperial dictator who is the source of pain, suffering and death, inflicted as so-called just punishment. But the Bible tells us that Satan is the one who wields the power of death and Jesus destroys him and his power, and Jesus destroys death and bring life and immortality to light.

God, looking down the corridors of time, told His friend Daniel it would be 2300 years until He could cleanse His sanctuary from these lies because it would be that long until the Bible was

translated to the people, until the eternal gospel that is to lighten the entire world is presented, the eternal good news about God as Creator whose laws are design laws so that people can make a right judgment about God and break away from the fallen system of human law represented by Babylon.

The 2300-year prophecy is the vision of the future God gave to His friend Daniel. God looking down the corridors of time, tells Daniel that there are 490 years (70 sevens) left for your people Israel to fulfill their mission, to be the avenue for the Messiah. In the middle of that final 7 years of the 490 years, Jesus will put an end to all the symbolic ceremonial sacrifices by becoming the true sacrifice to cure the sin problem. But after Jesus finishes His work on Earth and returns to heaven, Satan counters the work of Jesus and introduces a false interpretation and meaning of what Christ accomplished. The little horn power wars against the saints—and this war is not primarily physical, it is the war of lies about God, and the man of sin, the man of lawlessness sets himself up by his lies in the spirit temple, the hearts and minds of people, proclaiming himself to be God. And because of this false god being enthroned in the spirit temple as the god who is worshiped, it will be 2300 years before enough truth is recovered to cleanse the spirit temple, the hearts and minds of people and prepare them for the second coming. Thus, it will be 2300 years before the sanctuary will be cleansed, before the truth that God is not an imperial dictator who makes up rules and uses power to inflict punishment for rule breaking is recovered, it will be that long before the Bible is translated and printed and distributed into enough languages and to enough people that the truth can set the captives free and people can leave the false system of Babylon and begin worshiping the Creator God whose laws are design laws and thereby experience full trust and be cleansed settled and sealed to meet Jesus when He comes.

- "Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will **come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will **purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver." (Malachi 3:1–3)

- I did not see a **temple** in the city, because the **Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple**. (Revelation 21:22 NIV84, emphasis mine)

God and the Jesus the Lamb are the temple and we dwell forever as pillars in unity, oneness, friendship and love with them, as the bride is cleansed and wedded, atoned—made at-one with Jesus forever.

SUMMARY

- What is the heavenly sanctuary?
    - The combined structure built by God out of living beings
- What contaminates it?
    - Lies about God and our own sinfulness
- What does it mean to cleanse it?

    - To remove the lies and the fear and selfishness and restore in Jesus, His character, love, truth, freedom, holiness, righteousness so that we become the righteousness of God.
- What is atonement and how is it related to cleansing the sanctuary?
    - Bringing us into at-one-ment with God, the wedding of Christ to His bride where we are sealed and settled so that nothing can move us from our loyalty to Him
- What are Christ's intercessions?
    - His pleas to you and me to trust Him and let Him heal us, His actions to intervene and intercede with Satan, the lies, distortions, our guilt, shame, and anything that separates us from Him to win us back to love and trust.
- What are the records in heaven and the judgment taking place during this time?
    - The accurate transcript of every individuality, who we actually are in heart, mind, character, and our judgments to trust Jesus and Jesus' therapeutic judgments to heal and cleanse.
- Why wait until 1844?
    - Because God only wins with God's methods, truth, love, freedom and it wasn't until that time in history that the truth, the Bible, was translated and modern printing on communications and travel increased to the point that enough truth was recovered about God that people could have the opportunity to reject the lies and return to full loyalty of trust and have their sanctuaries cleansed.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 9
The Foundation of God's Government

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

A great title for the lesson, because the foundation of God's government is the central issue in the Great Controversy.

And what is the foundation of any government? The law, and thus the lesson points us to the central question—how do we understand God's law? Sadly, the lesson has yet to embrace the truth about God's law and instead continues to present The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ. If you haven't read our magazine by that name, please do so, for it lays out the central issue over God's law which slants everything we believe about God and the Bible.

If we understand God's law functions like that of a creature, imposed rules, then we always conclude that God's justice is legal, the use of His power to inflict artificial penalties to punish rule-breaking. And in such a worldview God becomes the source of pain and death.

But when we return to worshiping God as Creator we recognize that His laws are the laws reality is built to exist and operate upon and every single law of God is for our health and benefit. The more we choose to live in harmony with God's design laws the healthier and happier we become. The more we choose to violate God's design laws the more sickness, pain, suffering, we experience before we ultimately die unless we turn back to God and allow Him to heal us.

The message that the SDA church was given to take to the world was a call to turn people back to worshiping the Creator God whose laws are design laws. EGW wrote:

> **The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.** Upon this battle we are now entering—**a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah,** between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition**.** (*The Great Controversy* p. 582, emphasis mine)

The final issue in this war is over how we understand God's law and, thus, how we understand God's character and government to function. If the church is to finish the Reformation and hasten the day of our Lord, it must reject the Roman idea of law and return to worshiping the Creator.

> **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.** Upon this battle we are now entering—**a battle not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the

Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. (*Prophets and Kings*. p. 625, emphasis mine).

The final conflict is not a battle between rival churches! It is over the laws of men versus the precepts of God. What kind of laws do men enact? Imposed-law, made-up rules. But God's law is design law, the laws that sustain the operations of life itself. The final conflict will be over this issue.

Yet, sadly, far too many Christians are caught up in denominational fighting when the real issue is over whether we are worshiping the Creator or a creature.

Read first paragraph,

- Through intensive Bible study, Adventists came to understand the significance of **the law in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary**. Looking into the heart of God's law, they also discovered the **significance of the Sabbath**, the fourth commandment. In fact, this commandment more than any other clearly identifies God as our Creator, the foundation of all true worship—a theme that will be especially relevant in the final days of earth's history (see Rev. 14:6–12). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 72, emphasis mine).

We were certainly given light on the significance of the law, in 1888 when Jones and Waggoner brought the truth that the Ten Commandment law, referred to by Paul in Galatians was "added" and did not exist in eternity past, including the Sabbath. But the leaders of the church rejected that light and instead of appreciating the true significance of the seventh-day Sabbath undermined the truth and hid the light away from the people under a false burden of legalism and rule-keeping, i.e., that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience.

EGW confirmed the position of Jones and Waggoner:

- I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.** … "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). **In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law** (*Selected Messages,* vol. 1. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958, pp. 233, 234, emphasis mine).

Let's be very clear on a couple of points:

- Every Bible scholar of every denomination will acknowledge that the Sabbath of the Bible is the same Sabbath the Jews keep to this day, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday—there is no dispute between people who have studied the question as to which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath.
- The question is whether it matters—and this is the real failing of the SDA church since 1888 for they have embraced the right day but have promoted it with Satan's reason, that it is a made up legal test of loyalty to God and thus while keeping the right day as the Sabbath they are teaching the wrong law, imposed law, the law that creatures make up, and thus they are promoting the wrong God, just as the Jews did 2000 years ago. If we want to finish the Reformation, if we want to hasten the day of the Lord, if we want to give the special message

for this time, we must reject the lie that God's law functions like human law and returning to worshiping Him as Creator—yes we keep the beautiful and wonderful blessing of the seventh-day Sabbath but we present it in its design law reality and remove the legalism attached to it by the lie.

The history we have in the Gospels has been demonstrated that imposed law, rule-keeping, legalism is a false theology with Satan as the god being worshiped, when 2000 years ago the church of God, the people specially called by God, protected by God, blessed by God, the people who had the inspired writings, who had the sanctuary message, who had the health message, who had the seventh day Sabbath kept is all legally and they rejected the Lord of the Sabbath and killed Him.

In the SDA church, we have done the exact same thing, the blessings of God to help prepare us to meet Him have been corrupted because the leadership of the church rejected the design law truth brought to our church in 1888 and instead embraced the Roman idea of law, that God's law are made up rules that require legal oversight, and EGW wrote about the delegates at 1888 who rejected the truth that the 10 Commandments written on stone are not eternal, they were added because of man's sin, and instead taught God's law is a written down set of rules, like humans make. Listen to what she said about the Adventist leadership:

And this is only one quote, there are others in which she says similar things:

- But all the universe of heaven witnessed the **disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ**, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, **they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ**. (1888 1478.2, emphasis mine)

So first question is, have the Adventist leadership truly appreciated the significance of the Sabbath, or have they mispresented both the Sabbath and God's government by continuing to understand it through Roman law, through human law, through imposed law, teaching that it is a rule that we must keep and that God enforces through inflicted punishments?

Let me be clear, I am not and will not undermine the significance, blessing, value, holiness, sacredness of God's Sabbath—no, it is the legalists, the law-keepers, the rule-makers, the religious leaders who teach the Sabbath is a rule that must be kept lest God inflict punishment who undermine it. And it is so sad, heartbreaking really, that people can be enemies of God while they claim to be worshiping God and keeping His commandments—which is the exact lesson we have recorded in the Gospels.

And the root cause of this is the belief that God's law functions like human law—when one believes that lie they can have all the right doctrines, but are worshiping the wrong god, and applying the methods of God's enemy—force, coercion, and inflicted punishments.

So, what is the significance of the law in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary?

This is symbolic language taken from the OT Sanctuary service. In that old covenant system the law was kept in the box, in the ark under the lid. But in the new covenant where is the law written? In the hearts and minds of people (Hebrews 8:10).

In last week's lesson we learned that the construction material of the heavenly sanctuary is what? Living beings! So, what is the imagery of the law in the Most Holy place intended to lead our minds to understand? That God is working to remove the law of sin and death from our hearts and minds, to remove the law of survival of the fittest, the law of fear and me first and restore into our hearts and minds the His law of love, truth, and liberty, such that we are united with Him in at-one-ment in intimacy, which means we know Him, and we are "known" and this is life eternal (John 17:3), this is unity, this is the cleansing of the sanctuary, this is healing and restoration, this is recreation in Christlikeness, this is being a living stone built together in a house for the Lord, this is having the living law of love the law upon our hearts.

Read the second paragraph,

- Satan's aim from the beginning has been to **thwart the worship of God through undermining the law of God**. He knows that to **offend "in one point" means to be "guilty of all"** (James 2:10); so, he encourages people to transgress God's law. Satan hates the Sabbath because it reminds people of the Creator and how He is to be worshiped. But it also is enshrined in God's law in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Because the law is what defines sin, as long as people seek to be faithful to God, then His law must continue to be valid, including the Sabbath commandment. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 72, emphasis mine).

It is true that if we break God's law in one point we break it in all points—**but only if we understand God's law is design law**. If we think God's law is imposed rules, this is not true. Is it true that if someone cheats on their taxes, they are also guilty of child molestation? Is it true that if someone commits adultery, they are also guilty of murder or selling drugs to kids? Would you accept it as true if someone came to you and said, "because you lost your temper and cursed your neighbor you are guilty of rape?" Or would you say, "no I am not!" So the only way it is true that breaking the law in one point means we break it in all points is if we understand that God's law is design law, the protocols of love.

So,

- If we bear false witness against our neighbor we fail to love
- If we dishonor our parents we fail to love
- If we commit adultery we fail to love
- If we murder we fail to love
- If we steal we fail to love
- If we covet we fail to love
- If we have other gods we fail to love

- If we take God's name, calling ourselves Christian but misrepresent Him by teaching He is an imperial dictator source of death, we fail to love
- If we find worthy of our affections false images of God we fail to love
- If we don't remember the Sabbath and don't embrace the truth its existence reveals to us, which means holy living, we fail to love

Failing to love is the transgression of God's law, and the Ten Commandments were added for the need of fallen humanity.

And the Sabbath was created as a gift specifically for humanity but also as an evidence of God's character and government, His design laws, a proof, that Satan lied, a revelation and confirmation that God is love and He gives us genuine freedom—for love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

Satan hates the weekly Sabbath because it is evidence that he lied about God. So Satan attacks the Sabbath in a variety of ways, one way is trying to replace it or get people to forget it so they don't appreciate and realize the truth of God's character, so they accept the lie that God's character is like Satan's, a rule-maker and inflictor of punishments. Or he tries to trick people into teaching the right day of the week but as a legal requirement or made-up rule, imposed under threat of punishment like the Jews and sadly many Adventists have done this. All of which works to replace the truth about God with a lie, a false god in the hearts and minds of the worshipers.

The lesson says the Sabbath reminds people of the Creator—it most certainly can, however, the Jews claimed God as their Father in John 8, but Jesus said that despite their Sabbath keeping, Bible believing, and claims to worship the Creator God, that Satan was their father. So, consider this: if they had the weekly Sabbath and also believed God is Creator, how could Jesus say that Satan was their father?

Because they believed God's law functions like that of a creature! And this was borne out by the evidence of the methods they employed in how they treated others, including Jesus. The brought forth from their hearts the fruits of Satan's character because they worshiped a dictator god.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- **The Day of Atonement was a day of judgment**. All of Israel was commanded to take part in this event by repentance, soul searching, and refraining from all work (see Lev. 23:29–31). On this day alone the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place to **make atonement for sin**. There, in the innermost apartment of the sanctuary, was the ark of the covenant. Within the ark was God's Ten Commandment law, written on tables of stone. **The golden cover of the ark was called the mercy seat,** where **blood** was sprinkled to **cleanse the sanctuary from sin**. God's presence was manifest in Shekinah glory above the mercy seat. Every sacrifice offered

revealed God's mercy toward sinful human beings, but the Day of Atonement shows that **sin is remembered until the day of judgment (Heb. 10:3)** and that it could really be removed only through faith in the **blood of Christ to cleanse from sin** (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). There, in the presence of God, mercy and justice beautifully combine. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 73, emphasis mine).

How do you understand this in light of last week's lesson?

What is the first question we must ask? What law lens are we viewing things through. So, let's go point by point and contrast the two:

- The Day of Atonement was a day of judgment.
    - If viewed through the human law lens what does this mean? Legal examination, ensuring proper punishment was paid by someone, did the person confess their sin and claim the legal payment of Jesus' blood to their sin record in heaven? If so, then the sin recorded in the book can be erased by the mighty power of Jesus' blood and the sinner can be declared righteous while they remain unrighteous.
    - Design law—judgment is our examination of the evidence in the Great Controversy and judging if God is like Jesus revealed, Creator and Sustainer whose laws are design laws, or do we believe God is like Satan, like Baal, a being with immense power but who makes up rules and uses his power to punish rule breakers? We judge whether we can trust God and allow Him to enter our hearts and minds or whether we need a mechanism, a mediator, a payment, a shield, covering, or some other action to be done to an offended god—and instead of trusting God, we trust the mechanic, work, intervention being done to that offended god to protect us from it?
    - And judgment is God's diagnostic judgments, determining who has judged Him correctly and therefore opened their hearts and invited Him into their inmost holy place and He as our heavenly High Priest enters our sanctuaries and diagnostically judges what is wrong, what falsehoods still operate within us that undermine trust, what passions, fears, insecurities doubts, guilt, shame needs to be removed to heal and restore us into the full stature of Christ and He then cleanses all the defects in us restoring us in heart and mind to righteousness, we become the righteousness of God, the living law of love is written upon our hearts, we are cleansed by the blood (life) of Jesus, which we partake of via the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are at-one with Jesus again.
- Make atonement for sin.
    - Imposed law—means making the legal payment to the heavenly government so God's imposed law justice can be satisfied and the legal payment made
    - Design law we realize that atonement is at-one-ment bringing two into oneness, thus we realize it is Jesus cleansing His people from everything that separates them and restoring us to unity with God and Himself.
- The golden cover of the ark was called the mercy seat
    - Imposed law—it is a place where the payment of blood is legally applied to remove the record of sins, pay the legal penalty, assuage or propitiate the wrath of God to legally

merit—through the blood of Jesus mercy from God who grants forgiveness and restrains His wrath

- Design law we realize that the golden cover was not called a mercy seat until Martin Luther (the person who invented penal substitution theology to undermine the doctrine of purgatory). Luther created that title when he translated the Bible into German. Paul uses the name of the lid, which is called the cover, applying that name to Jesus. Jesus covers us, with His grace, His love, His healing power—He substitutes Himself between sinful man and sinless heaven, and becomes the connecting link and the means whereby God's purity, holiness, righteousness is restored into humanity, thus the blood is the symbolic way of showing the very life of Jesus is perfectly reproduced in all who have surrendered to Jesus as their Savior.

- Blood
  - Imposed law—it represents the death penalty paid for our sin crimes
  - Design law—it represents the sinless, holy, and pure life of Jesus that we internalize and partake of, as Leviticus taught, the life is in the blood—(not the death). Consider these two quotations, regarding the blood:
    - "In **the study of the Bible** the converted soul eats the flesh and **drinks the blood** of the Son of God, which He himself interprets as the receiving and doing of His words, that are spirit and life." (Fundamentals of Christian Education 378, emphasis mine).
    - "The **leaven of truth** works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By **it [the truth] the impure are cleansed**, **washed in the blood of the Lamb.**" (Christ's Object Lessons 102, emphasis mine).
  - If we include these insights into our understanding of the sprinkling of the blood by the High Priest to cleanse the sanctuary—what then is happening in reality? Who needs to internalize the truth and be cleansed? Does the Father need truth presented to Him? Does the Father need to be cleansed? Does a building made out of brick, gold, silver need to be cleansed? Of course not, we need to be cleansed.
  - Jesus is cleansing hearts and minds from sinfulness, purifying the believers, again nothing penal or legal going on, it is actual, just as we discussed last week.
- Sin is remembered until the day of judgment
  - Imposed law—there is a legal registry and all sins are recorded and are brought up in the courtroom of heaven to be adjudicated and determine if the proper legal penalty has been paid for each sin crime, i.e., the blood of Jesus has been applied to all the confessed sins, those asked to be forgiven, but if one sin remains on the book, because you forgot to legally ask for Jesus' blood to be applied, then God will be required by law and justice to kill you for that sin, and in fact all the other sins you did remember to ask for forgiveness will be returned the record and your total torture time will be calculated based on all the sins you ever committed and then God will use divine power to inflict this torture, performing a miracle to keep you from dying until all the torture has been completed. Then God will kill you. Now, the legalists won't say it this way, but will dress it up in fancy theological words to make it sound more holy and

righteous, but the meaning is the same. And it is all a lie, it is Satan's perversion of the gospel which occurs when the imposed law lie is believed.

- Design law—sins are symptoms of sinful hearts and minds, and the symptoms, the sins, are forgotten from the relationship as soon as the underlying sin condition is healed or addressed—because they are no longer relevant to reality. The sins are not forgotten as long as the condition remains any more than we forget a child has a fever of 106 as long as they are sick, but when they are well the fever is no longer thought about—we don't have amnesia for the fact they had a fever, but it isn't thought about or considered when the child is well. Likewise, with God there is no registry of sins, no accounting book of misdeeds, there are spiritual medical records that accurately reflect the real-time real-life condition of every heart and mind. This is why the Bible says:
  - "God is love" and "love keeps no record of wrongs" (1 John 4:8 and 1Corinthians 13:5)
  - "Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. **God did not keep an account of their sins**, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ; or God was in Christ making the whole human race his friends." (2 Corinthians 5:19 GNT, emphasis mine).

MONDAY

The Immutability of God's Law

What does this mean? That God's law cannot be changed—what is the only type of law that is not changeable? Design law, the protocols reality is built upon, for to change that type of law destroys reality itself, it would destroy the fabric of the cosmos as God created it. But changing imposed laws doesn't destroy reality.

Now, what about the Ten Commandments—are they eternal or added?

- Did God's law exist in heaven when Lucifer rebelled? Yes!
- Did the seventh-day Sabbath exist in heaven when Lucifer rebelled?
  - Jesus said the Sabbath was made—if it was made it had a beginning, and He said it was made for man—indicating it began when man began, thus wasn't in existence in heaven when Lucifer rebelled.
  - EGW wrote:
    - **The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden.** After God had made the world and created man upon the earth, He made the Sabbath for man. After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The **principles** of the Ten Commandments **existed before the fall** and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings**. After the fall the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were**

given to meet man in his fallen state. (*Story of Redemption* 145, emphasis mine)

- If the Sabbath didn't exist when Lucifer rebelled in heaven and if **"The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.**"(*The Great Controversy* p. 582, emphasis mine), then how is the Sabbath involved in the final events?

The lesson will attempt to make it a test between which day of week one attends worship services, the Bible Sabbath or the festival of Sunday, but if the final issues are the culmination of the controversy that began in heaven over God's law when Lucifer rebelled, and the Sabbath was not part of the opening rebellion over God's law, how is it involved in the end of this conflict?

And that leads us to **TUESDAY's** lesson, The Sabbath and the Law

Read third paragraph,

- At the conclusion of Creation week, God rested in the beauty and majesty of the world He had made. He also rested as an example to us. The Sabbath is a weekly pause to praise the One who made us. As we worship on the Sabbath, we open our hearts **to receive the special blessing He placed in that day only, and in no other day**. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 75, emphasis mine).

I have heard this argument my entire life and I agree with it—I do believe there is something special about the Sabbath, however I have never heard a Adventist leader tell me what that special blessing is. I have asked multiple Adventist pastors and leaders, what is that special blessing, but what they describe is not a blessing exclusive to the Sabbath. What do you think?

The lesson lists us a couple of potential special blessings, but remember, we are looking for what the lesson claims is a blessing that is associated with the seventh-day Sabbath and **no other day.** If we can experience the blessing on another day, then while that may be a blessing, it is NOT **the special blessing** of the Sabbath, for **the special blessing** must be exclusive to the Sabbath and no other. Do you agree with this premise?

So let's test the lesson's assertions:

- **A Memorial of Creation**—it is true that we can remember creation and God as Creator and the Sabbath reminds us of God's creatorship—but is this exclusive to the Sabbath? What about the seven-day weekly cycle, irrespective of which day is the Sabbath, do all the days together organized in a seven-day week give evidence of God's Creatorship? For all the other time measurements, days, months, years, we have astronomic events, the movement of planet and moon to measure these times. But the weekly cycle is established only by creation, so does the Sabbath alone, by itself establish God as Creator, or does the weekly cycle give evidence of this? And does the weekly cycle give evidence for all to consider even without a Bible, for anyone from any time in history could inquire, why do we have 7-day weeks, what is that

based upon? And the Bible also teaches that the heavens declare the glory of God and nature reveals God as Creator. So while it is true the Sabbath speaks to God as Creator, this blessing is not exclusive to the seventh-day.

- The Sabbath as a sign of the plan of salvation—it is true that Jesus rested in the tomb over the Sabbath day and has connected the Sabbath with rest in Him as our Savior—however, Jesus also left us the memorial of communion and baptism which teach us of His death for us and the plan of salvation. And people celebrate His death and resurrection on Easter Sunday, the first day of the week upon which He rose from the dead. So, while we certainly can be blessed by celebrating Jesus' victory over sin and death each Sabbath, that blessing is not exclusive to the Sabbath.
- The Sabbath as a weekly pause to praise and celebrate God—while it is certainly a blessing to do so, are we somehow prohibited or restricted from pausing and praising God on other days of the week? And if we pause to praise God on another day of the week, will we not be blessed by doing so? When Daniel paused three times each day to praise and worship God every day of the week, did he experience blessing or was he only blessed when he did so on the Sabbath? So, it is certainly a blessing to pause each week to praise God, but pausing to praise God and spend time with Him does not set the Sabbath apart from other days.

So again, what is the special blessing of the Sabbath? What does the Sabbath provide that no other day of the week can?

Consider the Sabbath in Eden, before Adam and Eve sinned. Was its purpose there so that they could physically rest and recover from a hard work week?

- What was the condition of the world when the Sabbath was made?
- Consider the type of activities that Adam and Eve did during the six work days while in Eden:
    - Went for walks in nature
    - Studied nature
    - Interacted with the animals
    - Walked with God in the cool of every week day
    - Appreciated God and all He had done in the creation of the world
    - Talked with angels
    - Did they have to pull weeds?
    - Was there any planting to do?
    - Any harvesting and storing in barns?
    - Any fertilizing, irrigating, or pesticides to spread?
    - Were there houses to build?
    - Was there laundry, vacuuming to do, or dishes to wash?
    - Was there anything for them to do that we call work?
- What was the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden?

In other words, were Adam and Eve's non-Sabbath activities very similar to the activities we find valuable to do on Sabbath?

Did Adam and Eve do any of the following on Sabbath in Eden?

- Attend church services?
- Have communion ceremony?
- Go to confession?
- Do penance?
- Pay tithe or bring offerings?
- Would they still walk in nature, pick fruit from the trees to eat, interact with the animals, converse with God and angels?
- So what was different for Adam and Eve about the Sabbath than any other day of the week?
- Was the difference primarily in their behavior or something else?

Could the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden be in what the day itself revealed? Could it be in what the day itself represented? And could the Sabbath day reveal something about God that God wants every human to understand, to know both intellectually but also experientially about Him? **Could the Sabbath be different from the other six days of the week not because of what Adam and Eve did differently, but because of <u>what God did differently</u> on the seventh day of creation week**?

As the commandment says "for in six days God created the heavens, earth, sea and all that in them is, but on the seventh-day **God rested**." The Sabbath is a memorial to God's character and methods of truth, love, and freedom—the Creator God on Sabbath STOPPED using power. The Commandment calls our attention to the contrast of what God did—and we have failed to recognize it and instead focus on His incredible power to create or our own selves, our behavior.

Praise God we serve the Creator the all-powerful one—but the question isn't whether He is powerful, the question in the Great Controversy is whether God can be trusted with the power, and thus the Sabbath is proof, evidence, of God's character and methods. That despite having all power, He gives us real freedom—He does NOT use His power against His creatures. He does not force Lucifer and the rebelling angels into line. He leaves all free!

Thus, because God created Adam and Eve in the middle of this war He also created the Sabbath to be a reminder, a sign, a signal, an indicator, a testament, an evidence, a memorial, a flag, pennant, signet, a revelation, a proof of God's character, methods, principles, law, and form of government!

The Sabbath was made by God and it was made holy, blessed, sanctified, set apart, how? Was the Sabbath made holy by legislation? Was it made holy by declaration, or was it made holy by both design and action, by deed, by how it came to be, by what God tied to that day in its origin by His actions to rest and not use power? In other words, the Sabbath was set apart at and by creation and the actions of God in its origin.

Thus the Sabbath is evidence of God's character and methods in a way the other six days are not, the other six days we learn God has power. Only the Sabbath reveals that God is love and gives us real freedom and thus we are safe in the universe with Him for all eternity for He will never use His power

against us. Just the opposite of the imposed law legalists who teach God will use power to punish Sabbath breakers.

Is there some divine power attached to and contained within the Sabbath, some power we need in the controversy?

Paul wrote in Romans:

- I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

What is the power that Paul is referring to that is found in the gospel? What type of power is this? Is this the power of physical might? No! it is the power of truth and love, the truth and love of God's character, methods, principles and design law.

This is the same good news power contained in the Sabbath!

The Sabbath is a sign, a symbol, an evidence, a proof, a promise, a commitment, a reality built into time itself of God's character and design law government. The war in heaven began when Lucifer alleged God is arbitrary, a rule-maker, a being who uses power to take away freedom through infliction of punishment for rule-breaking. In other words, Satan's rebellion started by attacking God's law, teaching that God's laws are nothing but made up rules and as we have discussed this one lie changes everything we believe and think about God, undermining trust in God.

So, how does the Sabbath and our observance fit into God making us holy if it is not a rule that we are required to keep?

Consider this historical quote:

- **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter**. **We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the **Sabbath as a sign** between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent <u>the principles of His government</u>**. **They will bring into <u>daily practice</u> the laws of His kingdom**. **<u>Daily</u> it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day** they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. **Every day** their light will shine forth to others in good works. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 6 p. 353).

What is described here? Is this describing a one day in seven experience or a daily experience?

The Sabbath is a gift from God that is to be employed by us as a spiritual weapon in our cooperation with God to be a holy priesthood all week long as we remember the Sabbath and all it reveals and incorporate those principles into our daily living!

How is the Sabbath useful in our holiness?

How does the Lord make us holy?

- Does God do this with divine power alone, or is there a part that we must play in that process of our being made holy?
- Do we have choices to make?
- Do our choices have any impact in our salvation and our being made holy by God's divine power?
- Can God make someone holy while they actively choose to rebel against Him?
- Can a person make themselves holy by anything they can do apart from God?
- Is there some type of choosing that we must make that is involved in God's plan to transform and save us? What? And how is the Sabbath involved?

Is salvation about making sure we have the right set of doctrinal beliefs? That we have a correct understanding of which day is the Sabbath, how to perform biblical baptism, belief in a literal 7-day creation week, accurate understanding and practice of tithing and offerings, correct understanding of marriage, right beliefs about the state of the dead, accurate interpretation of Bible prophecy?

Does correctly and rightly understanding all these truths mean one has salvation?

Understand, salvation is not found in believing the right list—salvation is found in trusting the right God.

And if one has the right list, but understands that list, including the Sabbath, through imposed law, then they have the wrong god.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson title is the Mark of the Beast

What do you understand this to be?

There are longer versions of this idea, but the following quote gets the point across:

- The **sign, or seal**, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . . The **mark of the beast is the opposite of this--the observance of the first day of the week**. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 8, p. 117).

Any concerns or questions about this statement?

Statements like this are often misunderstood and misused because they are viewed through the imposed law model.

And the lesson provides a quote that makes clear is it not about the specific day, but the methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement associated with the day, from **FRIDAY's** lesson

- "Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance **shall be enforced by law**, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath [which is the embodiment of liberty], then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. [By preferring the methods of Rome, of imposed law, of coercion of conscience, of imperialism, of the beast, rather than the principles of truth, love, and liberty that originate in God]. He is paying homage to Rome and **to the power which enforces the institution** ordained by Rome. [Remember all imposed law comes from Satan and all compelling power comes from Satan. It is the methods employed that are the problem.] **He is worshiping the beast and his image.** [Not by going to church on Sunday, but by embracing, agreeing, with, and practicing the methods of the beast, imposing law and coercing others to obey.] As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—'the mark of the beast.' And **it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast**.' " (*The Great Controversy*, p. 449, emphasis mine). And they mark themselves in their forehead when they believe and prefer the methods of imposed law with coercive enforcement, and they mark themselves in their hands when they don't agree in heart, but go along with their support and works to protect themselves and their property and wealth instead of standing for truth, love, and liberty—all symbolized by the Bible Sabbath.]

What is a mark or sign?

A symbol that stands for or signifies something else: So these two days of worship stand as signs or symbols for something else, what? **Two types of governments or two ways of governing!**

How did the Sabbath become a day set apart from the other days? By creation, by design, thus the Sabbath is a sign of God's government or kingdom which operates upon design law.

How did Sunday get set apart as a day of worship from the other days? By legislation, by man-made rules. Thus Sunday becomes a mark or sign of imposed law and represents governments that are made by sinful beings—because created beings cannot build reality, we can only make up rules and enforce

those rules with inflicted punishments. So these two days are symbolic, or signs, of two types of laws, which result in two types of governments, which have two different gods.

Consider the days as flags of two different governments or seals of two different governments. Are the flags of the government the government, or only signs, marks, or symbols of the government?

The flag of the USA has historically stood for liberty and equality of all persons, the land of opportunity. Those who oppose these historic principles over the last decade have worked hard to attack the flag, to devalue it, to kneel rather than stand with hand over the heart when the national anthem is played, to work to assign false values of exploitation, enslavement, and abuse to the flag. Why? Are such attacks actually attacks on the flag, or attacks against the government that the flag represents?

Likewise, the various attacks against and actions to replace the Bible Sabbath are not primarily attacks against the Sabbath day. They are attacks intended to undermine and replace God's design law government with Satan's imposed law government—replacing God's kingdom of love, with Satan's fear-based kingdom of survival of the fittest, and dethroning Jesus and enthroning Satan into our hearts and minds as the one we admire and worship.

Could a person wear the flag of one country, which marks them as being a member of that country, but actually be a traitor and fighting for the other side?

Think about that when you consider who is on God's side and who is on Satan's side by merely what day a person attends church.

So, what is the mark of the beast? Is it attending church on a day other than Sabbath? Consider this quote:

- The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands**. **To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** (Review and Herald, July 13, 1897 par. 5).

What decision did the beast make and what ideas did it advocate that are in direct opposition to the word of God? Is it not the idea that God's law is imposed and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin? And justice requires the sovereign to use power to inflict external punishment on rule-breakers? And the church, having changed the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday in their legislative counsels give evidence or a mark that they do not consider God's law to be design law, but believe God's law is like human law, imposed rules that can be changed.

Thus the issue in the end, of which the two days stand as signs, is the issue of God's law of love, versus Satan's imposed law construct; God's rule of love versus Satan's rule of fear and selfishness;

God's design law versus worldly imposed laws. It comes down to the methods one practices and **the two days are symbolic of two systems**.

And what does the beastly systems of the earth do? They coerce, they force, they inflict punishment for disobedience. Consider this quote:

- But when the decree shall go forth **enforcing** the counterfeit sabbath, **and** the loud cry of the third angel **shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image**, the line will be clearly drawn **between the false and the true**. **Then** those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast. (Evangelism 234, 235).

Is the mark about the day upon which one attends church, or is it about the law one believes God governs by and therefore the methods employed, and ultimately the character one forms as they become like the god they worship?

The mark is about the methods one employs in how they treat others, which law people embrace into their hearts in how they live and treat others. Do they practice, truth, love, and freedom, or do they employ lies, fear/selfishness, and coercion?

Thus, any time we use power to coerce the conscience of others we are acting beastly and marking ourselves as loyal to the beast and not loyal to the kingdom of God.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the 3 angels' message of Revelation 14. If you haven't read our magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels, we invite you to do so as we present this message through design law.

But any questions about the message of the three angels?

How do you explain them to people?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 10
Spiritualism Exposed

by Tim Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Come And Reason – South Africa has also created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group at**: https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0**

New Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available. If you have a US Postal address and would like some to share, just email your requests to Requests@ComeandReason.com and we will send them at no cost.

MAGAZINE: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ, is now available! https://comeandreason.com/lie-that-deceived-angels/

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

SABBATH

What comes to mind from the lesson title? Let's define spiritualism and then explore why God warns against it and how we can protect ourselves from it.

Spiritualism, in all its forms, whether communing with the dead—seances, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, or other forms of spiritualism such as crystal balls, reading tea leaves, palm reading, astrology, or communing directly with demons—satanic occult worship, or spiritualism that is dressed up in Christian language and given Christian labels—all if it has one common root: *The pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason!*

And the result of spiritualism—despite its desire to gain knowledge is actually the damaging of minds, the rejection of facts, evidence, and truth, the diminishment of discernment, the undermining of reason, the belief in the irrational, fantastical, and superstitious.

Consider:

- Eve at the Tree of Knowledge—she is confronted with the miracle of a talking serpent, something that wowed the senses and astonished the understanding, and then she was tempted to gain knowledge without investigating the evidence for herself and using her reason to examine all the facts and truths of the situation that God had previously provided.
- King Saul sought out the witch of Endor because he wanted knowledge
- Why do people go to fortune tellers?
- Why do people read horoscopes?

How much truth does Satan have on his side? How much truth is on God's side?

So, if Satan is to succeed, what is an essential strategy that he must employ to get people to follow him? The denial, devaluing, undermining, sidelining of the truth, a willingness to believe based on something other than truth—so spiritualism in its fullest definition includes all the strategies and methods of demons to divert minds away from truth and accept lies and falsehoods, this can be:

- False signs, wonders, and miracles
- Emotionalism, activities designed to stir emotions and make one susceptible to suggestion or replace evidence, truth, and facts with emotional experiences, such as praying long and hard until the feelings change while ignoring the truth that God has given.
- Various mind-altering substances designed to interfere with reason and understanding and create false experiences like hallucinogens (perhaps why in Revelation 9:21 and 18:23 the Bible describes the wicked using sorceries in the KJV and magic in the NIV version and the Greek translated as sorceries or magic is *pharmakeia.* Sadly, some have interpreted this to mean all medicine, it does not, it means the various potions and substances concocted by shaman, witches, magic men and others to cause altered states of reality in order to deceive and alter the mind's ability to tell fantasy from reality. If we were treating a disease state such as schizophrenia that causes hallucinations and delusions with medication that restored

reason and clear thinking this would not be the *pharmakeia* or magic of the wicked, but moving minds back to God's design and restoring the ability to discern truth from fiction or falsehood.

- Mystical practices designed to awe, shock, and suspend investigation of evidence and the use of critical reasoning, many religions of the world use pomp, ceremony, ritual, smoke and mirrors, incredible edifices, all designed to suspend thinking and create a wondering mind that is susceptible to molding and shaping
- Authority of office, believe because the person in charge said so—this is the way the beast of Revelation works—and is a form of spiritualism, of deceiving and seducing minds, by declaration, claim, proclamation, rule that is contrary to truth, God's methods and principles, seeking to get people to surrender their minds to another person.

Consider this historical quote about Jesus' method, from the book *The Desire of Ages*, do you agree with the application and method described from the facts of Jesus' life?

- The King of glory stooped low to take humanity. Rude and forbidding were His earthly surroundings. **His glory was veiled**, that the **majesty** of His outward form **might not become an object of attraction**. **He shunned all outward display**. Riches, worldly honor, and human greatness can never save a soul from death; **Jesus purposed that no attraction of an earthly nature should call men to His side. Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw those who would follow Him**. The character of the Messiah had long been foretold in prophecy, and **He desired men to accept Him upon the testimony of the word of God**. (*Desire of Ages* 43, emphasis mine).

It is clear Jesus did in fact use the method of avoiding the pomp, circumstance, wealth, position, family connections, or other elements of earthly power and advanced truth, not just fact truth, but truth lived out in a righteous, sinless, life that embodied the living law of love.

Why does God use this method? God is all powerful; He could out-duel Satan in a battle of signs and wonders so easily. God could perform bigger and better miracles and could easily demonstrate more power that Satan without ever resorting to direct violence to harm Satan—why doesn't God use this method?

And this question connects to last week's lesson and the true purpose of why God created the Sabbath as a gift for us and why we are to remember it.

The reason God doesn't use such methods is because He cannot get what He wants if He used such methods—and what does God want? What is God's desired outcome from this conflict with Satan? Is God's desire only to eliminate sin from the universe? God could do that by wiping out all intelligent life—but then what? What does God want? He wants to eliminate sin while winning His intelligent creatures to love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship, faithfulness, understanding. Can God achieve this outcome, winning people to genuine love, trust, and friendship by the use of might and power, even if it is only miracle working might and power? Or does increasing the display of might

and power intimidate, awe, shock, and shut down understanding and lead to mindless obedience based on fear?

That is why the Bible teaches “not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6).

And the Sabbath was given as a gift to humanity when God RESTED, when God stopped using power, when God stepped back and created a time for free thinking and contemplation, when God’s character of love, truth, and freedom was revealed in action and deed by the creation of this blessed day.

Understand, if God were like Satan alleges, if God’s law functioned like Satan’s kingdoms, the kingdoms of this world—made up rules that require infliction of punishment—there would be no weekly Sabbath; there would be no true freedom. God would have demonstrated His power, recited the rules, and then given people a choice, conform or be punished. But the Sabbath proves God’s laws are design laws and that love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. And God gave us this gift because in His foreknowledge He knew we needed to remember all week long the truth about God, His character, His methods, His design laws and live them out all week long because in this world, the natural sinful heart believes the highest form of justice is law and law enforcement. The Sabbath calls us to a higher standard of reality—to Creator worship whose laws are design laws.

So, Satan, the great deceiver has a multiple forms of spiritualism, tricks to divert the minds of people away from the truth, to get them to stop reasoning and thinking. Our responsibility is to reject all such methods and practices and exercise our God given reasoning powers to be lovers of the truth and grow in truth every day in our relationship with God so that, as Paul wrote, we are fully persuaded in our own minds and have become mature people who can discern the right from the wrong.

Read first paragraph,

- Decades ago, stories surfaced about near death experiences (NDEs), in which people who died and were then revived gave incredible accounts of what they had seen and heard while “dead.” Millions now believe that these accounts are evidence that the dead are not really dead. This foundational belief of spiritualism is one of Satan’s most widespread and effective deceptions. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 80).

Many people believe Near Death Experiences (NDE) preview to what happens when a person dies. Most NDEs have a common theme, a narrow corridor or narrowing of the world, an approaching bright light, a person representing someone from the other side and a line, from which there is no return, if crossed. These events are typically described as peaceful, transcendent, beautiful, and euphoric. Reports of NDE experiences go back almost 2000 years and are reported by approximately 20% of people who suffer a heart attack and are revived.

Interestingly, however, a person does not have to be near death to experience a NDE. A 1990 study at the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center in Charlottesville of 58 people who had experienced NDEs found that half would have survived without medical care. Something as innocuous as fainting can produce an NDE.

There are many theories about the cause of NDEs to include hypoxia (lack of oxygen to the brain), which could trigger seizures in the temporal lobes and cause the symptoms of NDE, hypotension (loss of blood pressure to the brain), endorphin and enkephalin (brain produced mood elevators and pain killers) release, drugs injected during resuscitation, low blood sugar and other metabolic processes.

Kevin Nelson, a neuropsychologist at the University of Kentucky, has done research into NDEs and offered another reasonable explanation. NDEs are a form of sleep disorder called REM intrusion in which dreams occur in a non-sleep state. During this time a person is awake but paralyzed, may experience the sensation of floating, will have vivid dreams that would be experienced more like a hallucination and have out of body experiences. All of this will be remembered quite vividly after the event is over with a sense of conviction to the veracity of the experience.

A study published in 1994 by Thomas Lempert, then at the Rudolph Virchow Clinic in Berlin, Germany, documented how volunteers made themselves faint through a combination of hyperventilating, standing, and breath-holding. Many of them experienced euphoric NDE-like sensations such as floating out of their body, entering another world, or encountering supernatural beings. This is thought to be due to activating the vagus nerve which stimulates the brainstem to cause these NDEs. This would explain the high occurrence of NDE in people being resuscitated from a heart attack as vagal nerve stimulation occurs during this process.

The Bible is silent on near death experiences. But what is interesting is that the entire idea that the dead can communicate to us, or that we continue to be aware and conscious after death based on near death experiences is all **based on an obvious lie that everyone ignores**—and it is stated right in the name of the events—what is the lie?

The people having **near** death experiences are NOT dead! They may be **near** death, but they are **not dead**. And therefore what they are experiencing are the experiences of a living being, not a dead being, so the only rational and accurate conclusion is that these are experiences of living beings and cannot shed light on what the dead may or may not experience, because in fact, the people are not dead.

The reason people believe these NDEs are insights into what happens at death is because they believe other lies, such as what death actually is. Some people think that death when the heart stops beating. I have had patients tell me they died and were revived because their hear stopped beating and they were resuscitated. But the heart stopping beating is not death. Many people have had their heart stop beating, in fact many people have had their hearts removed and another person’s heart implanted and those people are not dead.

True and actual death (what the Bible calls first death) is necrosis; it is not cessation of the normal function of a bodily organ for a brief period of time, it is the necrosis of the body as a whole and most particularly the brain. This is what happened to Lazarus and why Jesus waited 3 days to go resurrect him. He wanted there to be no doubt that Lazarus was dead, and Martha's words are so helpful. When Jesus said to roll away the stone, she warned that it would stink because the body had begun to decay. That is death.

These near-death experiences are happening to people BEFORE they die, while they are still alive, and therefore to conclude anything happening to the living is evidence of what the dead experience is factually wrong and a method to deceive. But do you see how deeply lies have become imbedded into people's thinking that this very obvious and simple truth is denied?

Putting this obvious truth together what the Bible reveals about what the dead know and what do we learn? What stories are recorded from Lazarus after his resurrection? None, why? Because the Bible tells us the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5,6). In fact, in 100% of the cases in the Bible where a person died and was resurrected the Bible records nothing from them of their experience while dead.

Further the Bible warns against consulting those who claim to be able to communicate with the dead, for they are actually communicating with demons—fallen angels who are impersonating the dead.

- When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 18:9-13 NIV84).

So, if we are using our reasoning ability, and we are also using the evidence we have, we must conclude that there is no evidence that near death experiences provide any information on what the dead know or experience.

Read the second paragraph,

- In fact, spiritualism began back in Eden with the serpent's lie to Eve, "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4, NKJV). This idea also lay at the root of one of the greatest spurious religious movements of the nineteenth century with the Fox sisters' claim, later admitted to be fraudulent, that they could receive answers to their questions from spirits of the dead. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 80).

In Genesis, before sin, we have God telling Adam and Eve that if they should break trust with Him and eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would die. We have Satan telling Eve that she will not die. Who is telling the truth?

Why then do most Christians teach that Satan was telling the truth, that people continue to live in some form or another regardless of whether they are righteous or wicked if God said that if they sin they would die?

Because there is an underlying premise that is believed by many, it comes out of paganism and it along with the imposed law lie infected Christianity, and that lie is that when God created Adam and Eve He created them with some part of their being that is immortal, their spirit or their soul is believed to be immortal, so that it is believed that when God said they would die He meant only their body would die, but that their spirit or soul would live on eternally either in heaven if they partake of salvation or in the torments of hell if they are not saved.

But it is an assumption without evidence that God created humans with some part of them that is immortal. What are the problems if we conclude humans were given immortality in Eden?

First, this believe is a direct attack on the character of God, whether people realize it or not. What does it say about God if we believe that He created Adam and Eve with immortality?

- Either God doesn't have foreknowledge, or He is naïve, or He is malicious and sadistic, why?
- Consider, what does it say about God if Adam and Eve were created with immortality and sinned and also have the ability to procreate children and pass along both immortality and their sin-condition? In other words, what would it say about the Creator if He created them with the ability to create beings in their image and they sin and then have children who have immortal souls but are born into sin not by their own choice but Adam and Eve's, and some of those children live only a few years and never have the gospel presented to them and then die bodily, but have their "immortal souls" tormented in the fires of hell for all eternity?
- If this is true then what kind of God must God be? Either He doesn't know the future—and is also naïve—"Well I never thought that could happen, boy, sure caught me off guard there," or He is sadistic and malicious, "Yeah, I knew billions of people would never choose salvation, but I created them in such a way that they will be tormented for all eternity despite them never having a choice to avoid it."

No, the doctrine of natural immortality of the soul is a lie, it is demonic, it is designed to create distrust in God and undermine the truth about God's character. But we don't have to conclude this based only on our ability to reason out the implications of such a doctrine—the Bible is quite specific on this.

Evidence from Scripture that immortality is not possessed by humans, but a gift of God to the righteous:

- After God drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen 3:24
    - Why bar the way to the tree of life if they were already immortal?
    - How is barring the way to the tree of life an act of mercy, not a punishment for sin? Because it prevented there from being immortal sinners. Living in sin without the hope of healing and salvation is not happiness, it is torment and God will not allow this.
- "God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:15,16).

- "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)
- "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." (Galatians 6:8).

Could anyone really have happiness in heaven, have all tears wiped away as is promised in Revelation—if for all eternity future we hear the wails, cries, suffering, and torment of our unsaved loved ones?

Think about it, what happens in the hearts of any righteous person when they hear an animal crying in pain? How much more when we hear people being tormented? Can you think of anything more demonic, more intended to turn hearts away from love and trust in God, than the belief that heaven will be a place where the righteous are happy w**hile their loved ones are being tormented for all eternity by God**? It is a lie!

God would save every lost soul if He could, but He cannot force people to love Him, and to force those who prefer lies to truth, who have hardened themselves in selfishness, who prefer evil to righteousness, exploitation to selfless service, villainy to nobility into His unveiled glorious presence where the fires of infinite truth and love burn freely would be torment to them. Thus, He gives them freedom to choose what they desire. And when He unveils His life-giving glory, and the righteous are transformed, and radiate those fires of truth and love from their being, like Moses on the mountain, or Moses and Elijah at transfiguration, the wicked beg for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from love and truth. They would rather not exist than to live in purity, in holiness, in righteousness. So God grants them their choice, in harmony with His character of truth, love, and freedom—He sets them free to reap what they insist upon, complete and eternal separation from Him the source of life and they die eternally. Thus the punishment from sin is reaped from sin, and that punishment is eternal, but the punishing, the torment, the suffering is not eternal as the wicked are gone for all eternity. The memory of them is not gone, the righteous will remember for all eternity the choice of the wicked, the actions of God, and the reality of God's character and government and recognize how God longed to save these people, but love cannot be forced, and that the only just and merciful action God can take, that is in complete harmony with His character and design laws is to set them free to reap what they have sown into their own characters.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Witchcraft is demonic. It seduces people into false worship and counterfeits a genuine relationship with God, but it can never satisfy the deepest needs of the heart. Spiritualism is at the heart of Satan's plan to take the world captive. But Jesus, by His grace and power, sets

captives free from the chains of evil that bind them. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 81).

What is witchcraft? What is the power of witches, sorcerers, warlocks, witch doctors, and shamans?

Their power is the ability to deceive and seduce minds into believing lies, to get people to surrender thinking, to believe things that are not true, that contradict reality, and they use a variety of methods, signs, wonders, tricks, slight-of-hand, sometimes working with demons (fallen angels) to perform miracles or signs and wonders. But the goal is to seduce minds into believing things that are not true, to suspend reason, and to surrender decision-making to some other power than a noble, God-inspired, self-governance—the last fruit of the Spirt.

Examples:

- King Saul visited the witch of Endor. Saul had already been given immense amount of truth to know this was all a fraud, a con, a lie, not from God but from the evil one—yet Saul rejected all of this truth which, had he applied it to his life would have protected him from the deception he accepted because he would have never gone and listened to the witch in the first place. When visiting the witch he already believed a lie before he got there, that the witch was able to provide him knowledge without the use of reason or actual evidence. He believed the witch could conjure up Samuel's disembodied spirit and get counsel from Samuel. What Saul experienced was a fallen angel, commonly known as a demon, impersonating Samuel, and that demon lied to Saul and gave him a report designed to discourage and frighten Saul, which it did and led to Saul's poor choice and ultimately the taking his own life by suicide. Multiple layers of lies in this experience designed to seduce the senses and confuse the mind and discourage the spirit leading to hopelessness and surrender.
- All the forms of pagan worship in Scripture that seduce the senses and impair thinking with the rituals, sensual passions, fertility rights, intoxicating substances and superstitious irrational beliefs. Paul addresses this in Romans 14 speaking about foods offered to idols. The weak in faith, those who don't understand reality, believe that if they eat food offered to an idol then that idol will have some power over them. The problem is not in the food, or its being offered to the idol, but in the lie that a piece of stone or wood could have some power over them, the danger is in the fear-based superstitious belief. The mature in faith know it is non-sense and can eat anything without fear, but the immature cannot, not until they grow up and understand the truth. This is how demons work, they work through various falsehoods to inflame fear, diminish reasoning abilities, and get people trapped in false, fantastical, superstitious, irrational belief systems—including many things taught in Christianity.
- People going to seances or using Ouija boards, horoscopes or other spiritualistic activities etc. The people doing these activities already believe multiple lies, that the dead can communicate with us; that these devices have some ability to connect to another realm; that there is no God or there are no demons; or that witchcraft and the occult is just an innocent game; and they suspend reason, suspend the investigation of evidence and surrender their minds to what they see and hear from these sources.

- Speaking in tongues—receiving a message from what some believe to be supernatural sources that they cannot understand for themselves and is accepted as truth without investigating the evidence, comparing with Scripture, and reasoning for self.
- Praying for the burning bosom instead of using reason and investigating the evidence in Scripture, science/nature, and experience. In other words, replacing truth with feelings.

Any modern examples of warlocks or witches working in society today—and remember their power is to get people to suspend reason, believe on some authority, claim, proclamation that denies evidence, denies reality, and promotes a message that is directly contrary to Scripture and the truth God has revealed?

- All those world leaders who keep calling people to re-image reality. In other words, they are telling people to replace reality with imagination, with make-believe, with pretend, with what is not true, with fantasy, with myth, with cunningly devised fables.
- Examples of this include the promoters of the lie that there is no male and female—and let me be clear here. I am not speaking about people who suffer from some identity problem, people with real mental of physical conditions that cause them distress and who need our love and compassion and help. I am speaking of people who deny reality, and twist the truth. The truth is there are real people who are confused, who are struggling, but rather than seeking to help these people, the deceivers in society instead exploit this vulnerable group to create and promote the lie that there is no male and female, that gender is just a made up idea. It is demonic, it is spiritualistic, it is designed to get people to suspend reasoning and to accept claims that deny reality, and to deny the truth that God has revealed to us. For the Bible is clear, God made them male and female. Again just as in the NDE which in their name tell you it is not death, but near death, meaning the people are still alive and thus cannot tell us about death, but this obvious fact is denied and ignored to embrace the lie. So too in the trans-gender movement the name also reveals the lie. Consider, can you take a trans-continental flight if there are no continents? You can't be trans-gendered if there are no male and female. And male and female is not defined by how one feels but by objective physical facts, just like someone in America may feel like they are in Europe, but that feeling doesn't change reality. And while we can move a person from one continent to another, we cannot change North America into Europe—likewise a male can never become a female or vice versa. But minds can definitely be confused and we need to help people who are confused, just as we seek to help people who are confused about where they are.
- The promoters of the Green movement, and the lies related to climate change—all demonic lies that specifically deny the truth of God's Word, when God promised that the climate and seasons would continue until the Earth is destroyed at the second coming and then remade anew at the third coming.
- Those who promote the lie that God's government works like human governments and that God's law is imposed made up rules and justice is the infliction of punishment and obedience to God is blind obedience to voices in position of authority. This is fantasy; it is falsehood; it is not reality in God's universe; it is, in fact, demonic.

MONDAY & TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on what the Bible teaches us about death. Is death a punishment inflicted by God for sin, or is it a natural consequence of sin when God stops using power to hold it at bay?

The problem is that the term death is used in Scripture to describe two different states: first death describes the death that both the righteous and wicked experience and is described in Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, as a sleep, a state of suspended animation in which the person is unaware of what is transpiring?

Human beings are created by God and have three components, body, soul, spirit.

- Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NET, emphasis mine).

Interestingly, computers are also tripartite and serve as a poignant object lesson. In order to have an **operational computer,** one needs **hardware, software,** and an **energy source.** Having only one or two of these three will result in a computer that will not operate. All three are required for actual functioning.

In a similar way, to have an **operational** (functioning) **human being,** it requires all three components—**body, soul,** and **spirit**:

- The Greek word for **body** is σῶμα [*soma*] and is analogous to a computer's **hardware, including the CPU**—the physical machine, including our brain.
- The Greek word for **soul** is ψυχή [*psuche*], from which we get psyche, as in *psych*iatry and *psych*ology, and it means our individuality—our heart, unique personhood, character, identity. It is analogous to a computer's **software** (including database/datasets/data).
- And the Greek word for **spirit** is πνεῦμα [*pneuma*], from which we get pneumonia or pneumatic, and it means wind, air, or breath—as in the breath of life. This is our **energy source**—the life-energy originating from God.

When a computer runs out of power, what state does it go into? It "sleeps." This is exactly how the Bible describes those who die the first death: they "sleep," awaiting the resurrection (Psalm 7:5, 13:3; Matthew 9:24; John 11:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). With this in mind, we can now answer what actually happens to the various components of a human being at death.

At the first death:

- The body returns to dust (Genesis 3:19, Psalm 44:25, Ecclesiastes 3:20);
- The spirit—life energy—returns to God who gave the breath of life (Ecclesiastes 12:7);
- But what about the soul (*psuche*/psyche)—the individuality, the software? Where does that go?

If someone stole your laptop and was threatening to destroy it but you had a perfect copy of the data backed up on a cloud server, then you might say, "I'm not afraid of the one who can destroy my laptop (hardware/body/soma) but cannot destroy the software [soul/*psuche*]." This is like what Jesus described in Matthew 10:28 when He spoke about those who might kill us for our faith in Him.

Why is it that the killing of the body cannot destroy the soul? Because the soul is our individuality, our unique personhood, and it is distinct from the body. The question is, *where does the soul go when it is absent from the body?* The apostle Paul answers:

- Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be **absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord** (2 Corinthians 5:6–8 KJV).

But where would our souls/individualities/software be stored in heaven? Would it not be in the heavenly records—the Lamb's Book of Life ("servers"), where our *names/characters* are recorded? If someone destroyed your laptop but your data was safe on a cloud server, the data would not be active and operational but dormant—awaiting download to new hardware. Likewise, when our bodies die and decay to dust, the breath of life returns to God, and our souls/individualities are safely stored on the heavenly "servers" in the presence of the Lord, in what state are they? They are asleep/dormant/in stasis, awaiting download into new bodies (hardware) at the resurrection.
Paul brilliantly describes this very process:

- Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep,** or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 NIV84).

Did you notice that the very same righteous dead who arise out of the ground are also coming down out of heaven with Christ—and that they are described as coming from heaven in a state of sleep? How can this be? Because their souls/individualities/software, which are stored on the heavenly "servers," are coming down with Christ to be downloaded into their new immortal bodies during the resurrection at the second coming! Jesus, the Builder of our tripartite beings, understood this, proclaiming:

- I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die (John 11; 25, 26 NIV84).

The righteous may *sleep*, but they never *die*. Their individualities are safe with Christ in heaven!

But the Bible says:

- "For the **wages of sin is death,** but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction"** (Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- **"Sin**, when it is full-grown, **gives birth to death"** (James 1:15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

These texts seem to make it clear that death is the direct result of sin, not an infliction by God, and the Bible says elsewhere that the power of death is Satan's power, not God's:

- "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil"** (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The power of death is the devil's power and that God does not inflict death as punishment for sin, then what do we do with texts like this one?

- "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand" (Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84).

Is the Bible contradicting itself? Does God use Satan's power? Is God the source of life and death? Is death inflicted by God?

It all depends on how we understand God's law functions, if we understand God's law is imposed rules then we falsely believe God is the source of death inflicted as punishment.

But when we return to design law, understanding that God is Creator and all His laws are the protocols that He built reality and life to operate upon—like the laws of physics, health, and the moral laws—then we realize that God is not the source of death, but that death is the result of breaking away from God and His design protocols for life, like breaking the law of respiration by tying a plastic bag over one's head.

Then what do we do with Deuteronomy 32:39? We cannot ignore this text, so how do we understand it?

As we do with all Scripture, we place it in the setting of the entire inspired record, the setting of the Great Controversy, and we do not form our understanding only on one text. And with just a little more Bible searching, we find this clarifying text:

- "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up" (1 Samuel 2:6 NIV84).

In this passage, we can see the answer through Hebrew parallelism, in which the second phrase expands upon the first—and what do we learn? That God is in control of what the Bible calls the first death, not the second death; that God causes the first death but not the second death and that He will raise people from the first-death experience.

As the great Reformer Martin Luther wrote, "It is enough for us to know that souls do not leave their bodies to be threatened by the torments and punishments of hell, but enter a prepared bedchamber in which they sleep in peace" (Weimarer Ausgabe, 43, 360, 21–23 (to Genesis 25:7–10); also Exegetica opera latina, Vol 5–6 1833 p. 120 and the English translation: Luther's Works, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: CPH), 4:313).

The first death is not the end of life; it is a pause in one's life—the life will continue at the resurrection.

The second death is the death that is the "wages of sin" death (Romans 6:23); it is the death in which both body and soul are destroyed. This death does not happen to anyone until *after* the judgment—after the second resurrection at the end of the 1,000 years. This is the death that occurs when one is completely and permanently cut off from God, who is the source of life. And the second death has no power over the righteous, only the wicked (Revelation 2:11; 20:6).

Understanding these two types of death allows us to understand Deuteronomy 32:39 and 1 Samuel 2:6 and how the devil, not God, holds the power of death.

God is the source of the first death—the sleep-death, which is an artificial state of suspended animation instigated and caused by God's grace to limit the destructiveness of sin and to allow time for the plan of salvation to be carried out. If not for God's grace in suspending for a time the ultimate consequences of sin (second death), there would be no first death, only the second death. But the Bible tells us that God in "his forbearance had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84). God intervened to create this artificial state of sleep-death so that Jesus' mission to come and overcome as our substitutionary Savior could be accomplished.

Thus, the Bible rightly tells us that God is in control of the sleep-death, and it is God's power to bring this sleep-death and to awaken people from it. But the sleep-death is not the death that is the wages of sin! The death that is the wages of sin is the death that Satan causes—and which Jesus came to destroy:

- "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26 NIV84).

- "Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84).

So, we have two deaths described in Scripture. The first death, the sleep-death, which is not death at all but a period of suspended animation in which a person awaits resurrection, is the artificial state of grace controlled by God for the purpose of saving humanity from sin.

But the second death, eternal death, which is a state of annihilation and from which there is no resurrection, is not from God—it is the result of unremedied sin and is the fruit of Satan's power to alienate people from God, the source of life.

And the second death occurs not when God uses power to inflict it, but when He stops using His power to prevent it. In other words, God has been using power to hold at bay what sin does, but in the final end, God "lets go" and surrenders the persistently rebellious to reap the full consequences of what they have insisted upon, separation from Him, the source of life, and they die eternally. Just as Galatians says: "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (6:8 NIV84).

God is the source of life; Satan and sin are the source of death!

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- The devil will use "signs and wonders" and spectacular miracles to deceive multitudes just before the coming of Jesus. Commenting on the deceptive power of demonic spirits, Ángel Rodríguez makes this telling statement: "Their power of persuasion is to be found not in the content of their message but in the power of supernatural manifestations called 'signs' or 'miracles.' They perform/do (poieō) signs, thus appealing to the affective side of human beings rather than to their discretionary and rational abilities. The fact that these signs are performed by demons shows that the unifying force of the message of the three demons [dragon, beast, and false prophet] is spiritualistic in nature—God is not their source or origin. As the cosmic conflict approaches its closure, demonic power will enter the arena of human history in an unprecedented way. Spiritualism, whose very foundation is the non-biblical teaching of the immortality of the soul, will nearly take the world captive."—"The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels' Messages," unpublished manuscript, p. 6. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 84).

What is spiritualism? The pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason. And what are the three demonic forces foretold in Revelation? The dragon, beast, and false prophet—and what do these descriptors represent about the powers of spiritualism, the power to deceive? They all deceive, so they all use lies, but they do so with different approaches or methods.

- The dragon—that ancient serpent—uses signs, wonders, miracles, magic.

- The beast—uses imposed laws, rules, authority of office—we saw this during COVID when Fauci used his office to declare things to be true that were in fact known to be false, and then used the power of the state to induce or punish to get compliance with the falsehood.
- False prophet—false doctrines, claims, proclamations with false theologies, lies specifically about God, God's methods, and God's law—in other words, it is righteous, moral, and good to use power to punish people because that is what God does, that is God's justice and sometimes one has to kill, so wars are justifiable, and therefore we can go on crusades to kill in order to advance righteousness.
    - This happens in the church when religious leaders appeal to their office, the religious leaders in Christ's day did this repeatedly, accusing the common people of being uneducated and asking them if any of the leading theology professors believe in Jesus? Threatening people from worship services or membership, and we see this today being practiced by organized churches.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 11
The Impending Conflict

by Tim Jennings (anouncements last page)

SABBATH

Read second paragraph,

- The aim of this week's lesson is to reveal the coming **conflict over worship**. Satan will challenge God's **authority** by attempting to **undermine God's law**. Specifically, the **Sabbath** will become the center of a global conflict over **worship**. **Satan hates the Sabbath because he hates the Creator**. He will use **coercion, pressure, and force** to break our commitment to Christ. There will be a **collision of beliefs over the true and false day of worship**. God's final appeal is an appeal to **faithfulness to Christ** despite persecution, an economic boycott, imprisonment, and a death decree. This week's study emphasizes Jesus' strength to take us through earth's final conflict. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 88, emphasis mine).

This is a great paragraph—but could become not so great if what? If it is read through the human law lens, the imposed law lens, if we understand design law, this paragraph is great so let's go through it.

- Conflict is over worship
    - Imposed law worship is doing the right ritual, following the right ceremonies, obeying the right rules in the right way to be loyal to the god and its requirements; false worship is either false definitions of doctrines—believing the wrong things, erroneous rituals, or breaking the rules laid out by the god. False worship for the legalist would be holding to doctrines that are untrue; playing the wrong music in church; having the wrong people lead the worship service—say an unordained person leading communion; or for some having a woman lead worship; not being ceremonially baptized in the right ritualistic way—say sprinkling instead of immersion; going to church on the wrong day; not using the right words when praying, saying Jesus instead of Yeshua for instance; for some it is reading the Bible in any version other than the King James and on and on the list goes. But the focus of worship for those who think through the human law lens is on us, what we are doing, are we obeying the right rules, do we have the right definition of the doctrines, have we claimed the right blood to pay the sin debt, have we confessed all the sins we have committed and gotten the payment applied to our account, have we paid the proper pre-tax tithe, do we observe the right Sabbath, do we have proper behaviors on the Sabbath—no water above the knee for instance or no conversations about anything but Bible topics etc.
    - Design law understands that God is Creator and His laws are the protocols reality operates upon and one of them is the law of worship—as Scripture describes it is by beholding we are changed (2 Cor 3:18). We understand that we become like the God

we admire and worship. And that our view of God is determined by what we choose to believe about God's law. If we believe God's law is imposed, then that belief causes us to view God as the source of inflicted punishment as justice—and the beast of Revelation will eventually use these very tactics and as long as the beast is using the tactics to enforce the right rules—say baptism by immersion and church attendance on Saturday the Bible Sabbath, the legalistic Adventist will say, "this is our god we have waited for him" because they believe it is only right and just to punish those who refuse to obey. But we recognize that breaking God's design laws damages and cuts one off from the source of life and thus unremoved sin that is clung to in the heart brings its own punishment—eternal death. And God has been using His power to hold death at bay and keep open the avenue for us to be reconciled, healed, and restored into unity with Him. Thus we worship the God of love and by admiring, adoring, esteeming, and valuing Him we realize that He can never get love, loyalty, devotion, friendship, and trust by threatening to punish people who don't love, who don't trust.
    - So we agree the final conflict is over worship—and our worship is about which God we prefer and that is determined by the law we believe God has built His universe and government upon.
- A question of authority
    - The authority of the beast, of Satan, of the systems of the world is the authority of position, of office, of power and strength, of ability to punish.
    - The authority of God is the authority truth itself—God is truth and His authority rests in reality—He is the Creator; He is the Sustainer; He is the Healer and Redeemer! Only in harmony with Him, in unity with Him is there life, health, and happiness. God's authority does not come from claims, proclamations, declarations—from position, but from reality, from the truth itself.
- Satan undermines God's law
    - Satan undermines God's law by replacing in the minds of people the truth that God's law is design law with the lie of imposed law and thereby replaces worship of the Creator with worship of a creature.
- The Sabbath is central in the question of worship
    - The truth that is embodied in the Sabbath—which is the truth about God is central in the question of worship. The Sabbath is evidence, proof, revelation given to humanity as a sign, a flag, a beacon, a lighthouse in this dark sinful world built right into time itself and set apart by God when God RESTED, when God ceased using power, when God refused to inflict punishment upon Satan and his rebel angels, when God showed, proved, revealed that His laws are design laws of truth, love, and freedom. We have real freedom with God and God doesn't use external power to coerce or force.
- Satan hates the Sabbath—not simply because he hates Jesus, no he hates the Bible Sabbath because it is evidence that he lied, that God is the God of truth, love and freedom. The Sabbath wouldn't exist if Satan's version of things was true, thus he hates people recognizing the reality of the meaning of the Sabbath, why God gave it to us as a gift, in the same way President Nixon hated the Watergate tapes. Nixon didn't hate the Watergate tapes because he hated democrats, but because they exposed his wrongdoing. This is why Satan hates the Sabbath. But when we frame this as he hates the Sabbath because he hates Jesus, we miss the bigger truth

and purpose of the Sabbath that it is proof of how God's government works, evidence that God does not run His universe on a made up system of rules to test us by.

- And this is where many Adventists are blind, Satan seeks to take the Bible Sabbath, the sign of our freedom with God, the evidence that God is love, and twist it to teach just the opposite, that God is not love, but a severe judge seeking to punish the disobedient. Satan does this by getting many people to teach the seventh-day Sabbath is a made up rule, that it is an arbitrary test of obedience—in other words they teach the right day of the week to be the Sabbath, but they teach it through the wrong law, the imposed Roman law and thus they promote the worship of a creature rather than the Creator. This is one of the lessons we have from the Jews in Christ's day. They had the right Bible Sabbath, but the wrong concept of God's law and thus they worshiped the wrong god on the right day of the week. Jesus Himself told them directly when they claimed to be worshiping the Creator that they were in fact worshiping Satan (John 8).

- The beast will use coercion, pressure, force
  - And this is the key, God never coerces consciences—for to do so would destroy individuality, it would actively obstruct and prevent what He wants, which is our love and friendship, our loyalty and trust. But imposed law always uses coercion and force and they call it justice.
- There will be a conflict over true and false worship—represented by the true and false day of worship
  - Yes, true worship is the worship of our Creator God of love whose laws are design laws and we worship Him in truth and give Him glory when we internalize into our hearts, minds, and characters His living law of truth, love, and freedom in how we govern ourselves and how we treat others. This is the New Covenant, having God's law written upon our hearts and minds. And we only experience this by returning to the truth about God, which means rejecting the imposed law lies—and the Sabbath is a sign that God is the one who makes us holy, through His methods of truth, love, and freedom that wins us to trust.
  - The two days, then, are symbolic of two types of law, Sabbath—Design Law; and Sunday—imposed or legislated law. So those who **remember** the Sabbath to keep it holy are those who have experienced heart renewal and have the living law of love written upon their hearts and their characters so they are like Jesus in character; they live the truth, they love and they leave others free. Whereas those who are beastly believe God's laws are rules that require enforcement, and those who believe this believe the only way to have a just society is to pass laws regarding worship and use the power of coercion to force people to comply—so that we all can return to a safe and healthy society, a better and more just world.

    Some believe this will only happen when Jesus comes with a rod of iron and He rules with external force as He has perfect knowledge and no one will every be falsely punished or punished more than they deserve. In other words, some believe the problem with human imposed law is that it is applied inconsistently by flawed humans who make mistakes, or intentionally manipulate the system, but when Jesus comes He will use this method of external infliction of punishment with perfect motives and perfect

knowledge and then it will be right to do. These individuals fail to understand reality, how love functions, what happens to individuality when force is applied—and thus those who believe this will be ready to receive Satan when he impersonates Christ.

Sunday, because it became set apart for worship by human legislation and law enforcement is **symbolic** of this methodology—but let's be clear—going to church on Sunday does not give one the mark of the beast—**it is using the methods of coercion upon others that gives one the mark of the beast**. In other words, it is rejecting God's design laws of truth, love, and liberty and embracing and apply Satan's imposed laws into one's character in how one lives that corrupts the character and marks one as a follower of God's enemy. In lesson 9 of this quarter, on Friday's lesson, there was the following quote from the book *The Great Controversy*, please note this author describes exactly what I am saying:

- "Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are **now true Christians in every church**, **not excepting the Roman Catholic communion**, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. **God accepts their sincerity of purpose** and their integrity before Him. [Why? Because man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. The legalists, those who accept the impose law lies look at behavior, but God looks at the motives of the heart, not the specific technical fulfillment of a rule.] But **when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law**, and the world shall be **enlightened** concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, **then** whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher **authority than that of Rome**, will thereby honor popery above God. [It isn't the specific day it is the enforcing of that day which brings the issue to a head, which causes the contrast between two systems, to methods, two types of laws, and true God and the imposter god. Those who are loyal to the true God will recognize that coercing consciences is beastly and they will side with those they see standing for truth, love, and liberty. And to transgress the commandment of God, to break the Sabbath is not a legal behavior, it is a choice of the heart and mind. It is choosing to value and apply the methods of God's enemy over the methods of God. Isaiah tells us that true Sabbath observance requires that we delight in it, not keep it as a rule. And delight cannot be forced, legislated, or commanded.

  When one understands these principles and chooses as just, as right, the methods of enforcement, of inflicted punishment upon others on matters of conscience—they are demonstrating themselves beastly regardless of what day they attend worship services. This was revealed for all with eyes to see during COVID when almost every person had to make a choice in what methods, what principles, what laws they would internalize into their own hearts and minds in how they treated others. Would they, if they believed in the jab or if they didn't believe in the jab, present the truth as they understood it, in love, with pleas for friends and family to choose what they were advocating, but then leave others free? Or would they believe it is right and good to force people, to put

economic sanctions, travel restrictions, restrict worship, use law enforcement to pressure people to comply, to refuse to associate, to vilify, to accuse of evil intentions such as wanting to kill others? Sadly, we saw many people who call themselves Christian and who lead out in Christian organizations taking the position to use the beastly methods—why? Because they have accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law and they could not find in the Bible or their church documents any rule against experimental injections so they concluded this issue had nothing to do with worship, and so they used the power of their office and position to pressure people, employees, students, church members. Why? Because many are already worshiping the imposter dictator god whose laws are imposed rules and it is only just to use the power of the state to enforce rules upon people when those rules are the right rules.] He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. **He is worshiping the beast and his image.** [Not by innocently and honestly worshiping the God of love, truth, and freedom on Sunday—but by colluding with and practicing the methods of coercion in the enforcement of Sunday worship.] As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be **the sign of His authority**, [the sign of His authority—which is truth, love, and freedom, the design laws emanating from our Creator and which sustain all things] and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—'the mark of the beast.' And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast.' " (The Great Controversy, p. 449, emphasis mine).

- A couple of other quotes from the same author that confirms my conclusions:
- **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter**. **We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life**. All who regard the **Sabbath as a sign** between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent <u>the principles of His government</u>**. **They will bring into <u>daily practice</u> the laws of His kingdom**. **<u>Daily</u> it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day** they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. **Every day** their light will shine forth to others in good works. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 6 p. 353, emphasis mine).
- The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast** or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands. **To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** (Review and Herald, July 13, 1897 par. 5, emphasis mine).
- And what decision is that? That God's law is imposed and justice is inflicting punishment for disobedience.

- We are called to stay faithful to Jesus

- We stay faithful by trusting Jesus with outcomes and refusing to join with forces that would coerce the consciences of others. We live the design laws methods of God!

MONDAY-FRIDAY

See Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 Magazine

Our view does not find the lesson has wrongly interpreted the various symbols of Revelation 13—but that it is incomplete in the interpretation. In other words, the lesson has left many elements uninterpreted and this creates conclusions that are only partially true and leaves people open to misunderstanding.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW IN SOUTH AFRICA: Our new magazine The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ is now available in South Africa. If you would like a hard copy please email **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

The Job Pamphlet is now available in Afrikaans available on the Come and Reason website under the languages tab. Should anybody in South Africa want to order a physical copy they can contact Jacques van den Heever at **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

Also we are excited to announce that we created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group and should anybody would like to join they are welcome. The link is**: https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0**

New Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available. If you have a US Postal address and would like some to share, just email your requests to Requests@ComeandReason.com and we will send them at no cost.

MAGAZINE: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ, is now available! https://comeandreason.com/lie-that-deceived-angels/

Billboards are now available on our website!
You can find them all at https://comeandreason.com/?s=billboards

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 12
Earth's Closing Events

by Tim Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A NEW CHILDREN's BOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE: Biblical Concepts Made Easy, by Stephanie Land. It is a fun book with puzzles that teaches children the truth about God, His design laws, and answers difficult questions regarding moral decision making and why suffering happens. These are available for you and your family and to share. We will ship them at no cost to any US Postal address. They will also be for sale on Amazon as an individual book and we will have them for sale at bulk discount pricing on our website for schools and church groups to purchase and give to their youth. Please get a copy and share with your youth pastor or leader and give them the contact information where they can order on our website.

SOUTH AFRICA: Our new magazine The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ is now available in South Africa. If you would like a hard copy please email **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

The Job Pamphlet is now available in Afrikaans available on the Come and Reason website under the languages tab. Should anybody in South Africa want to order a physical copy they can contact Jacques van den Heever at **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

Most of our class today is going to be via power point, continuing to unpack the beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 as these are topics that the lesson focuses upon for this week—Earth's Closing Events. However, before we do that there are a couple of points I want to highlight from the lesson.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Throughout the ages, the great controversy has been **a battle between truth and error**. Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Jesus is the author of all truth. He declared, " 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' " (John 14:6). **The truth that sets us free** from Satan's deceptions is found in God's Word. The Bible unmasks Satan's strategy and reveals God's plans. Scripture is a lamp to our feet (Ps. 119:105). The psalmist declares, "The entrance of

> Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130, NKJV). He then adds, "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Ps. 119:160, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 97, emphasis mine).

Thoughts? Everything said in this paragraph is true—and I agree with it—yet, it left the issue wide open for misuse, misdirection, misinterpretation, and deception—how? It did not identify the central issue in the war. Yes, it is a battle between truth and error—but over what? Yes, the truth does set us free—but what truth? Is it the truth about how to be baptized, or which day is the Sabbath, or the state of the dead, or any other of our doctrines? No, those are not the central truths in the war. The central truth that must be setting, the truth that unmasks Satan and reveals God's plan and then causes the Bible to be a lamp to enlighten us, is what?

Consider Jesus' words to see if the most important truth was left out of the paragraph:

- You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. (John 5:39-40 NKJV).

- "Eternal life means knowing you, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I have shown your glory on earth; I have finished the work you gave me to do. Father! Give me glory in your presence now, the same glory I had with you before the world was made. I have made you known to those you gave me out of the world. (John 17:3-6 GNT).

- Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9).

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84).

Now consider the first paragraph again and ask, are all the ideas true, and yet still something is missing?

- Throughout the ages, the great controversy has been **a battle between truth and error**. Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Jesus is the author of all truth. He declared, " 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' " (John 14:6). **The truth that sets us free** from Satan's deceptions is found in God's Word. The Bible unmasks Satan's strategy and reveals God's plans. Scripture is a lamp to our feet (Ps. 119:105). The psalmist declares, "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130, NKJV). He then adds, "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Ps. 119:160, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 97, emphasis mine).

Can one use this paragraph to teach the truth about correct doctrines, the correct fundamental beliefs, the correct day of worship, the correct way to go through ceremonial baptism, searching Scripture for the truth on these things but cling to the lies about God because one holds the wrong law concept?

In other words, the lesson rightly tells us that the controversy is a battle between truth and error but LEAVES OUT the central issue over God's character, and our belief about that is determined by how we understand God's law functions! And this leaves room for people to believe they are pursuing the truth, that they are loyal to God and the Scripture while they are God's enemies, just like the Jews 2000 years ago.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- In the last days, the great controversy will be played out, in a dramatic way, over worship. **Do we worship the Creator, or do we worship the beast and its image?** There is no middle ground. The first angel of Revelation 14 urges men and women to " 'worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water' " (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). In further support of heaven's appeal, the third angel reveals the dire consequences of worshiping the beast: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation" (Rev. 14:10). By contrast, those who worship the Creator are described as keeping "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 99, emphasis mine).

What determines whether we are worshiping the Creator or a creature? The law one believes their God's government operates upon. What we believe about God's law determines what we believe about God.

Consider this dialogue between the church leaders and Jesus Christ—and remember these church leaders were the Adventists of their day. They were the ones with the Bible, Sabbath, health message, sanctuary message, believers in the one true Creator God and they specifically claim that they are worshiping the Creator God and notice what Jesus says in this interaction:

> "**Abraham is our father**," they answered.
>
> "**If you were Abraham's children**," said Jesus, "**then you would do the things Abraham did**. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. **You are doing the things your own father does**." [They claim virtue by genetics, by biology, claiming promises God made to Abraham. But Jesus tells them that Abraham's true children are those who do what Abraham did, those who respond to the truth by placing their faith, their trust in Jesus, by having hearts that love truth and grow in the truth about God, His methods, practices, and principles. And Jesus goes further and tells them that God recognizes relationship based on the qualities of character one forms, based on the principles, the type of law one chooses to operate their lives upon. And these people have chosen not the God of truth, of love, of liberty, of design law. But they have chosen the god of lies, of fantasy, of selfishness, of imposed rules with coercive enforcement.]

> "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [So the legalists up their claim—they claim to be Bible believing worshipers of the Creator God and they are seventh-day Sabbath keepers. Notice what Jesus says.]
>
> Jesus said to them, "**If God were your Father**, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me… **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet **because I tell the truth**, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? **He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God**."
>
> The Jews answered him, "**Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed**?" (John 8:39-48 NIV84, emphasis mine). [When one rejects the truth, when one's heart prefers the lies, the lies about God's character, the lies about God's government, which are based in the lies about God's law—then when they hear the truth they not only reject it they claim those with the truth—Jesus Himself—is demon possessed.]

So, putting this together with our lesson's paragraph—what does it mean to worship the Creator? Is it enough to be a loyal observer of the seventh-day Sabbath? No! And this is where all but the very elect will be deceived. Those who observe the seventh-day Sabbath as an imposed edict from a god who makes up rules and who uses his power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking will find themselves in the same camp as those Jews Jesus was speaking to in John 8. They will claim they are children of the Creator, that they are worshiping the Creator God, but they will sadly discover that they are children of the devil.

Now we turn to completing our exploration about the beasts of Revelation 13 and 17, the seal of God, the mark of the beast and the final events on planet earth.

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 13
The Triumph of God's Love

by Tim Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW CHILDREN's BOOK NOW AVAILABLE: Biblical Concepts Made Easy, by Stephanie Land. It is a fun book with puzzles that teaches children the truth about God, His design laws, and answers difficult questions regarding moral decision making and why suffering happens. These are available for you and your family and to share. We will ship them at no cost to any US Postal address. They will also be for sale on Amazon as an individual book and we will have them for sale at bulk discount pricing on our website for schools and church groups to purchase and give to their youth. Please get a copy and share with your youth pastor or leader and give them the contact information where they can order on our website.

SOUTH AFRICA: Our new magazine *The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ* is now available. If you would like a hard copy please email name and address to: **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

The *Job* pamphlet is now available in Afrikaans on the Come And Reason website under the languages tab. Should anybody in South Africa want to order a physical copy then email name and address to: **southafrica@comeandreason.com**

SABBATH

What a great lesson title—The Triumph of God's Love.

Does love triumph in the end? Does love triumph in the end on its own? Is the only power of God that causes the triumph the power of love, or does the triumph in the end require another power of God to be combined with it?

God is love but God is also true. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth and love. It is these two powers together that actually win the day.

Love alone can be broken by lies—which happened in Eden. Lies believed break the circle of love and trust.

Truth without love can be used to harm not heal, can cause one to become arrogant and unkind.

The ultimate victory is God's love and truth advancing together to heal the mind and hearts of people.

The last paragraph from MONDAYs lesson is the following quote from the book *The Great Controversy:*

- "The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. . . . That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe."—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 651.

Science corresponds to our thinking, comprehension, understanding—our thoughts, our minds—it is the internalization, acceptance, identification with and application of the truth. This corresponds to our left brain.

Song corresponds to our emotions, heart reaction, affections—our spirits, our feelings—it is the internalization, acceptance, identification with and application of God's love. This corresponds to our right brain. Thus, God wins by cleansing us from lies, fear, and selfishness.

Our thoughts and feelings, our minds and hearts, our souls and spirits combined make up our characters and our hearts and minds, our souls and spirits, our thoughts and feelings, will for all eternity rejoice in Christ and what He has done for us.

What is the method or mechanism for love's triumph?

- We love because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19 GNT).
- You will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:32).
- God's kindness leads you toward repentance (Romans 2:4 NIV84).
- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17 NIV84).

It is through the revelation of truth and love that we are won back to truth and love!

Can love triumph through imposed law and law enforcement?
What happens to love if one uses the methods of enforcement?

God's kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. God's kingdom operates upon design laws and He wins by His divine and holy methods. Specifically love wins through the application of truth while leaving people free—the law of liberty—love only exists and grows in an atmosphere of freedom. Take away freedom and love is eliminated:

- We can program computers or robots to function with perfect obedience—but robots and computers cannot love.

- God could program people—He is God, infinite in power, but if He did that, we would be reduced to robots, to machines, and would no longer be beings who bear the image of God because God is love and we would no longer be able to love.
- If instead of programming like a computer, we instead control the environment, only giving food and water if people do what we want, do we get love?
- What if we give lists of rules and inflict punishments to enforce our rules, do we get love?

How does God triumph with love?

Consider these two historical quotes, and notice the application of the law of liberty in these quotes—why God has acted the way He has:

- Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. . . . They were to enjoy communion with God and with holy angels; but before they could be rendered eternally secure, **their loyalty must be tested**. At the very beginning of man's existence a check was placed upon the desire for self-indulgence, the fatal passion that lay at the foundation of Satan's fall. The tree of knowledge, which stood near the tree of life in the midst of the garden, **was to be a test of the obedience, faith, and love** of our first parents. While permitted to eat freely of every other tree, they were forbidden to taste of this, on pain of death. **They were also to be exposed to the temptations of Satan**; but if they endured the trial, they would finally be placed beyond his power, to enjoy perpetual favor with God. . . . (Conflict and Courage13.2, emphasis mine) [I am pausing here before this author completes her explanation to inquire, How do you hear this? Do you hear this through the imposed law lens? God made a rule and if they disobeyed then He would be required by law to inflict punishment? Did He test them as a set up for them to fail? Do you see God testing them to find out what they would do, as if He didn't know the future? Or do you understand reality, God's design law methods of love and liberty? Do you realize this is the only way God can obtain what He wants—love, loyalty, friendship, trustworthiness, devotion—by presenting free intelligent beings an opportunity to think for themselves, consider issues for themselves, and to make a choice for themselves as to what they believe, what they prefer, what they will know in their own mind, heart, character, and experience. Will they choose to know truth, love, and loyalty, and exercise their freedom to trust God and know by experience, action, and choice what it means to be a trustworthy friend of God? Or will they choose to believe lies, and choose to know fear, distrust, selfishness, doubt, guilt, shame, sin, and evil? The only way they could know life, to know in function, in character love, is to choose truth and love. And God provided them this opportunity for them to experience and know for themselves God's love, truth, and friendship. Notice what the author of this paragraph says next as to what she meant by the words I just read for this is the next paragraph she wrote.]

  God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation**. **Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of**

> **character**. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. (Conflict and Courage 13.3, emphasis mine).

Do you see the law of liberty applied in the description of the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? This test was not a legal test, it was design law reality being applied to free beings for them to test themselves and decide what kind of people they would become. Why? Because God can get love and loyalty only in an atmosphere of freedom!

Do you see how the traditional Christian teaching of God's law and God using His power to inflict punishment for sin destroys freedom and undermines love and actually obstructs God from achieving what He wants for and from us?

Here is the second quote, and we read this last week at the end of our presentation:

- "God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order**. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power**." (*The Desire of Ages* 759, emphasis mine).

How can God win by love?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The close of human probation is followed by a time of trouble " 'such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.' " Revelation 16 describes seven last plagues that will be poured out on the wicked world. But, as with the plagues that fell on Egypt, God's people will be shielded from them. Note the promise in Daniel: " 'And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book' " (Dan. 12:1, NKJV). This must be referring to the "book of life" (see Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 20:12, 15; Rev. 22:19). If we have stayed faithful to Jesus, our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 105).

What closes human probation? Is it a time preset by God and when the clock runs down Jesus stands up from His intercessory role and says, "ready or not, time's up; here I come"?

Or does probation close when every human heart is settled either into loyalty to God or hardness against God so that no person will change their mind. For the righteous, no temptation, to trial, no tribulation will cause them to break trust with God—they are perfect like Job, perfect in their trust of God. And for the wicked they have destroyed the faculties that respond to truth and love and no further amount of truth and love will have any impact upon them.

This is what closes probation. It is a combination of events occurring in the world that bring people to this point—it is a combination of the gospel being presented in its true light in contrast to the methods of Satan being advanced globally, **specifically the principles of truth, love, liberty of conscience resisting the rule of law being advanced by the earthly powers under the guise of saving lives and doing justice**.

But, if we have a forensic, human law view, we may falsely think that the close of probation is when Jesus finishes reviewing all the records in heaven and all the heavenly judicial decisions have been completed, when Jesus finishes deciding what names of the righteous He keeps in the books and which ones He removes. Some believe that it is when that legal accounting work by God is complete that determines the close of probation—have you ever heard this?

It all goes back to how we understand God's law—this legalistic way of describing things is based upon believing God's law functions like human law and distorts things in ways that undermine trust in God and cause fear.

When we return to reality, to design law, we understand the records in heaven are merely the accurate description of what is the true condition of each heart and mind—like accurate medical records. **Nothing in a medical record causes the patient to live or die, nothing in the heavenly record determines whether a person receives eternal life or eternal damnation**.

For the patient, it is what is actually happening in their body that determines whether they live or die, and the medical records merely document that reality. So too for our eternal salvation, it is what is actually happening in our hearts and minds that determines our eternal destiny and the heavenly records merely document that reality.

The various false human-law legal views, such as penal substitution theology, create fantasies that cloud minds and prevent hearts from being healed as they teach people to seek legal adjustment in record books in heaven and the hiding of the truth from the Father by the blood of Jesus who declares us righteous while we remain unrighteous.

Questions?

The lesson makes a comparison between the plagues at the end and the plagues of Egypt—how are these plagues similar and how are they dissimilar?

They are similar in that they are plagues that are part of God's judgments against people for their hardness of heart and rebellion against Him, and the plagues are unpleasant and cause distress to those who experience them.

They are dissimilar in that the plagues of Egypt occurred when God judged it was time to use power to intervene with therapeutic actions to expose the gods of Egypt as false in order to win both Hebrews and Egyptians to faith in Him. God's actions in Exodus were not actions to punish sin, but were specifically designed to expose sin and falsehood by the revelation of truth in action and thereby win the people to trust in Him. Thus God's use of power in Egypt was saving, healing, and therapeutic, not punitive. As God said,

- "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 29:6, NIV84).

The plagues at the end of time are called the wrath of God poured out without mixture. God's wrath is when God judges that no more use of power will save anyone else, all are sealed either into loyalty or rebellion and therefore God ceases to use power. And when God stops restraining or hold at bay the destruction that comes from sin and the chaos that results when His presence is removed, the forces of evil are unrestrained and more destruction happens. This is the punishment of sin—the punishment that sin itself causes and brings when God no longer protects us from it. Paul describes this in Romans 1:18-32 and we have read those verses many times.

Thus, the plagues at the end of time are the step-wise withdraw of God's presence and power from the earth and Satan gaining more control over both people and the elements to act—much like we see in the book of Job when God removed His restraining hand and Satan began to destroy.

EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church describes it this way, and I agree with her assessment, because this is describing how design law functions. Do you agree with these descriptions?

- "I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;

  "**They place themselves beyond His protection**. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them**.

  "**It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress**, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." (Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3, emphasis mine).

- **Satan has studied the secrets of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. It is God that shields His creatures from the destroyer**. But the Christian world has shown contempt for His law, and **the Lord will do what He declared that He would—remove His protecting care from those who rebel against His law and force others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard**. He will favor and prosper some, in order to further his own designs; and he will bring trouble upon others, and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them. (From Here to Forever 360, emphasis mine)

  While appearing as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, Satan will bring disease and disaster until populous cities are reduced to ruin. In accidents by sea and land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in a thousand forms, **Satan is exercising his power**. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. **He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish**. (From Here to Forever 360, emphasis mine).

Sadly, those who hold to the imposed law view falsely teach that the two plagues are God using power to inflict punishment, that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death and conflate the two instances of plagues to misrepresent God rather than discerning the truth.

Read second paragraph,

- In the time of trouble, God's people have a personal relationship with Jesus so deep that nothing can change it. Their consummate desire is to please Him in all things so that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, they will be as pure as He is pure. There was nothing in Christ's heart that responded to Satan's deceptions. We can reflect this aspect of His character, as well. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 105).

There is no doubt that all the saved will have a personal relationship with Jesus that will not change. They will absolutely want to please Jesus, no question about it. And the saved will have nothing in their hearts that resonates with or prefers Satan, so true.

Then what conclusion do you draw from this paragraph—isn't it that salvation is achieved by forming a personal relationship with Jesus?

Is that the core of salvation—or is salvation something that we experience from and through our personal relationship with Jesus but if one has a personal relationship with Jesus and doesn't experience what salvation actually is they won't be saved.

I am asking, is it possible to have a personal relationship with Jesus and still not be saved because the core element that our personal relationship with Jesus is suppose to cause to happen in us didn't happen? In other words, can a person have a personal real, one-on-one, for themselves, relationship with Jesus and not be saved?

Consider Lucifer in heaven—did he have a real, individual, personal, for himself relationship with Jesus?

What about Judas on earth—did he have his own, individual, personal relationship with Jesus?

What did Lucifer and Judas not have despite their personal relationship with Jesus? –**They didn't trust Him and didn't love Him more than themselves!**

What is the core element that is the actual reality of what it means to be saved? It is what Jesus described to Nicodemus, it is being reborn, it is receiving through our relationship with Jesus a new heart and right spirit, it is dying to fear and selfishness and living to love and trust, it is being recreated in the inner man, it is recreation by the Holy Spirit that is achieved through our personal relationship with Jesus. For a personal relationship with Jesus to result in salvation it must cause our sinful distrusting heart to be changed to love and trust—in other words, we must come to actually trust Jesus and love Him and His methods, design law, and principles.

Lucifer broke trust and never restored it, and Judas never trusted Jesus, never died to self and was never reborn to love God and others through a genuine trust in Jesus.

Is there a danger in thinking salvation is in the relationship with Jesus, rather than being transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit through our relationship with Jesus?

What if someone prefers the false Christ, the imposter, the imposer of law and the inflictor of punishments and they believe he is god, that the enforce of law "Jesus" is the true Jesus, could they form a relationship with that Jesus, and could they in that relationship trust that Jesus to pay their legal penalty, erase their sin crimes from the records, and to one day punish all their enemies for their unrepentant sin crimes and then go out in the name of that god to do justice, to advance on others with law and punishment to put down rebellion and sin—just like Saul of Tarsus did before the Damascus road?

And what will Jesus say to such worshipers when they claim they were doing all of this in His name? He will tell them to go away He never knew them—they actually didn't have a trust relationship with Him, but preferred His enemy instead.

Yes—salvation is found in a personal relationship with Jesus—but salvation means healing, it means saving from sin, it means restoring God's law in us and cleansing our hearts, minds, and characters from fear, selfishness, and distrust and that requires we know God and Jesus Christ and die to self and actually come to trust Jesus and be reborn to love God and others more than self.

Read last paragraph,

- There are some who have misunderstood the concept of living through the time of trouble without a mediator. Jesus ceases His mediation in heaven's sanctuary when everyone has made their final decision for or against Him. But this does not mean we are alone during this time,

> trusting our own strength. Jesus has assured us He will be with us always (Matt. 28:20). Faith trusts when it cannot see and believes even when the world around us is falling apart. During the time of trouble, our faith strengthens and our longing for eternity increases so that our one desire is to live forever with Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 105).

I like how the lesson says He finishes His mediation when everyone makes their decision for or against Him. But what has He been doing? What is His mediation?

If we have a forensic view, a human law view, then we often project in ideas about Jesus doing legal accounting, or arguing like a lawyer to His Father, or pleading His blood as a payment etc., all of which create fearful concepts of what happens if Jesus isn't there to intercede with the angry and wrathful Father? This is all a lie.

There is nothing wrong with the Father—there is something wrong with us and Jesus is the Father's agent to mediate the covenant of grace to humanity. First, by taking up humanity damaged by sin and purifying and perfecting it as our substitute, and second by applying His victory into the hearts and minds of every sinner who trusts Him to heal and transform!

He is the mediator of the new covenant, the covenant of love and trust and God has no deficiencies that need addressing, resolving, healing, correcting, removing, or cleansing. But we do, thus Jesus mediates God's plan to heal and restore us back into unity with Himself and the Father. And once He has done that, cleansed and sealed us into eternal loyalty and friendship such that nothing can shake us from it, His work as mediator is done and now He enters His final cleanup phase, reaping the harvest from the Earth, separating the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, and bringing to final conclusion of the sin problem.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Jesus' words, " 'Let not your heart be troubled,' " are His reassurance that He will never leave us and is coming again to take us home. This world is not our home. A better day is coming. Once in every 25 verses, the New Testament speaks of the return of our Lord. When the days are dark and the oppressive enactments of a church-state power threaten our lives, the promise of Christ's coming fills our hearts with hope. This is the "blessed hope" that has inspired the faithful people of God in every generation. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 106).

What strategies does Satan use to destroy people's hope? The common root action needed to destroy hope is to get people to take their eyes off Jesus, in any way he can, by such things as:

- Focusing on personal problems, finances, health issues, family conflicts

- Focusing on other people's problems, dramas, issues
- Focusing on worldly threats, climate change, wars and rumors of wars
- Focusing on entertainments of any type
- Focusing on work—even work for the Lord to the point we take our eyes off Jesus
- Focusing on evil and what the evil are doing to the point we become discouraged and hopeless
- Focusing on ourselves—our sins, our responsibilities, our duties, our commandment keeping or lack thereof etc.
- Focusing on the extent of the sin and evil problem in the world, which is overwhelming to human abilities to address
- Others?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the millennia—what happens during the Millenia?

The millennia is a future event described in the highly symbolic book of Revelation, which means it is open for a variety of divergent interpretations. And in fact, there are a variety of different teachings within Christianity on what happens during the millennia. We can go through the various texts and demonstrate why we think our view is the most reasonable view, but at the end of the day what is important is the following:

- Does our interpretation accurately represent or misrepresent God's character, methods, and principles?
- Does our interpretation make God out to be like Satan has alleged?
- Does our interpretation teach God functioning in a way that violates His own design law?
- Does are interpretation function to increase fear, shut down thinking, increase a servant rather than friend's relationship with God?

So let's examine one common view of the millennia and compare it with our view and inquire, which is most consistent with God as Jesus revealed, with our God who IS love, with God who is Creator and whose laws are design laws, and therefore which view functions to increase trust, decrease fear, and promote eternal security in which sin never arises again?

- Some Christians believe that there is a secret rapture coming in which the righteous dead and righteous living all disappear from the Earth and are taken to Jesus and for the next 7 years the wicked rule on the Earth and it is the time of tribulation when the plagues fall. At the end of those 7 years Jesus, the New Jerusalem, and the saints return to Earth and all the wicked are killed in a great physical battle with Jesus who leads His forces to victory. Then Jesus sets up a government on earth in which the Christians rule with Jesus for 1000 years. During that 1000 years new children are born to the saved and some of those children rebel and choose to sin but Jesus is now ruling with a rod of iron so there will be no trials, no investigation, no inquiry, only swift justice directly from king Jesus who punishes all the disobedient.

- What type of principles, law, methods, and government are described in this interpretation?
- Are the principles, methods, and law those of God's or Satan's?
- First, there is a secret rapture—who is the one in the controversy who operates in secret and who conducts their business in the open?
- Who is the one who operates in darkness and who is the light that lightens all men?
- Who is the one who has no truth and thus must depend on secrecy and no investigation or inquiry and who has all truth and asks us to come and see, come and reason?
- Who would like a place where the wicked rule unrestrained by God and what kind of place would that be—a place without any grace, goodness, kindness, love, truth, hope, a place of total depravity and sin? It would be a place of torture and torment—and what kind of a god would create a place of torment and torture?
- After the 1000 years, who would want a future in which sin continues to arise God or Satan?
- And what kind of law is being applied when Jesus is described as using power to inflict punishment upon sinners?
- This entire theology is deeply infected with Satan's view of God and God's law, and therefore must be rejected. Those who believe this are conditioning their minds to accept Satan when he comes impersonating Christ.

In our view there is a tribulation which precedes the second coming of Christ, which is brought about by the outworking of God's design laws and reality itself. God's end-time witnesses are first sealed (settled into the truth so that they will not be shaken out of their loyalty to God) and then the four winds begin to be loosed. As billions of people choose the lies, reject God, and harden their hearts against heaven the Holy Spirit is slowly withdrawn from the Earth and Satan and his demonic forces get more freedom to act. The contrast between the righteous—those who are kind, truthful, loyal, faithful, patient, meek, loving, forgiving, gentle, noble, trustworthy and Christlike, and those who are cruel, selfish, deceitful, faithless, impulsive, demanding, arrogant, unforgiving, belligerent, debased, perverse, untrustworthy and satanic becomes ever more stark.

These events are permitted to assist those who have not settled into one of the two camps to discern and choose—the events themselves place people into positions where they have to choose, in governance of themselves, what methods, what law, they are internalizing and practicing and thus every person will decided for or against Jesus by the methods and law they choose to apply to themselves in how they live and treat others. Remember Jesus said as we have done it unto the least of these we have done it unto Him.

Once every heart is settled either into loyalty or disloyalty, then Jesus stands up and the plagues begin to fall. And the plagues are not God using power to inflict harm, but they are the result of God giving people what they have freely chosen—a life without Him. So He sets the world and people free from His protective care in a step wise fashion. While the wicked are given what they have chosen, separation from God's presence and protection and thus suffer under the plagues, the righteous are also given what they have chosen, intimacy, unity, and oneness with God and His angels are sent to

watch over them, protect, them and provide for them in this difficult time—like Elijah when the angels fed him.

This ends with the second coming of Christ at which time all the wicked who are still alive on Earth die the first death, the death the Bible describes as a sleep. All the wicked who are already in the grave stay in the grave. All the righteous who have died through history and have been asleep in death arise at the voice of Christ and the trumpet call of God and the righteous on the Earth are changed in the blink of an eye when this mortal puts on immortality. All the righteous through all history are gathered together to meet Jesus in the air as Paul describes in Thessalonians. And Jesus takes all the saints away from the Earth for 1000 years.

All the righteous are in heaven, all the wicked are asleep in death, and the planet is returned to its state before God created here, what is described in Genesis 1:1 a dark, deep abyss, where Satan is bound with his angels for 1000 years.

During the 1000 years the saints reign with Christ in heaven and this is a time for every person to learn, to grow, to understand, to ask questions, to complete their Christian education in the things of God. It is not a time to develop Christian character, that has already happened that is why they are in heaven. It is a time for the saved to settle in their minds the things they didn't understand, the things they were accepting on faith. It will be a time to clarify and clear up issues that left questions and uncertainties, about God, the origin of sin, why Jesus had to die, who is saved and why some people we thought should be there are not there and on and on. It is God opening Himself and all the records of all history up for examination and evaluation—because God is the God of truth and light and love and He wins us to eternal loyalty by the truth, not by operating in secret.

One example of the kinds of things that will happen for the righteous during the 1000 years will be those people who are saved but haven't yet heard about Jesus will learn about Jesus and all He did for us.

The Bible describes this group this way:

- What may be known about God is plain to them, because **God has made it plain to them**. For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature**—have been clearly seen, **being understood from what has been made**, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20 NIV84, emphasis mine)

- All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who **hear the law** who are righteous in God's sight, but it is **those who obey the law who will be declared righteous**. (Indeed, when **Gentiles**, who do not have the law, **do by nature things required by the law**, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they **show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) (Romans 2:12-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- This is the **covenant** I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I **will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.** I will be their God, and **they will be my people**. (Hebrews 8:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- **If someone asks him**, 'What are these wounds on your body?' he will answer, '**The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.**' (Zechariah 13:6 NIV84).

When you get to heaven will you have a lot of questions? Will one of them be, "Jesus, where did you get those wounds on your body?" Or do you know the answer to that question already? So what does it imply that some will ask this question? That some will be there who have not yet heard the full story, yet they have responded to the truth about God that is revealed in creation, and received the indwelling Holy Spirit, who took the victory of Christ and applied it to their hearts so they were reborn with a new heart and cleansed mind. In other words, they were still saved by and through Jesus, but now need to learn the full story that no one had ever told them before.

Now, which of these versions of the millennium is most consistent with the God of love, truth, and freedom, in harmony with His design laws, and consistent with Jesus and what He revealed, and instills greater love and trust?

At the end of the day this is all future and I don't debate these details, my concern is do we present them in such a way that presents God in His true character of love, in harmony with His design law methods, that engenders trust or do we incite fear and distrust—this is the real concern. As long as we are engendering trust, and helping people grow in harmony with God's design law principles, then the specific details can be clarified during the 1000 years if we have some of them incorrect.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- During the millennium, the righteous will have an opportunity to observe firsthand God's justice and love in how He has dealt with the sin problem. Who doesn't have questions they would like to ask God about a lot of things? Now, during the millennium in heaven, the redeemed get to ask those questions. If a loved one or close friend is absent from heaven, the saved have the opportunity to understand God's decisions more fully. In a new way, more forcefully than ever before, the redeemed will grasp God's powerful attempts to save every person who has ever lived. They will realize anew that everyone who is lost has missed out on heaven because of their own personal rejection of Christ. Only then does God bring final judgment—the second death, which is eternal destruction—on the lost. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 108).

What do you understand this to mean? What does it mean observe firsthand God's justice? If we are reviewing records is that firsthand observation or second hand observation? So what is firsthand

observation? Will the wicked be resurrected one at a time and brought before a tribunal in heaven in which we hear God interrogate them and then we make a judgment about their case and decide how long they deserve to be punished before God kills them?

Some teach that we will be sitting on committees in heaven and making such determinations about all the wicked, deciding how much torture each person must receive before they are executed—is that what they mean or do they mean something else?

What does this sentence mean,

- "If a loved one or close friend is absent from heaven, the saved have the opportunity to understand God's decisions more fully"?

It seems like it doesn't fit with the following two sentences:

- "In a new way, more forcefully than ever before, the redeemed will grasp God's powerful attempts to save every person who has ever lived. They will realize anew that everyone who is lost has missed out on heaven because of their own personal rejection of Christ."

These seem to be contradictory—if every person is lost by their own personal rejection of Christ, then what is God's decision in the lost being lost?

Is there a suggestion that God as the sovereign has the final decision whether someone is saved or lost? What kind of law functions this way, where the judge determines guilt or innocence, the judge determines pardon or punishment? That is human law, this is a distortion if it means God's decisions are determinant in someone's salvation.

No, the only person who has determining power for someone's salvation is that person. God doesn't decide any person's eternal destiny, every person decides their own. God has provided the means and opportunity for all people to be saved and He wants all to come to salvation—so God's choices are the actions of mercy, grace, and love to provide us that choice. The reason anyone is lost is because they have spurned every opportunity, all truth has been rejected, every mercy despised, every entreaty spurned—until the individual has hardened their heart and mind beyond healing. God's judgment doesn't determine this outcome, God's judgment is diagnostic and simply identifies what is.

So, what are we doing during the 1000 years? We are personally examining any and all evidence that we need to examine to confirm for ourselves that this is in fact true. That every single action of God was therapeutic, loving, merciful, redemptive, and created opportunities for salvation and that no person is lost because of an act of God or a neglect of God.

What is the final judgment?

There are four judgments in Scripture;

The First Judgment
The first is our judgment of God—which Adam and Eve had to make in Eden, and which every person in history has been called to make since. Is God like Yahweh then worship Him, but if like Baal, worship him.

The Second Judgment
We talked about some time ago and are God's therapeutic judgments throughout history. His diagnosis of the problem and His judgment of what is the best intervention or treatment for the problem. This would include the investigative judgment in which Jesus determines what is necessary to cleanse and heal all who have trusted Him throughout history , and simultaneously the living are judging the evidence of who God is and choosing to trust God.

The Third Judgment
The third judgment is the judgment that the righteous render during the thousand years after they are taken to heaven and all the evidence of history is before them.

- I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge.** And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6 NIV84).

This is also not a judicial process; it is an answering of all the questions people have about the great controversy. It is the assessment, discerning, and settling of minds regarding how God's laws govern all reality. It is the confirmation of what sin does and how salvation occurs—and why some are saved and others are not when God loves all equally, wants all to be saved, and is all powerful.

This judgment by the saints includes more than judging why some of our friends and loved ones are not in heaven; it also includes judging what the angels did and how they possibly could have rebelled:

- "Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3 NIV84).

In the future, during the Millennium, the saints will review the history of what transpired on earth and the lives of the lost, humans and angels alike, and they will judge that there was nothing more that God could have done. God's design laws and government will stand vindicated, and God will not be falsely blamed for any soul not being in heaven. Without this judgment, doubt about God's goodness would remain in the hearts and minds of those, who like the thief on the cross, were saved near the end of their lives and didn't have time to work through all their doubts and misunderstandings. This is the judgment in which the saved exercise their God-given ability to think, reason, discern and settle all their questions so that sin will never arise again.

The third judgment is not a judicial process but a review of reality, of actual history, of applying our understanding of the design laws of God and making the judgment that all who are lost are lost because that is what they prefer and that there was nothing more God could have done for them.

The Fourth Judgment
The fourth and final judgment is the judgment that occurs at the end of the thousand years. It is often called the Great White Throne Judgment.

- I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. … And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

Surely this judgment must be judicial … right? No, it isn't.

What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

- Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned** (Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84).

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what the reality actually is. God is the God of reality, the builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols upon which life operates. There has never been a heavenly judicial law court like humans make; the idea that God is an arbitrary judge who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin is a lie from Satan.

The fourth and final judgment is not judicial; it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

- He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).

THURSDAY

The final end at the end of the 1000 years,

Consider this commentary, part of it is quoted in the lesson, I am giving a little more from the book *The Great Controversy:*

- At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. (The Great Controversy 664).

- Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance. (The Great Controversy 665).

- As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—all appear as if written in letters of fire. (The Great Controversy 666).

- The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them. (The Great Controversy 668)

- Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence. (The Great Controversy 670).

- Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created... The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: “Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.” (The Great Controversy 670).

Then the cleansing fires of truth and love burn free and lies and selfishness are burned up, those with the greatest resistance and longest record fight the truth and love the longest and so all do not surrender to the flames of truth and love at the same time. Satan resists the longest, but eventually, he too surrenders and gives up on life not wanting to live in the unveiled presence of God with the full weight of his own evil bearing down on his own mind and heart. And then the fires of combustion break forth and the elements melt in the heat and the God recreates the Earth anew the home of the righteous.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 1
The Beginning of the Gospel

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Introduction

The introduction starts with describing how in Mark the demon possessed people recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Most High God, and how Jesus commanded them to keep silent. Then the lesson says the following in the second paragraph:

- But Jesus rather consistently commands that they keep this information quiet. Why this command for secrecy? Bible students for centuries have mulled over this question. It even has a name in scholarship—the Messianic Secret. Why would a Gospel want us to keep quiet about who Jesus is? (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 2).

Did you notice what the lesson did—innocently to be sure, but did it nonetheless? The lesson introduced an interpretation, most likely accepted from Christian tradition, that Jesus commands secrecy. Is this true or false? Did Jesus command secrecy or did He command that the demons be silent?

Are those ideas, Jesus commanding demons to be silent and Jesus commanding secrecy the same?

Is God the one who operates in secrecy or is the devil the one who operates in secrecy? Does God want things to remain hidden or bring things out in the open? Is God the source of darkness or light that exposes the darkness?

Who is the source of all truth and who has no truth on his side? Who then requires secrecy and who wants the full light of truth to shine forth?

Is commanding the demon-possessed in His day to keep quiet the same as commanding you and I in our day to keep quiet? Or, in fact, are we commanded to share the gospel with the world?

Read the third paragraph:

- What will become clear in this journey through the Gospel of Mark is that not only is there secrecy in this book—there also is amazing revelation. It can rightly be called the revelation/secrecy motif, and it runs through the Gospel of Mark. Although, at the end of the book, all the secrecy is surprisingly replaced with a powerful revelation of Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 2).

So glad the lesson here acknowledges Jesus is revealing truth—yet continues to suggest this idea that secrecy may be coming from Jesus, the idea that there a motif being used of mixing secrecy with revelation.

Who is the one who wants to mix the true and the false?

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the **light** of men. **The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it**. (John 1:1-5 NIV84, emphasis mine)

- This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5 NIV84).

In reality, there is the battle between good and evil, light and darkness, truth and lies, reality and fantasy, life and death. There is revelation and there is obstructing of revelation, there is secrecy.

The question is do we find such mixture of these elements in God's character, God's kingdom, God's methods, and God's law? Or do we find this mixture today because this world is the battleground between good and evil, between light and dark, between truth and lies?

So, is Jesus commanding secrecy? No, He is commanding that the enemies be silent so that people will not look to them for light and truth. He is here from heaven as the light; He is here to dispel the darkness; He is here as a revealer of the secrets; to expose the liar and He does this by His methods which are evidence revealed in action and deeds achieved, by teaching and instruction through the lessons of life, how reality works. The demons work through claims, proclamations, through authority of position, through intimidation, through suspending thinking.

Jesus tells them to keep silent not because He wants secrecy, but because He wants the truth to be seen unmixed with error, without confusion, without the testimony of His enemies. He doesn't want their endorsement because their spoken truth on who He is will lead some to listen to what else the demons have to say and thus the demons introduce falsehood—a mix of revelation and secrecy, light and darkness—the domain of demons, which sadly seems to be being applied to Jesus by the lesson, which is not unexpected whenever people have rejected God's design law and operate upon imposed law. The Jews in Christ day, with correct doctrines, the correct Bible, the correct rituals, the correct Sabbath, did this all the time. They mixed the true doctrines with the wrong law and the wrong character and methods of God which mislead.

And is this question leading us to truth or does the question mislead?

- "Why would a Gospel want us to keep quiet about who Jesus is?"

Doesn't this imply the Gospel wants *us* to keep quiet about Jesus?

Does Jesus want us to keep quiet about Him or does Jesus want us to tell everyone the truth about Him?

I don't think the lesson authors are intentionally trying to mislead, not at all. I think they intend, with the purest motives, to help us understand—but people cannot explain what they themselves do not know. So, even with good intentions if one only knows the false system of imposed rules then that is what one teaches.

We are in a war between the source of all truth and the father of lies, and the father of lies constantly tries to imbed falsehood in with the truth—this is his most destructive form of deception. Lies mixed with truth do much more harm than complete falsehoods alone, for the truth becomes the element that allows people to accept the lie and the lie corrupts the heart and mind undermining trust in God and inciting more fear while people believe they are advancing the truth. And the central issues are the beliefs we hold about God—2 Cor 10:3-5.

Read the sixth paragraph:

- The second half of Mark, from Mark 8:31 to the end of the book, answers the question, Where is Jesus going? The answer is shocking. He is going to the cross, the most ignominious and shameful manner of death in the Roman world. And it is such an unexpected destination for the Messiah, who **His followers think will defeat Rome and establish Israel as a powerful nation**. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 3, emphasis mine).

Why did His followers think this?

- What about Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman will be bruised?
- What were all the lesson taught by the sacrifices and sanctuary?
- What about Isaac being saved by a substitutionary sacrifice?
- What about Isaiah 53 which describes our suffering and dying Savior?

Didn't the Bible teach them that the Savior was coming to suffer, be rejected, and die as a means of dealing with the sin problem?

Why didn't they understand this? Why did they think He was coming to defeat Rome and establish and earthly kingdom?

Because they read the Bible through the imposed law lens. They thought legally. They thought justice is achieved by law and law enforcement, and they were looking for a Messiah to come and enforce his way through might and power, to punish and destroy their enemies.

What about the Christian world today? What is almost the entire Christian world teaching about the kingdom that Jesus is coming to set up? Isn't it that He is coming with might and power to inflict just punishment upon His enemies and establish a kingdom that He rules with a rod of iron?

And this is why so many Christians will accept Satan's impersonation of Christ, because they believe the methods and principles of Satan are God's.

SABBATH

Interesting title—**The Beginning of the Gospel**—I think the title means the book of Mark which is one of the four books we call the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And thus the title means, we are going to explore the beginning of the book of Mark, not the origins of the good news.

But the title lends itself to ask that other question—when did *the* gospel begin—the gospel that Jesus said we are to take to the world—the eternal gospel? Does that gospel have a beginning?

How would you define that gospel—what is it?

Revelation says it is an eternal gospel—good news that is eternal good news, good news in eternity past as well as throughout all eternity future.

What is that good news? The truth about God, that God is not the kind of being that Satan has alleged, and God's character, laws, methods are not those of a creature, but of the Creator God of love—truth, love, liberty.

Does this good news about God have a beginning? No—because God doesn't have a beginning—that is why the good news is eternal because God is eternal and the good news is the good news about God which destroys the lies and wins us to trust and in trust we die to fear, sin, selfishness and are reborn with a new heart and mind, we receive the life of Jesus and become new beings united with God in love and trust.

Read the memory verse:

- Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15 NKJV).

What does this mean? The kingdom of God is at hand, what kingdom?

Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world—was He correct, or did He make an error in that statement, an oversight?

Wasn't Israel still on the Earth, even though under Roman occupation, didn't they still have a king, and wasn't the Sanhedrin still functioning? Didn't they have a temple, and weren't they still following the blueprint given to Moses?

Yet, Jesus said His kingdom is NOT of this world. He didn't say, "My kingdom is not of this world, except for Israel, that is my kingdom."

The nation state of Israel was never His kingdom—they were His chosen people to fulfill a mission (which they barely did, but they did)—but their national sovereignty, imposed laws, judicial system despite being set up by the directions given by God through Moses does not represent the kingdom of God—Jesus rejected that system as His kingdom.

In fact, all the kingdoms of this world are Satan's, and he offered them to Jesus.

Why was Israel not God's kingdom of earth?

Because it operated upon imposed laws with imposed punishments and not upon design law. It used the power over others method of coercion, it did not rule in the hearts of people, but over their behaviors. Then why did God Israel the various laws if His kingdom doesn't function in this way?

The answer is simple and straightforward: The rules given to Israel were for the setting up of a civil government in a sinful world to bring order and stability to a rebellious, unrighteous, self-centered, and sinful people who did not have hearts reborn to love God and others, people who had not experienced the new covenant of having design law written upon their hearts, a people who functioned upon the same me-first, fear-based, survival-of-the-fittest principles as the godless world around them, people who were just freed from being slaves of pagans.

This was to allow for the gospel, the good news about God to be carried forward so His true kingdom of love, the new covenant where He writes His law on our hearts and minds, could be established.

The imposed rules were not intended to represent how God's government works; rather, they were intended to establish societal order among this sinful people to protect them from decaying into infighting, political intrigue, and tribal wars, which was already starting to occur with Korah and his rebellion, so that they could accomplish the mission for which they were called—to be the human avenue through whom the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15 would come and to preserve the inspired writings.

In Romans 13 the apostle Paul describes how God uses human imposed law via civil governments to provide order in a sinful world but contrasts it with the law of love—God's design to love our neighbors which must be written upon the heart. And to help people realize the need to have the law of love written upon their hearts God added laws, both ceremonial and the Ten Commandments (Galatians 3).

Jesus said

- And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14 NIV84).

The Jews were looking for a kingdom of this world. Jesus said when the good news of His kingdom of truth, love, and liberty goes to the world then the end will come. But sadly Christianity accepted Rome's idea of law and have taken another gospel to the world, the gospel of a kingdom of law, of rule, of imperialism, of external judgment and inflicted punishment—a false gospel and God is waiting for people to return to worship Him as Creator and take the good news of His kingdom of love to the world, which requires we reject imposed law and return to understanding all of God's laws are design laws.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the author of the book of Mark, who was John Mark. The SDA Bible Commentary has the following:

- The unanimous and consistent testimony of Christian tradition points to John Mark as the author of the Gospel that bears his name. The name Mark is from the Latin Marcus, and is the surname of the writer (Acts 12:12, 25). His first name was John (see ch. 13:5, 13). His mother's name was Mary (ch. 12:12). He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), who at one time had been a resident of the island of Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Mark's home in Jerusalem seems to have been the house in which was the "upper room" (see on Matt. 26:18), where, for a time at least, some of the apostles lived after the resurrection and the ascension (John 20:19; Acts 1:13), and where members of the early church in Jerusalem assembled (Acts 12:12). It was John Mark who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their first missionary journey (ch. 13:5, 13). On a later journey, Mark accompanied Barnabas to the island of Cyprus (ch. 15:36–39). Later he seems to have worked under the direction of Peter and Paul (1 Peter 5:13; Col. 4:10 2 Tim. 4:11). The fact that the Gospel carries the name of so inconspicuous a man as Mark is indirect evidence of its genuineness and of his authorship. Had the book been a forgery, the name of a more well-known person who had been associated personally with Jesus, such as the apostle Peter, would no doubt have been attached to it. There is no valid reason to doubt either the authenticity of the book or that Mark was its author. Papias, bishop of the city of Hierapolis, about 10 mi. (16 km.) from Collossae and Laodicea in Asia Minor, is the first known writer who speaks of Mark as the author of this Gospel. (Nichol, F. D., ed. (1980). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 5, pp. 561–563). Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

The lesson focuses on the struggles of John Mark, how he started out on a missionary journey with Paul, but then quit and went back to Jerusalem, and later wanted to rejoin Paul, but Paul wouldn't have him back on his team, so Barnabas took him, and then later he went with Peter.

The lesson quotes EGW, and we will read a little farther than their quoted portion from the commentary *Acts of the Apostles*:

- Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts of the Apostles 169.3)

  This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after years his solicitude in Mark's behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the blessing of God, and the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker. (Acts of the Apostles 170.1)

  Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark and received him as a fellow laborer. He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker "unto the kingdom of God," and "a comfort unto me." Colossians 4:11. Again, not long before his own death, he spoke of Mark as "profitable" to him "for the ministry." 2 Timothy 4:11. (Acts of the Apostles 170.2)

I believe this is a reasonable and accurate historical account of the events recorded in Scripture. And these events in Scripture are recorded for our benefit. What are the lessons we can derive from the account of Mark becoming discouraged, leaving his initial commitments, Paul losing confidence in him and refusing to work with him, Mark being mentored by Barnabas and Peter and recovering himself and Paul regaining confidence in him?

What was revealed by Mark's initial withdrawal from service? What was the likely cause? Was it evil in Mark—was it that he wanted to pursue a worldly course with his life? Had he rejected Jesus? Did he choose a new god? Or did he get overwhelmed with various feelings and was unprepared for the investment of time and energy, didn't have the emotional mental stamina, and wasn't prepared for the rigors of the struggle. This would be immaturity, or lack of preparation.

Did that mean he was now cast off by Jesus, that he had lost his salvation, that he had forever forfeited his usefulness for God and God's cause? Obviously not, but could the devil tempt a person in such a situation to think this? And if a person believes this lie then what happens? The problem is not the initial disengagement, but the lies that get in the head and prevent one from growing, maturing, and returning to Jesus.

And might the devil bring to mind a Bible text to discourage and undermine a person's faith?

- Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 NIV84).

Does this text mean that John Mark was unfit for Jesus' service because he started and then turned back? Again, obviously not as John Mark was very useful to God's cause, then what does this text mean?

Consider,

- "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV84).

Man looks at the behavior—someone started in service, but pulled back—then man judges that person to be unfit.

God looks at the heart—the motive, someone starts in service but is only unfit if their heart was not right. In other words, they started the service because they thought they could make a name for themselves and then turned back because they never really embraced the truth and principles of God, they didn't get the accolades they sought for themselves, they didn't get the position, recognition, or validation they wanted, so they left the cause. This is different than the person whose heart does love God and seeks to honor Him, but who hasn't yet developed the experience, stamina, energy, or perspective, and it is in this very hardship of the experience of giving up a particular mission that they learn about themselves, go to Jesus to overcome what they had not previously seen in themselves that interfered with their initial attempt, and they go out again better equipped having struggled through their first failed attempt.

The one Jesus spoke about is one who leaves Jesus completely and is no longer interested in kingdom of God or the true gospel. Mark represents those whose hearts never left Jesus, but they may have left a particular endeavor but still want to work for Jesus in another endeavor.

So, I rendered it in the Remedy this way:

- Jesus said, "No one who puts their hand to sowing seeds of truth — yet has their heart longing for the world — is capable of sharing the Remedy from the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 REM).

So, back to John Mark, what other lessons do we learn from his life experiences?

What was likely a key factor in enabling Mark to overcome his immaturity? The events that followed his leaving Paul. His conscience convicted him; Paul lost confidence in him, which would have likely been upsetting to him; Barnabas and Peter almost certainly counseled him. He was sure to have spent

time in prayer and reflection on what transpired, and as evidenced by his later actions, he experienced a maturing of character and became reliable and trustworthy.

Can you think of other Bible examples of this process?

- All of the disciples except Judas—look at their journey with Jesus, how at the beginning they were vying for who would be first, and at the end, right before the crucifixion, they were still vying for who would be first and were unprepared for the crucifixion. Were discouraged, Thomas about to give up his faith. The disciples on the road to Emmaus, doubting and about to give in. Yet, they were all searching, looking, and willing to reexamine themselves and the evidences and they grew and matured.
- Peter of course, his denial of Jesus, and that experience did not put the pathology of fear and selfishness into Peter's heart, it revealed it, exposed it to Peter and all of us in such a way that Peter really couldn't deny to himself any longer that despite three years with Jesus he had not yet been fully converted. This is why Jesus said to him, prior to those events, when you are converted feed my sheep. And that event, caused Peter to go out, weep bitterly, wrestle with himself in union with God, and the working of the Holy Spirit to overcome the fear and selfishness and experience a new heart. And after that, Peter was a changed man—did that mean Peter was mistake free, error free? No, his heart was right, but his understanding and judgments were not flawless and thus he made a mistake with the Judaizers requiring Paul to correct him publicly—but that was not done out of fear and selfishness, it was done out of a desire to reach the Jews and not offend, yet is was an error and introduced wrong concepts that would have been destructive. And because his heart was renewed, rather than pridefully objecting and claiming his Apostleship as his authority to advance his own judgments, he accepted the correction.
- David after the Bathsheba/Uriah incident—did that incident place the infection of fear and selfishness in David's heart, or was that incident the graphic and undeniable exposure of the fear and selfishness still operating in David's heart? And what happened to David afterward? He wrote Psalm 51, experienced full and complete repentance, rebirth, recreation of a new heart and right spirit and then became a man after God's own heart.
- Moses after he murdered the overseer.

The evidence of Scripture is clear—we are all born infected with sin, fear and selfishness, and God is working through Christ to heal us, to give us a new heart and right spirit of love and trust. As we are won to trust in Jesus we enter into a conflict with our old motives, methods, beliefs, attitudes and while we may have the good intention to honor God, we still may be immature, still have old biases, prejudices, beliefs, attitudes, or simply not developed the maturity to handle certain responsibilities and we try before we are ready and fall short. It is then the devil will step in and try and discourage us and it is then we must remember these stories, the evidences God has given us, the reality of what is transpiring, the truth of who God is and go to Jesus, fall down before Him, wrestle against the lies, fear, selfishness and old habits in union with Jesus and this is how we advance, how we overcome, how we mature.

Was Paul wrong for refusing to work with John Mark again? No, he judged that John Mark wasn't ready at that time for the rigors of what Paul was going to face. And that feedback to Mark required him to do some introspection and evaluate if there was some truth to Paul's concern.

Does that mean John Mark should be rejected by the church and not allowed to serve in any capacity? No, and we are all blessed because of the fact Paul didn't take him again but others did.

What does this mean for us in our personal discourses and relationships within the church? Not every person who is a true follower of Jesus is well suited to fill every position in which they might volunteer or be drafted, and once in that position, they might become overwhelmed, discouraged, and give up that mission—but that doesn't mean they are a backslider, or a rejector of Jesus—it might only mean they were not well suited for that role.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Mark 1:1-8, let's read it from the Remedy:

- The Remedy originated with Jesus Christ, God's Son. God's spokesman Isaiah wrote: "I will send my herald before you, who will prepare the people for your arrival. A voice calling in a dark and desolate land: 'Prepare your minds, untwist your hearts, and make ready for the Lord to come with his healing Remedy.'"

  And so John arrived, immersing people in a desolate region, and preaching, "Immerse your minds into truth and love and turn away from lies and selfishness so that your sinful hearts can be healed. "From all over Judea and Jerusalem huge crowds of people flocked to John, and confessing their sinfulness, they were immersed by him in water in the Jordan River. John was dressed in a camel hair cloak, tied with a leather belt and he ate locust and honey found in the wild. He proclaimed, "The One coming after me is so awesome, I am not even worthy to tie his shoes. I only immerse you in water, but he will immerse your minds and characters with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:1-8 REM).

Do you like this version, or do you prefer other more traditional versions that say things like, "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" Mark 1:4 NIV84)?

What would you say was the purpose of John's preaching? What was it to achieve? Was John preaching about legal adjustments or what John preaching about actual changing of hearts and minds?

And while John was a real historical person, who really preached a message for the people of that day as recorded in Scripture—he also is the fulfillment of a prophecy, someone that prophecy predicted would return—who?

- "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes." (Malachi 4:5 NIV84).

- As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

  " 'I will send my messenger ahead of you,
  who will prepare your way before you.'
  I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 11:7-15 NIV84).

Who is the prophet Elijah returned? Jesus says it wasn't the individual person who went to heaven in a fiery chariot, but the one who came with the message of Elijah, the message that called people back from Baal worship, the legalistic worship of a legalistic punishing god, to the worship of Yahweh the Creator. And John is the one who fulfilled this role 2000 years ago. But this is another example of a dual fulfillment prophecy—with a lesser regional fulfillment and a greater global fulfillment.

John was the lesser regional fulfillment—what is the greater global? It is when the people of God give the end time message of Elijah to the world, preparing the world for the second coming of Christ, as John called people to prepare to meet Jesus at His first coming.

And Jesus quoted an Old Testament verse:

- 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

I had always linked this in my mind with the verse John quotes from Isaiah about make the paths straight and thought this was from Isaiah, but it is not, do you know what verse Jesus links with the Elijah message? Malachi 3:1:

- "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness (Malachi 3:1-3 NIV84).

This is the message the Elijah people will give at the end of time, it is the message of Jesus coming to His Temple for the purpose of cleansing the Levites, the priesthood of believers, to prepare them, to

purify them, to unify them into eternal at-one-ment with Him so the people will be ready to meet Jesus when He comes. We describe this cleansing of the sanctuary message, this cleansing of the bride of Christ in our recent talk Light from the Sanctuary

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. The word "drove" is from the Greek word ekballō, the common word used in the Gospel of Mark for driving out demons. The Spirit's presence here illustrates the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life. The Lord is already starting the journey of His ministry, and He immediately confronts Satan. The sense of the struggle in the scene is displayed by the reference to 40 days of temptation, the presence of wild animals, and the angels ministering to Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 10).

Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness? Didn't the Holy Spirit know Jesus would be tempted? Aren't we supposed to pray for God to lead us not into temptation—but it appears here that Jesus was led into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted—why?

Because that was exactly part of why Jesus came—He came as our substitutionary Savior—the second Adam, to take up humanity damaged by Adam and to overcome where Adam failed, to be tempted in all points like we are but to instead of sinning, to overcome sin, fear, selfishness, and ultimately death itself—which He did. Thus the only way to achieve the victory is to face the pathology and destroy the lies with truth, confront the fear and overcome with love, to be tempted with selfishness and choose selflessness. And in Jesus God lived fully overcoming by exercising only human abilities and powers as Jesus' trusting His Father to succeed and did not rely on His own divine abilities.

Read last two paragraphs,

- An unusual characteristic of the opening scene of the Gospel of Mark is that Jesus is presented as a character with both divinity and humanity. On the side of divinity: He is the Christ, the Messiah (Mark 1:1), the Lord announced by a messenger (Mark 1:2, 3), mightier than John (Mark 1:7), the beloved Son on whom the Spirit descends (Mark 1:10, 11). But on the side of humanity, we see the following: He is baptized by John (not the other way around, Mark 1:9), He is driven by the Spirit (Mark 1:12), tempted by Satan (Mark 1:13), with wild animals (Mark 1:13), and ministered to by angels (Mark 1:13).

  Why these contrasts? This points to the amazing reality of Christ, our Lord and Savior, our God, and yet also a human being, our brother and our example. **How do we fully wrap our minds around this idea? We can't. But we accept it on faith and marvel at what this truth reveals to us about God's love for humanity.** (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 10, emphasis mine).

Thoughts? What do you hear is the message? Is it, “While God is infinite and we can never fully comprehend God, yet we are to think, reason, and understand to the fullest extent possible and our understanding and appreciation will grow through all eternity?” Or did you hear, “God’s ways are beyond our ability to comprehend so we don’t think about them—we just accept them on faith without seeking to understand?”

I really dislike the merger of a truth with an action that is against God’s desire for us. The truth is that we cannot FULLY wrap our minds around this—we cannot FULLY comprehend God—that is true. But that does not mean we cannot comprehend and understand many things of God, His character, methods, nature, motives, design laws, aspects of His sacrifice, and grow in our understanding through time.

In fact, Jesus said He wants us to understand, that He wants us to be His friends who do understand and not be unthinking servants who simply obey because the master said so (John 15:15).

This type of logic really bothers me because it presents itself as virtuous, as righteous, as a good thing, as pious, holy, saintly, meek and humble—but it is actually none of those things. It is a deception to keep people from knowing the truth for themselves; it prevents people from understanding and being set free by the truth. Satan has no truth on his side so he must get people to accept and believe things based on faith without understanding, without comprehension, to believe things that are not supported by evidence, things that are irrational and unreasonable—that is why they cannot be thought about—because if one thought one would see the lie. So, people are taught, don’t question, don’t think, that would be a lack of faith, just believe.

But while we cannot FULLY comprehend the things of God, we can understand a lot about why this contrast is there and the reason Jesus had to become human. This contrast is there, inspired by God and written by Mark, because our salvation requires both to be true. Our salvation requires that Jesus had to be fully human in order to save the species God created in Eden. But He also had to be fully God in order to address the lies Satan told about God that started the war in heaven deceived angels, and then deceived Adam and Eve. Both must be fully true in order to both save humanity and also bring an end to the cosmic war over God’s trustworthiness.

So it is quite understandable as to why both are presented and necessary. Jesus is God who became fully human. He was the merger of two lives, or life-forces, or spirits—the breath of life, or spirit, breathed into Adam which Adam corrupted with sin, and the Holy Spirit, who was the Father of Jesus’ humanity. In Jesus the spirit of fear inherited from Adam was opposed, overcome, eradicated, and replaced with the spirit of love, truth, and holiness and became the new life source for humanity—connecting humanity back to God the source of all life. And when we are converted, won to trust, we surrender our old life, our old spirit of fear and selfishness, and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit who imparts a new spirit of love and trust that comes from Jesus. We are reborn with new motives and desires and become part of the family of heaven.

THURSDAY

Read Mark 1:14-15:

- After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15 NIV84).

What is the time referred to by Jesus? The fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 9, 70 weeks set aside for the Jews to fulfill their mission to be the avenue through whom the Messiah would come.

And Jesus did come and reported that the kingdom of God is near—what kingdom? How would you describe it? What is the basis of His kingdom?

What did Jesus mean when He said,

- "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21 NIV84).

What does this mean? Is it related to 1 Samuel we quoted earlier, man looks on the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart?

What kind of kingdom functions inside of person?

What is the basis of any kingdom? Its law—what kind of law functions inside a person?

What is the new covenant—God writing His laws upon our hearts and minds—how does this happen? Is it a list of rules?

Can God get His law upon our hearts and minds by might, power, enforcement of any kind? How does He win?

Truth, love, and freedom is the only means to be used.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Light from the Sanctuary Presentation: Several weeks ago I presented our understanding of the Sanctuary message from the design law reality, God's plan to heal and cleanse us so we are ready to meet Him when He comes. We have this video along with the power point slides available online and have sent out an email this week with the promotion and link. We are asking you to forward it with your recommendation or encouragement to all of your Adventist family and friends. Ask them to view it and see if this isn't the first presentation that actually makes sense on this subject.

https://comeandreason.com/light-from-the-sanctuary/

A NEW CHILDREN's BOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE: Biblical Concepts Made Easy, by Stephanie Land. It is a fun book with puzzles that teaches children the truth about God, His design laws, and answers difficult questions regarding moral decision making and why suffering happens. These are available for you and your family and to share. We will ship them at no cost to any US Postal address. They will also be for sale on Amazon as an individual book and we will have them for sale at bulk discount pricing on our website for schools and church groups to purchase and give to their youth. Please get a copy and share with your youth pastor or leader and give them the contact information where they can order on our website.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 2
A Day in the Ministry of Jesus

by Tim Jennings

MONDAY

I want to follow up on a topic that was in last week's lesson, but is also in this week's lesson and we find it in Monday's lesson, in the fifth paragraph,

- Next, the command to come out of the man is understandable, but why the command, " 'Be quiet' " (NKJV)? Beginning here in Mark, a remarkable motif appears: Jesus' call for silence regarding who He is. Scholars call this the "Messianic Secret." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 16).

This idea of secrets, of Jesus promoting secrecy, let's unpack this a little more.

The lesson asks us to read Mark 1:23-26:

- Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"
  "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. (Mark 1:23-26 NIV84).

Why did Jesus tell the demon to be quiet? Was Jesus wanting secrecy? Was Jesus starting a secret society, a mystery religion? No! Jesus is the light, and Jesus never promoted a Messianic Secret, it is exactly the opposite. Was telling a demon to be quiet same as saying I want my mission to be a secret? So why did Jesus tell the demon to be quiet—and I want you to see this. It is important, because Jesus told the demon to be quiet because Jesus wanted to truth to be seen, understood, revealed, and promoted, the opposite of a secret.

Was the demon telling the truth?

No, the demon lied, but the lie was mixed with a truth which made it all the more dangerous and effective at obscuring the truth. What is the lie the demon mixed with the truth that the demon was attempting to promote—the lie that if believed would undermine the plan of salvation **while** people claim Jesus as their Messiah?

Let me say that again—the plan of the demon was to infect the thinking of people in such a way that they could acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, the Son of the Most High God, and still be lost and still promote Satan's lies about God and Satan's kingdom under the name of Jesus—and the words of the demon included the lie that would cause this to happen if believed. And sadly, this demon's lie has

been believed and taught as truth for millennia in Christianity and is still being taught. And sadly, our quarterly writers/editors believe this lie that that is why they conclude this is a Messianic Secret motif, rather than seeing that Jesus' instructions are just the opposite, it is the Messianic Revelation of truth motif.

What is the lie? **That Jesus is the source of inflicted punishment, destruction for sin, the type of punishment that comes from imposed law**.

Those who wrote our lesson believes this to be true, that Jesus will use power to inflict external punishment and death for sin, thus they see no problem, no error, no falsehood in the words of the demon and therefore conclude Jesus must want secrecy.

We see the same lie promoted by other demons—Satan's forces have a gameplan, they have an agenda, they have a false view of God that they actively work to promote and get people to accept, and we read it again in Matthew 8:28-29:

- When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Matthew 8:28-29 NIV84)

What is the lie the demons are telling?

That God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, torment, and death, which is quickly and easily accepted as truth by people who believe God's law functions like human law.

The people hear the demon acknowledge Jesus as the Son of the Most High, and then hear the fear, and the question "Have you come to destroy us? Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?" and people accept, embrace, and promote the lie that God is the source of torture and death inflicted upon demons and unrepentant sinners.

No wonder Jesus told the demon to keep quiet. Sadly, so much of Christianity, including leaders in the SDA church, are still teaching these lies from demons about God.

The message for this time, the message that is to lighten the world for Christ's return is that God is not like Satan has made Him out to be. God is the Creator and God's laws are the laws life itself is built upon, deviating from God's design, breaking God's laws, harm the one who breaks them and results in pain, suffering, and death unless healed by the Creator. God uses power to heal, to save, to redeem, to hold at bay the destroyer. God does not use power to torture and/or kill—second death as punishment for sin. But if we believe the demons lies, that God's law functions like human law, then we naturally believe the words of the demons that Jesus is one day going to torture and kill—and Satan is counting on that for he will do exactly that when he impersonates Christ.

Was Jesus promoting secrecy? No, He was advancing the truth, but Jesus often told the people He healed to keep quiet, and the disciples not to share their belief He was the Son of God. If He wasn't using the Messianic Secret motif—why did He do this? Because He was the light to lighten all men only by the means, methods, principles of God.

- Methods—God's methods are to win based on the truth, on reality, which is through the revelation of evidence, truth in action, versus those who have no truth and thus must rely only on proclamations, declarations, claims, and testimony of others. Jesus wants people to see for themselves. When John the Baptist's disciples came and asked if He was the One, He told them to spend the day and watch. See the evidence, don't just accept a verbal declaration, don't accept the conclusions of others, understand and know the truth for yourselves. So, Jesus is telling people to be silent so He can reveal the evidence in action and people will learn how to think through things for themselves and not rely on other people's testimony alone for their faith. They are to hear the testimony, like people from Samaria who heard the testimony of the woman at the well and then came to learn from Jesus directly and no longer believed based on the woman's testimony, but because they knew the truth for themselves.

After I prepared this week's lesson, I came across this quotation from the book *Education* as I was reading during my morning devotions. Please consider this in light of what we have just discussed:

- It is a fact widely ignored, though never without danger, that error rarely appears for what it really is. **It is by mingling with or attaching itself to truth that it gains acceptance**… The **mind that depends upon the judgment of others is certain, sooner or later, to be misled**. (Education 230).

And sadly most of church history the organized churches have taught people to surrender their judgment to the church leadership, to trust the priests, popes, church counsels, pastor, the Biblical Research Institute, the General Conference Committee, rather than thinking for themselves as Paul taught in Romans 14—every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind.

Other reasons Jesus told people to be quiet included:

- Impact on mission—Jesus didn't want to alert his human enemies to the fact that the one they opposed was in the area, thus drawing more opposition
- Prejudice and bias from the religious authorities against the people who were receptive to the gospel, thus decreasing the arbitrary rule application that would create social outcasts, and prevent people from being restored to community

In Monday's lesson the study guide quotes Mark 1:22, let's read that verse:

- The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. (Mark 1:22 NIV84).

What does this mean?

What authority did Jesus wield?

Did Jesus teach with the authority of:

- The Sanhedrin—today known as the General Conference Committee? In other words, did Jesus teach with the support and endorsement of the organized church leadership?
    - Then how could His teachings be with authority if the authorized church on earth did not recognize, endorse, and support Him? In fact, how could He teach with authority if they were actively telling people He was teaching heresy?
        - Did this dynamic, church leaders opposing truth, happen only to Jesus or throughout all history? Did the priests of Israel often oppose the prophets? Read Jeremiah?
        - Did church leadership oppose the Reformers?
        - Could this happen today? Could church leaders today still oppose those who are teaching with the authority of heaven?
- The state—did Jesus have the endorsement of governmental office?
    - Pilate could speak with the authority of Rome.
    - Matthew could speak with the authority of Rome on matters of taxation. Did Jesus speak with the authority of the government?
- Academic credentials—did Jesus speak with the authority of academic endorsement, a degree from a recognized university? Board certification from a recognized credentialing body?
    - In fact, didn't they wonder how He could teach with such wisdom having never gone to their universities and never completed an academic degree?
- If Jesus didn't have the authority of the church, of the state, of academia, of some professional society, then upon what did His authority in teaching rest? What about the authority of truth? Jesus taught reality, the truth of God and His kingdom of love.
- But why does the Bible say He taught with authority but adds, "NOT as the teachers of the law"? What does this contrast mean?
- Were the teachers of the law teaching the wrong Sabbath, the wrong festivals, the wrong tithe percentage, the wrong list of clean and unclean meats?
- What were the teachers of the law doing that undermined the authority of their teaching?
- Didn't the teachers of the law have the endorsement of the General Conference Committee—the Sanhedrin, and didn't they have the authority of office, and the academic credentials to teach—to be subject matter experts? And didn't they claim the authority of Scripture and of Moses and God Himself? But their teachings didn't have the authority of Jesus, why? What was wrong with their teaching? They were not speaking with godly authority but with earthly authority—what is the difference?
    - God's authority rests in truth and love in harmony with His character, design laws, and methods—in other words reality.
    - Earthly authority rests in coercion, compelling power, rules, declared positions of power, the office itself, the laws enacted, the degrees attained, regardless of whether it is true.

    - We see this in the world today like never before—people declaring things to be one way when in reality they are the exact opposite.
- Consider Saul of Tarsus before the Damascus road when he was arresting Christians and persecuting the followers of Christ. Did he have the authority of the Sanhedrin, of his appointed office, of the law, and the local government? But did he speak with the authority of God? Why or why not?
- What was Jesus' authority—was it coming from position, endorsement, office, academic degree, or was it innate in some way and can we wield that same authority?

Isn't it the truth itself that gave His words authority? To the degree anyone is speaking truth they are speaking with authority for the truth is authoritative.

Consider these historical quotes:

- Jesus' manner of teaching was beautiful and attractive, and it was ever characterized by simplicity. He **unfolded the mysteries** of the kingdom of heaven through the use of figures and **symbols with which his hearers were familiar**, and the common people heard him gladly; for **they could comprehend his words.** There were no high-sounding words used, to understand which it was necessary to consult a dictionary. He illustrated the glories of the kingdom of God by the use of **the experiences** and occurrences of earth. (Christian Education 126, emphasis mine). [Christ came to reveal mysteries, to unveil secrets, as the light of the world. He used illustrations that made it easy for people to understand reality. He did not use metaphor or symbol to hide reality, but to reveal it. He chose simple words, not complex theological jargon that people don't understand, like propitiation, expiation, vicarious substitution, and so on. And He connected the truth to real world experiences because God is the God of reality. He showed and taught that God's truth always translates into real world living, not theoretical constructs for some future life. The integrative evidence-based approach—He explained Scripture connected to science and nature and life experiences.]

- Christ came to **unveil divine truth** to the world. He taught as one having **authority**. He spake as never man spake. There was no hesitancy in His manner, not the shadow of a doubt in His utterances. He spake as one who **understood** every part of His subject. [He had confidence in His demeanor because He was speaking reality-based truths that He understood. We cannot teach what we do not understand, and sadly many Bible teachers do not understand God's design laws and thus they teach a distorted legal religion, the confused system of conflicting beliefs the Bible symbolically describes as the fallen system of Babylon. Jesus confronted this legal distortion with the religious leaders of His day and we are still battling this legal mindset in the church today.] He could have opened mysteries which patriarchs and prophets desired to look into, which human curiosity had been impatiently desirous of understanding. But when men **could not discern the most simple, plainly stated truths**, how could they understand mysteries which were hid from mortal eyes? [Why couldn't they discern them? Because their understanding was warped through a system of rules and rule enforcement. They didn't understand the design laws of God, the principles upon which life was built to operate. Thus they couldn't comprehend deeper truths. If you don't understand the basic rules of math, you

can't understand algebra. The design laws of God are the basics, if we get those wrong then all our other conclusions are going to be distorted.] Jesus did not disdain to repeat old, familiar truths; for He was the author of these truths. He was the glory of the temple. **Truths which had been lost sight of,** which had been misplaced, misinterpreted, and disconnected from their pure position, **He separated from the companionship of error**; and showing them as precious jewels in their own bright luster, **He reset them in their proper framework**, and commanded them to stand fast forever. [He reset them in design law, in reality, all of Jesus' parables teach design law and overthrow imposed law—the governing system of creatures.] What a work was this! It was of such a character that no finite man could comprehend or do it. Only the divine Hand could take the **truth which, from its connection with error, had been serving the cause of the enemy of God and man**, [This is how Satan is most successful, mixing error with truth—as the demons were doing when Jesus silenced them. Today this would be doing something like having 28 true doctrines and then mixing in the lie that God's law works like human law, which requires God to legally enforce the breaking of those doctrines, rules, beliefs. The error about law corrupts the meaning of the correct 28 fundamentals the correct doctrines end up serving the enemy of God as the people are lead to conceive of God as an authoritarian dictator who is required by law to use his power to inflict pain, torture, and death upon the wicked, and who even killed his innocent son to pay our legal penalty, and to whom we must offer the blood of a human sacrifice to avoid his anger and wrath. This was the problem with the Jews 2000 years ago, they had the right doctrines set in the wrong law and thus they rejected and killed Jesus.] and place it where it would glorify God, and be the salvation of humanity. [Only as we return the true doctrines into the setting of design law are we able to present the true doctrines where they bring glory to God and salvation to humanity.] The work of Christ was to give again to the world **the truth in its original freshness and beauty**. **He represented the spiritual and the heavenly, by the things of nature and experience**. [Here it is again, the integrative evidence-based approach—Scripture is understood only as it functions in reality, in the laws of nature and real-life experiences. The truth of God completely overthrows the human imposed law system, which is a system of made-up rules with artificial externally inflicted punishments. We can only teach with authority when we teach reality, the truth of God's design laws and how it functions in reality.] He gave fresh manna to the hungry soul, presented a new kingdom which was to be set up among men. (Fundamentals of Chrsitian Education 236, emphasis mine).

The Jewish rabbis presented the requirements of the law as a wearing round of exactions. They did just what Satan is doing in our day,—presented the law before the people as a cold, rigid code of commands and traditions. Superstitions buried the light, the glory, the dignity, and far-reaching claims of the **law of God**. [What is the problem? Imposed law, that lie that God's law functions like human law, made up rules with inflicted punishments, that lead to nonsensical superstitious thinking that darken minds, increase fear and distrust of God, and harden hearts. This is what a legal religion does. This is what penal substitutionary theology does and all theology that teaches God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death. It undermines trust and dethrones human reason. God's design law has far-reaching claims, for God's design laws are the operational basis for everything and reach to the subatomic quantum level of creation itself and it claims that life requires harmony with the

protocols God built it to exist and operate upon.] They professed to speak to the people in the place of God. After the transgression of Adam, the Lord spoke no longer directly with man; the human race was given into the hands of Christ, and all communication came through Him to the world. It was Christ who spoke the **law** on Mount Sinai, and He knew the **bearing of all its precepts**, the glory and majesty of the **law of heaven**. In His sermon on the mount, **Christ defines the law**, and seeks to inculcate in the minds of His hearers the **far-reaching claims** of the precepts of Jehovah. [What did Christ teach? That sin happens in the heart and leads to bad behaviors or deeds, it is the lust in the heart, the hate in the heart. He taught that justice is not the infliction of so-called just punishments, it is not eye for an eye, but it is to love your enemies and pray for those who abuse you. This is design law, how life is built to operate. But Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of a creature who cannot build reality and thus he must make up rules and enforce those rules with inflicted punishments. All the kingdoms of the world work this way and all of them are Satan's. And the Jews accepted this idea of law as God's and thus corrupted and perverted the sacrificial system to teach appeasement and legal payment rather than loving self-sacrifice to heal and restore. Jesus came and reset it all in the light of design law]. His **instructions came as a new revelation** to the people; and the teachers of the law, the scribes and the Pharisees, as well as the common people, were astonished at His doctrine. **The words of Christ were not new**, and yet they came with the force of revelation; for they presented the **truth in its proper light**, and **not in the light in which the teachers had set it** before the people. **He showed no regard for the traditions and commandments of men**, but opened the eyes of their understanding to behold **wondrous things out of the law of God**, which is the **foundation of His throne** from the beginning of the world; and as long as the heavens and the earth remain, through the ceaseless ages of eternity, it will be the great standard of righteousness, holy and just and good. (Fundamentals of Christian Education 237, emphasis mine). [It only seemed new to the people because they were so deeply indoctrinated into the lie that God's law is imposed, that justice is the proper infliction of punishment, that sin is rule-breaking, that God is the source of punishment for sin, that sacrifice is offered to pay the sin-debt to an offended god. They were so deeply indoctrinated into pagan beliefs about God that the truth Jesus revealed seemed completely new to them. And sadly, it is like this in Christianity today. We are not presenting anything new, but it seems new to those who have been indoctrinated into the penal legal way of thinking about things. We are simply doing the work Jesus has called us to do, placing things back in their proper light.]

SABBATH

Read last paragraph,

- This "Sabbath with Jesus" at the beginning of Mark gives the reader a sense of who Jesus is. In the entire section for this week's lesson, there are very few of His words recorded: a brief call to discipleship, a command to a demon, a plan to visit other locations, and the healing of a leper with instructions to show himself before a priest to be clean. The emphasis is on action, particularly healing people. The Gospel writer likes to use the word immediately to illustrate

the fast-action movement of Jesus' ministry. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 14).

Why did the Jewish religious leaders have a problem with Jesus? Consider, what He actually did—He healed people of diseases, including lepers, He fed the hungry, He visited with the tax-collectors, Samaritans, women, prostitutes—why did these actions cause such hatred from church leadership?

Because they had a law, a legal way of seeing things, and in their minds sickness, disease, poverty, homelessness were God's inflicted punishments for sin—if you keep the law, obey the rules, do right then you receive reward, if you break the law, then you deserve punishment. Jesus, by healing the sick and feeding the poor, was overthrowing their legal religious system. They believed God was punishing people, and who was Jesus to remove it? Remember He even forgave sins!

Consider this historical commentary,

- It was generally believed by the Jews **that sin is punished in this life.** Every **affliction** was regarded as **the penalty of some wrongdoing,** either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted**.**

  Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.

  Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" **was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;"** and they hid their faces from Him. Isaiah 53:4, 3.

  God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471, emphasis mine)

They rejected Jesus in His healing of the sick, His raising of the dead, His feeding of the poor because they believed God was punishing such people for law-breaking, and therefore Jesus was doing injustice. This was confirmed in their mind when Jesus Himself was crucified.

Jesus was not concealing the truth, hiding the truth, promoting secrecy, He was confronting the lies through revelation of truth in action, deeds of truth, demonstrations of how reality works—but they were blind guides keeping people blind, just like many Bible teachers today who continue to teach a legal religion.

SUNDAY

Read Mark 1:16-20:

- As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20 NIV84).

Then read the last paragraph:

- But why does Mark not fill in more details? Likely, it is to emphasize the power of Jesus. He calls, and willing fishermen answer, and their lives, and the world itself, are never the same. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 15).

The lesson makes an assertion, a conclusion, an assumption, applies an interpretation as to why Mark doesn't fill in more of the details and it is to emphasize the power of Jesus—He calls, the voice of His authority has spoken, and it is so compelling they drop everything and follow. Hmmm…. Do you agree?

What are other possible reasons Mark doesn't include more details, as John does?

- Mark's emphasis was simply to identify these initial followers of Jesus establishing Peter, Andrew, James and John as early followers of Jesus.
- His first century audience likely already knew the details of the calling and this is a reminder not intended to be a deep dive into the stuff they already knew.
- Mark wants his letter/gospel to be short and he intentionally abbreviates things to the most salient elements rather than writing a treatise, as he wants the entire letter read in one setting during meetings.
- This was Peter's gospel and it was written to remind the people of what Peter had already told them, which is suggested by the following in 2 Peter:

    - So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. (2 Peter 1:12-15 NIV84).

What of the idea that it is appealing to Jesus' power—well what power? The power of charisma? The power of authority—He commanded them and they were powerless to resist the command?

In Revelation 5 Jesus is represented as a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns, the horns are symbolic of the seven powers of God that Jesus wields, which are:

1. Power of creation (Genesis 1; John 1:1–3,14; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:1, 2)
    - While on earth some believe this was demonstrated when He healed the man born blind. The only way to know in that time if an infant was born blind was if the infant was born without eyes. If it had eyes it is possible they lost vision later, but without eyes we can be certain was born blind. And Jesus healed this man by making mud and rubbing it on his eyes. Some interpret this to mean, just as God in the beginning formed Adam out of the dirt of the earth, that here Jesus formed new eyes out of the dirt wielding the power of creation.
2. Power of truth (John 14:6; Matthew 10:34; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 2:12)
3. Power of love (1 John 3:16, 4:8; John 15:13)
4. Power of life over death; resurrection power (John 11:25, 11:38–44; Romans 1:4; Revelation 1:18)
5. Power to forgive and save/heal from sin (Matthew 1:21, 9:6; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 1:9)
6. Power that sustains and holds all reality together and the laws that govern reality (Matthew 14:25–29; Mark 4:39; Colossians 1:17)
7. Power over time, including foreknowledge—the ability to see through time (Genesis 2:2-3; Joshua 10:12, 13; Daniel 2:28; Isaiah 46:10; Mark 2:28)

So Jesus uses the seven powers of God and none of them are coercive, declarative, proclamations, or imperial.

TUESDAY

Read first four paragraphs,

- After the amazing synagogue service, Jesus retires with His small band of disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to Peter's home, evidently to spend the rest of the Sabbath day in a friendly meal and fellowship.

  But a note of concern overshadows the scene: Peter's mother-in-law is ill with a fever, which back then meant you either got better or died. They tell Jesus of the sickness, and He takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and raises her up. She immediately begins to provide for their needs. What a powerful example of the principle that those who have been saved, healed, by Jesus will minister to others as a result!

  Throughout Mark it is often the case that Jesus heals by touching the affected person (see Mark 1:41; Mark 5:41), though other times no touch is mentioned (see Mark 2:1–12, Mark 3:1–6, Mark 5:7–13).

> Jesus was not done with ministry that day. After sunset many came to Peter's house for healing, no doubt from seeing what happened at the synagogue that day or from hearing about it. The fact that the Gospel writer does not tell his readers that people delayed because of the hours of the Sabbath indicates that he expected his readers to know about the Sabbath. This feature of Mark is consistent with his readers being Sabbath keepers. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 17).

Does this description raise many questions in your mind? What?

- Why did the people wait until after Sabbath to come to Jesus?
- Were they taught something about the Sabbath that was an actual barrier, hindrance, obstruction keeping them from coming to the Lord of the Sabbath? What?
- Could it be that the Sabbath is a rule made up that requires legal enforcement and there are all types of behaviors one is forbidden from doing on the Sabbath and thus, they were afraid of breaking the Sabbath law by going to Jesus?
- What about today is it possible to present the Bible Sabbath in such a way that it actually makes it harder for people to come to Jesus? Any examples?
- What are we forbidden from doing on the Sabbath?
    - Work—which is defined where in Scripture? It isn't!
    - Is that all we are forbidden from doing? What about disliking the Sabbath? Isaiah 58
    - Isn't true Sabbath keeping when one delights in the Sabbath, so wouldn't that mean we are not supposed to dislike it?
    - And then does the imposed law view, with all its rules and threats, the cause of many people disliking both the Sabbath and the god of the Sabbath and thus the method of legal Sabbath keeping is the very cause of Sabbath breaking, as it changes one's heart to something other than love and trust.
- Was Peter's mother breaking the Sabbath when she began working and serving them? Why or why not?
- What about Jesus, did He break the Sabbath when He healed her? The people were waiting until after the Sabbath to pursue getting healed, should Jesus have also waited to heal her?
- Why did Jesus perform so many miracles on the Sabbath, remember the man who was a paralytic for 38 years (John 5)? Jesus purposely healed him on Sabbath, this wasn't an acute sickness, it was a chronic condition, one more day wouldn't have mattered, or Jesus could have gotten there on Friday—why did Jesus choose the Sabbath to perform His healing?
- What is the purpose of the Sabbath, what is it to reveal to us? What are we to remember when we remember the Sabbath? Aren't we supposed to remember the truth about God—that God rested, that God stopped using power, that God did not use power to punish Lucifer and the rebellious angels, that God does not force people into compliance, that God leaves us free. Thus the Sabbath is God's sign to us that He will heal and save all who trust Him, through His methods of truth presented in love. It is the only way to save any sinner, because the use of might and power to change minds destroys individuality. Thus the Sabbath, God's truth presented in love while leaving us free—how reality works, is the sign that God makes us holy through the application of His design laws.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Jesus praying with His Father and encourages us to have an active prayer life. My blog a week ago explored the secret to getting prayers answered, which is to meet the conditions set out by God.

- If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit (John 15:7, 8 NKJV).

When we abide in Jesus, our hearts are surrendered to Him; our minds hunger for truth and actively assimilate His Word into our hearts; our attitudes, desires, motives, and longings are changed from selfishness to love; and we desire to glorify God. Then, with hearts that live to give glory to God, to uplift Jesus, to advance His kingdom, our prayers are gladly received and God answers them with the wisdom of His infinite foreknowing self. His answers will meet our true need and His greater purposes, and we, who live in abiding trust, rejoice in the varied ways and timing of God's response.

But there are many prayers that God does not pay attention to—prayers that God does not "listen" to or answer.

- **The selfish prayer:** God does not answer the selfish prayer because such prayer, no matter how religiously it may be phrased, means: "Give me what I want so I can continue to rebel against you, injure my soul, waste resources, and harm others."
- **The pretender prayer:** A prayer from a person who doesn't actually believe in God but prays to manipulate others who do believe. "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV).
- **The proud prayer:** A prayer people make to be seen; to advance themselves as more righteous, more holy, better than others; to be recognized as a religious leader and gain power over others; or to put others down. It was the prayer of the Pharisee recorded in Luke: "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess" (18:11, 12 NKJV).
- **The rejector-of-truth prayer:** A prayer said by those who may even be praying for the right thing but do so while they knowingly deny truth and choose what they know is wrong. This would be a person who prays for better lung function while continuing to smoke, or a person who prays for a happy and healthy marriage while they commit adultery.
- **The whiny, complaining, negative prayer:** The kind of prayer made with no interest in resolution, no desire to work things out, no desire to mature themselves, to heal, to change the destructive feelings, no openness to hear God speak, but simply to lodge a complaint and justify their role as victim and how life is not fair to them.
- **The proforma prayer:** The prayer done by rote, by ritual, by form without any thought or active engagement of the heart in pursuit of a connection with God. Man looks on the outward appearance (other humans can observe the act of performing a prayer), but God looks upon the heart and knows when the person is not praying but merely reciting a ritual.

While there are many prayers that God does not pay attention to, God smiles upon and longs to hear prayers from honest hearts, from people who believe in Him and genuinely desire to connect with Him, to know His will, hear His voice, abide in His presence, be transformed by His love, be strengthened by His power to carry out His will, those who have surrendered self and long to give glory to Him by growing daily in truth, to become mature Christians who manifest His character, and have the ability to live the principles of God, to apply the methods of God in how they govern themselves and treat others.

God will answer all such prayers!

I encourage you to pray—daily and often—but make prayer a conversation with God; talk to Him like you would talk with a friend, which means you must know Him, have faith in Him, and come to understand Him. And make your most intimate prayers private, seeking solitary places to commune with heaven, places without distractions, where you can abide in the quiet and hear the still small voice of God responding (1 Kings 19:12). When you know Him, you will understand His methods, His design laws, and will be more sensitive to His answers, for just as you would with a true friend, you will realize that He will not give certain responses because they are out of character for Him.

And when you encounter moments that seem to be silence, remember that God is your friend and ask yourself what would you do or think if your human friend responded with silence. Wouldn't you reflect and think, "What did I just ask? Do I already know the truth, the right course, the best action, but want something different and my friend is giving me time to reconsider?" Then when silence seems to be God's response, apply that wisdom and ask: "Is this a problem that I already know the answer to, that God has previously led me to solve? Do I need to solve this one on my own because God has given me the wisdom, principles, and methods already and now I need to apply them so I can mature and grow rather than seeking Him to tell me every answer?" If so, then ask God for the confirmation to proceed and apply His methods to the situation, actively remembering the vital truths applicable to your situation, thinking through your choices, and keeping your heart open to His leading while you move forward with a thankful heart, also remembering that Jesus has promised never to leave us or forsake us and that we can receive His power as long as our hearts are actively seeking to glorify Him.

Finally, if you are praying for strength to do God's will, you must remember that we do not receive the strength for the task *until* we choose to apply the truth and engage in the mission. The smoker doesn't get the strength to quit until they choose to quit; the runner doesn't get the endurance to finish the race until they are running the race; the waters do not part until our feet get wet. (See Joshua 3:13.)

The next time you pray, remember Jesus' promise:

- And I will do whatever you ask—that is in harmony with my character, methods, and principles—so that the Son may bring honor and glory to the Father by revealing the healing and life-giving power of his methods. You may ask me for anything in harmony with my character and methods, and I will do it (John 14:13, 14 REM).

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on healing of a leper. In the Bible, leprosy was a metaphor for sin—and it is an excellent metaphor because, leprosy destroys the pain fibers so when one touches a hot stove they don't feel pain and thus they experience much more damage than if they did feel pain.

Sin sears the conscience and thus we don't feel conviction, guilt, shame, or discomfort and persist in destructive living doing much more damage to our souls.

Read third paragraph,

- Jesus, however, is moved with compassion toward the man and touches him. "Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed' " (Mark 1:41, NKJV). This action should have defiled Jesus until the evening, when He would be required to bathe to become ritually pure again (compare with Leviticus 13–15). But Mark is clear that Jesus' action of touching the sick man cleanses him of his leprosy. Thus, Jesus was not defiled by touching the man. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 19).

Do you agree that Jesus was not defiled by touching the man?

Jesus became sin though He knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Jesus was not defiled by becoming sin, instead in Jesus sin was destroyed, death was destroyed, life was restored, sin was purged, humanity was cleansed from sin in Jesus Christ.

If we were to represent this symbolically what are the symbols for the cleansing life of Jesus—flesh and blood of the sacrificial animal, bread and wine. And in the OT system, did the blood of the sacrificial animal cleanse or defile? It cleansed.

Then why do some teach that the blood applied to the sanctuary defiled the sanctuary?

Jesus instructed the leper not to tell it was Jesus who healed him? Why? Because it would risk the priests rejecting him and refusing to declare him cleansed and allowing him back into the community.

Notice here the conflict between reality—design law and made up imposed law. When Jesus healed the leper that was reality, the leper was clean, no longer a leper. Will the acknowledgement of the priest change that reality? No, the leper was leprous free no matter what the priest says, however, the Jewish community is not operating upon design law, it is operating upon civil law, made up rules, and the word of the priest and the enforcement of their soldiers and the community is not based on reality, but on declaration—the word of the priest.

Jesus did not want this man to be rejected by the made up laws now that he was actually healed.

Further, Jesus didn't want the people to create such a stir about Him at that time that it would motivate His enemies to become more active in opposing Him and thus hindering His ministry.

But the man after being confirmed by the priest as being healed, broadcast loudly that Jesus had healed him.

The lesson describes it in the last paragraph like this:

- But the cleansed leper does not seem to understand this, and in disobedience to Jesus' command, he spreads the news far and wide, making it impossible for Jesus to enter towns openly for His ministry. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 19).

Do you agree that the man was in disobeying the Lord? Hmmm….this is how one sees things when one accepts Satan's lies about God's law. Jesus gave a command, you didn't behave the way He instructed, and therefore you are in disobedience. It is all about behavior rather than motivation.

Was the man doing this because he was rebelling against Jesus, or because he was for Jesus? This is not a reflection of a person disobeying but a person misunderstanding and being immature but who is still doing what they are doing from a heart seeking to uplift the Lord.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 3
Controversies

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The man was paralyzed; his four friends, therefore, had to carry him to Jesus. After they tore through the roof and let the man down into Jesus' presence, Mark 2:5 notes that Jesus saw their faith. How can faith be visible? Like love, it becomes visible in actions, as the persistence of the friends openly illustrates. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 23).

I like the idea here that faith is displayed in action. This is the point that James makes, that faith without action is dead.

But how would you describe faith—what is it?

Is there a difference between faith and trust and belief? In the Greek there is only one word for all three English words, *pistis.* Do we assign different meanings in English to these three words? Do you hear them all the same?

What is the meaning of saving faith? Does it matter in what or whom we place our faith? Any examples of faith that does not save?

- Faith in any savior other than Jesus?
- How about faith in one's works?
- How about faith in a blood payment to pay one's legal debt to the cosmic king?
- How about faith in doctrines—in other words, having faith that one believes the right things and this causes one to have faith they have the truth and thus are saved? Such as having the right Bible, eating the right foods, going to church on the right day—just like the Jews who crucified Christ.
- Others?

Are we saved by faith? Or are saved by God, by Jesus, through faith—so again, what is faith?

Faith is more than belief, the devils believe and tremble, but they are not saved by believing Jesus is the Savior of the world. Saving faith is our trust in Jesus. We enter a state of salvation when our hearts are changed from distrust to trust.

In Scripture the natural, fallen, carnal heart is described as being at enmity to God (Romans 8:7). Our heart's attitude, motives, desires, toward God that we inherit from Adam is one of fear and selfishness, a heart that does not trust God.

Abraham experienced a change of heart from distrust to trust—that is when Abraham went from a state of being dead in trespass and sin, to a state of being set right with God, a state of being saved by faith, by trust, and the literal, real, actual change in Abraham's heart attitude toward God is justification. Abraham was set right or justified when He chose to trust God rather than distrust God

and that is why God recognized, accounted, or reckoned Abraham as justified or set right, because he was in fact set right by faith.

There is nothing legal going on in salvation, there is reality, we are really out of harmony with God. We are really infected with fear and selfishness. Our natural hearts really distrust God and act selfishly. It is a fact that we cannot do anything in our might or power to change the condition of our hearts. It is a fact that Jesus came and became a real human being, taking up humanity damaged and infected by Adam and overcame where we could not, purged the infection of fear and selfishness and restored God's perfect love into humanity and became the bridge between fallen humanity and God. And It is a fact that we can be reborn, recreated, renewed, have a new heart and right spirit, if we trust or have faith in Jesus, just like Abraham.

But some may ask, *why is faith or trust necessary for our salvation—why can't God simply save everyone—doesn't He have the power? Isn't He omnipotent?*

What does it mean to be saved? To be healed, but what kind of healing? It is healing of the heart and mind, of the preferences, of the attitudes, of the alignment of the desires, motives, methods, and principles of the animating energy that moves us to act—salvation is purging, eliminating, removing, the contaminating motives of fear, selfishness, lust, pride, envy, greed and all such elements from our being, from our hearts and minds, and replacing it with love, trust, selflessness, honesty, self-control, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness that our motivating energies are those of God and His kingdom, that we prefer the methods, principles, and design laws of God.

And this can only happen with our agreement, with our choice to say yes to God, to open our hearts and minds in trust—for if God were to use His power to make such a change in our being without our agreement—He would erase our individuality and create robots that do what He programs them to do, but such entities could not love, would not be free, and would not be you and me.

Thus, God presents the truth in love and leaves us free to choose. We must decide whom we will trust, will we trust God and open our hearts to Him, choose to stay faithful to Him when our feelings tempt us, when our friends and family mistreat us, when our church lets us down, when our nation betrays us, when the wicked assail us—will we trust Jesus with our lives, with the outcome of events, with the future—or will we choose to act to save ourselves, to protect ourselves through the methods, means, and motives of this sinful world?

Will we align with the powers of this world, governmental powers, church powers, and act to coerce others in order to protect ourselves? This is what the beast system will do, it will lead the world to join together to pass laws that are stated to benefit the world at the expense of liberty, of love, of truth, and of freedom of conscience. People will have to choose, do they go along with the law, with the state, with the church who tells them that it is not a religious issue to coerce the conscience of people on medical issues; or do they choose, in governance of self to be true to the principles of God?

Saving faith is a trust in Jesus such that we choose loyalty to Him in the way we live, the methods we use, the protocols that govern our being.

These friends of the paralytic had faith, they had confidence, trust, that Jesus could heal, could resolve the problem, so in faith they went to Jesus. That is what faith does, it acts to carry out what is in harmony with God's methods, purposes, principles and will. That is faith that works.

Read second paragraph,

- The man's obvious need was physical. However, when he comes into Jesus' presence, the first words Jesus pronounces refer to forgiveness of sins. The man speaks not a word during the entire scene. Instead, it is the religious leaders who object (in their minds) to what Jesus has just said. They consider His words blasphemous, slandering God, and taking on prerogatives that belong only to God. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 23).

Why did Jesus tell him his sins were forgiven? What was the common belief of the people back then about the cause of physical sickness? That it was punishment from God for sin, thus the man had the burden of not only being sick, but feeling under the curse of God for his sins. To be sure he is a sinner as we all are, but it is a false conclusion that sickness in this world always occurs because of individual sin. But this is what they believed.

The man needed healing of his soul as well as his body because his mind was infected with lies, particularly lies about God—**that God is the type of being to use power to inflict punishment for sin.** Jesus, God in human form reveals the truth that God is the source life, health, and healing and **God uses power to remove sickness and heal people**, not cause sickness as punishment for sin.

Sadly, I get emails frequently from people who sincerely believe that God's justice requires God to use His power to inflict punishment for sin. Why? Because they believe that while there is natural consequence for breaking the laws of health, these sincere souls also belief that there would be no punishment for breaking God's moral laws if God didn't inflict it, which means they don't believe God's moral laws are design laws, but functionally are no different than the laws humans make up. They have accepted Satan's lie about God's law and therefore God's character—that God runs His universe like a creature runs their domain—on made up rules that require external enforcement.

This leads them to believe and teach that God wields Satan's power. The Bible tells us that,

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil** (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Christ Jesus, **who has destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** (1 Corinthians 15:22-26 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus is the source of life and destroys death, which is the power of the devil, and is the wages of sin, but sadly so many Christians continue to teach that God is the source of death inflicted upon people as punishment for sin. It is so sad.

What is forgiveness and how does it fit in with salvation?

- Can anyone be saved without God's forgiveness?
- Does God forgiving a sinner mean they are saved?
- Can someone be forgiven by God and still lost?
- What comes first God's forgiveness or man's repentance?

- Does God forgive people who do not repent? Consider those who crucified Jesus!

There are some versions of Christianity that teach Jesus died to pay our legal debt with His blood so that God could legally forgive us? Is this true? No, it is false. God forgave us before Jesus died, but God's forgiveness does not heal the damage done, it does not restore righteousness into humanity or eliminate the infection of sin in humanity.

The theology that teaches that forgiveness equals salvation is based upon human law and the belief we are in legal trouble and the obstacle to salvation is God's anger, or wrath, or unforgiveness, or the legal requirement the law demands in order to be pardoned or forgiven. However this idea is worded, the problem in this view is in God and God must be fixed in some way. It is all a lie.

The truth is that God is love and God forgives freely, but we are not saved, healed, redeemed, until we respond to God's forgiveness and repent, open our hearts in trust and receive the victory of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

- But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NIV84).

God did not wait for man to repent; He forgave instantly because He so loved the world that He sent us His Son.

While God's forgiveness is essential and required for salvation, for if God was unforgiving we could not be saved, we must recognize that God being forgiving, granting forgiveness, freely extending forgiveness doesn't equal salvation because the obstacle in salvation isn't in God, it is us and thus the change to achieve salvation must occur in humanity not in God. We must be won from distrust to trust so that we open the heart for God to heal us.

When Adam sinned God did not get changed and God's law did not get changed, Adam was changed. Thus salvation does not require anything to be done to God nor God's law, but requires something be done in humanity to fix what sin has done.

Jesus is the agent of the Godhead who carries out the purpose of the Father to deal with sin. Jesus became human for the purpose of eliminating sin from the entire universe, including humanity.

God's forgiveness is freely given and it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance and it is in repentance that we receive into our hearts the Holy Spirit who brings us the life of Christ, the animating energy, desires, motives of love, truth, freedom and we begin acting, choosing, living these principles empowered by the Holy Spirit developing a character like Jesus.

Read fourth paragraph,

- These religious leaders lost sight of what really mattered: justice, mercy, and walking humbly before God. So obsessed with defending their understanding of God, they were blinded to God's working right before their eyes. Nothing indicated that the men changed their minds about Jesus even though He gave them more than enough evidence to know that He was from God, not only by letting them know that He could read their minds (no simple feat in and of itself) but also by healing the paralytic in their presence in a way that they could not deny. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 23).

The religious leaders lost sight of justice? Didn't the religious leaders object because they wanted justice? Didn't they object because they thought the law was being broken and to break the law is unjust, and justice requires law keeping? And when the law is broken justice requires inflicted punishment. Weren't they upset with Jesus because they viewed Him as the unjust one?

Why did they think this?

Didn't we see the same issue during COVID when many religious leaders lost sight of justice?

How would you describe justice to someone?

And the lesson points out that they couldn't see the truth of reality which was being manifested before them because they were so obsessed with defending their understanding of God. That means they were blinded by their religious beliefs, their doctrines, their theology rather than leading them to know God obstructed them from knowing God.

And this has been one of Satan's primary traps throughout all human history—false systems of theology, beliefs, that trap people into mindsets that obstruct them from seeing truth. And the core lie through them all is God's law is imposed and God's justice is inflicting punishment—sadly this core lie still infects all of Christianity, including our church.

MONDAY

Read first three paragraphs,

> Tax collectors in Jesus' day were civil servants under the local or Roman government. They were unpopular among the Jewish population in Judea because they often exacted more than required and became rich off their countrymen. A Jewish commentary on religious law, the Mishnah tractate Tohoroth says, "If taxgatherers entered a house [all that is within it] becomes unclean."
>
> Thus, it is not surprising that the scribes inquire disapprovingly, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
>
> How did Jesus respond to their question? He doesn't reject it. Instead, He turns it on its head, indicating that people who are sick, not who are healthy, need a doctor. He thereby claims the moniker of spiritual doctor, the One who can heal the sin-sick soul. And should not a doctor go where the sick are? (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 24).

Jesus said,

- "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17 NIV84).

What is revealed by Jesus' answer? Is Jesus merely, only, justifying why He interacts with what the religious leaders consider the dregs of society, or does His answer have additional truths that we might overlook in the context of what His critics are doing?

What was the basis of Jesus answer? Were any principles involved in Jesus answer? Did His answer not only justify His actions in His associations, but simultaneously include deeper truths that were a direct refutation to Satan's imposed law penal/legal kingdom?

Why didn't Jesus answer by saying, "It is not those who are legally correct who need a lawyer, but those in legal trouble who need a lawyer. I have not come for those who are legally right, but for those who are legally condemned."

Wouldn't such an answer have justified His association with the dregs of society? But it would have misrepresented God and His kingdom to be like human kingdoms based on imposed law.
Don't you find it significant that Jesus did not answer with a legal description but with a medical healing description, upon design law?

Sadly, the legal system continues to infect the thinking of far too many and leads to the same disastrous outcomes as it did for the Jews 2000 years ago when their law-keeping prevented them from accepting Jesus.

Read the last paragraph,

- Jesus continues with two illustrations that highlight the contrast between His teaching and that of the religious leaders—unshrunk cloth on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins. What an interesting way to contrast the teaching of Christ and the religious leaders. It shows just how corrupted the ways of the teachers had become. Even true religion can be turned into darkness if people are not careful. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 24).

Do you think the authors of the lesson would believe Jesus' words apply to what is taught in our quarterly, that the teachings of the lesson are the old wine in old wineskin and we need to reset it with new wine in new wineskins?

Back in 2019 we posted a guest blog from one of our class members entitled New Wine in Old Skins and I want to share some of those insights today.

> The blog *describes the difference between the container—which is thinking style/worldview/governance system preference and the contents—the actual values/norms/mission of an individual or group.*
> *For example, the Marine Corps and organized crime groups share the same container: Loyalty, command and control, clearly defined behavioral norms and punishment for transgression, well-defined hierarchy and decision rights, enforced rules of engagement, and so on.*
>
> *Now consider the vast difference in the contents—the missions and values of the two organizations.*
>
> *The tensions in the church today are thought to be rooted in disagreement around the contents (doctrine, norms, and practices). However, I suggest the root of the tensions goes much deeper and is really about the container.*
>
> *Christianity's container has changed very little since Constantine co-opted the fledgling theology in a shrewd political move. He took the governance approach of imperial Rome (which had worked very well for centuries) and filled that container with Christian theology; he replaced the pagan metaphysics with fresh, new Christian theology.*
>
> *But the new theology was tainted by the old container—fundamentally changed (adulterated)—so that it could be successfully held within the imperial mindset. The promise of Christ's*

message to the world, in the form of Christian theology, was soured because it was held within a human-governance worldview.

The imperial governance container reused by Constantine was… authoritarian, hierarchical, based on the rule of law, self-serving, and self-protective. Emphasis was placed on behavioral right and wrong, group norms, compliance and punishment, the human need for justice, and a focus on the visible (hand) instead of the invisible (heart).

Jesus used the metaphor of filling an old wine skin with new wine, something the people of his day clearly knew to avoid. New wine continues to ferment, and a new wine skin will stretch to accommodate the pressure produced by the carbon dioxide. The new wine skin takes a particular form due to the maturing of the new wine.

New wine, placed into an old wine skin that has stretched once and hardened, will burst the old skin and waste the wine. Or the new wine will be contaminated with bacteria and turn to vinegar.

Jesus was trying to get his listeners to grasp the unavoidable outcome of placing truly new light within an old-thinking container. And he had a great example of a reused wine skin at his disposal: the theocracy of the Jewish governance system—largely self-serving, self-protective, authoritarian, and hierarchical; that is, a rule-of-law governance model.

The reason that the metaphor of the wine skins is so powerful is that we have a very difficult time seeing the problem: our human tendency to ascribe to God the system of governance that we use to survive in this fallen world.

The rule of law is the most effective governance system ever developed. But the problem is that this adaptation is profane; it works, but it is also of this world and a direct result of our sinful condition and the forces of chaos we face. This old wine skin, formed by the human need for authoritarian governance in response to survival-of-the-fittest dynamics is not a part of God's design, as clearly illustrated in the life of Christ.

Many praise the Reformation and laud the new wine. Martin Luther dumped out a portion of the old wine of Catholic theology and norms, but because he continued to use the old Roman Catholic container, he contaminated the new wine with the old. Protestant theology was adulterated by contact with the old wine skin.

We Adventists are satisfied that our church founders dumped a portion of old wine from mainline Protestant theology and replaced it with new wine. But the new wine, pressed in the excitement of the Awakening, was also contaminated by using the old wine skin, which has been passed down from pagan Rome.

And our message to the world is still not truly new wine, and it smells of vinegar. All this is due to using the old container—creating God in our image, believing that God's governance of the universe mirrors human systems of governance that emerged due to our sinful condition.

The rule of law evolved for one purpose: group survival. By dampening intragroup conflict and chaos, the group is strengthened against external existential threats. And as such, when inter-group conflict grows, those given leadership positions are expected to apply a heavy hand, "for the good of the organization." Does this sound familiar?

What would a new wine skin need to look like to hold the new wine that Jesus referenced? Think about the Good News without the contamination of the Roman wine skin. This is hard for us to envision, because a human system of governance for a religious organization formed by the fermentation of truly new light has never existed, except for a short time during the life of Christ and possibly the very early church.

In his understanding of reality, Christ saw past the profane usefulness of human governance systems based on group survival. He valued the progress of the individual and the value of the individual over the integrity and safety of the system. He understood, because of his divine perspective, that earthly group success and survival were temporal and not important compared to the healing of the individual character.

He was an outspoken critic of the use of coercion by those in positions of authority focused on behaviors, conformity, and group norms. And this was because these rules/norms/policies/enforcements evolved to protect the system and the collective, rather than out of concern for the spiritual health and well-being of the individual. Jesus was also notorious for non-compliance with the Jewish rule-of-law theocracy.

We have yet to see a new wine skin emerge that will successfully hold and protect the Good News, while it completes fermentation and maturity. That container, patterned on the life of Christ, will not look like the familiar kingdom-of-man container, which every historical theocracy and all successful contemporary denominations have adopted. When we refer to God as king, lord, judge, or ruler, we reinforce our mental model of a god created in our image.

The true kingdom-of-God container (wine skin) on this earth will take form based on the fermentation and influence of truly new wine. That form of governance, worldview, leadership, and organizational design will emerge based on the living and active nature of the new wine.

For this to happen, Christ's life must be the template for the system of governance. And the eternal good of the individual must always outweigh the perceived threats to the integrity and security of the system. If this principle is not reflected in form of the container, then we are destined to use an old wine skin to carry the good news to the world. This has been and will be ultimately futile.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention again on the Sabbath and Jesus claiming to be Lord of the Sabbath. Let's revisit last TUESDAY's lesson on page 17 of the adult study guide and read first four paragraphs:

- After the amazing synagogue service, Jesus retires with His small band of disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to Peter's home, evidently to spend the rest of the Sabbath day in a friendly meal and fellowship.

  But a note of concern overshadows the scene: Peter's mother-in-law is ill with a fever, which back then meant you either got better or died. They tell Jesus of the sickness, and He takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and raises her up. She immediately begins to provide for their needs. What a powerful example of the principle that those who have been saved, healed, by Jesus will minister to others as a result!

> Throughout Mark it is often the case that Jesus heals by touching the affected person (see Mark 1:41; Mark 5:41), though other times no touch is mentioned (see Mark 2:1–12, Mark 3:1–6, Mark 5:7–13).
>
> Jesus was not done with ministry that day. After sunset many came to Peter's house for healing, no doubt from seeing what happened at the synagogue that day or from hearing about it. The fact that the Gospel writer does not tell his readers that people delayed because of the hours of the Sabbath indicates that he expected his readers to know about the Sabbath. This feature of Mark is consistent with his readers being Sabbath keepers. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 17).

Does this description raise any questions in your mind? What?

- Why did the people wait until after Sabbath to come to Jesus?
- Were they taught something about the Sabbath that was an actual barrier, hindrance, obstruction keeping them from coming to the Lord of the Sabbath? What?
- Could it be that they believed that the Sabbath is a rule made up that requires legal enforcement and there are all types of behaviors one is forbidden from doing on the Sabbath and thus, they were afraid of breaking the Sabbath law by going to Jesus?
- What about today is it possible to present the Bible Sabbath in such a way that it actually makes it harder for people to come to Jesus? Any examples?
- What are we forbidden from doing on the Sabbath?
    - Work—which is defined where in Scripture? It isn't!
    - Is that all we are forbidden from doing? What about disliking the Sabbath? Isaiah 58
    - Isn't true Sabbath keeping when one delights in the Sabbath, so wouldn't that mean we are not supposed to dislike it?
    - And then does the imposed law view, with all its rules and threats, become the cause of many people disliking both the Sabbath and the god of the Sabbath and could it be **that legal Sabbath keeping is the very cause of Sabbath breaking**, as it changes one's heart to something other than love and trust.
- Was Peter's mother-in-law breaking the Sabbath when she began working and serving them? Why or why not?
- What about Jesus, did He break the Sabbath when He healed her? The people were waiting until after the Sabbath to pursue getting healed, should Jesus have also waited to heal Peter's mother-in-law?
- Why did Jesus perform so many miracles on the Sabbath, remember the man who was a paralytic for 38 years (John 5)? Jesus purposely healed him on Sabbath, this wasn't an acute sickness, it was a chronic condition, one more day wouldn't have mattered, or Jesus could have gotten there on Friday—why did Jesus choose the Sabbath to perform His healing?
- What is the purpose of the Sabbath?
    - Why did God create the Sabbath as a gift for human beings?
    - What is it to reveal to us?
    - What are we to remember when we remember the Sabbath? Aren't we supposed to remember the truth about God—that God rested, that God stopped using power, that God did not enforce His law that God did not use power to punish Lucifer and the rebellious angels? And therefore we are reassured to know that God does not force people today into compliance, that God leaves us free! Thus the Sabbath is God's sign to us that He will heal and save all who trust Him, through His methods of truth presented in love. It is the only way to save any sinner, because the use of might and power to change minds destroys individuality. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of God's

character and methods, when God presented truth in love while leaving His creatures free—how reality works. The Sabbath is the sign that God makes us holy through the application of His design laws.

- But sadly, the legalists in the camp, those who have embraced Rome's lie that God's law functions like human law, teach the Sabbath is a legal test of obedience and teach that worshiping on the wrong day will be punishable by torment and death at the hands of God—the exact opposite of what the Sabbath reveals.

WEDNESDAY

Read Mark 3:20-30:

- Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit." (Mark 3:20-30 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do you explain it?

What do you think about his family saying Jesus is out of His mind? Are they saying the same thing the religious leaders are saying when they said Jesus was demon-possessed?

My view is that the disciples, His brothers and family, were all struggling to understand Jesus through the lens of this world's laws and value system. It did not make sense to them that you get more by giving away what you have—no you get more by taking from others. It did not make sense to them that you get strength by service rather than be eating and rest.

His family and disciples recognized that Jesus was something different, that He was blessed of God, that He was a source of good and righteousness, but I think they thought Jesus was a little naïve and didn't really understand the ways of the world, and needed some help from them. They may have looked at him like the absent-minded professor who is so focused on his research he doesn't stop to eat and sleep or coordinate his shirt and pants etc. This is what I think His family was thinking, but the religious leaders thought He was actually working against God, was a heretic, was trying to overturn their faith, and thus they really thought He was from the devil.

And Jesus' responses again, beautifully refutes their allegation by an appeal to reality, to design law, how things actually work, not to some claim, or proof text.

Let's read these verses from the Remedy:

- Once Jesus returned home, a crowd gathered so quickly that neither he nor his disciples had time to eat. When those who considered themselves "close to Jesus" heard how the crowds were constantly pressing him, they thought, "He's not thinking clearly enough to handle all the fame," so they sought to manage Jesus' time and schedule. And the theology professors, who taught a legal religion, came over from Jerusalem and said, "He wants to be a celebrity, and just like the devil, he tries to make himself the center of attention. He uses Satan's power to drive out evil forces." So Jesus confronted them publicly with parables: "How can Satan enter into a person, and by entering, get rid of Satan? Think about it: It would be like using water to get rid of wetness. If a kingdom fights against itself, it collapses. If a family turns against each other, its cohesion is destroyed. If Satan opposes himself, he neutralizes his own efforts, his work collapses, and his effectiveness is ended. It is not possible to enter the domain of a strong man and take away his possessions unless one first neutralizes the strong man. Only when the strong man is restrained can one take his possessions. So here is the simple truth: Every sin — every deviation from God's design — can be healed. But anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit cannot be healed, either now or in the future, for it is the Spirit who works in the heart to administer the Remedy, and the Spirit only works in a willing heart. Closing the heart to the Spirit prevents healing and results in eternal sinfulness." He told them this because they were closing their hearts by saying, "He is working through an evil spirit." (Mark 3:20-30 REM).

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q2: Themes in the Gospel of John - Lesson #4
Witnesses of Christ as the Messiah

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

I love John's Gospel, as well as his 3 short letters and The Revelation of Jesus Christ! John was thought to be the youngest of the disciples, and he is the only disciple who wasn't murdered; but not for lack of trying, because they did try to boil him in hot oil. When that didn't work, they banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he died as a very old man. His preserved writings are especially for those who love to see "behind the lines." They start at the very dawn of infinity and reach down to Jesus' triumph and restoration of unity in His universe.

For those of us who are older, perhaps feeling a bit useless compared to previous years, and are tempted to think we are no longer of much use to God or to others, let me read this quote from the wonderfully insightful book called "The Acts of the Apostles," pages 573, 574 by Ellen G. White (EGW):

> "The history of John affords a striking illustration of the way in which God can use aged workers. When John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, there were many who thought him to be past service, an old and broken reed, ready to fall at any time. But the Lord saw fit to use him still. Though banished from the scenes of his former labor, he did not cease to bear witness to the truth. Even in Patmos he made friends and converts. His was a message of joy, proclaiming a risen Saviour who on high was interceding for His people until He should return to take them to Himself. And it was after John had grown old in the service of his Lord that he received more communications from heaven than he had received during all the former years of his life.
>
> The most tender regard should be cherished for those whose life interest has been bound up with the work of God. These aged workers have stood faithful amid storm and trial. They may have infirmities, but they still possess talents that qualify them to stand in their place in God's cause. Though worn, and unable to bear the heavier burdens that younger men can and should carry, the counsel they give us is of the highest value.
>
> They may have made mistakes, but from their failures they have learned to avoid errors and dangers, and are they not therefore competent to give wise counsel? They have borne test and trial, and though they have lost some of their vigor, the Lord does not lay them aside. He gives them special grace and wisdom.
>
> Those who have served their Master when the work went hard, who endured poverty and remained faithful when there were few to stand for truth, are to be honored and respected. The Lord desires the younger laborers to gain wisdom, strength, and maturity by association with these faithful men. Let the younger men realize that in having such workers among them they

are highly favored. Let them give them an honored place in their councils.

As those who have spent their lives in the service of Christ draw near to the close of their earthly ministry, they will be impressed by the Holy Spirit to recount the experiences they have had in connection with the work of God. The record of His wonderful dealings with His people, of His great goodness in delivering them from trial, should be repeated to those newly come to the faith. God desires the old and tried laborers to stand in their place, doing their part to save men and women from being swept downward by the mighty current of evil. He desires them to keep the armor on till He bids them lay it down."

In every respect John has always been an amazing witness to what he experienced with and about God. and we can also bear witness to the truth of he wrote. -- Acts of the Apostles," pp 573, 574

This lesson focuses on witnesses John the Baptist, Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, Nicodemus, and the disciple John.

But I would submit that even prior to these, there were many other witnesses:

- Isaiah seems like a book of information that Jesus in heaven gave Isaiah about the whole life and mission of Jesus on earth. Then, when Jesus was born on earth, he used this book to inform himself of that information. It's very interesting to read Isaiah from that viewpoint.

John the Baptist's father, the priest Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit, after he named his son John and regained his ability to hear and speak, and publicly gave this testimony:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.He has
- raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
- salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—
- to show mercy to our ancestors and
- to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and
- TO ENABLE US TO SERVE HIM WITHOUT FEAR in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will
- go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
- to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which
- the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,
- to guide our feet into the path of peace." -- Luke 1:68-79 NIV

Mary's husband Joseph was told by an angel that his fiancé's son was actually the Son of God, so Joseph's witness was believing and taking action as he was instructed and was instrumental in keeping Jesus safe in the face of murderous intentions of Satan through King Herod.

Then, of course, there were the Angels giving the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds near Bethlehem and guiding the wise men to Jesus. These witnesses told others about the good news and the wise men believed what they were told, going home a different way, and were also part of the escape plan to keep Jesus from being killed.

It's interesting to me that these wise men knew more about the birth of this tiny King than God's own leaders. Remember Daniel, who was made head of all the wise men in Babylon? I believe the wise men kept the prophetic information given them by Daniel, and acted on it when Jesus was born.

Simeon was a witness to the Messiah, when Jesus was brought to the temple in Jerusalem for circumcision:

> "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: A LIGHT FOR REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, AND THE GLORY OF YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL."
>
> The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Luke 2:25-35 NIV

And then there's Anna, who was also at the temple at the same time, and was Christ's second witness:

> "There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. SHE NEVER LEFT THE TEMPLE BUT WORSHIPPED NIGHT AND DAY, FASTING AND PRAYING. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." -- Luke 2:36-38

SUNDAY

The Testimony of John the Baptist

Jews in Jesus' time expected two messiahs, one priestly and the other royal. But when He came, they did not recognize Him in either of these categories.

Isaiah 40:1-5 predicted the part John would play:

> "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling In the wilderness "prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? Who can fathom the Spirit of the Lord, or instruct the Lord as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding? Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him? As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it. A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple. Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth

> each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." NIV

This reminds me a lot of what God says to Job in chapters 38-42 when they finally talk. What God was John preparing people for?

John's ministry and mission was to prepare the way for the messiah by being a voice to make straight paths for Him, baptizing people with water and calling for repentance. John also said,

> "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes ONE WHO IS MORE POWERFUL THAN I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and BURNING UP THE CHAFF WITH UNQUENCHABLE FIRE." -- Matthew 3:11-12 NIV

Most of us will recall that in the days before super highways, men would go in front of a traveling King and fix the road so his path would be as smooth as possible. They would fill in the dips and take down the the bumps.

Since our mission is like John's, in that we are preparing for Christ's second coming, how can we "fix the road" for Jesus, like John did?

Let's think about how we could present these:

- Clear up misconceptions about who God is
- Point to God as our powerful creator
- Understand how God's Holy Spirit baptizes us
- Clearly explain what it means to be baptized with fire
- Present how God uses his power - to grant true freedom, to serve His creation, to heal us from sin, to save us from eternal death and prepare us for understanding and meeting "the unquenchable fire."

> "Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I WILL THOROUGHLY PURGE AWAY YOUR DROSS AND REMOVE ALL YOUR IMPURITIES." -- Isaiah 1:24,25 NIV

> "Surely wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briers and thorns, it sets the forest thickets ablaze, so that it rolls upward in a column of smoke." -- Isaiah 9:18 NIV

John declared Jesus to be "The Lamb of God who TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD." As John baptized Jesus with water, "he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." -- Matthew 3:16,17 NIV

How does Jesus take away the sin of the world?

> "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
> YET WE CONSIDERED HIM PUNISHED BY GOD, STRICKEN BY HIM, AND AFFLICTED.
>
> BUT
>
> he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
>
> AND BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED.
>
> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; BY HIS KNOWLEDGE MY RIGHTEOUS SERVANT WILL JUSTIFY MANY, AND HE WILL BEAR THEIR INIQUITIES." -- Isaiah 53:1-6,11 NIV
>
> "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil— they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar." -- Isaiah 33:14-17 NIV

MONDAY

The Lamb of God

The Hebrew nation was looking for a Messiah who would deliver them from Rome. The goal of the gospel of John was to change their understanding of the Messiah. They needed to recognize in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the coming King, who would renew the relationship between God and His people.

Since today, this very day, is Yom Kippur to the Jews of today, and corresponds to the Day of Atonement in the yearly sanctuary service, I want to take a little side trip to talk about this a bit. The temple services were in every aspect a witness about Jesus and how He saves us. The feast days were all about the steps in our journey from destruction to salvation. From the Passover through the Feast of Tabernacles; from passing over our sins when the blood of a pure young lamb was on their doors and in our hearts, through to living or tabernacling with God again. It is The Lamb who TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

On the Day of Atonement, to atone for sin and purify the Sanctuary of the accumulated record of the sin of the people and priests, two goats were presented. One goat was sacrificed to death for the life of God's people, but the sins of the people were symbolically placed on the head of the other goat. Was that goat killed? No, it was lead out to the desert and left there.

This reminds me of Satan's final condemnation:

> "How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?" All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch; you are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. Let the offspring of the wicked never be mentioned again." – Isaiah 14: 12-20 NIV

Add to that this information in Revelation:

> "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to

> deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them." -- Revelation 20:1-9 NIV

Satan is left on this planet, which he has reduced to a wilderness, and with no living people to tempt for a thousand years, to contemplate the results of his rulership, as symbolized by the goat in the desert. These are such solemn times!

So how is the Lamb of God a witness?

The lesson tells us to read Jesus' lamb-like qualities:

- Mark 10:45, which says Jesus came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many; Romans 5:6, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; and
- 1 Peter 2:24, by His wounds we are healed. Verse 25 asks us to return to the Shepherd of our souls.

TUESDAY

The Two Disciples of John

Two of John the Baptist's disciples heard what he had said about Jesus being Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Andrew (Simon Peter's brother) and Philip left John to follow Jesus from then until the rest of their lives. Both went and found another person - Andrew brought his brother Simon, and Philip brought Nathaniel. So, as witnesses are are to believe in Jesus, follow Him to learn from and follow His teachings, and invite others to "Come and See" for themselves!

I find it interesting that no church leaders were among the 12 disciples. Why?

> "If John and Andrew had possessed the unbelieving spirit of the priests and rulers, they would not have been found as learners at the feet of Jesus. They would have come to Him as critics, to judge His words. Many thus close the door to the most precious opportunities. But not so did these first disciples. They had responded to the Holy Spirit's call in the preaching of John the Baptist. Now they recognized the voice of the heavenly Teacher. To them the words of Jesus were full of freshness and truth and beauty. A divine illumination was shed upon the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. THE MANY-SIDED THEMES OF TRUTH STOOD OUT IN NEW LIGHT. It is contrition and faith and love that enable the soul to receive wisdom from heaven. Faith working by love is the key of knowledge, and everyone that loveth "knoweth God." -- 1 John 4:7… If Nathanael had trusted to the rabbis for guidance, he would never have found Jesus. It was by seeing and judging for himself that he became a disciple. So in the case of many today whom prejudice withholds from good. How different would be the result if they would "come and see!"

> While they trust to the guidance of human authority, none will come to a saving knowledge of the truth. Like Nathanael, we need to study God's word for ourselves, and pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. He who saw Nathanael under the fig tree will see us in the secret place of prayer. Angels from the world of light are near to those who in humility seek for divine guidance." -- The Desire of Ages, EGW, pp 139,140

Should we be seeking new light as the disciples were?

> "The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. IT IS TO BE CONTINUED TO THE CLOSE OF YHIS WORLD'S HISTORY. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and NEW TRUTHS HAVE BEEN CONSTANTLY UNFOLDING." -- The Great Controversy, EGW, pg 148

WEDNESDAY

Philip and Nathaniel

The lesson points out that prejudice easily blinds the eyes from seeing people for what they are really worth. When Philip called Nathaniel to "Come and See" for himself about Jesus, he added, "of Nazareth.' Undoubtedly, he knew this would not set well with Nathaniel. So of course, Nathaniel uttered the prejudicial line, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Fortunately, his friendship with Philip was stronger than his prejudice. We need to be friends of people first!! Show them we care, before they care enough to believe us.

We see in this encounter that the best way to deal with prejudice is not some exalted philosophical or theological argumentation, but rather to invite the individual to experience the truth personally for themselves.

If you have eve seen gemstones before they are cut and polished, you will note that they don't usually look that special. But cutting and polishing them and then exposing them tonight brings out the beautiful facets! With close observation, we see even greater facets! We need to keep looking for and sharing the beautiful facts of truth!!

They thing I notice about Jesus is His insight into people, more so than His outright miracles. Jesus knew Nathanial, while sitting under the fig tree, "a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit," and that built trust into Nathaniel.

THURSDAY

The Witness of Nicodemus

You have to Love Nicodemus. He was a highly respected member of the elite Sanhedrin; he had a paid position he didn't want to lose. Now he was a searcher! Not content with going along with the party line, he dug for the truth, even going so far as to meet with Jesus under the cover of darkness. He was a teacher of teachers, yet he learned from his visit that he had never really understood God's plan for mankind, to be saved from sin, rather than the Romans. He, with us, learned the true meaning of the serpent on the pole lifted up for the believing Israelites to be healed from the venom of the snake. "That everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." Nicodemus seems to have taken the rebuke and learned his lesson, because after Jesus died, he bought 75 lbs of spices to use for Jesus' burial, and helped Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus in Joseph's tomb.

I used to think that when Jesus said:

"no one can ENTER the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit," He meant we couldn't go to heaven. But in a different version on this discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus was, "Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can SEE the kingdom of God unless they are born again." -- John 3:3 NIV

Thinking of binoculars, if someone hands binoculars to you usually you have to adjust the focus so that you can see and identify clearly. The Holy Spirit does that same thing for us. Unless He refocuses our spiritual eyes, we can't even SEE the kingdom of God. We can't perceive it and it seems foolish to us.

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but TO SAVE THE WOLD THROUGH HIM. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. THIS IS THE VERDICT: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that IT MAY BE SEEN PLAINLY THAT WHAT THEY HAVE DONE HAS BEEN DONE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD." (The NIV says, 'WHAT HAS BEEN DONE HAS BEEN DONE THROUGH GOD.") -- John 3:16-21
>
> "In the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation, and His mission to the world. In none of His subsequent discourses did He explain so fully, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the hearts of all who would inherit the kingdom of heaven. At the very beginning of His ministry He opened the truth to a member of the Sanhedrin, to the mind that was most receptive, and to an appointed teacher of the people. But the leaders of Israel did not welcome the light. Nicodemus hid the truth in his heart, and for three years there was little apparent fruit.

But Jesus was acquainted with the soil into which He cast the seed. The words spoken at night to one listener in the lonely mountain were not lost. For a time Nicodemus did not publicly acknowledge Christ, but he watched His life, and pondered His teachings. In the Sanhedrin council he repeatedly thwarted the schemes of the priests to destroy Him. When at last Jesus was lifted up on the cross, Nicodemus remembered the teaching upon Olivet: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." The light from that secret interview illumined the cross upon Calvary, and Nicodemus saw in Jesus the world's Redeemer.

After the Lord's ascension, when the disciples were scattered by persecution, Nicodemus came boldly to the front. He employed his wealth in sustaining the infant church that the Jews had expected to be blotted out at the death of Christ. In the time of peril he who had been so cautious and questioning was firm as a rock, encouraging the faith of the disciples, and furnishing means to carry forward the work of the gospel. He was scorned and persecuted by those who had paid him reverence in other days. He became poor in this world's goods; yet he faltered not in the faith which had its beginning in that night conference with Jesus.

Nicodemus related to John the story of that interview, and by his pen it was recorded for the instruction of millions. The truths there taught are as important today as they were on that solemn night in the shadowy mountain, when the Jewish ruler came to learn the way of life from the lowly Teacher of Galilee." -- The Desire of Ages, EGW, pg 176, 177

I love a God who is not intimidated by questions!

This is Paul's take on living the life of a witness for God:

FRIDAY

Further Thought

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? RUN IN SUCH A WAY AS TO GET THE PRIZE. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave SO THAT AFTER I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF WILL NOT BE DISQUALIFIED FOR THE PRIZE. -- 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 NIV

How do we become witnesses to the Messiah? We become intimate with God, really know Him, then get to know and care about others and show them how to be saved and become witnesses.

> "How, then, are we to be saved? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Psalm 40:8." -- The Desire of Ages, EGW, pp 175

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson
The Testimony of the Samaritans

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph,

- Who were the Samaritans? The northern kingdom of Israel had been taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 b.c. To create political stability, the Assyrians dispersed their captives throughout their empire. Likewise, captives from other nations were brought to populate the northern kingdom, and these became the Samaritans, who practiced their own form of Judaism. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 38).

to Wikipedia there persists today a small group of Samaritans numbering less than a couple thousand. They are considered by some in Israel to be Jews, by others they are considered a separate group. They have distinct beliefs from the Jews, some of which are:

- The believe only in the first five books of the Bible written by Moses and a different version of the book of Joshua
- They believe that the high priest Eli was a scammer who was a false high priest and made a counterfeit ark of the covenant and created a false worship center at Shiloh to keep people from worshiping at the true center in Mount Gerizim.
- They believe that the promised messiah does come through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but not Judah; that he has not yet been born and will be a descendant of Joseph, this is likely because the Samaritans are thought to be descendants of Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh.
- They believe that when their messiah, which they call the Taheb, comes he will be a prophet like Moses and prophecy or lead for 40 years; that he will bring all true Israelites back to the promised land, and then the resurrection will happen; that he will find the original tent of meeting constructed by Moses on Mt. Gerizim and then he will die and be buried on that mountain.
- They observe Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset and observe all the feast days described in Leviticus.
- They have their own high priest.
- They believe Mt. Gerizim is the most holy site while the Jews believe it is Jerusalem.
- Most importantly, this group, like the Jews, reject Jesus Christ as Messiah.

Most Jewish religious leaders through history, and also in Christ's day, believed the Samaritan religion was a false religion, a counterfeit of what God gave through Moses and His prophets. We would agree with this conclusion.

But how did Jesus treat the Samaritans? Did Jesus condemn them because they were caught up in a system of beliefs that were erroneous in many ways? Did Jesus refuse to present the truth to them because they had a different understanding of the Bible and the instructions contained therein?

What does Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan tell us regarding what Jesus thought about their divergent doctrines? In the story there was the injured person and the Levite, Jewish priest, and Samaritan—who is the one that Jesus intended to be considered the one right with God? The Samaritan—but the Samaritan would hold to a lot of erroneous doctrinal beliefs and fail to do the correct religious instructions, sacrifice in the right way, pay tithe to the right organization etc.—how could he be right with God while holding to erroneous doctrinal beliefs and doing the wrong religious activities?

Conversely, the Levite and priest would both hold to the correct doctrinal beliefs and engage in the correct religious practices, pay tithe to the right organization, sacrifice in the right place and the right way etc., yet they were not right with God. How can it be that believing the right doctrines and doing the right behaviors these men were not right with God?

So what makes one right with God?

What about today? In your church organization, what has been the emphasis on what makes one right with God? Is it on believing the correct beliefs and paying tithe to the right organization, getting baptized in the right way, with the right words, by the right authorized person, doing communion in the right way etc.?

Or is it about a right heart attitude and living lives that love God and others and love truth and thus be willing to be corrected and follow unfolding truth as our infinite God of truth reveals it to us? Didn't the Samaritans embrace Jesus and the truth He revealed and asked Him to stay longer with them? This revealed that their hearts were open to truth, but the Jewish leaders were hardened against truth because they were defending their own doctrinal beliefs, orthodoxy, and practices.

Those who hold to doctrines and ceremonies often reject truth that would change their current beliefs or their religious practices and end up enemies of God and their fellow humans under the guise of being godly.

What does Jesus' attitude toward the Samaritans tell us about the things they and the Jews fought over?

What was it the Samaritans needed? Was the saving message for the Samaritans different than what the Jews needed? What about the rest of the world?

So Jesus' said to his disciples:

- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NIV84).

The true gospel message is the exact same message for every human being whether Jew or gentile, black or white, free or slave, man or woman, for we all suffering from the same sin-sickness and all need the same Remedy Jesus Christ!

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on John 4:1-4 asking us the background of Jesus' visit with the woman at the well:

- The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. (John 4:1-4 NIV84).

What is going on that caused Jesus to leave Judea?

Consider this commentary,

- But the disciples of John looked with **jealousy** upon the growing popularity of Jesus. They stood ready to **criticize** His work, and it was not long before they found occasion. A question arose between them and the Jews as to **whether baptism availed to cleanse the soul from sin**; they maintained that the baptism of Jesus differed essentially from that of John. Soon they were in **dispute** with Christ's disciples in regard to the **form of words proper to use at baptism, and finally as to the right of the latter to baptize at all.** (The Desire of Ages 178, emphasis mine).

What is the problem? Jealously, which is a manifestation of selfishness, which is driven by fear—fear of insignificance, loss of esteem, power, position, relevance and is not motivated by love for others or advancing God's kingdom, even though people often deceive themselves that they are only jealous for God's kingdom like the Pharisees did.

And fear and selfishness, causing jealousy, leads one to attack others seen as a threat in order to defeat the enemy, so people criticize, find fault, devalue others. In the process one highlights differences in action, method, mode, words chosen, and even alleged rights all intended to elevate self and devalue the other. Things like: "They dress differently, speak differently, don't follow the same script, use lake water for baptism while we use river water; they don't have the right or authority to baptize, they haven't been ordained."

And all of this obscures the reality of God's kingdom, the focus is on rules, enforcement, legality, who is authorized and who is not, truth by declaration, position, and power rather than evidence, fact,

reality—and that method not only does not change hearts and minds, it obstructs the healing of hearts and minds.

And that is what human politics does—it gets people to argue, to use the methods of claims, proclamations, authority, imposed law, rules, deceit, propaganda, threats, fear, intimidation, manipulation, accusation, using human organizations and rules to cause stress and problems all intended to divert minds away from evidence, facts, truth, incite fear, jealousy, envy, hurt, and thereby get people aligned with one leader or group or another for the purpose of exploiting the people for the power of the political elites. The founding documents of the USA were intentionally designed to limit the ability of the elites to exploit the masses and it is why those principles have been and are under attack, because Satan's government is the government of the few elites exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites.

What did Jesus do? Why didn't Jesus stay and argue? What did leaving the area do? Took the emotional/relational fuel away, no one to argue with, no one to point at, no one to be offended by—and because there wasn't social media to follow Him everywhere or keep rerunning video in edited and distorted ways, things settled down.

Read John 4:5-9:

- So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) (John 4:5-9 NIV84).

What do you hear happening?

What do you think about Jesus' actions?

What does the woman's answer indicate?

Do you think she felt honored? Do you think she felt curious, offended, fearful, confused?

Imagine a black woman during Jim Crow and a white man asking her to drink from her cup. What might she think? Might she think: *What is wrong with this man?* Could she be concerned it was some type of a trick?

This encounter between Jesus and the woman is about cultural biases and discrimination, how human fear and selfishness infect hearts and put up barriers to the gospel and how the true gospel of Jesus Christ breaks through all such artificial barriers. God sees all people as part of the same human family in need of the same healing solution and He wants all to come to salvation. But human beings, infected

with fear and selfishness, are highly vulnerable to experiencing innocuous differences as threats and allowing those differences to cause biases and prejudices.

The Samaritans were treated by the Jews as second-class citizens, seen as dirty, unworthy, evil heretics and discriminated against. So in our culture today that same unchristlike attitude is seen in all forms of racism, sexism, and all the various biases and bigotries that cause people to devalue and exploit, abuse, and discriminate against other people based on innocuous differences.

True Christianity recognizes all people are made in the image of God, are descended from Adam and all have infinite worth and value; that Jesus died for them as well as for you and me.

The cause racism and all forms of exploitation is sin, fear and selfishness in the heart. And the solution for sin in all its forms, including racism, is Jesus in the hearts of people, removing fear and selfishness from the hearts and restoring God's living law of love into hearts and minds, so that we love others as our self.

The only righteous basis for us to discriminate—meaning to set up barriers of association, intimacy, trust, marriage, business, and fellowship is one of character: honesty versus dishonest, loyalty versus disloyalty, accepting Jesus as Savior versus rejecting Jesus and elevating another false god as the lord of their life. It is right to discriminate on the basis of godliness versus ungodliness of heart, mind, method, motive, and character in regard to who we trust, form alliances with, marry, enter into business etc. But while it is necessary for health to set healthy boundaries, we still love those individuals, our hearts ache for them knowing that without Jesus they are suffering and slowly dying and we actively seek to reach them with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the only biblical basis for discrimination and separation and one taught all throughout the Scripture.

This is the application of love which always rejoices with the truth 1 Corinthians 13. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth AND love. When the Spirit of God is present both truth and love are being advanced and in that atmosphere we have freedom:

- Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17 NIV84).

Let me expose a trap of Satan, how Satan gets people to advance his cause under the lie that they are fighting for God, or advancing the gospel, or fighting against evil, or fighting against racism. He does this by separating truth and love in a variety of ways, and when this happens freedom is lost and people become mental and emotional slaves controlled by emotionalism, feelings, or false beliefs.

I want to say to anyone listening, if you have experienced discrimination, mistreatment, rejection, vilification in this world because of some aspect of your being like race, national origin, sex—I want you to know that you are loved. You are loved with a supreme love by our supreme Creator God who came to this earth to provide you with everything necessary for your health, healing, wellbeing, happiness and eternal life. And the only path for health, happiness, healing, and eternal life is the path of truth and love working in your heart and mind.

- Love without truth is not kind—it's cruel; Truth without love is not healing—it's destructive.

Understand, though, that neither our love or God's love for a person changes objective reality nor prevents the damage of breaking away from God's design laws for life. We can love a person who believes they can fly and in their false belief jumps off the Empire State Building—but their sincere belief that they can fly doesn't change the design law of gravity, and our love for them doesn't protect them from the truth of what their choice will do to them.

Sin breaks the design laws of life, the protocols built into the fabric of reality that our hearts, minds, spirits, and souls operate upon. God's love never changes, but if we do not respond to His love by following and internalizing the truth, then we will still suffer and die while God continues to love us.

Yes, every single person is loved by God, but He wants more for everyone of us than simply to let us know that He loves us—He wants us well, healthy, restored to perfection, freed from fear, guilt, shame, and sin. He wants to restore His design laws for life within us. **He will love us no matter what we do—but we will not experience healing, restoration, wellbeing no matter what we do**. Our choices actually matter, our choices in what we believe, who we trust, and what methods we apply to our lives determines what happens to us.

And the devil works very hard to separate truth and love. He does this by getting people to apply some truth without love, without concern, without the welfare for others in their heart and the truth is then used to discourage, to bring guilt and shame, and to cause despair. Imagine if we only had the truth of our own mistakes, sins, and sinfulness without the truth of God's love, grace, and healing remedy provided in Jesus? Such truth without the love and grace of God would only discourage and destroy. Thus the devil works to separate truth from love.

But love, in the form of sympathy and empathy, can be separated from the truth, where people feel the pain, suffering, and hurt that innocents have experienced at the expense of abusers and rather than bringing truth united with love to heal the wounded, they instead get tricked by the wicked, through their empathy, to take actions that are outside of God's design, take actions that use Satan's methods as the intervention, the solution, the treatment to fix the wrong and this only causes more harm.

This is what wokeism and critical theories do. They rely on a two-step deceit process to create a reinforcing loop of evil that destroys all involved, but tricks people involved into thinking they are doing good while in fact they are causing more harm.

Satan's first step is to deceive in order to incite acts of injustice, and the second step is to advance a good cause (e.g., racial justice) but by the application of his, not God's, methods. Let's unpack this two-step trap in detail.

> **Step One:** Satan's first step is to deceive by replacing God's standard with a false standard. The ungodly forces do this by replacing the godly division of human society, which is the divide between moral good and evil (i.e., honesty versus dishonesty, kindness versus cruelty,

loyalty versus disloyalty, etc.—what the Bible describes as the sheep and goats, wheat and tares, righteous and wicked, saved and lost) with some other innocuous difference occurring among people groups (race, gender, language, ethnicity, national origin, etc.) and then attribute moral value, privilege, and/or superiority/inferiority to these innocuous differences, thereby inflaming fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, hate, violence, and subsequent acts of injustice against those deemed inferior.

In step one, some people believe the lie that skin color or gender or national origin actually makes some people inferior or less valuable or worthy. Their own insecurity causes them to fear losing what they have to others more capable or qualified. Thus, rather than making decisions upon objective reality, hiring the most qualified, people who are driven by fear and selfishness rather than love and trust, will hire people who are more like them to make them feel more secure—they will discriminate against people they see divergent from them, whether it is racially different, or ethnically different, or socially different.

Healthy discrimination is based on God's separation. We assertively want to discriminate against hiring people who will lie, cheat, and exploit. If we are hiring for a daycare, we definitely want to keep out pedophiles. But we also want to keep out incompetence. If we are hiring an airline pilot, we want to discriminate against those without a pilot's license. But objective ability is not always documented with some official licensure. If we are hiring a person as our receptionist, some people are objectively better in their interpersonal skills, deportment, the way they present themselves, mood regulation, impulse control than others—and this is not determined by the ungodly divisions, it is NOT determined by skin color or gender, but by character and maturity.

However, the lie of Satan is that character differences don't matter, it is the superficial divisions that matter. Thus the selfish sword of injustice cuts on both sides. The insecure will not hire the most competent who are of a different race or background because of their fear. They will project out threats that do not exist and vilify those of a different background without reason and not see the problem is in their own character, projecting out their own pathology and thus discriminate unjustly.

They will form lies that some races or groups are actually better than others based on these superficial innocuous differences. This lie leads to the creation of various caste systems (including the historic divine right of rulers and the lie that there is an actual difference between people of the royal class and commoners). And these arbitrary divisions cause people to inflict real injustice upon the innocent—slavery, Jim Crow, aristocracy versus commoner, and many other forms of exploitation, abuse, and restrictions of human freedom.

This step-one deception has been used to divide society for millennia—and people still fight over this lie today. But as evil as this step-one deception is, the step-two trap is even more diabolical.

Step Two: Satan's second step is designed to ensnare good people, those who recognize and reject the step-one lie and are outraged at the injustice they see and experience. Satan entraps them by tricking them into pursuing justice, "social justice," by *using satanic methods.*

Those who are tricked into adopting the step-two deception, rather than pursuing justice by advancing the gospel and placing Jesus and God's methods of doing right at the center, instead place the various injustices of the wicked at the center—the center of their attention, movement, media, and emotions. Racism, sexism, and various other wrongs are focused upon in order to inflame anger, outrage, and stir up a sense of injustice and, thereby, seduce these compassionate souls to accept the solution that Satan offers—"social justice" **by the application of imposed human law, coercion, and external power to force behavior change**, rather than by winning people to love and trust. But this only perpetuates new injustices and keeps the system of conflict and division going and actively keeps Jesus out of hearts and minds, thereby obstructing the only real solution to racism and all other forms of human injustice.

This methodology is central to Critical Race Theory and the other Critical Theories, which all function along this two-step deceit process: Identify objective racial or other injustices, label Christianity and its values as racist—thereby turning minds away from Jesus—and then introduce the solution of "social justice" through so-called "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion," which are all antagonistic to both individual and societal health.

What makes this process so diabolical is that this method of seeking "social justice" causes people to feel good, to feel like they are doing right, to even believe they are advancing God's kingdom—after all, they are opposing racism or some other evil—yet they fail to recognize that these very policies and practices are a violation of God's principles, violations that only incite more division and cause more harm.

MONDAY

Read John 4:7-15:

- When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

  "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

> Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
>
> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” (John 4:7-15 NIV84).

What lessons do you take from this story?

What method does Jesus use to engage the woman? Why do you think the woman was intrigued rather than offended? In other words, why didn’t she take offense and say, “I am not beneath you. You have no right to tell me to draw you water; I am not your slave”?

I think it is because of what the Bible is incapable of communicating to us—the Bible does not give us the tone of Christ’s voice, the look in His eye, the gentleness and compassion of His attitude toward her. All we have are the words of Christ.

Her response of engagement and inquiry informs us that she did not take offense but instead was shocked that a Jew would even speak to her. And I suggest, she was shocked because she discerned in Him actual kindness and respect to her as a person and that He was not demeaning to her.

So Christ’s first action is to see her as a person, as a child of God, as a soul who is loved, valued, cherished, but one who is also wounded, hurting, and in need of healing, of saving, of redeeming.

Knowing the biases and bigotry between the two peoples, Jesus doesn’t attempt to lecture, to instruct, to direct, such an action would likely be seen as demeaning, devaluing, judgmental, as ridiculing; instead He puts Himself in the position of the one who needs something from her. In doing so He demonstrates several things: that He is not repulsed by her; that He doesn’t devalue her; that He finds her worthy to engage and interact with and would appreciate her help in drawing water.

But once she engaged with Him, He immediately speaks to the longing of her soul, a water that quenches her deepest thirst and need. And she asks for this water.

What does the symbolism of water teach us about what Jesus is offering?

Consider what water does and how it has object lesson application to the plan of salvation:

- Water composes the largest portion of our physical being and is required for life
    - Genesis chapter one tells us that water covered the face of the deep and the spirit hovered over the water
    - We are made of water and the life animating energy, the breath of life, comes from God
    - Without water we will die and without the animating life energy, the Spirit of God, we will die
- We must drink water regularly or we dehydrate and die

    - We do not have life in ourselves, we must stay connected to God or we will decay and die
- Water refreshes
    - The Holy Spirit brings life to our bodies, minds, and spirits and refreshes us
- Water washes away dirt or cleanses
    - The Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts and minds from sin, fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame
- Water cools a fever
    - The Holy Spirit cools our tempers, irritability, jealousies, and rage changing our demeanor from pushing to get our own way to trusting Jesus with our lives and how things turn out
- Water puts out fire
    - The water of life, the cleansing presence of the Holy Spirit, increases our faith and extinguishes all the fiery darts of Satan, the fiery darts of fear, hurt, resentment, and various temptations
- Water has three states, solid, liquid, gas
    - God has three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Water can be polluted
    - The life energy, spirit, breath of life, God breathed into Adam was pure love, but Adam contaminated his life, his spirit, with fear and selfishness and we are all born in sin, conceived in iniquity, born with spirits contaminated with fear and selfishness because this is the only life, the only spirit, Adam and Eve had to reproduce life with.
    - Jesus came to purify the wellsprings of life. To eradicate fear and selfishness and restore in humanity the pure life of love and trust. And through Jesus we can die to the old life of fear and selfishness and be reborn and receive the new life, the new spirit of love and trust with its animating and motivating energy. This is the water of life offered to the woman and to you and me.
- When the earth became polluted with sin water cleansed the earth—and in the end the Spirit of God, the unveiled glory of God, will wash over the earth and cleanse it from all sin
- Water symbolizes the cleansing of hearts and minds in baptism—but the H2O doesn't cleanse the soul from sin it represents the Holy Spirit cleansing the heart and mind when we submit and surrender and are immersed in heart and mind into the cleansing power and presence of the Holy Spirit, i.e., experience baptism of the Spirit.
- Water coming from the Rock in the desert represented the pure Spirit of God coming through and from Jesus to humanity that heals, purifies, recreates us in righteousness, and gives us eternal life.
- In Elijah's day it did not rain for 3.5 years, an object lesson for the lack of the Holy Spirit because they turned their hearts away from God to Baal. Rain is symbolic of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon hearts and minds that bring the harvest of spiritual fruit, and we need the latter rain today more than ever.
    - What will enable the Holy Spirit to be poured out? Will God pour out His Spirit to empower people to lie about Him, to bring forth fruit of a satanic character?

    - So, isn't the truth about God as our Designer, our Creator, which is predicated upon rejecting the imposed law lie, part of the end-time message that prepares hearts and minds to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?
- Turning water into wine—what do you think this symbolically represents?
    - The water is the purifying presence of the Holy Spirit, the cleansing power of God. The wine represents the sinless righteous life of Jesus. The clay jars represent human beings who are made out of the clay or the dirt of the earth. Turning water into wine inside the clay jars, represents the water, Spirit of God working inside of us convicting us of sin, revealing the truth in love, which brings us to repentance. In repentance, we open our hearts and minds to God and the cleansing water of the Holy Spirit removes our guilt, removes our shame, removes our fear and selfishness, and we receive the wine which is symbolic of the blood, which is symbolic of the life of Christ. Thus we experience a new life, with new motives, the life of Jesus, it is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20), we become partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).
    - It is not enough to simply have the guilt and shame washed away, we must be reborn with a new life, a new spirit, which is the wine, the life of Christ animating and living within us.

This is the living water Jesus offers to the woman at the well. Drink of the water of truth and love and if you do you will not only be cleansed you from the guilt and shame from you past, but you will stop living a fear-based life always seeking for self and instead will be reborn with the life of Christ a life of love and trust that will become a well of love and truth that will flow out of you to others.

TUESDAY

The lessons cites Ezekiel 36:25-27, which is an incredible passage—what do you understand this to mean?

- I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:25-27 NIV84).

What do you understand this to be saying?

Is this describing a legal solution to salvation? What is it describing? If it is describing healing, then what is being referred to by laws?

What kind of law?

Notice Ezekiel says that the Spirit of God will move us to follow God's law—what does that mean? Does it mean that God, through His Spirit, takes control of the driver's seat of our life and makes the choices, that we become puppets and He pulls the decision-strings?

Or does it mean that we experience a new animating energy, drive, motive, that the law of survival of the fittest, the law of sin and death, the law of fear and selfishness which has previously motivated us to action is replaced with God's design law of love and trust and we identify with, value, and are motivated by love for God and others and with that new life, new energy, new desire, new identity in Christ we choose to live in harmony with God and His design laws for life because we like it, love it, and prefer it.

And when we make the choice for the good, because we are in loving partnership with Jesus, we receive, experience, draw upon, are empowered by the Holy Spirit to succeed in carrying out the righteous choice. In other words, the Holy Spirit gives us the new heart, the new motive, the new desire—and we say yes and choose to live by those new motives, and as we choose the good we receive the divine power of God that enables us to actually succeed. The new life comes from God, the power to succeed comes from God, the wisdom and truth comes from God, the love comes from God, but the choice to say yes, the choice to act upon the truth and love of God comes from us.

Consider, what is the reason you do not, and would not, molest a child? Is it because there is a rule, a law, that says it is illegal, or is it because there is something in you that recoils, is repulsed, that causes you to rather die than do something so horrible?

This is exactly what we see when Joseph was approached by Potiphar's wife and she tries to seduce him. He recoils from the thought, not because there is a rule and he fears legal punishment, but because his heart is so in tune with God that the thought is disgusting and offensive to him.

This is not legalism. This is not human law. This is design law and is what happens when God's living law of love and truth is written upon our hearts. We are healed, transformed, renewed and we do live God's law because we love God's methods and ways.

Read second paragraph,

- Jesus was seeking to reach these people with spiritual truths, even though He used illustrations from the natural world to do so. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 41).

Why do you think Jesus used illustrations from the natural world to teach spiritual truths?

What kind of law does the natural world operate upon? It is the best way to teach truth, to teach reality. God is the God of reality and all His creation operates upon design law, including our hearts and minds. Thus teaching lessons from the natural world teaches how reality works, it exposes the lies of Satan that God's law functions like human law; the lie that claims that God is the source of inflicted

pain and suffering and death. It teaches the reality that sin deviates from the way God built life to function and causes pain suffering and death unless healed by our Creator. Thus Galatians says,

- The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction** (Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Read the last paragraph,

- Abruptly, Jesus changes the topic of discussion, telling the woman to go call her husband and come back. Why the sudden shift in topic? The woman's actions bespoke avoidance. Jesus could read her heart. She must face her situation to find healing. "Before this soul could receive the gift He longed to bestow, she must be brought to recognize her sin and her Saviour."—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 187. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 41).

What do you hear being described? What is Jesus doing? Dealing with reality. This woman must accept her accurate diagnosis and the true remedy that cures.

Satan works to deceive on both points. He deceives people into thinking that they are spiritually healthy when they are not, and thus they don't seek Jesus to heal them.

- On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17 NIV84).

Can you think of any examples of this?

- Pharisees in Christ's day, but they represent a class of people through history, who?
- Legalists—all those who have a legal rules-oriented religion and who believe they are right because they are a member of the right organization, or have done the right rituals, or keep the right Sabbath, or dress in the right clothes, or eat the right foods. In other words, they believe they are righteous by their law keeping.
- Heavenly legalists—those who know their law-keeping make them right with God, so they substitute Jesus' law keeping and feel secure because they have claimed the legal payment of Jesus' life and death and rest secure that their legal status in heaven has been changed even though they remain unrighteous in heart, they falsely believe they are okay because they claim they are legally declared righteous in heaven
- Both of these groups are the Laodiceans—those who say "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But Jesus says to them, "you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." (Revelation 3:17 NIV84).
- He tricks people into believing that as long as they are morally righteous people and live civilly right lives that they will be saved.

But Satan deceives on the other side as well, those who are convicted of sin, realize their need of a Savior, the evil one will attempt to trick into accepting a false solution, a false savior, a false means of salvation to fix the problem:

- Buddha fell to this deceit—he recognized his problem, his fear of death and solved his problem by turning inward with emptying mediation until he experienced a self-induced altered mental state of euphoria and no longer had the conviction of the Holy Spirit
- The lie that God's law functions like human law and salvation is in legal adjustment through same payment to the punishing and offended deity.
- The lie that there is no God and therefore no right and wrong and therefore no need of a Savior.

WEDNESDAY

Read John 4:16-24:

- He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

  "I have no husband," she replied.

  Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

  "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

  Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:16-24 NIV84).

What is going on here?

Jesus focuses in on her spiritual need, on her long history of insecurity and seeking comfort in the arms of various men rather than making God first in her life. This inward look causes her discomfort, she doesn't want to be exposed, she doesn't want to discuss this area for which she is ashamed, feels guilty, and inadequate, so she shifts the conversation to something historically controversial between the Samaritans and Jews, the authorized place of worship.

How does Jesus deal with her question?

What does Jesus' answer mean for us today?

What does it mean for all the people in the world who are constantly fighting over so-called holy sites or places?

What does it mean for those who believe the geographic location is important in worship and/or end time events?

Where is the battlefield between Christ and Satan?

- For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The **weapons** we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power** to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Where is the battlefield? And what is the battle fought over? The knowledge of God, who we believe God to be!

And is this a physical battle? Is it a geographic battle? Do you see as the final events unfold on the world it will be all about seducing people into accepting, internalizing, and applying the methods of Satan in governance of self in how we address and solve problems. Will we be loyal to God and present the truth in love and leave others free or will we, in pursuing justice, use external laws with law enforcement to coerce consciences of people in order to do what is right, in order to save lives—like what happened during COVID?

What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth?

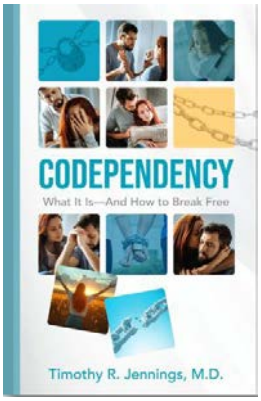
Consider this Bible commentary:

- He desired to lift the thoughts of His hearer above matters of form and ceremony, and questions of controversy. "The hour cometh," He said, "and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (The Desire of Ages 189).

  Here is declared the same truth that Jesus had revealed to Nicodemus when He said, "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, margin. Not by seeking a holy mountain or a sacred temple are men brought into communion with heaven. Religion is not to be confined to external forms and ceremonies. The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, **we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God.** It will give us a willing obedience to all His

requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit every sincere prayer is indited, and such prayer is acceptable to God. Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit's working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them, and to make them His sons and daughters. (The Desire of Ages 189, emphasis mine).

ANNOUNCEMENTS:



New Codependency Pamphlet is now available online and shipped to any US Postal address:

Designed4More Podcast: Is a joint effort of Come And Reason Ministries and Honey Lake Clinic. A new, 30 minute show is released every Tuesday. The focus is God's design for the four domains of our lives, body, mind, spirit, and relationships and how we can only thrive in harmony with His design laws for life. We explore a wide variety of topics and subjects, physical, mental, spiritual, relational, organizational etc. all seeking to understand how to apply God's designs to our real-world, real-life decisions and actions. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 6
More Testimonies About Jesus

by Tim Jennings (annoucements last page)

During Q&A #4 last week, I mentioned that EGW had made comments about men of means helping God's cause. Several asked me for references. There are more, but here are a couple:

- The Lord will work upon human minds in **unexpected quarters. Some who apparently are enemies of the truth will, in God's providence, invest their means** to develop properties and erect buildings. In time, these properties will be offered for sale at a price far below their cost. Our people will recognize the hand of Providence in these offers and will secure valuable property for use in educational work. They will plan and manage with humility, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. Thus **men of means are unconsciously preparing auxiliaries that will enable the Lord's people to advance His work rapidly**. (Counsels on Health 227, emphasis mine).

- The Lord has made men his stewards, and has entrusted to them the means to carry forward his work. When the poor have done all they can to advance the cause, **the Lord will bring in men of means to carry on the work**. (Gospel Worker 298, emphasis mine).

SABBATH

The Memory Text is John 12:32, but let's read verses 31 and 32:

- "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:31-32 NIV84).

What is the event to which Jesus is referring? His crucifixion.

His crucifixion is the event, yet Jesus said that this event is the "judgment on this world." How is His crucifixion the judgment on this world?

- At the crucifixion do we find a heavenly court being held with books being opened, legal processes happening, forensic evidence being presented, judicial rulings?
- Are the people of the world, including His crucifiers going through a heavenly judgment process?
- Even for those who claim that God's judgment is like ours a legal courtroom, do they teach that the court was set and the books were opened at the cross or at a later date?

- So how is Jesus' crucifixion the time of the judgment of this world?

Consider Paul's position on the judgment:

- If some did not believe, does their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? Absolutely not! Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "***so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged***." (Romans 3:3-4 NET, emphasis original).

What type of judgment is going on? Is this a legal process, an external authority reviewing arguments and making a ruling? Or is this the judgment of intelligent beings in regard to whom they will believe and whom they will trust?

Is this not the judgment Jesus was referring to, that the liar and deceiver had cast a spell over the minds of men and had confused the angels in heaven and the only way to destroy the lies of Satan was to reveal the truth and expose the lies; and the lies to be destroyed are the lies about God and thus only God could reveal the truth about Himself.

And the lies about God are centered upon God's law, by getting beings to believe God's law is arbitrary and imposed we misconstrue the character of God and teach that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death.

At the cross all of this was revealed to be a lie. God did not lay a hand on Jesus. God did not use power to harm His Son. God surrendered Jesus to His choice to be our Savior, and stopped using power to protect Jesus; He set Jesus free to reap what Jesus' had freely chosen. And Jesus had chosen to be our substitutionary Savior, to take our place, to confront every temptation, to suffer abuse, to face the shame of sin and despise it and destroy it through choosing supreme infinite love.

And the character of the Father and Son, their methods and principles, their eternal design laws for life are all revealed at the cross—because they are in operation at the cross, because they are lived out by Jesus at the cross.

And Satan is exposed as a liar, as the source of pain, suffering, and death and we are empowered with the evidence and truth to make a **judgment**, to decide, we can choose to reject the lies of Satan and embrace the truth and thus cast Satan out of our hearts and minds by choosing to trust Jesus and opening our hearts to Him.

Thus Jesus brings judgment by revealing the truth for this is how reality works. When the truth is revealed every person who becomes aware of the truth must decide how they will respond to it. Every person makes a judgment in response to the truth do they believe it and follow it or deny it and reject it and continue to follow the lie. This is what Jesus did at the cross.

Sadly, Satan understood the truth revealed at the cross exposed him before the onlooking universe. This is why all sympathy for him was lost in heaven, why he was cast out of all the affections of the

angels, why no angel would listen any longer to anything Satan would say. And he knows that when the truth of the cross is rightly understood it frees human hearts and minds, this is why he has worked so hard to pervert the meaning of the cross into a legal payment. The same lie he used on angels, that God's law is imposed and requires God to punish, he has used on Christianity. Christianity Romanized when it accepted Rome's idea of law, that God's law is imposed and sin is a legal problem and requires external punishment. The final message is to reset all the Bible truths, but especially the truth about God and what Jesus accomplished at the cross back into Creator worship, back into the design law reality of our Creator God.

One other point is that in the Greek the word "men" is not in the text as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not say that He would draw all "men" to Him at the cross, but that He would draw all to Himself, meaning all the intelligences in heaven and on earth.

- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth **or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84, emphasis mine).

To present the work of Christ as only for human beings restricts the full extent of His work and accomplishments and makes it easier for people to misconstrue the sin problem as a legal one. When we see the biblical truth that Jesus was not only saving humanity through His life, death, and resurrection, but was simultaneously destroying him who holds the power of death that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14) and securing the unfallen angels in their loyalty, we recognize something much more significant was happening than making legal payments. Consider this commentary:

- But the plan of redemption had a yet **broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man**. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might **regard the law of God as it should be regarded**; but it was to **vindicate the character of God before the universe**. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before **all the universe** it would **justify God** and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the **perpetuity of the law** of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. (Patriarchs and Prophets 68, emphasis mine). [The sin problem began in heaven with angels and spread to earth. God's plan through Christ deals with the entire sin problem not just the human sin problem. While the angels in heaven remained loyal, all the lies of Satan had not been exposed and refuted. Thus, in saving humanity from sin, Jesus simultaneously reveals truth that destroys Satan's lies and solidifies the angels in their loyalty thus preventing the spread of distrust and fear when Satan and sin are finally eliminated. And the issue is over God's law—how do we understand law? Satan alleged God's law is arbitrary, made up rules, requiring God to use power to punish and this confused the angels in heaven, and the death of Christ revealed the truth about God's law. Sadly, Satan has infected Christianity with his same lie that God's law functions like human

law and almost all of Christianity teaches that God's law requires God to use God's power to inflict death on Jesus as legal punishment for sin, which is contrary to the evidence of what transpired.]

From the first the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, **that His law was faulty**, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. In **attacking the law** he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author. In the controversy it was to be shown whether the divine statutes **were defective and subject to change, or perfect and immutable**. (Patriarchs and Prophets 69, emphasis mine). [How did Satan attack God's law? The same author, in other places, explains her understanding, does this add up, does it make sense? Is it reasonable? Is it consistent with Scripture?]

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the **law of God** could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned**. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. (*The Desire of Ages*. p. 761, emphasis mine). [What kind of law requires the infliction of punishment? Imposed law, the types of law that creatures make up. God is Creator and His laws are design laws, the protocols reality functions upon, to transgress them causes the harm, brings the suffering, separates from the source of life and results in death unless healed by our Creator. Consider another quote:]

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. p. 109, emphasis mine). [What kind of law is in operation and beings are in harmony with it but they don't even know about it? Consider when Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity and told his friends about the law—how many would say, gravity is a law, huh, never considered that it is just how things work. This again is a description of design law, not imposed law. You may disagree with this author, but she is consistent in her presentation. God's laws are design laws. Sin transgresses the laws upon which reality is built and results in ruin and death unless healed by our Creator, and that was the mission of Jesus. Satan, a creature, alleges God's law and government are no different that than of a creature. Thus the same author wrote the following in the opening of the book *The Great Controversy:]*

The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. The same hatred of **the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God,** and men are **led to**

worship the creature rather than the Creator, may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator,** and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to **set aside the divine law**, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers (EGW, The Great Controversy, p x.1, emphasis mine). [When we substitute imposed law for design law we are led to worship a creature rather than the Creator. The special message that is to lighten the world at this time in history is a message that calls people back to Creator worship, but we have thus far failed to do so because we have presented our doctrinal truths through Satan's imposed law lens and that lie distorts everything and obstructs the truth about God. Thus the message necessary to complete the mission is resetting it all in the setting of Creator worship, which is design law.]

The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.** Upon this battle we are now entering—**a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah,** between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition **(***The Great Controversy* p. 582, emphasis mine)**.**

Continuing on with the quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets:"*

- **From the first the great controversy had been upon the law of God**. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, **that His law was faulty**, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. In **attacking the law** he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author. In the controversy it was to be shown whether the divine statutes **were defective and subject to change, or perfect and immutable**. (Patriarchs and Prophets 69, emphasis mine).

  When Satan was thrust out of heaven, he determined to make the earth his kingdom. When he tempted and overcame Adam and Eve, he thought that he had gained possession of this world; "because," **said he**, "**they have chosen me as their ruler**." He **claimed** that it was **impossible that forgiveness should be grante**d to the sinner, and therefore the fallen race were his **rightful subjects**, and the world was his. But God gave His own dear Son—one equal with Himself—to bear **the penalty of transgression**, and thus He provided a way by which they **might be restored** to His favor, and brought back to their Eden home. Christ undertook to redeem man and to rescue the world from the grasp of Satan. The great controversy **begun in heaven** was to be decided in the very world, on the very same field, that Satan **claimed** as his. (Patriarchs and Prophets 69, emphasis mine). [What do you hear? Notice, Satan makes claims, assertions, allegations, proclamations, and they have a legal frame. He claims humans chose him as their ruler, as if our choice could change reality and make Satan into our creator and the sustainer of our being. He claims that forgiveness is impossible. He claims we are his rightful or legal subjects. And notice that Jesus bears the penalty of transgression, not the penalty of God, but the penalty that naturally comes from breaking design law in order to restore humans back into harmony with heaven.]

It was the marvel of **all the universe** that Christ should humble Himself to save fallen man. That He who had passed from star to star, from world to world, superintending all, by His providence supplying the needs of every order of being in His vast creation—that He should **consent** to leave His glory and take upon Himself **human nature**, was a mystery which the sinless intelligences of other worlds desired to understand. [1 Corinthians 4:9 we are spectacle a theater to angels] When Christ came to our world in the form of humanity, all were intensely interested in following Him as He traversed, step by step, the bloodstained path from the manger to Calvary. Heaven marked the insult and mockery that He received, and **knew that it was at Satan's instigation**. They marked the **work of counteragencies** going forward; **Satan constantly pressing darkness, sorrow, and suffering upon the race**, **and Christ counteracting it**. They watched the battle between light and darkness as it waxed stronger. And as Christ in His expiring agony upon the cross cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself. The great contest that had been so long in progress in this world was now decided, and Christ was conqueror. **His death had answered the question** whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. **Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer.** It was seen that the very same spirit with which he had ruled the children of men who were under his power, he would have manifested if permitted to control the intelligences of heaven. With one voice the loyal universe united in extolling the divine administration. (Patriarchs and Prophets 69, emphasis mine). [Satan is the author of pain, suffering, and death. Satan is the murderer from the beginning. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that Jesus destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil, and that Jesus destroys our last enemy death. Yet most of Christianity, believing the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, teaches that God, not Satan, holds the power of death and that God wields death and inflicts death upon the disobedient as just punishment. Some even teach that God killed Jesus on the cross. And in so doing they teach Satan's lies and prevent people from coming to a true knowledge of God and experiencing the salvation so freely offered.]

If the law could be changed, man might have been saved without the sacrifice of Christ; but the fact that it was necessary for Christ to give His life for the fallen race, **proves that the law of God will not release the sinner from its claims upon him.** It is demonstrated that the **wages of sin is death.** When Christ died, the destruction of Satan was made certain. But if the law was abolished at the cross, as many claim, then the agony and death of God's dear Son were endured only to give to Satan just what he asked; then the prince of evil triumphed, his charges against the divine government were sustained. The very fact that Christ bore the **penalty of man's transgression** is a mighty argument to **all created intelligences that the law is changeless**; that God is righteous, merciful, and self-denying; and that infinite justice and mercy unite in the administration of His government. (Patriarchs and Prophets 70, emphasis mine). [God's laws are design laws and cannot be changed. Like the law of respiration. If someone jumps into the ocean with weights tied around their legs, the law cannot be changed to meet them in their drowning state. The only way to save them is to put them in harmony with the law. Thus God works through Jesus to restore His living law into humanity, not to pay a penalty to Himself or the law. But there is a penalty that comes from the broken law, and Jesus at the cross experienced that penalty, the separation from His Father,

which was necessary for Him to die, and He had to die to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness, the corrupted life that we all inherit from Adam and replace it with His pure, sinless, life that He received as a human at his incarnation from His Father the Holy Spirit. There was and is nothing penal/legal doing on. It is all reality, design law, restoration to God's original design for life.]

Thus when Jesus was lifted up, He not only revealed the truth to destroy the lies, He accomplished in His humanity the Remedy to the human sin condition and Hebrews says:

- "Once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9 NIV84).

Wasn't He always perfect? He was always sinless, but biblical perfection is maturity of character and character cannot be created it must be developed. And Jesus developed a perfect and mature sinless human character.

All of this reality based thinking, understanding design law, understanding the setting of the Great Controversy, here is how I paraphrased John 12:31-32:

- "Now is the time for the infection of selfishness and sin in this world to be fully diagnosed and revealed as destructive; now, Satan — the prince of this selfish world — will be driven out into the open, out of the shadows, out from behind his lies and distortions about God and God's methods, out where all can see him as the murderer he truly is, and thus out of the hearts of all who love me. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all intelligences throughout the universe to me." (John 12:31-32 REM).

SUNDAY

Read last paragraph,

- John 3:31–36 continues the comparison between Jesus and John, showing the superiority of the Messiah over His forerunner. With John's testimony pointing toward Jesus, the idea of witness is again emphasized. Those who receive that testimony and believe in Jesus have eternal life. Those who do not receive Him remain under **the wrath of God**. That's what the text says. God loves the world and sent His Son to redeem the world (John 3:16, 17). But **those who refuse the gift** offered them will have to **pay the penalty for their own sins—eternal death**. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 47, emphasis mine).

What is the message you hear in this paragraph?

What law lens are you understanding these words through?

The lesson is referring to John 3:36, in which reads:

- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. (John 3:36 NIV84).

What does this mean? What is God's wrath?

Our understanding of wrath depends on our understanding of God's law. If we believe God's law functions like human law, made up rules that require judicial oversight and enforcement through external penalties, then we believe God's wrath is the use of God's power to inflict pain, suffering, and death as punishment. But this method is the method of Satan. Satan's wrath is that of using external power to cause harm.

When we understand the truth that God is Creator and His laws are the laws reality itself is built to operate upon, then we understand that God's wrath is the opposite of Satan's—it is NOT when God uses power but when God ceases to use His saving power that He has been using to hold at bay the pain, suffering, and death that sin causes. God's wrath is when God let's go and allows people to reap what they insist upon.

Paul tells us this in Romans 1:18-26, that God's wrath is God letting go, giving up, releasing to reap what is sown. And Paul confirms this in Galatians 6:8, those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction.

And Paul ties this all together for us in Roman 4:25 where Jesus was "delivered up" (NKJV, ESV), "delivered over" (NIV84), "handed over" (GNT, NRSV, NLT), "given over" (NET). But the Greek is the exact same as Paul uses in Romans 1:24,26,28 where it says "God gave them up."

Jesus, as our substitutionary Savior, experienced on the cross the wrath of God against sin, and what did God do? God let Him go, gave Him up, surrendered Him to reap what Jesus freely chose and what did Jesus choose? To go through the cross in love in order to eliminate the cause of death and restore the cause of life into humanity. God did not lay a hand on His Son. God did not use power to inflict torment or death upon His Son. God ceased using His protective and sustaining power and set Jesus free to reap what Jesus had chosen and thus Jesus' own testimony "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Consider these historical quotes, note the type of law involved, the actions of God, all consistent with Scripture

- "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" **The wrath of God fell upon Christ. This was the hiding of the Father's countenance.** (18 Manuscript Release 731, emphasis mine).

- David had neglected the duty of punishing the crime of Amnon, and because of the unfaithfulness of the king and father and the impenitence of the son, the **Lord permitted events to take their natural course, and did not restrain Absalom.** When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, **God Himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin**. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 728, emphasis mine).

- God bears long with the rebellion and apostasy of His subjects. Even when His mercy is despised and His love scorned and derided, He bears with men until the last resource for leading them to repentance is exhausted. But there are **limits to His forbearance**. From those who to the end **continue in obstinate rebellion, He removes His protecting care. Providence will no longer shield them from Satan's power.** They will have sinned away their day of grace. (*Review and Herald*, September 17, 1901 par. 7, emphasis mine). [What is the limit God's forbearance? The obstinate rebellion that sears the conscience and destroys the faculties that respond to truth and love so that no more time, mercy, love, truth, grace will have any impact, and therefore God, in harmony with the law of love and liberty, sets people free to reap what they have chosen—His wrath happens, He stops using power to protect them from what they have insisted upon]

  God keeps a reckoning with the nations. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Those who work evil toward their fellow men, saying, How doth God know? will one day be called upon to **meet long-deferred vengeance**. In this age a more than common contempt is shown to God. Men have reached a point in insolence and disobedience which shows that their **cup of iniquity is almost full**. Many have well-nigh **passed the boundary of mercy**. Soon **God will show that He is indeed the living God**. He will say to the angels, "***No longer combat Satan in his efforts to destroy***. Let him work out his malignity upon the children of disobedience; for the cup of their iniquity is full. They have advanced from one degree of wickedness to another, adding daily to their lawlessness. ***I will no longer interfere to prevent the destroyer from doing his work.***" (*Review and Herald*, September 17, 1901 par. 8, emphasis mine).

What is the wrath of God? God's stopping the use of intervening power and allowing people to reap what they have chosen. We are born terminal, dead in trespass and sin. Without divine intervention our condition inherited from Adam is incompatible with life and without intervention from our Creator to heal us we will die. Thus, all those who reject the remedy remain terminal, and when they pass the point that no amount of truth or love will have any redeeming healing impact, then God will let them go to reap what they have chosen and that is His wrath, and the penalty is the result of their choice, eternal non-existence. And that penalty comes from sin, it is not inflicted by God.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The Jews looked for a Messiah to come who would deliver them from the rule of Rome. Long under oppression, the Jews believed that the Messiah would not only overthrow Rome but would establish them as a great and powerful nation. John's words, however, calling Jesus "the Lamb of God," although directly pointing to His atoning sacrifice, were probably misunderstood by the majority of people. They might have not known what he was talking about at all. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 48).

Why do you think the Jews, who were blessed with the 39 books of the Old Testament, all of which taught the truth of the coming Messiah and the nature of God's eternal kingdom, did not understand? Why did they look for a Messiah who was like a human dictator? Why did they want a Messiah who would use might and power to inflict punishments upon their enemies?

If we could go back to Christ's day and ask one of the scribes or Pharisees the following questions, what answers do you think we would get?

- Do you want the promised Messiah to come?
- Do you anticipate the Messiah doing away with sin and evil or promoting sin and evil?
- Would you like for the Messiah to do good or to do evil?
- What is the good you anticipate the Messiah will do when He comes?

And wouldn't they say something like—He will punish rebellion; He will destroy the wicked; He will reward the righteous; He will overthrow our enemies; He will establish a kingdom on David's throne and rule with a rod of iron.

And what is the basis of these ideas? What law underlies them all? It is imposed law and the use of external force to either inflict punishment or distribute rewards. It is human law; it is the government of a creature. It is Satan's methods and principles.

And do we see this same way of thinking being taught throughout Christianity today. They will say that Jesus' first coming was for the purpose of paying the legal penalty for sin, but His second coming will be for the purpose of using power to destroy sin, punish sinners, and reward the righteous. The exact same kingdom type, methods, and imposed law structure that the Jews were looking for.

But Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world. That the kingdom of God is within us. And He had already revealed through the prophets that God wins not by might nor by power but by His Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and love.

And truth and love destroys lies and selfishness in hearts and minds and wins rebels into loving, loyal, and trustworthy friends of God.

We have been given a special message to prepare the world for Christ's return and that is a call for people to worship God as Creator and stop worshiping Him as if He were a dictator. And that requires we reject the imposed human law lie and understand all of God's laws are design laws.

Consider this historical quote and how if we are to effectively give the special message of the three angels of Revelation 14 which calls people to worship God as Creator, we must put it in the setting of design law:

- **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God.** Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being. All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of the laws that He has established. And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. He **publishes His law** and the penalty that will follow the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it if they will. … **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord** (Testimonies, vol. 3, p. 161, emphasis mine).

It is only when we understand God's laws are the design protocols that reality operates upon will we be able to present the truth about His character and government. As long as we cling to the lie that any part of God's government uses imposed law, we will continue to misrepresent God and distort the message of the 3 angels.

TUESDAY

Read John 6:48-56:

- I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone **eats of this bread**, he will live forever. **This bread is my flesh**, which I will give for the life of the world."

  Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

  Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you **eat the flesh** of the Son of Man and **drink his blood**, you have no life in you. Whoever **eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my **flesh is real food and my blood is real**

drink. Whoever **eats my flesh and drinks my blood** remains in me, and I in him. (John 6:48-56 NIV84, emphasis mine).

How did the Jews respond to this?

What is going on here? Where is the imagery of flesh and blood coming from? It is from the sacrificial system.

What prevented the Jews from understanding what Jesus was telling them? They though concretely; they did not understand the reality to which the symbols were pointing.

John 1 tells us that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, that the living thoughts of God, His character, truth, love, methods, principles, motives, self dwelt in Christ bodily; that we see the thoughts and ideas of God lived out in Jesus.

Thus, as food is taken into the body and becomes building blocks of our body's structure and provides energy to our systems, so too the truth of God, when taken into our hearts and minds becomes the building blocks of our understanding, perspectives, believes, values, morals and the motivating energy to our actions. As we are won to trust based on this truth, we open our hearts and receive the life of Christ, the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), and this is drinking the blood, partaking of the divine nature and we receive new motives, desires, and attitudes of the heart—the life of Christ.

But the Jews did not understand this because they refused to think beyond the literal to its true application in reality.

Many Adventists do this exact same thing when it comes to the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's mediatorial work for us. They think concretely; they think of literal buildings made of inanimate material; some form of parchment or record books with literal lists of bad deeds and the literal application of Jesus' blood to the books to erase the record of sin. They think of some human law system with a tribunal, review of records, weighing out what is a just punishment for the unrepentant and the eventual literal infliction of punishment by God.

All of this is caused by their failure to understand God's law is design law and that the OT Sanctuary service was theater, was symbolism, was metaphor, was designed to elevate the mind to reality of the elimination from sin, not from inanimate structures or books, but from hearts and minds of intelligent beings.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- As we have already seen, Jesus' hour of glory is the cross. Thus, the Father's testimony about Jesus points to the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. It is the

> culmination of His earthly ministry. His death in our behalf paid the full penalty for all our sins, and in Him, by faith, we never have to face that penalty ourselves. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 50).

What is the penalty? To whom is it paid? What happens if Jesus didn't pay the penalty—what would the Father do?

Can anyone point out how the lesson starts with the Bible truth and substitutes the human law lie?

The second sentence points out that Jesus' sacrifice was for the sins of the world—a little ambiguous, meaning not precise, but not wrong, as it leads the mind to think of what John the Baptist said, and since we are focusing on John the Baptist's testimony this is a reasonable link and he said:

- The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29 NIV84).

So the biblical truth is that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, which could be stated as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. But the Bible is more precise, to take away the sin of the world.

The rephrasing subtly moves the focus from the sin of the world to the sins, which can lead the mind to think of deeds rather than the sin condition which is the cause of the misdeeds.

But worse, the lesson substitutes Jesus as the solution that takes away sin which is curative, healing, and replaces that with Jesus taking the penalty, but without explaining the purpose was to eliminate the cause of death and restore life. They leave it as penalty replacement, He takes the penalty so we don't have to take the penalty, which suggests the problem is the penalty which someone has to pay. Not so, the problem is the condition of sin which someone has to remove and there was no way to remove the sin condition without going through the trial, suffering, and death—which was the means of destroying or killing the infection of fear and selfishness. In other words, it was the only way to eliminate sin from humanity. And yes, if we don't accept Jesus and receive from Him a new heart, a new spirit of love, a new life, and instead cling to the life, the spirit of sin, fear, and selfishness, then from that condition we reap death. But the issues isn't one of penal legal substitution, it is one of reality, of eliminating the death causing condition and replacing it with a sinless life.

THURSDAY

Read John 7:45-49:

- Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

  "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.

> “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. “Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.” (John 7:45-49 NIV84).

What is happening in this exchange?

What happened to the guards that they did not bring Jesus in as directed?

What did they hear? They heard truth. They saw with their own eyes, heard with their own ears, thought with their own minds, and they comprehended by observation, evidence, reason, and truth that Jesus was not like everyone else, that Jesus spoke with the authority of truth and manifested in action love, grace, kindness, mercy, gentleness and He was not a terrorist, a threat to good order.

What did the religious leaders do? They accused, they condemned, they name-called, and they appealed to the authority of position, office, degree, education, but not evidence, truth, and facts.

Understand, this same dynamic is happening all around us, people making claims based on the authority of their office, position, power, education that contradicts objective reality, facts, evidence, and truth.

And when people do not obey the claims and directives of those who are using their office as authority, when people instead identify with and follow objective truth, what do those who are rejecting truth do? They attack, vilify, demean, accuse and seek to use the power of the state to arrest and intimidate.

Consider what happens when people refuse the gender ideology? Or the climate change lies? Or the godless evolution propaganda? Or all the COVID scam? Or the various other hoaxes and frauds?

Minds are being attacked and people are being conditioned to stop thinking, stop reasoning, stop examining evidence, and believe based on the authority of the one who said it, and they are being intimidated with various threats, social isolation, rejection, fines, loss of jobs and privileges if they do not go along with the lies and falsehoods.

We are living right now in the middle of the Great Controversy in which hearts and minds are under assault with evil methods tempting people to collude with lies and falsehoods in order to protect and advantage self. Bow down to the idol of wokeism or be thrown in the fiery furnace of social annihilation.

ANNOUCEMENTS

Melbourne: 1-3 Nov 2024

Venue for all 3 days: 40 Warrandyte Road, Ringwood, VIC Hosted by Oasis Fellowship Group

The opening of our event in Melbourne, is set to be the hub of excitement from November 1st to 3rd. This venue is a community-centric space and is perfect for people from all walks of life, offering a welcoming environment and a range of spaces designed to provide an area for all guest's needs.

Light lunch will be available on the Saturday so you may stay the whole day for all talks.

Fri 1st Nov

@7:00-8:00pm: ***The Remedy for Abuse***

Can we really Overcome the Shadows of Abuse?

Sat 2nd Nov

@10:00-11:00am: ***The Remedy for Relationships***

Healthy Love or Love Addiction?

@11:30-12:30pm: ***The Remedy for our Minds***

What is the Secret to a Healthy Mind?

12:30-2pm – Combined LUNCH BREAK (Soup and Buns)

@2:00 -3:00pm: ***The Ultimate Remedy***

What if your Belief is based on a Lie?

@3:00-4:00pm: ***Q&A***

Sun 3rd Nov

@2:00-4:00pm: ***The Remedy for Deception***

How do we Guard against Misinformation and Manipulation?

Who Should Exercise Power over our Choices?

Graham Hood Interviews Dr Jennings & Q&A

Sydney: 8-9 Nov 2024

Friday - Saturday Venue: Restore Church

47 Britannia Rd, Castle Hill NSW 2154, Australia

Welcome to *Restore Church* in Castle Hill, the opening of our event in Sydney, set to be the centre of engaging talks on November 8th and 9th. This venue is designed with the community in mind, making it an ideal space for individuals from diverse backgrounds. It offers a welcoming atmosphere, and a variety of areas tailored to meet all our guests' needs. A light lunch will be provided on Saturday, allowing you to stay the entire day for all the talks.

Fri 8th Nov

@7:00-8:00pm: ***The Remedy for Abuse***

How can we overcome the Shadows of Abuse?

Sat 9th Nov

@10:00-11:00am: ***The Remedy for Relationships***

Healthy Love or Love Addiction?

@11:30-12:30pm: ***The Remedy for our Minds***

What is the Secret to a Healthy Mind?

12:30-2pm – Combined LUNCH BREAK (Soup and Buns)

@2:00 -3:00pm: ***The Ultimate Remedy***

What if your Belief is based on a Lie?

@3:00-4:00pm: ***Q&A***

Sydney: 10 Nov 2024

Sunday Venue: Concord Seventh-day Adventist Church

7 Flavelle St, Concord NSW 2137, Australia **Sun**

10th Nov

@2:00-4:00pm: ***The Remedy for Deception***

How do we Guard against Misinformation and Manipulation?

Who Should Exercise Power over our Choices?

Graham Hood Interview & Q&A

Children's Programs for both MELBOURNE / SYDNEY

The Children's Ministry program (Hosted by Master puppeteer Louis Johnson of ReLoveolution) will run during Dr Jennings' presentations.

The team at Come & Reason Australia, and its children's ministry helpers will host programming during main presentation times to most effectively give you time to listen to Dr Jennings.

All children's programs are tailored to best captivate and minister to young minds. Your kids will love the thoughtfully curated sessions that inspire creativity, healthy habits, & kindness/selflessness.

Expect a blend of fun and learning through interactive sessions that will keep the kids engaged while you enjoy the main events.

For more information and to stay updated on the events, visit Come and Reason Australia on Facebook or comeandreason.com for the latest news and resources.

Join us on this extraordinary tour in Australia, where every moment is an opportunity to create new healing pathways and lasting memories. Whether you are in the bustling city of Sydney or the tranquil surroundings of Melbourne, there's something special for everyone.

Get ready to explore, learn, and heal!

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q4 Themes in the Gospel of John, Lesson 7
Blessed Are Those Who Believe

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

> "Jesus said to him,'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' " (John 20:29, NKJV).

From the lesson:

> Throughout his Gospel, John has a diversity of people—people with different backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences—all testify- ing to who Jesus was.
> " 'Behold the Lamb of God!' " **[John the Baptist]** (John 1:36, NKJV). " 'We have found the Messiah' " **[Andrew - Peter's brother]** (John 1:41, NKJV). " 'We have found Him of whom Moses . . . wrote' " **[Philip to Nathanael]** (John 1:45, NKJV). " 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' " **[Nathanael to Jesus]** (John 1:49, NKJV). " 'Could this be the Christ?' " **[Woman @ the Well]** (John 4:29, NKJV). " 'We ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world' " **[Fellow Samaritans based on interacting with Jesus]** (John 4:42, NKJV). " 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life' " **[Peter to Jesus]** (John 6:68, NKJV). " 'I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world' " **[Martha to Jesus before Lazarus' resurrection]** (John 11:27, NKJV). " 'Though I was blind, now I see' " **[Man born blind]** (John 9:25, NKJV). " 'Behold your King!' " **[Pilate to jews again]** (John 19:14, NKJV). " 'I find no fault in Him' " **[Pilate to jews]** (John 19:6, NKJV). " 'My Lord and my God!' " **[Thomas after examining Jesus]** (John 20:28, NKJV).
> (Adult SS Guide Q4 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John, pg 56)

Who were some of these people, and why did they testify as they did to the identity of Jesus?

SUNDAY
Harking Back to Abraham

Jesus speaking to the jews:

> "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." [John 8:56, NKJV].

The lesson asks

> Why was Abraham's witness so important that it was included in John's gospel?
>
> Through type and promise God 'preached before the gospel unto Abraham.' Galatians 3:8. And the patriarch's faith was fixed upon the Redeemer to come. Said Christ to the Jews, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced that he should see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.' John 8:56, R.V., margin. The ram offered in place of Isaac represented the Son of God, who was to be sacrificed in our stead. When man was doomed to death by transgression of the law of God, the Father, looking upon His Son, said to the sinner, 'Live: I have found a ransom.' — Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 154
> (Adult SS Guide Q4 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John, pg 57)

The jews argued with Him stating, "You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?" [John 8:57 NKJV].

Jesus destroys their argument with, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." [John 8:58 NKJV]. The church leadership then gathered stones to "throw at Him". Why was the jewish political / church leadership so animated to kill Jesus?? What is the root of their animosity?? What about Christian leadership today?? Will it manifest the same hatred for the same reasons??

The lesson correctly identifies the root of the problem contrasting Paul's description of Abraham's righteousness by faith in Romans 4: 1-5:

> What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has discovered regarding this matter? 2 For if Abraham was declared righteous by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. 3 For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited due to grace but due to obligation. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness.
> Romans 4: 1-5

Abraham's heart went from a natural distrust of God [thanks to sin], to a position of trust [thanks to Jesus], and he started on the pathway to righteousness by faith in a future event. He developed an understanding of the nature and function of God's Design Law. My suspicion is Abraham better understood the Design Law from the beginning of his life than we do. It's generally accepted that Babylon was the first "nation" that had a codified law, and nearly every culture since then has followed suit. Abraham did not have to unlearn the error that seems to function in our DNA that God's Law functions just like human laws. Scripture is silent on what the Laws of Sodom were, but it doesn't take much imagination to figure out that they were pretty lax in their legislation / enforcement if they existed at all.

MONDAY

The Witness of Mary.

Mary anointed Jesus with some expensive fragrant oil at Simon's house. The lesson surmises that this was done in gratitude for the forgiveness of her "sins" and for the resurrection of Lazarus. The whole house was filled with the heady fragrance of the oil[s] and Judas rebuked her, claiming that the gift should have been sold and the proceeds given to "the poor". Jesus states:

> Leave her alone, she kept it for the day of my burial. For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."
> [John 12: 7,8 NET].

Many on the political left reject this Scripture along with the ones in Deuteronomy 15 and Matthew 26 / Mark 14, and in their utopian zeal tell us that poverty can be eradicated with a variety of government imposed programs of excessive taxation or universal basic income. These programs are at war with God's Design Law of Liberty, Sowing & Reaping, and Exertion. How?

John takes an aside to make clear to the reader the nature of Judas' character [John 12:6]. He's a thief. Jesus knew this beforehand and still protected Judas' reputation. The disciples found out about Judas' thefts after his death.

> The fragrant gift which Mary had thought to lavish upon the dead body of the Saviour she poured upon His living form. At the burial its sweetness could only have pervaded the tomb; now it gladdened His heart with the assurance of her faith and love. . . . And as He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from His redeemed ones forever.
> (The Desire of Ages, pg 560)

Our sense of smell is one of the most primitive and a familiar scent can trigger some deep memories / emotions. Imagine Jesus in Gethsemane, his humanity wrestling with powerful emotions to deviate from his chosen path, praying for Devine strength, feeling the loss of connection with his Father, and getting a whiff of the perfume originally bought for His burial, and getting strengthened to continue along with His decision. Or hanging on the Cross, and feeling the pain of nails in His hands and feet; his back raw flesh from two floggings pressed against rough wood, splinters jabbing in His spine; the crown of thorns that pierced his skull, and a slight change in breeze brings the faint scent of the perfume on his punctured feet mixing with the odor of sweat and blood, strengthening Him to continue the fight against His human nature from his mother and surrender His life to His Father — "in to your hands, I commit my Spirit, Father".

TUESDAY

The Unwitting Witness of Pilate.

The lesson recommends reading the EGW Desire of Ages chapter "In Pilate's Judgement Hall". I wholeheartedly agree.

> **Christ's persecutors had tried to measure His character by their own; they had represented Him as vile as themselves.** But back of all the present appearance another scene intruded itself,—a scene which they will one day see in all its glory. There were some who trembled in Christ's presence. While the rude throng were bowing in mockery before Him, some who came forward for that purpose turned back, afraid and silenced. Herod was convicted. The last rays of merciful light were shining upon his sin-hardened heart. **He felt that this was no common man; for divinity had flashed through humanity. At the very time when Christ was encompassed by mockers, adulterers, and murderers, Herod felt that he was beholding a God upon His throne.**
> (Desire of Ages, pg 731[emphasis mine).

When Jesus was returned to Pilate he was "disappointed and much displeased." He had already told the mob Jesus was innocent of their false charges and wanted to be done with their mess. He did, however, agree to have Jesus scourged. For those who don't know what Roman scourging involved, it was a deeply cruel beating. The prisoner was tied to a post, while a punisher swung a short stick with 3-6 leather straps attached to the end of it. Embedded in the ends of the leather straps were sharp pieces of iron or bone that dug in to the prisoners skin and ripped it apart when the straps were jerked away for the next lash. Jewish law limited the beating to 40 lashes, so typically a prisoner was given 39 lashes ["twoscore less one"], however the Romans had no such limitations, and no body part was off limits. Many victims died with 39 or less.

> Concerning the Romans flagrum, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea recounts in vivid, horrible detail a scene of scourging. He says, "For they say that the bystanders were struck with amazement when they saw them lacerated with scourges even to the innermost veins and arteries, so that the hidden inward parts of the body, both their bowels and their members, were exposed to view"
> (Ecclesiastical History, Book 4, chapter 15).

The jewish accusers of Jesus noted Pilate's weakness in capitulating to having an "innocent" man scourged to placate them and they pressed for more.

> Here Pilate showed his weakness. He had declared that Jesus was innocent, yet he was willing for Him to be scourged to pacify His accusers. **He would sacrifice justice and principle in order to compromise with the mob. This placed him at a disadvantage.** The crowd presumed upon his indecision, and clamored the more for the life of the prisoner. If at the first Pilate had stood firm, refusing to condemn a man whom he found guiltless, he would have broken the fatal chain that was to bind him in remorse and guilt as long as he lived. Had he carried out his convictions of right, the Jews would not have presumed to dictate to him.

> **Christ would have been put to death, but the guilt would not have rested upon Pilate. But Pilate had taken step after step in the violation of his conscience. He had excused himself from judging with justice and equity, and he now found himself almost helpless in the hands of the priests and rulers. His wavering and indecision proved his ruin.**
> (Desire of Ages, pg 731 emphasis mine)

Pilate is an example of those described in Revelation as receiving the mark of the beast in their hands. He was not a true believer in the jews or their accusations about Jesus, but he wanted to curry their favor, and was afraid of ill reports getting back to Caesar possibly jeopardizing his position, so he "went along" to protect self. God was still trying to reach Pilate and gave him another evidence via the letter from his wife regarding her vision. He still vacillated and offered them the release of a prisoner, Jesus or Barabbas, for their Passover. The jews would have none of it and demanded Christ be crucified, and welcomed the release of Barabbas.

> Pilate yielded to the demands of the mob. Rather than risk losing his position, he delivered Jesus up to be crucified. But in spite of his precautions, the very thing he dreaded afterward came upon him. His honors were stripped from him, he was cast down from his high office, and, stung by remorse and wounded pride, not long after the crucifixion he ended his own life. So all who compromise with sin will gain only sorrow and ruin. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
>
> The people of Israel had made their choice. Pointing to Jesus they had said, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Barabbas, the robber and murderer, was the representative of Satan. Christ was the representative of God. Christ had been rejected; Barabbas had been chosen. Barabbas they were to have. **In making this choice they accepted him who from the beginning was a liar and a murderer. Satan was their leader. As a nation they would act out his dictation. His works they would do. His rule they must endure.** That people who chose Barabbas in the place of Christ were to feel the cruelty of Barabbas as long as time should last.
> (Desire of Ages, pg 738 (emphasis mine)

WEDNESDAY

The Witness of Thomas

The lesson asks "What major mistake did Thomas make?"

Did Thomas make a mistake or did he exercise his discernment in not surrendering his decision making to another disciple or an authority figure. I'm willing to give Thomas some grace in wanting to examine evidence for himself. To be fair, the other disciples would not likely have lied to Thomas about seeing Christ, but I still affirm him for wanting to evaluate the evidence himself. Sister White disagrees with me:

> Thomas "cast himself at the feet of Jesus crying, 'My Lord and my God.' Jesus accepted his acknowledgment, but gently reproved his unbelief: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou

hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' The faith of Thomas would have been more pleasing to Christ if he had been willing to believe upon the testimony of his brethren. Should the world now follow the example of Thomas, no one would believe unto salvation; for all who receive Christ must do so through the testimony of others.

Many who are given to doubt excuse themselves by saying that if they had the evidence which Thomas had from his companions, they would believe. They do not realize that they have not only that evidence, but much more. Many who, like Thomas, wait for all cause of doubt to be removed, will never realize their desire. They gradually become confirmed in unbelief. Those who educate themselves to look on the dark side, and murmur and complain, know not what they do. They are sowing the seeds of doubt, and they will have a harvest of doubt to reap. At a time when faith and confidence are most essential, many will thus find themselves powerless to hope and believe.
(Desire of Ages, pp 807, 808)

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration.**
(Steps to Christ, pg 105 emphasis mine)

THURSDAY

Our Witness of Jesus.

From the Lesson:

> Imagine having been there, in person, in the flesh, and having seen Jesus do many of these miracles. We'd certainly believe, wouldn't we? We'd like to think so; but, in some ways, we have even more reasons to believe in Jesus than did those who actually saw the miracles.
> (Adult SS Guide Q4 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John, pg 61)

Why?

Why indeed? Are we advantaged in any way

The lesson makes excellent points on this — we have the history of the 1st century church; all of the gospels; history of Paul's conversion / missions / letters; fulfillment of a variety of prophecies including the persecution of the believers in medieval Europe, & those being fulfilled in real time now; the compilation of both Old and New Testaments into our Bible; advances in science supporting Scriptural accounts of beginnings and events; and **OUR** unique experience with the Holy Spirit making effectual Christ's accomplishments and transforming our characters to ones like His.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 Q4 Themes from the Gospel of John Lesson 8
Fulfilling Old Testament Prophecies

by Lori Atkins

memory text is from John 5:36 but I want to read it in context from The Remedy

> 31 "If the only evidence of who I am and of the truth I bring was my own proclamations about myself, such evidence would not be reliable. 32 But there is an abundance of other evidence that verifies that what I say is true, and this evidence is reliable and valid. 33 "You already inquired of John, and he has confirmed the truth of who I am. 34 It is not because I need his testimony that I mention this, but I hope you will accept his testimony and be healed. 35 John was a source of light — on fire to reveal the truth — and for a time you willingly rejoiced in it. 36 "I have evidence more compelling than John's testimony: the very work of revealing the truth of the Father's character and the fact that his principles of love, truth and freedom are the foundation of life, while exposing that Satan's principles of selfishness and survival-of-the-fittest lead only to death. This is the work I am doing, and it is the evidence of who I am and that the Father has sent me. 37 Not only this, but the Father himself has given evidence that he has sent me. But you have never understood his truth nor comprehended his character, 38 nor do you have his methods in your hearts, because your minds are so in tune with Satan that the revelation I have brought about the Father is rejected as faulty. 39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that in them you will find some secret that will give you possession of eternal life, but the Scriptures are simply the written revelation about me; 40 yet you refuse to come to me and accept the healing I offer, and live. 41 "Praise from people is not important to me nor does it matter to me, 42 but I know you. I know you do not love God's methods of self-sacrificing love. You would not be willing to lay your life down for another. No! Instead, you prefer Satan's methods of survival-of-the-fittest, and you would gladly kill to protect yourself. 43 I have come as a direct revelation of the Father–his thoughts made visible and audible–and you will not accept that the Father is like me, or that I am sent from the Father to reveal him. But if someone comes promoting their own agenda, seeking to make a name for themself, you eagerly accept and praise them because self-promotion is in harmony with your own self-centered hearts. 44 How can you claim to trust in God when you seek praise from each other, refuse to accept God's truth, and refuse to cooperate with him in the healing of your minds. 45 "Stop thinking that I will accuse you before the Father, or that the Father's attitude is what determines your destiny! I and the Father are One, and we do not accuse anyone. Your destiny is determined by the choices you make; and by choosing to reject the Remedy that

> Moses taught, you accuse yourselves. 46 You claim to believe in Moses and tout him as your guiding light, but everything Moses wrote was designed to teach you about me. 47 But since you have already rejected the Remedy he wrote about, how are you going to believe the Remedy now, that I am here?" "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me".

Who was Jesus speaking to here? He was speaking to theee most prominent religious leaders…the most preeminent theological and historical scholars…who had memorized the *Torah*, many who were likely descendants of the very Old Testament prophets in question…how could these folks possibly miss the very pinnacle of Old Testament prophecy…how could they not recognize the very thing that every single generation of **humanity** (not just the Jews) had been looking for and waiting for since the promise given to Adam and Eve (and Satan!) in the garden of Eden? Remember what God said to the serpent in Genesis 3:14-15? "So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." What a seemingly benign verse, and yet it is perhaps the most important text in all of Scripture – it is literally the promise of salvation for the entire universe (all things in heaven and on earth)…but for we humans down here on this little rock nestled in a tiny corner of the Milky Way and groaning under the weight of sin, it is the promise of healing…of restoration…of remedy for our terminal condition. And don't underestimate that **enmity**…that is the only thing that even gave humanity a snowball's chance.

Consider this quote:

> "The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." **The enmity does not exist as a natural fact**. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and **if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven,** and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. **There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men;** both are evil through transgression of the law of God [which law? Being out of harmony with God's design laws is the common component that unites them], and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship." (Signs of the Times, July 11, 1895)

This text, this promise made in Genesis 3:15 sets the stage for and is the key to understanding the entire Old Testament! Once Adam sinned no human could be saved without Jesus, our Messiah, coming and overcoming where we could not. The entire OT narrative is the battle between God's forces working to bring the Messiah to save humanity and bring an end to Satan and sin and secure the

universe unfallen, and Satan working and warring to prevent the coming of the Messiah. This gives us insight into why the Bible focuses our attention on the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then Judah, because it is through them that the Messiah comes. It gives insight into why God intervened with the Flood, the Tower of Babal, Sodom, and many other places, it was all all all about keeping open the avenue for the Messiah, because without Jesus no human being could be saved. The Genesis text also gives us insight into God's intercessions or interventions. Once Adam sinned God intercedes in three places or ways, and this text reveals one of them. God intercedes in human hearts with the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, to instill a desire for Him, for right, for life – that's that enmity. As we just read in that quote, without this intercession in our hearts there would be a perfect union between fallen human beings and fallen angels. We can still see this in individuals who reject the workings of the Holy Spirit and sear their consciences and harden their hearts, they become fully united to Satan and under his demonic influence. But the entire human race would be in that state if it wasn't for God interceding in our hearts in this way. God also intercedes in holding back the principalities and powers of darkness, putting up a hedge of protection around the righteous. And third, God interceded in the natural result of sin within the human species by Jesus becoming incarnate and destroying the carnal infection of fear and selfishness (the death causing principle) and restoring God's living law of love (the life causing principle) back into the human species, thereby becoming the second Adam and opening a new and living way back into the presence of God for us!

So, back to my original question: how could these prominent, preeminent, religious leaders and historical theological experts miss the fulfillment of their most cherished prophecy? One of the founders of the SDA church had a theory and wrote about it in *Christ Object Lessons*:

> "When Christ came, the Jews did not recognize Him to whom all these symbols pointed. The had the word of God **in their hands**; but **the TRADITIONS which had been handed down from generation to generation, and the HUMAN INTERPRETATION of the Scriptures**, hid from them the truth as it is in Jesus. The spiritual import of the sacred writings was lost. The treasure house of all knowledge was open to them, but they knew it not. (Christ Object Lessons, pg 104)

What traditions?

How can passing down generational traditions possibly hide the truth as it is in Jesus?

Let's examine some Christian traditions. We will find some harmonize with the Bible, some contradict it, and others do neither. And consider, which of these traditions have actual salvation significance? There are some traditions that are consistent with Scripture and some are not—but even between these, how many are salvation issues—i.e. the tradition will separate the saved from the lost?

- Using musical instruments or not in worship at church
- Baptism by immersion or sprinkling
- Attending church on Sabbath or Sunday or Wednesday evening
- Elevating the Priest or Pastor on a platform above the congregation
- Having sermons/lectures with no audience participation
- Having special music
- Having a church building owned by a denomination
- Having denominations at all
- Ordaining pastors or priests as a separate spiritual class from church members
- Having ordination of men and not women or ordaining both
- Celibacy of the priesthood or married pastors and priests
- Children's story during the worship service
- Passing a collection plate for tithes and offerings during the worship service

How many of these traditional are actually essential to salvation? How many denominational divisions do we have because of one or more of these traditions? If they are not essential to salvation, then why are we divided over them?

That brings us to the second reason why the Jewish leaders missed the Messiah. What do you think is meant by "the human interpretation of Scriptures" in the quote? Although the Pharisees in Christ's day were students of the Bible and devoted long hours to becoming experts on Scripture, they accepted the wrong/human interpretation of God's law and how it functions – the lie that God's law is an imposed set of rules that require policing and punishment – and we know that adopting that human interpretation of the Scriptures, that construct that says God's laws function like human's imposed laws, has some very predictable consequences, and they experienced all of them - they practiced the methods of this world, the rejected truth when it was presented, they hardened their hearts and seared their consciences, and ended up murdering the very God they claimed to serve.

This is Satan's primary strategy to represent God as an imperial dictator, whose laws are made up rules enforced through threats and inflicted punishments. As long as people believe this, it obstructs the ability of Jesus to make all things new because such beliefs obstruct love and trust and incite rebellion, fear, and selfishness. Further, such beliefs, via the law of worship, cause people to become like that God and they will begin to practice the pursuit of justice through the methods of Satan – imposed laws, more rules, more external control, more coercion and force, all in the name of justice and they will be ripe for Satan to come and impersonate Christ claiming he is coming to restore order, bring justice, and punish wickedness. Just as the Jewish leaders did, far too many Christians think that Jesus/the Messiah is coming to set up a kingdom that runs just like earthly kingdoms, with top-down, power over, and infliction of punishment for disobedience.

Who is actually going to come and give them such a kingdom?

This is Satan's grand strategy, to infect minds with the lie that God's law works like human law, with imposed rules that require legal action and external enforcement. That idea corrupts everything:

- The cross is corrupted into God legally executing His Son and Jesus dying to pay a legal penalty to a god who is the inflictor and source of death
- The wicked are tortured and killed by God and God is feared rather than loved
- Theologies are taught that are designed to hide us or protect us from God (covered by robe of righteousness, intercessor pleads to the punishing god not to punish etc.) because we don't trust Him—we don't actually have faith in God we have faith in the legal payment of Jesus!
- Holiness is perverted to rule-keeping, performance, obedience to law
- Churches fracture as they fight over the right definition, of terms or understanding of texts, or the right mechanics for worship or the right rituals
- Justice is distorted into accurate record keeping and "just" infliction of punishments
- People are deceived into believing justice can be achieved through human governments if only we get the right laws passed or officials in office.

The beastly system of Revelation will not arise seeking injustice. It will not arise by claiming to promote evil. It will arise pursuing justice—the specific justice doesn't even matter—it might be racial justice, economic justice, gender justice, environmental justice, justice for the unborn—but whatever justice is pursued it will be advanced by using human governments to pass laws that will be enforced by fines, sanctions, revocation of business licenses, restrictions of freedoms such as travel, assembly, speech, canceling of memberships, imprisonment, and an eventual death penalty. All of this in the pursuit of justice, of doing what is right to save the planet, to save lives, to protect the innocent, the help the down trodden, free the oppressed...but will be accomplished by using Satan's kingdoms, methods and principles. This is all designed to infect hearts and minds with Satan's beastly methods and it will deceive - if it were possible - even the very elect.

I want to discuss the topic of this weeks lesson – the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, but I am going to use a lengthy quote from Acts of the Apostles that references one of Paul's sermons rather than John…because the sermon does such a great job of associating a vast number of those OT prophecies with the evidence that Christ was indeed the long awaited Messiah who came to fulfill them.

> In preaching to the Thessalonians, Paul appealed to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Christ in His ministry had opened the minds of His disciples to these prophecies; "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the

things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27. Peter in preaching Christ had produced his evidence from the Old Testament. Stephen had pursued the same course. And Paul also in his ministry appealed to the scriptures foretelling the birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. By the inspired testimony of Moses and the prophets he clearly proved the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah and showed that from the days of Adam it was the voice of Christ which had been speaking through patriarchs and prophets.

Plain and specific prophecies had been given regarding the appearance of the Promised One. To Adam was given an assurance of the coming of the Redeemer. The sentence pronounced on Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15), was to our first parents a promise of the redemption to be wrought out through Christ.

To Abraham was given the promise that of his line the Saviour of the world should come: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." [God gave the promises to Abraham and his seed. The Scripture does not say "seeds," meaning many people or all his descendants, but "your seed," meaning one single person, who is Jesus Christ."] Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16.

Moses, near the close of his work as a leader and teacher of Israel, plainly prophesied of the Messiah to come. "The Lord thy God," he declared to the assembled hosts of Israel, "will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken." And Moses assured the Israelites that God Himself had revealed this to him while in Mount Horeb, saying, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him." Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.

The Messiah was to be of the royal line, for in the prophecy uttered by Jacob the Lord said, ["But the scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from your descendants, until Shiloh – the Remedy to sin – comes and cleanses the people."] Genesis 49:10.

Isaiah prophesied: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee." Isaiah 11:1; 55:3-5.

Jeremiah also bore witness of the coming Redeemer as a Prince of the house of David: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a **King shall reign and prosper**, and **shall execute judgment and justice in the earth**. In His days **Judah shall be saved**, and **Israel shall dwell safely**: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness." And again: "Thus saith the Lord: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually." Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:17, 18. –

Even the birthplace of the Messiah was foretold: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2.

The work that the Saviour was to do on the earth had been fully outlined: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." The One thus anointed was "to preach good tidings unto the meek; ... to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Isaiah 11:2, 3; 61:1-3.

"Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law." Isaiah 42:1-4.

With convincing power Paul reasoned from the Old Testament Scriptures that ["…Scriptures absolutely teach that the only way for the Messiah to save humanity was for him to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. Then he told them, 'This Jesus that I am telling you about is the Messiah!'"] Had not Micah prophesied, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek"? Micah 5:1. And had not the Promised One, through Isaiah, prophesied of Himself, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting"? Isaiah 50:6. Through the psalmist Christ had foretold the

treatment that He should receive from men: ["But I don't feel like a son of God; I feel low, like a worm — loathed and reviled by people. Any who see me taunt and scorn me; they sneer insults and shake their heads, saying: 'He claims he trusts God; let God rescue him now! Let the Lord save him, since he loves him so much."] ["My bones protrude — easy to see; my enemies stare in triumph, gloating over me. They divide my garments among themselves and roll dice for my clothing."] ["I am like a stranger to my own family, an alien to my own siblings. A passionate desire to complete God's healing plan and restore God's house consumes me; I accept the abuse meant for you, in order to protect and heal you."] ["Slander, scorn and rejection have broken my heart; such animosity and callousness sicken me. I look for sympathy, but there is none, for someone to comfort me, but found no one. They gave me poison for food and vinegar to quench my thirst."] Psalm 22:6-8, 17, 18; 69:8, 9, 20-21.

How unmistakably plain were Isaiah's prophecies of Christ's sufferings and death! "Who hath believed our report?" the prophet inquires, "and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: **yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted**. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken." Isaiah 53:1-8. (Acts of the Apostles, pp 221-226)

What do we think about the Isaiah 53:4 text…the NIV says:

"Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted."

What does our *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* say about this verse?

> "The enemy made it appear that the sufferings of Jesus were punishment inflicted upon Him by a vengeful God because He was a sinner. If that were true, He could not be the world's Redeemer" (Vol. 4, p. 291).

The commentary also references The Desire of Ages page 471, which reads:

> "It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God, as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. [Arbitrary, is an infliction of punishment that is not inherent, in other words, imposed law versus design law. If someone commits murder why does one person get 10 years in prison, another 20, another life, another the death penalty? Because all these penalties are arbitrary and inflicted, the legal penalty to murder is not inherent, thus the author is saying the legal penalty theory is from Satan!] Hence, one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.
>
> **Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus**. He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" and they hid their faces from Him. Isa. 53:4, 3.
>
> God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that **suffering is inflicted by Satan**, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. **The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ**. (Desire of Ages, pg 471)

God warned us through Isaiah that this very misunderstanding would occur that we would misunderstand and teach that God was the One who struck him, killed him...that God punished Jesus at the Cross. The Jews believed it and thus rejected Christ—Christians still believe it and while accepting Christ they REJECT the truth about God that Christ revealed, and instead promote a false God concept...all based on believing the lie that God's law functions like human law. Once we reject that lie and embrace the truth that God's law are design laws, we realize that weare dead in trespass and sin and Jesus condescended in unimaginable ways to take up our humanity…to take upon himself our terminal sin condition **in order to overcome and cure it**, and Jesus himself served as God's agency through which the Triune Godhead accomplished their goal of eradicating sin and saving the human species.

Back to the quote…

> Even the manner of His death had been shadowed forth. As the brazen serpent had been uplifted in the wilderness, so was the coming Redeemer to be lifted up, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.
>
> "One shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." Zechariah 13:6.
>
> "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." Isaiah 53:9, 10. (Acts of the Apostles, pg 226)

What does verse 10 mean?

- NIV: Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer
- GNT: The Lord says, "It was my will that he should suffer"
- NKJV: Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;

He has put Him to grief The *SDA Bible commentary* on this passage states:

> "The Lord was not delighted that His Servant, Messiah, should suffer, but rather, in view of the eternal welfare of men and the security of the universe, it was best for Him to suffer. 'It pleased the Lord' in the sense that 'it was the will of the Lord.' Only thus could the plan of salvation succeed. The sufferings of Christ were part of the eternal plan." (SDA Bible commentary , vol. 4, pg 291).

This is well said—it pleased God that Jesus, in perfect accord with Himself, perfectly revealed the Father and perfectly fulfilled His mission to heal and save humankind. So, while God did not enjoy His Son's suffering, He was pleased for His Son to carry out His purpose to save humankind and the only way to do this was to partake of our human nature, confront the carnal nature and destroy it restoring the species human back to God's original ideal. It would be like a parent whose child was dying of leukemia having another child who was a bone marrow match – they would be pleased the healthy child donated bone marrow to save their sibling, and even though the parents wouldn't enjoy healthy child suffering through the donation process, they would be pleased with it because of what it accomplished.

OPTIONAL:

> But He who was to suffer death at the hands of evil men was to rise again as a conqueror over sin and the grave. Under the inspiration of the Almighty the Sweet Singer of Israel had testified of the glories of the resurrection morn. He joyously proclaimed, ["My heart rejoices, my mouth proclaims glad tidings, and my body rests in hope, because you will not leave me in the grave, nor will you allow your perfect Remedy to decompose. You will proclaim me as the only way of life, filling me with the joy of your life-giving presence and with the pleasure of living with you forever."] Psalm 16:9-11. – {AA 227.1}

Paul showed how closely God had linked the sacrificial service with the prophecies relating to the One who was to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." The Messiah was to give His life as "an offering for sin."

> [OPTIONAL] Looking down through the centuries to the scenes of the Saviour's atonement, the prophet Isaiah had testified that the Lamb of God "poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah 53:7, 10, 12. – {AA 227.2}

> [OPTIONAL] The Saviour of prophecy was to come, not as a temporal king, to deliver the Jewish nation from earthly oppressors, but as a man among men, to live a life of poverty and humility, and at last to be despised, rejected, and slain. The Saviour foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures was to offer Himself as a sacrifice on behalf of the fallen race, thus fulfilling every requirement of the broken law. In Him the sacrificial types were to meet their antitype, and His death on the cross was to lend significance to the entire Jewish economy. – {AA 227.3}

What broken law? How did Christ's death/sacrifice on behalf of the fallen race fulfill every requirement of that law?

> Paul told the Thessalonian Jews of his former zeal for the ceremonial law and of his wonderful experience at the gate of Damascus. Before his conversion he had been **confident in a hereditary piety**, a false hope. His faith had not been anchored in Christ; he had **trusted instead in forms and ceremonies**. His zeal for the law had been disconnected from faith in Christ and was of no avail. While boasting that he was **blameless in the performance of the deeds of the law**, he had **refused the One who made the law of value**. – {AA 228.1}

But at the time of his conversion all had been changed. Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had been persecuting in the person of His saints, appeared before him as the promised Messiah. The persecutor saw Him as the Son of God, the one who had come to the earth in fulfillment of the prophecies and who in His life had met every specification of the Sacred Writings. – {AA 228.2}

As with holy boldness Paul proclaimed the gospel in the synagogue at Thessalonica, a **flood of light was thrown upon the true meaning of the rites and ceremonies connected with the tabernacle service**. He carried the minds of his hearers **beyond the earthly service and the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary**, to the time when, having completed His mediatorial work, Christ would come again in power and great glory, and establish His kingdom on the earth. Paul was a believer in the second coming of Christ; so clearly and forcibly did he present the truths concerning this event, that upon the minds of many who heard there was made an impression which never wore away. – {AA 228.3}

For three successive Sabbaths Paul preached to the Thessalonians, reasoning with them from the Scriptures regarding the life, death, resurrection, office work, and future glory of Christ, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8. **He exalted Christ, the proper understanding of whose ministry is the key that unlocks the Old Testament Scriptures, giving access to their rich treasures.** – {AA 229.1}

4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 9
The Source of Life

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse:

- Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:66 NIV84).

What does this text mean?

Jesus is the way? The way where, to what, and how is He the way?

This text is an excerpt from Jesus answering a question from Thomas, who asked a question in response to something Jesus just told them, so let's read John 14:1-5:

- "Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too. And you know the way where I am going."
  Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:1–5 NET).

So, in context of Jesus statement and Thomas's question, the way to which Jesus is referring leads to where? Is it not the way back to unity with God, the way back to God's original purpose in creating Adam and Eve, the way back to perfection, sinlessness, love, at-one-ment?

Consider Hebrews 10:19-23, is this the way Jesus was referring to?

- Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a **new and living way** opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us **draw near to God** with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having **our hearts sprinkled** to **cleanse us** from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:19–23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus opens the new a living way the way back into at-one-ment with the Father! And notice what Hebrews says that way entails and what it does not entail. It entails cleansing us, healing us, restoring

us, renewing us—it does not entail paying a blood payment to the Father, for God so loved us that He sent His Son to restore us to unity with Him by removing sin from us.

So what is did Jesus make this way through, metaphorically it is the veil in the temple, but what does that represent? What is it that has been obstructing our unity with God? Some say the veil represents Jesus' body, but was Jesus the obstacle to being united with God or is Jesus the way through the obstacle? So, again, what has been obstructing human beings from being united with God?

The lies that Satan told about Him and His Father that we have believed and our own fallen carnal nature—and Jesus is the truth that tears through the veil of lies AND Jesus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that He inherited through Mary and restored God's living law of love into humanity, thus Jesus destroyed the veil of death and brought life and immortality to light, opening again the way through the lies and the terminal sin condition back to unity with the Father.

Thus, my paraphrase of Hebrews 10:19-23:

- Therefore, brothers and sisters, since Jesus died to bring us the truth about God and to eradicate selfishness from humanity, we no longer need to be afraid but can confidently enter the Most Holy Place–God's very presence–because Christ's death revealed the truth about God and ripped open the veil of lies told by Satan that blinded our minds, and destroyed the infection of selfishness that separated us from him. And since we have this great ministering priest who ministers the truth to all, let the truth permeate us, cleansing, transforming and changing us as we draw near to God in heart, mind, purpose, method, principle and character, so that we may have ultimate confidence and trust in him who has revealed himself to be completely trustworthy. (Hebrews 10:19-23 REM)

Do you agree that Jesus is the only way to salvation? Why? Because there is one human species created by God in Eden—every other human being is descended from Adam. This one human species all suffer with the same terminal sin condition brought upon all of us by our human parents Adam and Eve (Psalms 51:5). And there is only one solution to this terminal condition—we must exchange the terminal life of fear and selfishness for the eternal life of love and trust. And it is only possible for us to experience this exchange of life because Jesus became a real human being, partook of the same life breathed into Adam and which was corrupted by Adam. He partook of that life through His mother Mary, but because the Father of His humanity was the Holy Spirit Jesus was born capable of not only experiencing temptation in every way just like we do but also capable of exercising His human power of choice to say no to the spirit of fear and selfishness inherited from Adam and yes to the spirit of love and trust inherited through the Holy Spirit. And at the cross Jesus destroyed the spirit of fear and selfishness, and arose in a humanity purified and perfected, thus Jesus destroyed the lies that separate us from the Father by perfectly revealing the Father to us, but Jesus also destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness, what the Bible calls the carnal nature or drives cleansing and purifying the species human. In the person of Jesus Christ, who is not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man, the species human, the species created in Eden was redeemed, cleansed, purified, perfected, and restored to perfect unity with the Father. And simultaneously, through what Jesus accomplished, the truth was revealed that solidifies the unfallen worlds in their loyalty and the remedy to our sin condition was

procured and each one of us is offered eternal life, the free, pure, holy, life of Christ that we can receive if we choose to trust Him.

This is reality—there is nothing penal legal going on, through Jesus the way back into oneness with the Father is open for all who will simply surrender to Him in trust.

SUNDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- In John 1:1, the apostle clearly states that Jesus is God, the divine Son. Consequently, in John 1:4—"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (NKJV)—the reference to life here has to be divine life, underived eternal self-existence. Because He has life within Himself, He can lay down His life and take it again (John 10:17). And, because He has life within, He can give life to whom He will (John 5:21; compare with John 14:19). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 73).

Jesus as the Son of God has life original to Himself, underived from another source and immortal. But Jesus, as the Son of Man, as a human, partook of life that had a beginning, He partook of the life breathed into Adam and thus Jesus' divinity has no beginning, but His humanity did. There was a time a little more that 2000 years ago that Jesus did not have a human life—He only had His divine life. But now Jesus is both fully divine and fully human and because Jesus eliminated from the humanity He took upon Himself the infection of fear and selfishness, the humanity He now holds is immortal.

Do you agree with this or am I misstating it in some way?

And Jesus offers to share His immortal life with you and I, we can receive the immortal life of Christ through trust. As Paul wrote, "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20) or as Peter wrote "you may be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4 NJJV).

Read the fourth paragraph,

- Just as the bronze serpent took the place of the Israelites who had been bitten by serpents, so Jesus took our place, we who have been struck down by sin. He took the penalty that was ours so that we might have the life that was His. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 73).

How do you understand this paragraph. What law lens do you understand it through?

Is there a penalty for sin? Yes, did Jesus suffer because of our sin, suffering He did not deserve and which was not naturally His own? Yes, and because of His voluntary choice to take our place, to substitute Himself, and win a victory that we could not win, can we, if we choose to trust Him and follow Him, avoid the penalty of sin? Yes!

Is it possible that these truths could be understood in a way that interferes with people experiencing the free salvation Jesus' offers despite claiming they are saved by Jesus? How might that happen?

It all depends on the law lens—if one holds to Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law. Then the penalty for sin is legally inflicted suffering and death inflicted by God and God becomes the obstacle to salvation and Jesus' death is the means whereby we are able to be protected from God. The legal lens actually undermines our trust in God, instead of seeking God's presence, the legal theologies create all kinds of theoretical and theological mental defenses to hide us and protect us from God because we believe the lie that if this isn't done God is required to use His power to kill us. People will write things like this, published in the Review December 2023:

- To spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). **In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead. … Or, to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn't have to kill us"** (Goldstein, C. "Law, Freedom, Love." *Adventist Review,* online edition, Dec 8, 2023, https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAlHxfD47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0, emphasis mine).

But when we return to worship God as Creator and realize the truth that God's laws are the design protocols upon which reality is constructed to operate, we understand that death does not come out from God, death comes from breaking away from God and the laws upon which He constructed life to operate. Just as the Bible teaches:

- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NIV84).
- Sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:15 NIV84).
- The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).

God is the source of life, life comes from God, sin severs our connection with God and life and naturally results in eternal death unless the sin is removed and life is restored within. This is what Jesus has done for humanity and is doing for each person who trusts Him.

God, through Jesus, destroys death, death is the power of Satan, not the power of God:

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14,15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death**. (1 Corinthians 15:24-26 NIV84, emphasis mine).

God is the source of life and through Jesus God destroys death—because death is the result of distrusting God, of breaking His design laws. But when people accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, they teach that God is the source of death and then create all kinds of legal fictions that operate in hearts and minds as a barrier obstructing our unity with God.

People trust in the blood, the payment, the erasing of the records, the mediatorial pleading of Jesus, or Mary, or the saints to plead mercy from the Father, but they do not actually trust the Father and they live in fear of the day that the intercessor is removed and they must stand in the presence of the Father without an intercessor.

But those of us who know the truth of God's design law and worship God as Creator, look forward to the day Jesus our intercessor finishes His work of cleansing our hearts and minds from sin and once He has finished His work of restoring the image of God within us, of removing fear, sin, and selfishness, of sealing us both intellectually and spiritually so that we cannot be moved, then He can stop interceding to bring us back into at-one-ment with the Father because we will be at-one and ready to meet Him face to face.

Just as John wrote,

- We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2 NIV84).

MONDAY

The lesson asks, "How do we receive eternal life?"

What would you say to someone who asks this of you?

Consider this story from Acts:

- The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought

them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family. (Acts 16:29-34 NIV84).

What lessons do we learn from this story and does it raise any questions that need clarifying?

- How could they be baptized on the same day they chose to believe in Jesus? Didn't the apostles get this wrong—weren't they supposed to have this family say the sinner's pray, then enroll in several weeks of Bible study classes to learn the correct doctrines—what some might call "indoctrination" and weren't they required to give up their Sabbath job, change their diet, quit using alcohol, and start paying tithe before they could be baptized?
- Doesn't the Bible say that the devil's believe and tremble (James 2:19)? So what does it mean to believe in Jesus? Is there another word in our modern English that the Greek is also legitimately translated into that better captures the true meaning? Yes, trust, trust your heart, mind, soul, life, future, fortune, self into Jesus' care. Just like a patient will trust themselves to a surgeon and while under anesthesia trust the surgeon to do a work that the patient cannot do for himself, and then afterward trust the instructions of the surgeon, keep the wound clean, take the medicine as prescribed, do the exercises assigned etc. So, too, when we trust Jesus we open the heart and ask Him to come in and do the things we cannot do, but we also trust Him by doing the things which are ours to do. Thoughts?

Salvation happens when the heart/mind that was living in fear and selfishness surrenders to Jesus in trust and receives, through their trust, AKA faith, a new heart and right spirit, a new animating energy of love and trust and from that point forward it is no longer the old fear-ridden selfish life animating the person, but a new life, a new animating power, the presence and power of Jesus Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit giving us new desires, insights, motives, and power as we daily choose to say yes to the Spirit of truth and love and no to the spirit of fear and selfishness.

The lesson asks the following question,

- How does the promise of having eternal life impact how we view our temporal life here?

This is actually quite a significant question, can you think of examples from the Bible, from history, from recent events, of how Satan tricks people into valuing temporal life over eternal life, or how inflaming fear of losing temporal life causes people to make choices to distrust God and align with Satan in method and practice?

The life we all inherit from Adam is the life infected with fear and selfishness, the natural drive of this fallen state is the survival of the fittest drive, when we are threatened the fear causes us to act to harm others to protect ourselves. It is considered justifiable and right to defend self against assault, to kill rather than be killed.

At the cross, Jesus demonstrated another method—trusting God with one's life rather than acting to protect one's life. Jesus did not use power to protect self, to act in self-interest, but instead surrendered His life into the care and keeping of the Father.

Daniel, the three worthies, Stephen, the martyred apostles and martyrs down through history have all done the same thing.

And Revelation tells us that those who are ready for translation, the true remnant at the end of time are described in these words:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death**. (Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Satan's method is to inflame fear, fear of injustice, fear of abuse, fear of death and then get people to promote a good cause, justice, stop abuse, save lives, but through the application of his methods of force and coercion.

The high priest Caiaphas went down this path when he said,

- "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." (John 11:49-50 NIV84).

And we saw this same trap, this same trick, used worldwide during COVID when nations, corporations, some churches and church leaders, spoke just like Caiaphas—it is better to harm a few to protect the many lest the entire nation perish, or lest our corporation lose its government funding etc.

We saw the same thing in the recent election cycle when pundits constantly promoted various fear inducing messages to get people to act unrighteously to protect self.

We can never win God's cause by using Satan's methods and that is the trap. Satan will, if he can, try to advance an evil cause, murder, rape, abuse. But not everyone will be seduced into overt evil, so he tricks them into trying to remedy the evil by promoting a righteous cause, but with his evil methods. This is what will happen when the beast rises and why only the elect will be saved, because only those who know God's design laws will be able to differentiate between the righteous goal and the unrighteous methods being employed.

This was articulated by some in the last election cycle, some think it is justifiable to do whatever it takes to prevent the other side from being elected to office, even if it means lying, cheating, or whatever, the ends justify the means. But this is a trap of Satan. Notice, I didn't say which side, for people on extremes of both sides get caught into such traps.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about believing and the new birth experience. What do you understand the new birth to be?

Can a person believe in Jesus and not experience a new birth? Don't the devils believe and tremble?

So believing in Jesus must mean more than acknowledging or being confident in the reality of Jesus and Him being the Son of God.

So how is belief connecting to a new birth?

Can a person be saved without a new birth experience or is the new birth experience required for salvation? Why or why not?

Is the new birth experience different from or the exact same event as justification? Is the new birth experience something that happens in record books or something that happens in hearts and minds? What about justification—is it legal happening in books or is it actual happening in people?

Isn't justification setting right what is wrong? And what is wrong that needs to be set right? Isn't it the sinful heart of human beings?

There are two aspects to justification for the human race:

1. Jesus, as our human substitute, took upon Himself the terminal sin condition with which Adam infected the species and being tempted in all points like we are overcame that condition and eradicated it at the cross. Thereby, in the individual humanity, brain, person, of Jesus Christ the race, the species that God created in Eden, was reconciled, justified, put right with God again. But Jesus in reconciling the species in His personhood, as He was a real human who lived sinlessly using human abilities, simultaneously developed the remedy that will cure, heal, save all who trust Him. That leads to the second aspect of justification—individual justification
2. Individual justification is only possible because Jesus first justified, reconciled, set right the species in His person becoming our sinless second Adam, the metaphorical vine into which we can be grafted and receive a new life, be reborn and experience the new spirit of love and trust, the animating energy of the divine nature, having Christ live in us. This is what Abraham experienced. His natural human heart was like yours and mind, as Romans describes enmity to God—distrusting and against God. But Abraham experienced a change from distrust to trust and only AFTER Abraham's heart was set right or put right in trust with God did God reckon, declare, credit, Abraham as being justified or righteous because he was in his heart right with God again.

This is true justification, it is real, actual, literal, not legal, not declared, not pretend, as the Bible says:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Being reborn means that we receive, through our faith or trust, the indwelling Holy Spirit that comes with the divine spirit of love, the animating energy of the divine nature, the life of Christ that

motivates us with new desire and enables us to choose to love, to live honestly, to say no to the carnal drives of fear and selfishness and thus we become righteous through our faith or trust in Jesus.

Read the last paragraph,

- Faith, biblical faith, based on the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, is the foundation of our faith. “Faith is . . . the great blessing—the eye that sees, the ear that hears.”—Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places, p. 104. **The humanistic approach to faith states that we must find a foundation, the criteria for faith, and then believe. In contrast, the biblical approach states that faith is the foundation, a gift from God** (Eph. 2:8, 1 Cor. 1:17–24, 1 Cor. 2:1–6). We start with the foundation of faith, and then from there we grow in understanding and grace. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 75, emphasis mine).

What does this mean? Are they saying as Christians we are not to have a foundation for our faith?

I must not be understanding this—are they saying we must have faith based on something other than evidence, reason, facts, truth, historical accomplishments, reality revealed, that we are just believe without evidence?

How much truth is on Satan’s side? Zero, how must is on God’s side 100%, so in this battle for hearts and minds who benefits if we turn minds away from evidence, facts, truth? Satan does—so the idea that faith is not based on a foundation of truth, facts, evidence is a lie. All our faith is built upon reality, the truth that God has revealed to us in Scripture, Nature/science, and Experiences.

Consider:

- Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 NIV84)
- "**God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence** upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that **appeals to our reason;** and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence**, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find **plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith**." (Steps to Christ 105, emphasis mine)

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- The sin of the Hebrews when they were at Kadesh Barnea was to doubt the Word of God. God had asked them to go up and take the land. Twelve spies were sent to Canaan to spy out the land. They came back with two reports. The majority gave a negative report. There are giants

> in the land, walled cities, weapons we have never seen before, and well-trained armies. By contrast, we have been slaves in the land of Egypt with little military experience. Ten spies voted no, based upon the overwhelming evidence from a human standpoint. Two spies voted yes based upon their faith in the overwhelming power of the Word of God. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 76).

What happened here?

Did the spies who recommended not going in give a false report when they reported there were giants in the land and walled cities, strong armies? Were they making that up?

So their report of strong enemies in the land was accurate—what was the problem?

The lesson wants us to believe that their problem was simply that they didn't believe what God had said. But was it that simple? Or, were there other facts and evidences that the nay-sayers left out of their ability to understand the situation and trust God?

Was there evidence of God's existence, His leading, power and plan for them from the 10 plagues of Egypt, the manna, the fire by night and cloud by day, Moses' face radiating light whenever he left God's presence?

Did they have evidence of God's presence, power, and care for them?

Is God asking them to believe in and trust Him simply because He said so, or had God given evidence upon evidence of His love, presence, trustworthiness, reliability, and care for them to base their faith in Him?

God had told them why He sent the Ten Plagues?

- "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 29:6).

So they had lots of evidence of God's existence, trustworthiness and reliability and they were not called upon to believe or trust simply because God said so.

Why do you think some people want to take the position that we are to believe without evidence? What kind of system is that? What kind of system operates upon claims, declarations, proclamations, voices of authority, power, and position? This is Satan's method, it is the method of imposed law, arbitrary rules, made up systems—this is how Satan sought to get power in the beginning of the controversy:

- **You said** in your heart, "**I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise** my throne above the stars of God; **I will sit** enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **I will ascend** above the tops of the clouds; **I will make** myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:13-14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

This is all claims, declarations, proclamations. Lucifer is not saying that he is becoming a divine being, that he actually has infinite powers—it is not reality based, it is fantasy, make-believe, artificial, imposed, authority by claiming power and attempting to exert it over others—which is how all human governments work—by made up rules and external enforcement.

The fact our lesson argues for the approach of believing God based on God saying it is evidence that they believe in the imposed law made up system.

Understand God always speaks truth and we are wise to believe, listen, and follow His Word—but understand the difference, it is critical. What God says is true because it is how reality is, God's saying it doesn't make it true—He says it because it is true.

And God wants us to understand reality, understand the truth for ourselves.

But ten of the spies going into Canaan didn't trust God—why not? They did not keep their minds/hearts focused upon God, but instead focused upon the threats which incited fear and caused them to think of worldly ways to survive—let's leave, bypass, go around.

Did you see this same problem happening during COVID—many people diverted away from the principles of God and replaced love with fear and justified coercing others in order to make themselves feel safe, rather than simply presenting the truth in love and leaving others free to decide for themselves?

Do you see this happening as we approach the end times, people living in fear of what the government will do and fretting and worrying about how they will survive, rather than keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus and resting in His promise to provide for us?

I love this thought,

- We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. (Christian Experience and Teaching p. 204).

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because [he has] not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. . . . Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that [his] deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light" (John 3:18–21, NIV; compare with John 1:10). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 77).

What does this mean? Why are people condemned? Is this a legal condemnation or a terminal state of being that causes the condemnation?

We are born in sin conceived in iniquity, dead in trespass and sin—this is a terminal condition we inherited from Adam. Without remedy the natural result is eternal death. Thus, those who refuse the remedy are condemned to die from the condition with which they were born. They are not in legal trouble, they are in lethal trouble. And they are not guilty of having the condition, but all who die of it will be guilty of rejecting and refusing the free remedy that would cure them of this condition.

Read third paragraph,

- Eve was given light on how to relate to the tree in the center of the garden. Satan tempted her to bring the light into question. **She tested God's word by reasoning that a God of love would not destroy the creatures whom He created.** She also relied upon the data of her senses. The serpent has eaten of the fruit and now has the power to speak. Perhaps the serpent is right. If I partake of the fruit, I may become like God! Deceived, she turned away from the light. And her husband chose the same path. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 77, emphasis mine).

What is the lesson trying to suggest? Are they suggesting that God will destroy the creatures He created and that Eve was wrong to conclude that a God of love would not destroy the creatures whom He created?

It all depends on how one understands God's law.

If one believes the lie that God's law functions like that of a creature, imposed rules requiring the infliction of external punishment, then one believes what the lesson suggests.

If one believes that God's laws are design laws, the protocols reality functions upon, then one recognizes that Eve's conclusion is correct—God will not destroy His creatures. But if one recognizes the truth that God will not destroy His creatures but is tricked into believing God's law is imposed rules—they one believes falsely that there is nothing wrong with eating the fruit since God won't destroy one for it, but the problem was never with God, the problem is that sin breaks the laws upon which life is built and destroys the sinner, just as the Bible says:

- The wages of sin is death Romans 6:23
- Sin when full grown brings forth death James 1:15
- Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8

It would be like saying to a child whose parents warned them not to play Russian roulette, or not to take illegal drugs or smoke, "She tested the word of her parents by reasoning that her parents that love her would not destroy the children they procreated" so there must not be any harm in playing Russian roulette, do drugs, or smoking.

The injury, harm, death doesn't come from God, Eve was correct in her conclusion that God would not destroy the children He created—in fact God so loved the world that He died to save those children. She was wrong in her belief that God's law functions like human law—she failed to understand the nature and character of sin, of breaking away from God's law of love and truth.

Read last paragraph,

- Christ had at His disposal the same humanistic tool of thought used by Adam and Eve, the antediluvians, and Israel at Kadesh Barnea. **He could have asked why a God of love would leave His Son in the wilderness for 40 days and nights** without food and protection. He also could have determined to prove His Sonship by turning stones into bread! Instead, He answered with the Word of God. He operated on the level of heavenly things rather than on earthly patterns of thought. How easily He could have rationalized His way to a wrong decision, which so many people, even people of faith, often do. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 77, emphasis mine).

Why did Jesus not ask these questions? Because He understood design law—He understood that humanity was infected with the spirit of fear and selfishness, that the animating energy passed down from Adam and Eve was dissonance, out of harmony with heaven, incompatible with life as God constructed the universe to operate and that He came to eradicate the spirit of fear and selfishness animating human beings and replace it with the spirit of love and trust. In order to do that He had to be tempted in all points like we are, He had to face the temptations and choose with His human abilities to do only what is harmony with the spirit of love and trust. Thus He understood He could not accomplish His mission without going there, so there was no rationalizing mindset, there was mission completion mindset because Jesus did not operate upon the lie of imposed law with the false penal legal payment theology.

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 10
The Way, the Truth, and the Life

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read the second paragraph,

- Interestingly, the famous seven "I AM" statements form a bridge across the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. These are "the bread of life" (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51), "the light of the world" (John 8:12, John 9:5), "the door" (John 10:7, 9), "the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14), "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), and "the true vine" (John 15:1, 5). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 80).

What significance do you find in the "I AM" statements?

Jesus is clearly calling Himself God, and referencing back to when God spoke to Moses as the bush,

- Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"
  God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:13–14 NIV84).

What does this mean? What is God saying in this?

God is self-existent, the originator of all things and the sustainer of all things. Jesus is making it clear that it is through Him that all things were created and through Him that all things hold together.

- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For **by him all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him** and for him. He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.** (Colossians 1:15–17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he **made the universe**. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things** by his powerful word. (Hebrews 1:1–3, NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus is God, full, complete, and infinite. And God is the source of all things and the sustainer of all things. He exists above and outside of space and time as we know it and it is from Him that everything we know and comprehend exist and hold together.

Let's consider the seven I AM's. What do they mean?

- "the bread of life" (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
    - Jesus is the source of all sustenance, physical, mental, spiritual, relational. He is the source of truth, love, and freedom. He is the source of all energy, physical matter, all that is nutritious and healthy for every aspect of our being. Every nurturing element we experience ultimately has its source in Jesus.
- "the light of the world" (John 8:12, John 9:5)
    - Jesus is not only the source of all truth and light, but He is the member of the Godhead who left infinity, left the domain of the divine and entered not just our space-time continuum, but He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). He left heaven and came down to Earth and became a real human being in order to bring us the light of heaven, the truth, love, and freedom of God.
        - In him was life, and that life was the **light** of men. The **light** shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it… The true **light** that gives light to every man was coming into the world… No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:4-5, 9, 18 NIV84, emphasis mine).
        - We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. (1 John 5:20 NIV84).
- "the door" (John 10:7, 9)
    - Jesus is the connecting link between Earth and heaven, only in and through Jesus is humanity reconnected and restored to unity with God and heaven. It is only through Jesus that life returns to humanity. Adam and Eve infected humanity with sin, the death causing principle, and Jesus, by becoming a real human not only revealed the truth, He restored the sinless life originating in God back into the species and became the only way, the only door, the only gate, path, road, ladder, or access point back to sinless perfection and reconciliation with God.
- "the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14)
    - Jesus is not only our Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and Healer, He is our Protector, Director, Guide, and Friend, the one who watches over us, guides us, leads us, provides for us just like a shepherd does for his flock.
- "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)
    - Jesus is the resurrection and the life—the cure to death, the victor over death, the one who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life (2 Timothy 1:10; Heb 2:14). Jesus is NOT the victim of death, the legal payment for a death penalty, and He is certainly not the source of death—He is the resurrection from death and the source of life. Satan is the one who holds the power of death—and we must stop putting Jesus and the Godhead in the role of eternal death dealers as the punishment for sin—they are

not the source of death, they are life. Death comes from sin—Life comes from God and is restored into humanity through Jesus.

- "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)
    - Jesus is the full embodiment of God lived out in humanity who revealed the truth that destroys lies and wins to trust and also destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and restored in humanity God's living law of love, the protocols for life, thus saving humanity from eternal death.
- "the true vine" (John 15:1, 5)
    - Jesus is the second Adam, the new head of humanity, the one who contains life and we can receive that life only as we are grafted into Him through trust.

Did you notice none of who Jesus is or what He accomplished is legal, it is all actual, achievement, reality, the way things exist, operate, and function because our God is the God of reality and who Jesus is and what He accomplished is real, not some fictional legal adjustment.

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to John chapter 13 where Jesus washes the feet of His disciples in the upper room.

What are some of the lessons from this story?

I think one of the most important revelations and evidences is in verse 3:

- Jesus knew that the Father had put all things **under his power**, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What do we learn?

Jesus had all power, all things were placed under His power. He is fully God. If we have seen Him we have seen the Father, and what did Jesus do, as our human substitutionary Savior, with all power? He served, He used power to help others, He humbled self and refused to use power to exalt self or protect self. This is the exact opposite of how Satan and the kingdoms of this world use power and function.

Satan and all who unite with him always seek power for self and use power to rise over others and exploit others for their benefit. Throughout all human history every single nation has had a few ruling elites exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites. This is why God warned the Israelites not to have kings, because the royal class would exploit the people for the benefit of the ruling class.

All the kingdoms of the world operate on this principle of a few exploiting the masses through imposed law and artificial and arbitrary authority over others.

Jesus, the Creator and Sustainer of all, has real power, real authority invested in Him by reality—He is a divine being; He is the Creator and Sustainer, and He uses power to serve, to build up, to protect, to uplift, to heal and restore the people:

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but **made himself nothing**, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself** and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore **God exalted him** to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus sacrificed self for the uplifting of His creation and did not seek honor and glory for self and therefore is honored and glorified. Satan, however, sought to advance and exalt himself:

- **You said** in your heart, "**I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise** my throne above the stars of God; **I will sit** enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **I will ascend** above the tops of the clouds; **I will make** myself like the Most High. But you are **brought down** to the grave, to the depths of the pit. " (Isaiah 14:13-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

These two beings, Jesus Christ and Satan, practice two opposing methods, principles, or laws. Jesus lives out perfectly God's design law of love, selflessness, and beneficence and as such not only saves others, but is Himself exalted. Whereas, Satan, practices the methods of a creature, imposed rules, selfishness, self-exaltation, artificial, declared, imposed authority attempting to rule over others and not only destroys all who follow him, but ultimately separates himself from life and despite all his efforts to advance himself he only destroys himself. Why? Because his actions break the design protocols life operate and exist upon—not because God functions like Satan and uses external power to punish Satan.

So the first lesson we learn from Jesus is that the more power we receive in God's kingdom the more we are to use it to help and bless others and as we do this we experience greater blessings ourselves.

Other lessons?

The foot washing also is a symbol, metaphor, teaching tool of our need for ongoing cleansing from sin while we continue to live in this world of sin.

Our initial cleansing from sin is symbolically represented by baptism, in which the person is submerged in water, symbolically representing the reality of the entire being, heart, mind, soul and

spirit being immersed in the cleansing waters of the Holy Spirit who washes away our guilt, shame, fear, dread, doubts, worries, lies and recreates in us love and trust and transforms us by the truth.

But once we have been reborn with a new life of love and trust, we still live in this world of sin and we will be confronted with lies, injuries, wounds, fears, anxieties, resentments, hurts, worries, temptations, frustrations, mistakes and missteps, shortcomings and personal failings, and it is important that this dirt from walking the road of life in this sinful world be washed away. And this is symbolically represented by the foot washing service in which Jesus washes the feet of those who are His. The reality of it is our daily surrendering to Jesus and being cleansed each day by the daily washing of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our humble growth in grace and service to others.

What is the purpose of the ceremony? What is the benefit and are there any dangers?

The idea behind the ceremony is to be a teaching tool by experience, to stimulate or remind people to do introspection, consider the various elements of pride, arrogance, temptation, sin, guilt, fear etc. and ask the Holy Spirit to remove any of this dirt from our hearts and minds, and then to act upon the new motives in service to others. But the ceremony is only that, a ceremony that is to remind us, help us, lead us into actual living lives of godly love and service to others.

The danger is that the ceremony can instead of being understood as a teaching tool, become construed to possess some saving benefit, some merit, making one somehow clean from sin or righteous because they participated in the ceremony. Worse, it can become a litmus test of orthodoxy or righteousness virtue signaling where people become spiritual proud for participating and judge others who don't participate as not being as good, virtuous, or righteous.

So the ceremony can be a blessing if understood and experienced as Jesus intended, but can also be an obstacle if misunderstood and misused. And what makes the difference in how ceremonies like this one are experienced? The law lens one holds as they approach it. If one believes God's law functions like human law, then they are vulnerable to experience the ceremony as a rule, a mandate, a legal requirement or condition for salvation, and to believe that if one doesn't do it then one is not being obedient, they are in fact disobedient and can't be cleansed from sin because they are not complying with the rules Jesus set out.

But if one believes the truth that God's laws are design laws then one realizes this is all ceremony and symbolism designed to lead our minds to experience the reality of cleansing our hearts and minds from sin and live authentic lives of Christian service and they do not experience the ceremony as a legal requirement but an opportunity to remember reality and reaffirm their humble surrender to Christ and rest thankfully in His cleansing power and presence.

But this confusion about ceremony and symbols is not new, consider what God told the Israelites about ceremonies:

- Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of **Sodom**; listen to the law of our God, you people of **Gomorrah**! "The multitude of your **sacrifices**—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have

more than enough of **burnt offerings**, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; **I have no pleasure** in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this **trampling of my courts**? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your **incense is detestable to me**. New Moons, **Sabbaths** and convocations—**I cannot bear your evil assemblies**. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts **my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them**. (Isaiah 1:10–14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Who is God addressing here? The Israelites, but He—God—calls them Sodom and Gomorrah—why? What does this mean? What is God saying? How can the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be Sodom and Gomorrah?

- As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister **Sodom** and her daughters **never did what you and your daughters have done**. 'Now **this was the sin of your sister Sodom:** She and her daughters were **arrogant, overfed and unconcerned**; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen. Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. **You have done more detestable things** than they, and have made your sisters seem righteous by all these things you have done. Bear your disgrace, for you have furnished some justification for your sisters. Because **your sins were more vile than theirs**, they appear more righteous than you. So then, be ashamed and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous. (Ezekiel 16:48-52 NIV84, emphasis mine).

How is this possible? What does it mean? How was Israel more vile than Sodom and Gomorrah?

Who do you recognize as being more vile—the single woman who goes into prostitution, or the married woman who while married goes into prostitution while pretending to be faithful to her husband?

Sodom and Gomorrah—were selfish, they did not show love to the strangers who visited them, no hospitality but sought to exploit and abuse others for their own gratification. This is the outworking of fear and selfishness, the exact opposite of God's living law of love.

But the Sodomites did not profess loyalty to Yahweh. They had not entered into a relationship with God. They had not presented themselves to the world as representatives of the God of heaven. In other words, they were not in the position of the Bride of Christ—they were acting out loyalty to their god, Satan and revealed him accurately.

But the Jews had accepted God's proposal, they had entered into relationship with God. They had taken the position of the bride, claimed to be representatives of Yahweh—yet they were just as selfish, unconcerned, exploitive, manipulative, deceitful, arrogant, prideful, and sinful as the Sodomites, but it was worse because they claimed they represented God. Thus, they not only were destroying their own souls as the Sodomites were doing, but were making it appear this is how God functions and thus obstructed others from coming into as saving knowledge of God.

- Again the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, **they defiled it** by their conduct and their actions… wherever they went among the nations **they profaned my holy name,** for it was said of them, ‘**These are the LORD’s people**...’ “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which **you have profaned** among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name **you have profaned** among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and **you will be clean**; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you**; I will remove from you your **heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh**. And **I will put my Spirit in you** and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to **keep my laws**. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. **I will save you from all your uncleanness**. (Ezekiel 36:16-29 NIV84, emphasis mine).

They were more vile than Sodom because they did the same selfish, sinful, exploitive living as the Sodomites but they claimed to represent God and thus they profaned the name, character, methods, and principles of God’s kingdom obstructing the plan of salvation rather than promoting it.

Yet God prophesies that He will bring glory to His own name by revealing His grace through them. But this prophecy along with others is, incredibly being used to continue to misrepresent God and lead people into error. I have heard many Christians today focus on this prophecy and some like it about God restoring the Jews to their land as being fulfilled by the nation state of Israel today. But, they ignore entirely the point of the prophecy, it is not about the geography, it is about the character. And the prophecy cannot be fulfilled unless the people are reborn to have Jesus restored into their hearts and minds and they become righteous and reveal the truth about God. That only happens when we rejected the imposed law lies and return to design law function, love for God and others.

So watch the devil do what he has done throughout history, get people to embrace the Bible but teach it through imposed law lenses so that people end up legalistic Christians using the might of human laws and force of arms to do battle with others all under the name of doing good or some mandate from God.

This condemnation of Israel being Sodom is the same condemnation that God gives to the false church, known as the great prostitute in Revelation, the church that claims to represent God and be the bride of Christ, but who instead of internalizing the design law methods of Jesus embraces and takes into their hearts, mind, character, the imposed law lie of Satan, taking Satan’s seed of legalism and imperialism into her heart and teaches a false Christianity that functions like Rome, with an imperial dictator god who is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as the legal punishment for sin. This is the harlot of Revelation and the true church, the pure bride, is composed of people who have

had their spirit temples, their sanctuary, their hearts and minds washed and cleansed by the Holy Spirit from the lies of Satan and have returned to worshiping God as creator, meaning they have rejected the imposed law lie and embraced the truth that God's laws are design laws and reset all their doctrines into this setting. These are the ones who at this time in history God reveals His name, His character through.

Back to God's condemnation of Israel's rituals and ceremonies: Who gave them all these instructions? God did, then why is God berating them for doing the various ceremonies He told them to do?

Because the ceremonies had become meaningless; the people were doing them without thought. These ceremonies were only teaching tools to engage the mind to think and comprehend reality and because the people were not thinking the ceremonies had become obstructions to understanding reality, obstacles to the truth and thus God hates anything that darkens hearts and minds.

This is the danger in ceremony, it can become an obstruction to actual thinking, which if that happens, obstructs the truth and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. This is why God says just a few verses later:

- Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).

God connects reasoning with Him and cleansing from sin. If we refuse to reason, to think, to comprehend, then we are not able to know the truth, we will not be able to discern right from wrong, and we will not be empowered to choose the right and be set free.

So ceremonies can be very helpful and beneficial but only as they engage our thinking to comprehend and appreciate the truth to which they were designed to teach.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention again on Jesus being the way, truth, and life and in that context states the following in the second paragraph,

- John 1:18 says that the only begotten (better translated here as unique) God is the One who has made the Father known. To make known in this text is the Greek verb *exēgeomai*, meaning to *explain, interpret, exposit*. We get the word exegesis from this. It means to bring out the meaning. Thus, Jesus Christ is the link to the Father, the One who explains or interprets the Father to a fallen world. Consequently, He is the way or path to the Father. Without Him, we are limited in our understanding. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 83).

There is no doubt that Jesus is the way to the Father; that He is the Father's thoughts made audible and visible, an exact representation of the Father and that through Him we learn the truth about the Father. So, I never want to do anything to diminish this reality.

However, what is this knowledge that Jesus brings? Is it proper exegesis that is the knowledge? Or if we limit ourselves to exegesis do we fall short of the knowledge that Jesus brings?

Jesus said in John 17:

- Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is Jesus referencing proper exegesis or a different kind of knowledge?

When we think of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was it the tree of proper exegesis?

No, it was the Tree where they would choose to know by experience, by action, by choice what they would know—love, loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity, honor, virtue, trust, and godliness—would they know good in their heart, mind, soul, and character, or would they believe the lies and know evil, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame and all the pain and suffering it brings?

Likewise, life eternal is not proper exegesis, it is returning in heart, mind, character, and experience to knowing God personally. It is knowing God, not knowing about God simply with proper exegetical references.

Or course we want to do proper exegesis, always the truth, but can a person do proper exegesis and still not know God?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Again and again in John's Gospel, truth is connected to Jesus, to His Father, and to the Holy Spirit. Truth is connected with Jesus, the Word (logos), and with light—in contrast to darkness (John 1:1–14, John 3:19–21). And, too, falsehood is connected with the devil and sin (John 8:44–46). Consequently, truth in John is not simply a matter of facts and figures. It does involve such things, but more than this, the idea of truth contains a moral aspect of faithfulness to God and to His will. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 84).

What do you think of the idea that truth contains a moral aspect of faithfulness to God and His will? Yes, if we follow the truth we will live in harmony with God and His will and this will be morally right, no doubt about that.

But what is morality or moral decision-making? It is the aspect of deciding what is right and wrong—and how can we determine what is right and wrong, what defines or determines it?

Is right and wrong determined by whomever is in charge, something is right because God says it is right, and wrong because He says it is wrong—or does God say something is right or wrong because it actually is that way and it is still that way even if God doesn't say so?

For instance, the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* describes a time in eternity past when God found it necessary to verbally declare that Jesus was fully and equally God. Did Jesus only become fully and equally God when and because God said it, or did God say it because Jesus was, in fact, fully and equally God and always had been?

- The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence **He might set forth the true position of His Son** and show the relation He sustained to all created beings… **There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ**. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made **necessary a statement** of the true position of the Son of God; but **this had been the same from the beginning**. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions. (Patriarchs and Prophets 36 and 38, emphasis mine).

So when God declares something to be so, does His declaration make it so, or was it already that way, but because of sin, lies, misunderstanding, confusion God finds it necessary for the sake of His creatures to state clearly the way things are?

And this is true of God's law. God's laws are design law, the protocols reality is built upon, emanating from His being, sustaining all things. God's verbal description of His law does not establish it, He states it because it is the way things are as He created them.

So is the Sabbath holy because God said so, declared it holy, or did God declare it holy because it was holy?

The Bible says God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day—what does that mean? He blessed it by legal declaration, making an imposed law that requires external enforcement through inflicted punishments? If that is what God did, then that would not have been a blessing but a cursing for that is the way Satan's kingdom works, that would have sustain Satan's charges against the government of God rather than refute them. No, God did not make a legal rule, an imposed law. God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath by action, conduct, creation—by reality. The Sabbath was made, created, built into time by the God who controls space and time, whose laws are the basis of the operations of all reality. And the Sabbath was made in the context of a war against God's rulership. And the Sabbath was set apart from the other six days NOT when God used power, but when God stopped using power, when God rested, when God left all His creatures free to think and decide for themselves. The Sabbath was created at the end of creation week of this planet and is invested, made, created, built by the revelation of truth, love, and freedom when God refused to use external power to punish Lucifer, to

force Satan to comply, to operate the way of a creature. Thus the Sabbath is holy, made and created as a sign, evidence, revelation, demonstration of God's character of love. It exists because God exists and God is love and love only exists in freedom. And thus, for the same reasons God found it necessary to declare the true position of Jesus, God also declared the reality of the sacredness, holiness, blessedness of the Sabbath day. But His declaration doesn't make it so. He declares it because it is so.

Here is one historical quote that describes this reality:

> **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be**, holy, just, and good, complete in itself. It cannot be repealed or changed. To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (*Prophets and Kings.* p. 625, emphasis mine).

This is not how the laws of creatures work nor how Satan's kingdom operates. Satan and all creatures cannot speak reality into existence, we cannot create from nothing. We cannot establish the laws that reality operate upon, so we make up rules and call them law and enforce our rules by external enforcement. This leads to the belief that law is declared, it is imposed, it occurs when the ruler proclaims it, like the laws of Nebuchadnezzar or the Medes and Persians described in the book of Daniel.

God wants His people to be faithful to Him, like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, but such faithfulness, love, loyalty, cannot be obtained by God by using imposed rules with external enforcement. It only happens by truth, love, and freedom, when all the loyal are fully persuaded in their own minds (Romans 14:5).

Thus God wants us to know the truth, reality, God's character, nature, methods, principles, and the laws upon which all reality function. When we know the truth, we are won to love and trust by the revelation of truth. And we freely surrender in trust and receive a new heart and right spirit with new desires that frees us from lives of fear and selfishness. We are won to loyalty, we are not threatened into behavioral obedience under fear of punishment.

THURSDAY

Scripture and the Truth—what is the purpose of the Bible? What truth does it contain? What are its limits? How can it be misused?

Is it possible for people to be firm Bible believers and be God's enemy?

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84).

Isn't this sad, people studying Scripture but doing it in such a way they do not benefit from it. Can this happen today? How?

When people believe the lie that God's law functions like human law and then Scripture becomes a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned, a way to shut down thinking, a way to believe without evidence, on claims, and proof texts without actually understanding reality—just like the religious Bible quoting leaders who crucified Jesus.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus' promise to come again—and asks why should we believe Jesus is going to come again?

Why do you believe in the second coming of Christ?

- Because the one who promised is reliable and trustworthy!
- Because the Bible is reliable and trustworthy and not only did Jesus promise it, but Scripture describes the new heaven and earth repeatedly
- Because of the many prophecies and promises already fulfilled in Scripture
- Are there any other specific reasons why you believe?

Are there any signs or evidences that Jesus coming is soon?

1. Scoffers

> First of all, you must understand that in the **last days scoffers will come**, scoffing and following their own evil desires. **They will say, "Where is this 'coming'** he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3, 4 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Have we seen this? This sign was fulfilled in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the Enlightenment, which directly opposed the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was a religious movement that called people's attention to the nearness of the second coming of Christ. But this movement was countered by the Enlightenment, in which godless scientific views and human reason replaced a belief in God, and godless evolutionism spread throughout the world. In the wake of godless evolution came communism and other godless philosophies that scoff at the idea that Jesus is coming again.

2. Wars and rumors of wars

> You will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is not yet** (Matthew 24:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus here refers to the never-ending regional struggles, tribal wars, crusades, and conflicts throughout the Dark and Middle Ages prior to the "end times," which began in the 19th century with the Enlightenment. The end times come after these wars. Notice the shift from wars to nations and kingdoms rising against each other.

3. World wars, natural disasters, famines, pandemics

> **Nation will rise against nation**, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great **earthquakes, famines and pestilences** in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven (Luke 21:10, 11 NIV84, emphasis mine).
>
> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are **the beginning of birth pains** (Matthew 24:7, 8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

After the long history of wars and conflicts through the Dark and Middle Ages, after the Enlightenment and the rise of the scoffers, we enter the 20th century and experience WWI, WWII, nuclear weapons, wars in Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Syria, and terrorism around the world. The 20th century, with its two world wars and other military conflicts, saw more people killed by war than any other century in human history. And in the past fifty years, the world has seen massive famines, the threats of climate change, HIV, SARS, Swine Flu, COVID, and the increasing frequency of earthquakes, hurricanes, destructive storms, and other disasters. But all of this is *the beginning of the birth pains*.

When a woman goes into labor, the time of delivery has begun. In other words, she has entered the "end time" of her pregnancy—but the labor isn't instantaneous. The pains get more frequent and more intense right up until delivery. We are now in the time of the end, the time of ever-increasing rapidity of events leading up to our Savior's return!

Understand that no matter what we do, things on Earth are not going to get better until Jesus returns. And the worsening of conditions on Earth, the increasing labor pains as the Earth itself groans under the weight of sin, will be used by the scoffers to incite fear, turn minds away from God, and promote their godless solutions that will solidify power into a global coalition that persecutes the righteous.

4. The promise of an era of peace and safety

Paul also used the metaphor of a woman going into labor when referring to the return of our Lord, adding an interesting detail:

> Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman**, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to

> the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled (1 Thessalonian 5:1–6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

When those who don't know God—the scoffers, the evolutionist, the humanists, those who are desperately seeking to save themselves and "save the earth"—are saying, "This is the way we can have global peace and safety," sudden destruction will come, as labor pains on a pregnant woman.

They will be unaware that sudden destruction is coming, but why? Because they have given up a belief in God, they no longer trust Scripture, they have accepted the false narrative of godless evolution and secular humanism, and they believe peace and safety can be achieved through the implementation of their worldly agenda. This is the delusion of socialism, of globalism, of the Green movement—that we can save the planet. They claim, "We can create a new world order in which all nations come together to stop climate change, to stop the destruction of the environment, to eliminate poverty—all doable through a new globalism that we can create with new economic realities that will bring in a new era of peace and safety."

But Jesus continues His warning:

5. Increased divisions in society, loss of faith, persecution of believers in Jesus

> Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and **you will be hated by all nations because of me**. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will **betray and hate each other**, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people (Matthew 24:9–11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Then, at the time of the end, at the time after the scoffers arise, at the time when the labor pains have begun, after the nations have had global wars, after the increase in natural disasters and pestilence, *then* those loyal to Christ will be persecuted, some put to death, and hated of all nations. Then people will betray each other to find security for themselves.

And what do we see in the world today? Christians beheaded in some parts of the world. Christians ridiculed for resisting the new world order, scorned for standing against the restrictions of liberty, hated for holding to faith in Jesus, vilified for voicing the hope in God and warning of Christ's soon return.

6. Love of most will grow cold

> Because of the increase of wickedness, the **love of most will grow cold** (Matthew 24:12 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Because of the increase in wickedness—which is all the violations of God's designs, laws, methods, and principles—the love in the hearts of most people grows cold. Because of the denial of God and the rise of the lies of secularism, humanism, socialism, evolutionism; because of the breakdown of

families; because of the assault on our common heritage and community values, love is dying in the human heart.

7. So caught up in entertainment and living, people are unaware

> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, **people were eating and drinking, marrying** and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen** until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man** (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Incredible! The people before the Flood knew nothing about what was going to happen despite Noah preaching for 120 years and building a giant boat. How did they not know? Because they were consumed with pleasure-seeking, eating, drinking, and marrying. They were too busy either being entertained or living their lives to be bothered with eternal realities.

This is exactly the state of the world today: It is caught up in increasing consumption of mind-altering substances, or leaving reality behind for their preferred fantasy world of video games, social media activity, TV shows, movies, sports, concerts, amusement parks, or anything else to consume and distract the mind. This is the world today—ignoring the warnings of Jesus, ignoring the signs of the end all around, and living merely for the pleasures of the moment.

8. The good news about God's kingdom of love lightens the world

> **But he who stands firm to the end will be saved.** And **this gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, **and then the end will come** (Matthew 24:13, 14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

But those who stand firm for the truth of God's kingdom of love will be saved! We will be the ones who take the good news about God and His kingdom of love to the world. We will advance the cause of liberty, for love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. We will stand for truth in a world of falsehood and propaganda. We will glorify God by revealing His character of love in how we treat our neighbors. We will call people back to the truth of our Creator by teaching people God's design laws—the laws our Creator built reality to operate upon, demonstrating that harmony with God and His design laws are the only way to health and happiness.

The truth about God and His kingdom of love, in the face of a world consumed with greed and selfishness, is the final message to lighten the world for Christ's return. It is the final message of mercy, the message of hope, the message of God's true character of love that Jesus revealed. It is the message that Satan hates because God's love destroys the fear Satan works so hard to incite.

So, as you see the signs all around us, don't let fear rule your heart; instead,

> "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because **your redemption is drawing near**" (Luke 21:28 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Other reasons to believe in the nearness of Christ's return?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 11
The Father, the Son, and the Spirit

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Read the second and third paragraphs,

- Unfortunately, Lucifer brought sin into this world. Sin is, among other things, a disruption of our relationship with God. It misrepresents who God is. Thus, Jesus took upon Himself our human nature in order to restore knowledge of God and to bring salvation to humanity.

  While here, Jesus submitted His life to the Father, living according to His guidance. He said, " 'I and My Father are one' " (John 10:30, NKJV). " 'The Father is in Me, and I in Him' " (John 10:38, NKJV). " 'If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me' " (John 10:37, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 89).

Do you believe Jesus and the Father are one? Are they one only in the way that Jesus prayed for Him and His followers to be one or are they one in a different way?

Do we believe that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father? Do we believe that Jesus is more than a human being but also God?

This is a critical truth and when understood dispels much of the confusion and lies that are circulating about God.

Have you noticed an ongoing attack on the Godhead by, in my experience, very well-meaning and good-hearted people who only want to be true to Scripture—and the attack I am speaking of is the denial of the three members of the Godhead, the move to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit and to relegate Jesus to something less than the Father.

These arguments never are based in reality—how reality functions, but always based in philosophy, theory, proclamations, claims, assertions, textual criticism, and a refusal to integrate all the evidence God has provided. To undermine the full divinity of Jesus also undercuts God's plan to win the Great Controversy.

When it comes to matters of theology the Bible is always our first and primary source of evidence and truth. So, let's start with the Bible and its evidence and then consider how reality functions and the implications in the Great Controversy over what conclusion we draw.

What Bible evidence would you offer to someone who rejects that Jesus is fully and equally God in all aspects with the Father?

- **In the beginning** was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made… He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him…The **Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen **his glory, the glory of the One and Only**, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth… No one has ever seen God, but **God the One and Only**, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:1-3, 10, 14, 18, emphasis mine).

Who was the Word that became flesh? Jesus, and Jesus was with God from the beginning and Jesus was God and Jesus is the revelation of the glory of God.

- For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9 NIV84).

It was through Jesus that all things were made:

- For by **him [Jesus] all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him** and for him. **He is before** all things, and **in him all things hold together**. (Colossians 1:16,17, emphasis mine).

Jesus is fully God, Creator, from whom all reality was Created and who existed from the beginning with the Father.

Jesus claims the name of God:

- "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58).

- "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

The Apostles recognized Jesus as God:

- Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).
- We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. **He is the true God and eternal life.** (1John 5:20, emphasis mine).

And we are only to worship God:

- Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (Luke 4:8 NIV84 quoting Deuteronomy 6:13)

- At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! (Revelation 19:10 NIV84).

Did Jesus reject worship when Thomas worshiped Him?

And angels worship Jesus:

- And again, when God brings his **firstborn** into the world, he says, “Let all God’s **angels worship him**.” (Hebrews 1:6 NIV84, emphasis mine)

How do we deal with the question of Jesus being first born if some suggest He is a divine being but is the offspring of the Father, not eternally co-existent with the Father?

Who was Abraham’s firstborn son, the one who inherited the promises of God? Isaac, but who was the son naturally born first to Abraham—it was Ishmael. So in the Bible firstborn does not mean simply biological descent but means the one who is the inheritor of the blessings, the one who is the head of the family. And Jesus is the firstborn over all Creation, the one through whom God’s promises, power, blessings flow to all creation.

- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the **government will be on his shoulders**. And he will be called Wonderful **Counselor**, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Who is the child that was born? Jesus, who is fully and completely God. And how can God’s heavenly eternal government be on His shoulders unless He is Creator, the originator of the design laws and the one in whom all things hold together?

So, we have many Bible texts that testify to the divinity of Jesus, now let’s talk about reality and how it functions.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is fully God and equal with the Father that Jesus is the exact representation of the Father, that the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily; if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father. So, the first reality-based understanding is to realize that if Jesus is not fully God then these texts are not true.

- If Jesus were an angel then His life tells us something about angels, not about God.
- If Jesus were an angel, then what we learn about God is that He is willing to sacrifice angels but not Himself.
- If Jesus is a demi-god, subordinate god, later to the stage god, then we learn something about the demi-god, that the subordinate god is willing to sacrifice self but the Father is not.

We can all declare things about someone we know, but we cannot live the life of someone we know. The only way that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, is if Jesus is fully and equally God. Any diminishment in the full divinity of Jesus undermines the plan of salvation and sustains one of Satan's charges that God is not truly love, not truly willing to sacrifice for His creation.

Consider these historical quotes:

- By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. (The Desire of Ages p. 19).

- Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. He had **accused God** of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, **while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice**. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the **Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make;** for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death. (The Great Controversy p. 502, emphasis mine).

If Jesus is not fully God then we do not learn that God is self-sacrificial, but that He is willing to sacrifice others to protect self.

Some might argue that I am using philosophy—not at all—it is not philosophical, it is again how reality works. We, in reality, learn of the person who is acting by observing and interacting with that person. Thus, we learn of God through the life of Jesus only if Jesus is in fact God. We can learn of God healing and restoring power, His kindness, love, grace, and mercy, methods and principles in the lives of people who have accepted God, but we are learning through their experience, their perspective, their understanding, their words, acts, and deeds, all of which filter and impact the light of heaven and thus we are not seeing God in action as another individuality is acting, is choosing. It is only from God Himself that we get pure unadulterated truth lived out in action.

The Bible gives all kinds of evidence about God. Historical accounts of God interacting with people, descriptions of God by His penmen, evidences of His words and declarations as recorded by the prophets, but ultimately the purest, truest revelation and evidence is in the life of Jesus who is God in humanity.

Jesus, who is God in humanity, taught there was a third member of the Godhead called the Comforter, Counselor, or Spirit:

- "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Counselor** to be with you forever—the **Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept

him, because it neither sees **him** nor knows **him**. But you know **him**, for **he** lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:15-17, emphasis mine)

Notice Jesus did not say what many deniers of the Trinity say, that God would send His own presence. Jesus did NOT say: "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will come to you to be with you forever—His spiritual presence will be with you. The world cannot accept the Father's spiritual presence, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

Jesus did say,

- "But the **Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father** will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26, emphasis mine)

- "When the **Counselor** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the **Spirit** of truth who goes out from the Father, **he** will testify about me." (John 15:26, emphasis mine)

The Old Testament teaches God is a plurality, not a singularity:

- Then God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness..." (Genesis 1:26, emphasis mine)

Even the text quoted by Jews and Muslims that "God is one" teaches a plurality, not a singularity:

- "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

    - Notice the passage in English uses "Lord" and "God". The reading of this passage with the Hebrew names for "Lord" and "God" would go like this: "Hear, O Isreal: *Yahweh* our *Elohim*, *Yahweh* is One."

    - What is interesting is that the word *Elohim* in Hebrew is plural and is the same word used for God in Genesis 1:26. Thus an accurate English reading might go like this: "The One is more than One yet is One"

    - In Hebrew there are two words for "one," *Yacheed* and *Echad*. The first indicates singular unity as in one and only, the second indicates compound unity, as the oneness of two or more. In this text *Echad* is used along with the plural name of God *Elohim* indicating the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament also provides texts in which all members of the Godhead are referenced:

- And now the Sovereign Lord [Father] has sent me [Son], with his Spirit [Holy Spirit]. This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 48:16,17).

- "Here is my [Father] servant [Son], whom I [Father] uphold, my [Father] chosen one [Son] in whom I [Father] delight; I [Father] will put my Spirit [Holy Spirit] on him [Son] and he [Son] will bring justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1)

The Old Testament teaches the close love relationship between them:

- "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." (Zechariah 13:7 KJV)
    - The Man who is my friend NCV
    - The Man who is close to me NIV

- "Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind." (Proverbs 8:30 NIV84).

So, the Bible gives strong evidence for the plurality of our One God, supporting the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are a perfect unity of three separate individualities. But, for me all the above evidence is not what is most compelling. The most compelling evidence for me that God exists in plurality rather than singularity is the nature and character of God Himself—how reality functions.

The Bible says, "God is love." (1John 4:8). Further the Bible teaches that this love is "not self seeking." (1Corithians 13:5). Love is outward moving, other-centered. Therefore, God, being love, could not be love in isolation because love requires an object to pour itself upon. Love is other-centered! God's nature and character of love, rightly understood, is the most powerful argument for the plurality of God and we see this in the Old Testament texts above as the Father is delighting in the Son and the Son rejoicing in the Father and the Spirit loving them both.

Some might again argue that I am making a philosophical argument—no, again, I am observing how reality functions. Love **cannot** function or exist in isolation as a singularity. If we say there was a time when God the Father existed alone before Jesus then at that time in eternity past God is no longer love, but something else. And the minimum number for true other-centered, selfless, love is three. With two you can get narcissistic reinforcement, but three requires selfless sacrifice for the benefit of the others.

And we see this all through the Bible Jesus never seeks glory for self but always seeks to uplift the Father, the Father is always promoting and exalting and glorifying Jesus, the Holy Spirit is uplifting and advancing both the Father and the Son.

Therefore, when God created us in His image He created "them male and female" and the "two shall become one" united in a triune relationship – husband, wife and God indwelling their hearts via His Spirit! And they were told to be fruitful and multiple in the world before they sinned. Why? So they could grow and develop in true other-centered godly love, which requires more than just the two of them. As they have children and seek to give of self for their children, they function in love, thus God creates other intelligences and gives of Himself for them.

Those who seek to destroy the truth about the plurality of the Godhead undermine the truth about God's character of love whether they intend to or not, and in so doing, place an obstacle to the only healing remedy for sin: God's "perfect love [that] casts out all fear." As we see the truth about God as revealed in Jesus, the lies about Him are removed and we are won to trust and in that trust He pours His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and we are transformed to be like Him!

Amongst the founders of the SDA church there was debate regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Some saw Christ as the offspring of God and, as such, not a "created" being, but was of the same "substance" as the Father, yet still not equal to the Father for the Son arose from the Father. This idea goes back millennia and is sometimes referred to as Arian theology.

But, Ellen G. White opposed this theology and came out strongly in favor of the Bible position above. Here are a few of her quotes:

- Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, **was one with the eternal Father,--one in nature, in character, in purpose**,--the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6). His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34, emphasis mine).
- The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a convicting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that **he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes**. (The Signs of the Times, Nov. 27, 1893, p. 54, emphasis mine).
- Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged Sovereign of heaven, **one in power and authority with the Father**. (The Great Controversy, p. 495).
- "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified, **but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God.** The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. **But the life of Christ was unborrowed.** No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself" (John 10: 18), He said. **In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived.** This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p 296, emphasis mine).
- The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through **the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in the **fullness of divine power**. It is **the Spirit**

that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. (The Desire of Ages 671, emphasis mine).

- **There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**--those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ. (Evangelism, p. 615, emphasis mine).

Some Protestants attack the Trinity truth because they have been tricked into believing this is a doctrine originated by the Roman church and that Protestants should therefore reject it as not being in the Bible. This is often put forth with the argument that the word "trinity" cannot be found in the Bible, or the challenge, "Show me from the Bible a text with the word trinity in it."

But this would be like saying that we don't believe in the Investigative Judgment because we cannot find that term in the Bible. Or that words like atonement, justification, or sanctification are translated words, not Greek or Hebrew words and therefore not in the original Bible therefore we should not believe these ideas.

The term one uses to describe the Godhead is NOT what matters, what matters is the truth about God that we understand and believe regardless of what words we choose when we talk about it. It is what those words mean that matter.

Others object to the Trinity because the Bible appears to represent Jesus as subordinate to the Father and they wonder what this means if not that Jesus was a later addition, a being born or begotten from the Father.

The idea that Jesus is "subservient" to the Father is a misunderstanding that results from not appreciating God's character and the way His government works. In God's economy,

- "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35).
- "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:16).

God's kingdom is the kingdom of love and love gives for the wellbeing of others. Thus Jesus is "exalted" because Jesus surrendered all and gave all for others. This exaltation is not "conferred" by the Father to the Son, but a result of the accomplishment of the Son in perfectly revealing and carrying out the Trinity's character and purpose.

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but **made himself nothing**, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself** and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore

> **God exalted him** to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus sacrificed self for the uplifting of His creation and did not seek honor and glory for self and therefore is honored and glorified. Satan, however, sought to advance and exalt himself:

- **You said** in your heart, "**I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise** my throne above the stars of God; **I will sit** enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **I will ascend** above the tops of the clouds; **I will make** myself like the Most High. But you are **brought down** to the grave, to the depths of the pit. " (Isaiah 14:13-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Another way to understand it, (recognizing of course that our finite minds are trying to probe the Infinite God so we will inevitably come up short of complete understanding), is that the Godhead voluntarily assumed different roles or functions for the accomplishments of Their joint purposes (a loving way all share together in giving for Their creation). Any of the three could have assumed any of the functions. We would err in concluding that when one of the three assumes a function that He was not capable of functioning in the role of the others.

As I understand their chosen roles, the Father acts as the source of all. The Son is the medium, mediator, advocate, conduit, agent through which the Father reveals Himself or acts particularly in linear space time—the member of infinity who leaves infinity and interacts with the creation on the plane of creation. And the Holy Spirit is the actualizer or applier of what the Father and Son have achieved. Thus God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself (2Corinthians 5:19). Jesus' work on Earth was the acting out of the Father's will. As Jesus said, not His will but the Father's be done. His completed mission and victory over sin are applied to the lives of believers by the work of the Holy Spirit. In creation we have the Father as the source, the Son as the architect, designer, and builder and the Spirit as the actualizer or implementer of Their design.

So, with this understanding we realize what Christ meant when He said, "I do nothing of myself." Christ takes from the Father to fulfill all the Father's purposes for His universe. In this sense we can see Christ turning to the Father, not to persuade the Father to be kind, but to receive the fullness of the Father's purpose of love for His creation and carry that purpose out in meaningful action!

We also see throughout Scripture that the Son never seeks glory for self but constantly seeks to bring glory to the Father and the Father is constantly uplifting the Son and the Spirit is giving witness to the glory of both Father and Son. In other words, the Godhead functions in perfect other-centered love.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on God's actions after Adam's sin, how sin severed our relationship with God and God's plan to restore that relationship:

- To accomplish the restoration of this relationship, one Member of the Godhead became human. Thus, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, manifesting the glory of God (John 1:14–18). As a result, humanity has received His fullness and grace. This is what Jesus came to share, to declare the glory of God so that the relationship broken by sin might be restored, at least to all who were willing to accept by faith what has been offered them in Christ Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 90).

Why is the truth that Jesus is fully God essential for not only our salvation, but in order to eliminate sin from the universe?

Consider this position, taken by one of the Adventist Reformers after the 1888 GC in which the message about design law was rejected and leadership officially accepted the imposed law view with its false penal legal solution to the sin problem. It was written by EGW, do you agree and does it give insight as to why Jesus must be fully God?

- **Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God.** He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the **erroneous ideas** Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, **in regard to the character of God, might be removed**. We could not behold the glory of God unveiled in Christ and live; but as he came in the garb of humanity, we may draw nigh to our Redeemer. We are called upon to behold **the Lord our Father in the person of his Son**. Christ came in the robe of the flesh, with his glory subdued in humanity, that lost man might communicate with him and live. Through Christ we may comprehend something of him who is glorious in holiness. Jesus is the mystic ladder by which we may mount to behold the glory of the infinite God. By faith we behold Christ standing between humanity and divinity, connecting God and man, and earth and heaven. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 5, emphasis mine). [If Jesus is not fully God then we are not learning of God in the life of Jesus and the lies about God cannot be removed by the actions of a being other than God.]

  Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him. Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character**, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused truth of vital importance to be so **mingled with error** that it had lost its significance. **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary**. [How? By asserting that God's law is not design law, not the protocols reality is built to operate upon, but made up rules that functions like human

law, imposed rules requiring external authority.] He was pictured as **one who could take pleasure in the sufferings** of his creatures. The **very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God**. [Again by getting us to believe God's law functions like human law we believe God functions like a creature, using power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking and thus Satan replaces the truth about God with his own characteristics] Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. **Angels could not fully portray the character of God,** but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes**. That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 6, emphasis mine). [Again if Jesus is anything less than God He could not fulfill the mission of the Godhead and eliminate sin and rebellion from the universe because could not reveal the truth about God necessary to destroy the lies that caused the distrust and rebellion. It is how reality works.]

The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be. [Isaiah 9:6 for unto us a child is born His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, a Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.] Said Christ, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The love of Jesus, expressed for the fallen race in his life of self-denial and sufferings, **is the manifestation of the Father's love** for a sinful, fallen world. Christ endured shame and grief and death for those who despised his love and trampled upon his mercy… (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 7, emphasis mine).

Man was God's workmanship, made after his image, endowed with talents, and fitted for a high destiny. **But Satan has worked to obliterate the divine image, and to impress his own image instead of the image of God in man's nature**. ["The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8 NIV84). Jesus condescended to humble himself, to take human nature, and by uniting divinity with humanity, he proposed to elevate man in the scale of moral value. All heaven was poured out in the gift of God's dear Son… The redemption of man is a wonderful theme, and the love manifested to the fallen race through the plan of salvation, can be estimated only by the cross of Calvary. The depth of this even angels cannot sound. **That God could consent to become flesh**, and dwell among fallen beings, to lift them up from their helplessness and despair, is an unfathomed mystery. He whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, whose dominion endureth throughout all generations, made himself to be sin for us that he might lift up all that are bowed down, and give life to those who are ready to perish. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 8, emphasis mine).

Oh, that men might open their minds to know God as he is revealed in his Son!... Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom he represented. **Christ exalted the character of God**, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of **the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God**. **In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and**

> **the matchless perfections of the Father**. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world**,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that **the character of the Father was made manifest to men**. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 9, emphasis mine).

Why is it a requirement for our salvation that Jesus is fully and completely God and any other lesser being that somehow lived a sinless life and died on the cross would fail to be able to provide salvation?

What is the cause of sin in heaven and what is the cause of sin on Earth?

Satan is the father of lies and his foundational lies are about God, and thus we must have the truth of God restored in order to have the lies removed and be won back to trust in God:

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and cause fear and selfishness—this is the problem that sin causes. And the only way to remedy this is to reveal the truth about God that restores trust.

And what was Satan's mode, method, point of attack to undermine God's character and get people to believe God is actually like him, severe, revengeful, unforgiving, and arbitrary, and being who is the source of pain, suffering and death and who requires appeasement, something done to assuage His anger and wrath lest He use divine power to torture and kill?

He misrepresented God's law as functioning like human law. And wherever and whenever any being, angel or human, believes that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, their minds are trapped into lies about God, and they falsely believe that justice is using external power to inflict punishment on law breakers. Thus, they worship a creature instead of the Creator and misrepresent God as being like Satan.

This is what Rome did to Christianity. When Constantine converted he used the power of the state to make Christianity the legal religion and passed all kinds of laws enforcing Christian worship. And the Roman bishop became the head of the western Roman empire when Constantine moved the capital to the Constantinople, now Istanbul. And the Roman bishop, as a Roman governor of the empire, used the power of the state to enforce Christian law. When the Roman empire fell, the Roman church continued to function and continued to function with its cannon law, Roman hierarchical structure with a Caesar-like leader who is elected by the senate, (college of cardinals); and the church and world, in

this legal system of imposed law with a false god that is the source of inflicted pain and suffering for sin, went into the Dark Ages.

The Reformation is a call to leave the Romanization of Christianity, to return to worshiping God as Creator, stop seeing Him as a dictator, and this requires we rejected the imposed law view of things and return to understanding that all of God's laws are design laws.

People get confused because of the Ten Commandments and instructions given to Moses. They think that the Ten Commandments and the other Levitical laws are evidence that God's law does function like human law. This was the great schism in Adventism in the 1888 GC where our church was blessed with the message of design law, that was embraced and promoted by the Reformers Waggoner, Jones, and EGW, but was rejected the legalists in leadership.

Jones, Waggoner, and White taught that the various written laws including the Ten Commandments were all added and are not eternal. They were added specifically for the need of sinful human beings as helpful guides, diagnostic tools, and protective hedges until the people could mature in love and trust and experience the restoration of God's eternal living law written upon hearts and mnids.

This is the final message of mercy to go to the world—the truth about God's character of love, worshiping God as Creator, rejecting Satan's view of God as dictator and source of death. And we only are able to do this when we rejected the Roman law lie with all its baggage and distortions.

TUESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- Jesus' claims about His relationship to the Father are astonishing. He asserts that all of His teachings are the teachings of the Father; that all He says He had personally heard from the Father; that belief in Him is the same as belief in the Father; that both His very words and His works are all of the Father; and that He and the Father are united in loving and working for the salvation of humanity. What a powerful testimony to the closeness of Jesus to His Father in heaven! (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 91).

This is so well said and absolutely true, God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus bodily. Jesus said if we have seen Him we have seen the Father.

Can you think of any doctrines taught within Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, that deny this and teach the opposite, that there is a difference between the two?

Jesus as our mediator in heaven pleading His blood to the Father to pay for our sin to propitiate the Father's wrath, to assuage the Father's anger, to do something to the Father because if Jesus doesn't do this then the Father would lash out in anger and hurt us. In other words, we are kept safe only by the

Jesus working upon the Father. In the Roman church they also have Mary and the saints up there pleading to either Jesus or the Father for blessings.

I remember one Catholic colleague describing why he valued the ministry of Mary in heaven so much. He said, no one can influence a son more than his mother and when he prays to Mary, Mary goes to Jesus and influences Jesus to grant the blessing that he is praying for.

Consider what such a teaching says about God. Many Protestants do the same thing when they teach Jesus pleads with the Father to get the Father's blessings. But this is not what the Bible teaches:

- What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us**, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will **he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things**? Who will bring any charge against those whom **God has chosen**? It is **God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and **is also interceding** for us. (Romans 8:31-35 NIV84, emphasis mine).

It is only by the truth, the truth that Jesus is fully and completely God, the truth that God's laws are design laws, that we are able to free our minds from the lies about God and see Him as Jesus revealed Him to be. And this truth destroys the lies and restores us to trust. In trust we open our hearts and experience the indwelling Holy Spirit who takes the victory of Jesus and reproduces it in us so that it is no longer I that live, but Jesus lives in us.

And this is why some attack the divinity of the Holy Spirit, they want to undermine the application of Christ's victory in people. Understand, Jesus, in His own personhood became a real human being, descended from Adam and overcame sin and restored the species human to unity with God. In the individual person of Jesus the species human was saved, the truth of God was revealed. If no other individual human being were saved, because Jesus became a real human being and overcame as our substitutionary Savior, the species was saved. There will always be a sinless human being because Jesus is fully human.

We are not individually saved because of the historical fact of what Jesus did. We are individually saved when we receive, participate, partake, the victory of Jesus into our own hearts and minds, as Peter wrote, when we partake of the divine nature through faith or trust. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to not only bring truth and love to our hearts to convict us of sin and enlighten us to God's love and Jesus as our Savior. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit to infuse us with the life, the spirit, the animating motiving energy of Jesus Christ—to reproduce in us the living law of love that compels us and enables us to live lives of love rather than fear and selfishness.

And the lesson quotes from the book *The Desire of Ages* in **WEDNESDAY**'s lesson:

- "In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit

from His Father **for the exaltation of His people**. The Spirit was to be given as **a regenerating agent**, and **without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in **the fullness of divine power**." (The Desire of Ages, p. 671, emphasis mine).

The Holy Spirit is the sealing presence and power of God:

- And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13 NIV84).
- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30 NIV84).

The saved in Revelations are sealed with a seal on their foreheads—how is that seal connected to the Holy Spirit?

Consider this description of the sealing by EGW, and see if it gives insight into the seal of God and how the Holy Spirit is the seal, the sealing agent?

- "Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a **settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved**—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already." (EGW, The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 4:1161, emphasis mine).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love. The Holy Spirit is the source of truth, enlightening our minds, bringing conviction, but leaving us free. If we choose to submit to the Holy Spirit and are converted we believe the truth, the lies are displaced, and we become settled into the truth so that we cannot be moved. That is being settled intellectually or sealed intellectually—this is the cleansing or sealing of our minds, our thoughts, and mental processes, morals, values. But the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of love, the animating, motivating, energy of altruism, beneficence, self-sacrificial service, love for God and others. When we are won to trust and open our hearts God pours His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). We not only experience how much God loves us, but we have the Spirit of love operating within inspiring, motivating, and compelling us with love. As we choose love we are cleansed from fear and selfishness, perfect love casts out the fear and we are spiritually settled or sealed that we would rather die that exploit others. We become partakers of the divine nature and Christ lives in us via the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus the sealing is only possible by the work of the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

This is why Satan attacks the Trinity because he wants to misrepresent the divine character undermining trust, cause confusion about God's methods, principles, and design laws. And interfere with the application of Christ's victory in the hearts and minds of sinners, so even if they rightly believe that Jesus is Savior, they don't open their hearts in trust to experience the indwelling Spirit that

seals them, but instead traps them in a false legal theology in which they claim legal payment to an offended god.

THURSDAY

Read the fourth paragraph, which are quotes from Jesus' prayer in John 17:

- " 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God' " (John 17:3, NKJV), not God, whoever we think He is. " 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me, . . . and they have kept your word . . . and know in truth that I came from you' " (John 17:6, 8, NRSV). " 'Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth' " (John 17:17, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 93).

What does this mean?

Do we see again why it is a requirement that Jesus is fully God?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 12
The Hour of Glory: The Cross and Resurrection

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

- Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this **purpose** I was born and for this **purpose** I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37 ESV, emphasis mine).

Jesus came into the world for a purpose—what?

Remember when Peter pulled out his sword, Jesus told him to put it away and said,

- "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:53-54 NIV84).

Did Jesus go through the cross against His will or in harmony with His own will, understanding, purpose, goals, mission?

Jesus had a purpose in becoming incarnate. He came to accomplish something, what?

To eliminate sin from His universe and save humanity from sin and restore this world back to sinless perfection.

Wouldn't all Christians, regardless of denomination, regardless of how they explain the details of the atonement agree that Christ's mission, the reason He came and died was as the solution to the sin problem? Wouldn't all agree that Jesus is the answer, the way, the solution, the antidote, the divine response that the Godhead initiated to address and eliminate sin from existence?
So we ask the question, Why did Jesus have to die in order for God to save humanity and eliminate sin from the universe?

In order to accurately understand the solution we must understand the nature of the problem the solution resolves.

So, what is the problem that sin caused that the plan of salvation, Jesus incarnation, sinless life, death, and resurrection solves?

If the problem is presented as a legal problem then what will the solution be? A legal solution.

If the problem is presented as a problem with God's anger, wrath, need for justice, something going on with God, then what will the solution be? A mediatorial act to present God with something to impact, change, propitiate, assuage God's anger wrath or law.

If the problem is presented as a condition of being, something that is deadly, terminal, wrong in sinners then what will the solution be?

Let's approach this a little differently, let's present some of the atonement theories, and seek to identify based on the theory what is the problem this theory is attempting to solve. In other words, what does such a theory indicate the sin problem is?

- Traditional satisfaction theory, in which Jesus died to satisfy God's anger, wrath, or sense of justice—to satisfy God? What does this solution suggest is the problem that needed fixing?
    - God was angry and offended by sin and His sense of holiness, righteousness, and personhood needed to be satisfied. And the death of Jesus satisfies God.
    - Doesn't such a view place the sin problem with God that there is something in Him that needs fixing or resolving? That our sin changed God in some way and Jesus needed to do something to God?

But the Bible says that God doesn't change:

- "I the LORD do not change." (Malachi 3:6 NIV84).
- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8 NIV84).

Consider these quotes as evidence that the traditional satisfaction view is trying to solve a problem in God:

- What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? … Scripture teaches only that Christ became a 'propitiation,' a 'sin offering,' or a 'sacrifice' for sins...Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, **could offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath** against the sins of mankind… Anger against sin shows the personal side of God, for sin is a personal offense against him. **God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased** in order to offer a personal forgiveness. In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, **the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ**. (Robert Sungenis, Founder and President of Catholic Apologetics International Publishing: Not By Faith Alone (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), pp. 107-108.)
- We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, **propitiating the Father by paying for our sins** and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel. ("A Call to Evangelical Unity," Christianity Today, June 14, 1999, emphasis mine.).

When Adam and Eve sinned did God get changed? No, then the solution, why Jesus had to die is not to fix God. What about in SDA theology? Has the idea that sin changed God and that Jesus died to solve or fix God in some way entered the teachings and publications of the SDA church?

- Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side**. (Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74, emphasis mine.)
- Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin**. Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself. (*Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111, emphasis mine.)

What do these two quotes describe happening? Where is the problem sin caused that these quotes claim Jesus' death address? Where is the barrier that these quotes claim Jesus' death removes?

But this is not the truth that the SDA church is supposed to be teaching. The truth that came to the church in 1888, the truth written about and promoted by EGW, but which was rejected by official leadership at 1888. Notice who she says is responsible for the barrier:

- To break **down the barrier that Satan had erected between God and man**, Christ made a full and complete sacrifice, revealing unexampled self-denial. He revealed to the world the amazing spectacle of God living in human flesh, and sacrificing Himself to save fallen men. What wonderful love! (*Signs of the Times*, September 24, 1902, Review & Herald Publishing, emphasis mine)

One view is the barrier is God's anger and wrath. The other view is that Satan did something to erect a barrier between God and man that is removed by the Revelation of Jesus' self-denial, God's love, and what His sacrifice accomplished.

So several theories have the sin problem being God, God's attitude, God's need for satisfaction, God's anger and wrath—we reject that when Adam sinned that God got changed.

But there are other theories, what do these proposed explanations teach is the problem that they are trying to solve?

- For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became 'a moral and legal necessity.' God's 'justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute judgment** on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will**. (*Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111, emphasis mine).

- Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightening, or a lethal injection? (Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007. http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html, emphasis mine).
- To spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). **In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead. … Or, to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn't have to kill us"** (Goldstein, C. "Law, Freedom, Love." *Adventist Review,* online edition, Dec 8, 2023, https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAlHxfD47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0, emphasis mine).

What is the problem these explanations are trying to fix? It is a legal one. They view the sin problem as legal, which is all predicated on the idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, and thus justice requires the infliction of proper punishment by the ruling authority in order to maintain the integrity of the law, the authority of the government, and the justice, which means punishment, for the law breaker.

But all of these theories are false, distortions, in fact are corruptions and manifestations of Satan's attack on the truth. After the victory of Jesus at the cross Satan did not let that victory stand unchallenged, he immediately began undermining the meaning, introducing falsehoods to pervert it and ultimately use the cross to teach his own lies about God. He has done this by getting Christians to believe that God's law functions like human law, the laws of creatures and if we accept this lie, then we believe justice is infliction of punishment, that Jesus came to take our punishment, that God's justice is the source of that punishment and therefore God killed Jesus.

This line of thinking presents God as the source and inflictor of death, but the Bible teaches that Jesus' victory at the cross was for the purpose of destroying death:

- Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:19 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- For he [Jesus] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be **destroyed is death**. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**—and **free those** who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15, emphasis mine).

Notice the Bible teaches that Jesus' death, which is the solution for the sin problem, destroys death and the devil who holds the power of death. But the common theologies, including those that have

dominated the SDA church since 1888 teach that God holds the power of death not Satan and that God wields the power of death as just punishment for sin. This is a lie.

What is the problem that sin caused that the plan of salvation fixes?

Sin separates from the source of life and causes death and the plan of salvation destroys death and brings life and immorality to light by removing the breach, the infection, the fear, selfishness and distrust and reconnecting living beings to God the source of life.

But how can Jesus free us from the fear of death if we teach that death comes out from God as just punishment?

If God is the source of death inflicted as punishment for sin, how can Jesus destroy death, doesn't the power of death continue to reside/originate in God who can wield it if sin ever presents again in the future? Haven't you even heard this taught by some, the idea that when this is all done if anyone ever sins again Jesus won't have to die, God will simply kill them on the spot.

But these lies about God, His law, the meaning and purpose of the cross did not catch God by surprise—He foresaw it all and forewarned us:

- Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet **we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted**. (Isaiah 53:4, emphasis mine).
- "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of **lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he **sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God**." (2Thesselonnians 2:4, emphasis mine).

What temple? The spirit temple—and how did Satan do this? By getting Christians to exchange the truth that God's laws are design laws for the lie that God's laws function no differently than human laws, imposed rules that require legal enforcement. This was the Romanization of Christianity, the moving away from a reality based Creator God worship to a fantasy based creature worship in which the god is now viewed as the source of pain, suffering, and death from whom we need protection through mediation and payment of various kinds.

When we believe the lie that God's law is imposed, we believe the sin problem is penal legal and Jesus came to take our punishment and God is the legal authority who enforces the law through punishment, the minimum being death, and it is falsely taught that God is the source of death. Satan in character, method, motive, and function replaces God and is being worshiped in the spirit temple in the place of God. And people teach that God killed Jesus for justice sake.

The SDA founders were focused on completing the Reformation, on advancing the unfolding truth, on carrying the final message of mercy to the world, on restoring the purity of the gospel as Jesus revealed it and God blessed those Bible students with the truth about design law, but that truth was rejected by the legalists in the camp just as the legalistic Jews rejected it when Jesus presented it. Just

as the legalist fought against Paul when he presented the truth about design law. Just as the legalists through all Christian history have done.

Once Constantine converted and the church Romanized the idea of Roman law, imposed law, cannon law became orthodoxy and no branch of Christianity has freed itself from this imposed law lie and all still teach that God's justice is the use of power to inflict punishment.

But what is the truth? What is the true problem that sin caused and that Jesus fixes so that God both saves humanity and also eliminates sin from His universe?

1. Jesus revealed the truth, which exposed Satan as liar, secured the unfallen universe & wins humans to trust
    - "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." Colossians 1:19-20

2. Destroyed Satan and His power
    - "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14

3. Destroyed the infection of selfishness and cured humankind
    - "Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2Timothy 1:10

How did Jesus destroy death?

- What is the basis of life?
    - God – the life emanating from God flows out to all in unity with Him and who continue to live in harmony with His design
- What happens if one breaks this design?
    - One severs the connection with the source of life and dying they die
    - Death is the natural outcome of selfishness
    - In order to destroy death Jesus had to remove, eliminate, eradicate from the species human the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle into humanity.
    - He did this by becoming human, partaking of the life descended from Adam, the life now terminal, infected, corrupted, the purged that corruption and restored perfection, love, life.

- Adam formed from dust
- Eve from Adam's side
- You and me from sinful mother and father
- Jesus in none of these ways

- But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Galatians 4:4-5
- The Holy Spirit was His Father. Matthew 1:18

- Jesus was "tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin." Hebrews 2:14

- And each one of us "is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." James 1:14

Did Jesus experience the internal temptation to save Himself? Yes in Gethsemane.

Why did Jesus have to die?

- God formed Adam out of the dirt, and then breathed into Adam the breath of life, this is the *pneuma*, which is translated spirit. It is the animating life energy that originates only in God.
- When Adam sinned he changed the animating motivating energy from love and trust to fear and selfishness. His own spirit, his own energy, his own motivation, his own natural inclinations, desires, and drives, the power that moved him to action was changed from love and trust to fear and selfishness and this drives Adam to run and hide from God.

And Adam and Eve were given procreative abilities to share their life—the breath of life breathed into Adam and corrupted by Adam. They only had that life to share and that life is now infected with fear and selfishness—it is the only life, the only spirit, the only animating energy they have to pass on. Thus they have children born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). We are not born legally guilty, we are born infected with a terminal condition. This condition is incompatible with life. It motivates, natural drives, one to distrust, to seek to advance and protect self, to flee from God, to cut oneself off from God and His life giving presence. In fact, it is antagonistic to God and life. It is the law of sin and death, the survival of the fittest motivation and drive.

Jesus came and partook of this very life. The very same life breathed into Adam and passed down through the generations, through David and through Mary (Romans 1:3; Galatians 4:4).

But the Father for His humanity was the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary and Jesus' humanity was conceived within her. Thus Jesus is born with a humanity that is capable of being tempted in all points like we are, yet He lived without sin. He could experience the internal fear, the emotional anguish, the internal temptation to act in selfishness and flee from death—as is seen in Gethsemane. But Jesus was born with a holy spirit, with a pure animating energy He received from the Holy Spirit and thus Jesus as a human grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. He lived a sinless life. He never developed a bad habit, and while He could be tempted in ways Adam in Eden was not, He overcame every temptation by the exercise of His human brain in choosing always YES the spirit of love and trust and always choosing NO to the spirit of fear and selfishness. At the cross Jesus destroyed death, the spirit of fear and selfishness that Adam brought into the race and rose again in a

humanity that was descended from Adam yet one which was purified, purged, perfected, and restored to God's original intention when He created Adam.

Thus Jesus became the second Adam, the source of salvation for all who trust Him.

- Although he was a son, he **learned obedience** from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus was tempted in all points like us and as a human learned by experience humble submission, surrender to His Father's will, which He Himself said "not my will by thy will be done" at the height of His greatest temptation in Gethsemane. And although He was always sinless, Bible perfection is maturity of character, and Jesus as a human had to overcome where Adam failed. Jesus had to use His human abilities to develop a perfect sinless human character in love and trust to His Father and thereby destroy the infection of fear and selfishness. It was only by doing this that Jesus could eradicate sin from humanity, reveal the truth to destroy lies, and secure the universe unfallen in its loyalty.

So Paul writes:

- For God has **not given us a spirit of fear**, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

God did not give us the spirit of fear we inherited that spirit from Adam. Through Jesus Christ God restores in us the spirit of power and love and sound mind, self-control.

With all of this in mind, let's unpack the Romans 8:1-15 and see how Paul describes this exact reality, how we are infected with a spirit of fear and selfishness and Jesus came to destroy that animating power, energy, life, spirit from humanity and restore in us the spirit of love and trust. And as we go through you will see how the penal legal fraud has a form of godliness but denies the power, denies the animating presence of God and keeps people trapped in cycles of fear and selfishness while claiming legal solutions to a lethal condition.

- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. [Why is there no condemnation? If you believe God's law functions like human law, then you read this to mean that Jesus paid the legal price to God or God's law by dying in our place and therefore there is no legal condemnation and we are legally pardoned or set free. But when we return to design law we realize that we are actually dying of a terminal condition, the life we inherited from Adam is corrupt, and Paul in this very passage describes how this life is enmity to God, in hostility or rebellion to God, and incapable of pleasing God, for the spirit of fear and selfishness causes us to flee from God and seek to protect ourselves. This animating power, energy, spirit, is the survival of the fittest principle that every single human since Adam is born with by having received this spirit from both their father and mother. Paul describes how all nature groans under this law of sin and death, the survival drives that only

destroy and naturally result in death unless removed and replaced by the law of the Spirit of life. And thus we have no condemnation because our being, our hearts and minds, have been freed from the control of fear, we have a new animating energy a new spirit of love and trust—and Paul describes this in the following verses. But the penal theories teach people to claim legal pardon and removal of legal condemnation through the fiction of legal adjustment while leaving people dying of this terminal sin condition.] For what the **law was powerless** to do in that it was **weakened by the sinful nature**, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order **that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us**, who do not **live** according to the sinful nature but **according to the Spirit**. [The written law is external, it is outside of our hearts and minds. It has no power, no animating energy, no capacity to fix, restore, heal, recreate, regenerate. It can only expose, diagnose, communicate, reveal that we are dead in trespass and sin, that we are sick in heart and mind. Our sinful nature is the life of fear and selfishness and it is incapable of animating, empowering, motivating to love and trust. Our animating spirit of fear and selfishness cannot cause us, inspire us, motivate us, empower us to live love. It can only cause us to live in fear and selfishness. Thus living out God's law is impossible because our nature is weakened, damaged, infected, animated by fear and selfishness. This is why Jesus came to condemn all deviations from His design that cause pain, suffering and death, and restore the law of life back into the species human and into the hearts of all who trust Him and are reborn to live by the animating power of the Spirit.] Those who live according to the sinful nature have their **minds set** on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their **minds set** on what the Spirit desires. [Both the converted and unconverted have a sinful nature, a spirit of fear and selfishness. It is the only life, spirit, animating energy that we can be born with. But the unconverted set their minds on gratifying, living, defending, and promoting self of responding to and growing in the spirit of fear and selfishness. They do not die to self. They do not surrender self to Jesus and do not receive the Holy Spirt. They are not reborn. But the converted, while they still have the animating spirit of fear and selfishness inherited from Adam, have been won to love and trust and have surrendered self to Jesus. They have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit and receive through trust a new animating power, and they choose set their minds on living to love God and others.] The mind of sinful mane is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; [The mind of fear and selfishness is the mind empowered, controlled, driven, animated by the spirit of fear and selfishness and this is the law of sin and death. Fear and selfishness sever God's design law of life, break the law of love and trust, sever our connection with God the source of life. The only outcome without replacement with the spirit of life, is ruin and death. But the mind who has surrendered self, who has died to the spirit of fear and selfishness, receives a new animating energy, spirit, life, power, the Holy Spirit who brings the life of Jesus and their mind is now empowered, inspired, directed, controlled by the Spirit of life.] the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. [Our natural mind animated and controlled by the spirit of fear and selfishness is hostile to God and incapable of submitting to God's law of truth, love, and freedom. Fear and selfishness drives, causes, manifests, leads to, inspires, only actions that lead away from God. Just as Adam and Eve ran from God as soon as they sinned. The only power they had at that point was the power of the spirit of fear and selfishness. And without rebirth, without the

indwelling Holy Spirit, the only animating power we have is fear and selfishness and thus we are incapable in our natural self of surrendering to God. This is why even repentance is a gift of God. When we have a desire to leave the life of sin, that is the Holy Spirit working upon us to woo, call, instill a desire for life. All we can do is choose the truth and surrender the infection of fear and selfishness and receive the free gift of a new life, a new spirit to indwell and empower us.] Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. [Because they are living out the survival drives of fear and selfishness which runs away from God, counter to how God built live to operate and is the cause of all pain, suffering, and death.]

You, however, are **controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit,** if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. [When we surrender our natural life, the spirit of fear we inherited from Adam in trust to Jesus we receive a new animating energy, the Spirit of love and trust. This is reality. The life we were born with is dead in trespass and sin. We must receive a new life from Jesus in order to have eternal life because our natural life inherited from Adam is the spirit of fear. We must have a new spirit of Christ, the life of Christ. And if we do not receive this new spirit of Christ we are not saved. And we cannot receive the spirit of Christ by claiming legal payments be applied to our books in heaven. This is why the penal legal theologies are so corrupt. They teach a form of godliness but they deny the animating power that recreates people into godliness. We must receive the spirit of Christ so that we can say what Paul said, "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me." Gal 2:20] But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the **Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you**, he who raised Christ from the dead **will also give life** to your mortal bodies through his **Spirit, who lives in you**. [The sin problem is a real problem of being. Adam corrupted the spirit, the life given to him in Eden with fear and selfishness. This is a terminal condition. The only way to save humanity was to partake of this life, become a real human being, face the temptations this condition brings, and destroy the infection of fear and selfishness and replace it with a spirit of love and trust. Jesus did this in His person and offers us the free gift of His Spirit. We can partake of a new animating energy, the pure love of Christ that we can receive through trust and thus we can say no to the spirit of fear and yes to the spirit of love.] Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but **if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live**, because those who are **led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**. For you did not **receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear**, but you received the Spirit of sonship. (Romans 8:1-15 NIV84, emphasis mine). [This is reality—it is recreation, transformation, through receiving a new animating energy, a new life, a new spirit operating and functioning with us. The spirit of fear does not come from God, it came from Adam and it must be replaced with the spirit of love and trust that comes from Jesus. And when we surrender self in trust and receive this new life, the indwelling Holy Spirit who takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us, our heavenly records are cleansed because God's records are the records of reality. And the reality is we were born in sin and conceived in iniquity. We were all born with only a spirit of fear and selfishness, and that spirit causes us to act hostilely to God and out of harmony with Him and His design laws. In other words, to sin. Thus we must be reborn and receive a new life, a new

animating energy, a new spirit, the spirit of Christ, of love and trust. And our heavenly records document that change and we are now children of God. And from that moment we live to love God and others and grow in godliness."]

Notice how Peter describes this very process of living a new spiritual life, a life animated by love and trust and how this causes us to live and suffer like Jesus because we are confronting and putting to death the spirit of fear and selfishness we inherited from Adam.

- Therefore, since **Christ suffered in his body**, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because **he who has suffered in his body is done with sin**. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. (1 Peter 4:1–2 NIV84).

The spirit of fear we inherited from Adam leads us to live selfishly and sin. The spirit of love and trust we receive from Christ leads us to say no to the spirit of fear and selfishness and this causes the old self to suffer, but when we say yes to the spirit of love and no to the spirit of fear and selfishness we are done with sin.

Do you see how the infection of the imposed law lie into Christianity has completely corrupted the gospel and caused a form of Christianity that is without power—a penal legal form?

Jesus is waiting for the gospel, the eternal good news about Him, His character, His design law methods of truth, love, and freedom, the true plan to heal and restore sinners to go to the world and then the end will come.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks what is the truth?

It points to the discussion between Jesus and Pilate when Pilate dismissed Jesus by asking "What is truth?" In other words, Pilate was not seeking truth, but dismissing truth, basically saying everyone has their own version of the truth, who can know what truth is.

Has this attitude toward truth gone away, or is it still prominent today?

Have you heard it expressed in ideas like, "That's your truth not my truth"?

What is the problem with this expression?

It is not about truth at all, but just like Pilate it is a means to avoid the truth.

What is truth—it is reality, that simple. And Satan is the father of lies and as such his positions are all overthrown and exposed by truth, by reality. Thus Satan seeks to divert minds away from truth, away from reality, and replace reality, replace truth with anything else.

What kinds of strategies does Satan use to divert minds away from truth, away from reality?

- Fantasy, fiction, myth, mystery, fable, make-believe
    - Godless evolution
    - Impose law views of God
    - All false religions
    - Anything that denies objective reality—almost everything taught by woke culture is fiction, fantasy, make believe and requires the suspension of reason and the denial of facts and evidence.
- Authority, proclamation, claims without evidence
    - This was used by the church of the Dark Ages and also by communism, fascism, and wokeism
- Faith without evidence
    - All movements use faith, but the godless and evil movements have people place their faith in anything other than the true God—faith in a cause, a person, a belief, a country, a lie and teach that faith is believing without evidence
- Love, devotion, conviction, strong feelings
    - Satan will use love, but when Satan uses it it is always love for something or someone that is divorced from truth. The Bible teaches that love rejoices with the truth. But Satan cannot abide the truth, so will use love to promote falsehoods, either false ideas, or false practices
    - Love for a person that causes an individual to not speak healing truth in order to avoid upsetting that person. This is manifested in society by political correct speech. The lie that is wrong to say anything someone else might find offensive. It doesn't matter if what is spoken is true and done in love, the lie suggests that if someone will be offended then love wouldn't speak it. Thus in various parts of the world those who advance this lie have passed laws that make it hate speech to speak truth, such as it is a crime to pass out *The Great Controversy* because it exposes the Dark Ages church as abusive, or promoting godly marriage is hate speech against the LGBTQ community.
    - Devotion to wrong causes
    - Devotion to good causes by using evil methods
    - Feelings of various kinds, but especially fear—this is how Satan motivated the world to abuse the liberties and violate the consciences of their neighbors during COVID. It is how various Christians justified and participated in such ungodly methods. And the reason church leaders failed to side with righteousness, the reason so many sided with the states to coerce. It is because they believe the lie that God's law functions like human law. As such they do not understand how reality works. Instead, they need to be told what is right and wrong, what the answers are. They are the infants spoken of in Hebrews 5, still on milk, still on the elementary teachings, not acquainted with righteousness. They may have good motives, they may want only to help, to bless, to

protect, but they cannot be trusted to lead any more than you would trust your 6 year old loving child to lead. Not because they are actively in heart in rebellion, but because they are immature and easily deceived. They are like someone in a math class who wants to do really good and doesn't want to make any mistakes so they go to the text book find the key and memorize all the correct answers. And when the question is asked what is 2 + 2 they answer correctly "4" But when asked why, they say "Because the text book said so." These are many of our leaders. They know many right answers, but when asked why is that the right answer they say, "Because the Bible says so." But when the child who knows the right answer to the math problem because they memorized the key is faced with a problem that is not in the textbook, they cannot answer it, because they have never learned the principles of math, they don't know how reality works, they only know the example questions. This is how many Christian leaders are. They read the Bible to find the answers to the example questions and memorize those answers—and those answers may very well be the right answers. But they don't know design law, they don't know the principles of God, they don't know why it is right or wrong, and thus when a new problem arises, like should we cooperate with governments and pressure our students, employees, and patients to take an experimental injection with no safety data, or should we provide a letter supporting conscientious objection—they went to the Bible, the textbook but they couldn't find anything about vaccines, injections, or experimental medicines and so they could not solve the problem because they have never learned the principles of God. This is why Paul taught that every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind. We are not to surrender our thinking to church leaders. The mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong (Hebrews 5:14).

- Miracles, signs, wonders
    - These can be faked, the truth cannot
- Shock and Awe
    - Intimidation which can either incite fear or just awe which shuts down thinking
- Loyalty to people or causes

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on how Pilate left Jesus and went out to dialogue with the people to try and persuade them to release Jesus because he didn't find Jesus worthy of death. But we know how that turned out. They threatened to accuse him to Caesar that he was supporting someone claiming to have kingly authority.

But, what do you think would have happened if Pilate would have stopped, stayed with Jesus, and asked the following:

Jesus, I don't find anything in you worthy of death nor supporting the charges against you. I am in a pickle here. I would like to release you. Can you give me any insight or advise on what I can say to the crowd that will get them to back down and stop demanding you be crucified?"

What do you think Jesus would have said?

Is there a hint of what Jesus might have said, in these words?

- Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” (John 19:11 NIV84).

Might Jesus have said what He said to Peter,

- “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matthew 26:53-54 NIV84).

Or do you think Jesus might have repeated the words He said to John the Baptist when John protested baptizing Jesus,

- Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15 NIV84).

Remember what Jesus said to James and John when they asked to sit on the right and left side in His kingdom?

- “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38).

Didn’t Jesus have to go through these experiences in order to reveal the truth and destroy the cause of death?

TUESDAY

It Is Finished—what was finished?

Was the entire plan of salvation finished?

What was finished?

The revelation of truth which exposes the lies of Satan and the destruction of death and restoration of life into humanity.

In other words, the procurement of the remedy which when applied will eliminate sin from the universe and ultimately bring the final end of all pain, suffering, sin, death, and rebellion.

But it still needs application.

If you have never read it I recommend the chapter in the book *The Desire of Ages* entitled "It Is Finished." One of the best every written on this subject by anyone.

And it is all about design law, how lies break the circle of love and trust, how the truth about God's law must be revealed. How the use of might and power to eliminate Satan would not resolve the sin problem but would spread fear and rebellion. That what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, friendship, devotion and this cannot be achieved through imposed law and inflicted punishments, but only by design law of truth, love, and freedom.

It is an incredible chapter and well worth the read. Questions about what was finished?

WEDNESDAY

The Empty Tomb—praise God Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light—how?

Consider this quote,

- Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. **The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb.** Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. (The Desire of Ages 753, emphasis mine).

How did Jesus experience this? Because He partook of our humanity, the life inherited from Adam and could be tempted in all points like us, because that life is the life of fear and thus Jesus could experience fear and did.

But Jesus never gave in to fear. Despite the fear, the temptations, the inability to see through the tomb, Jesus trusted His Father—in other words Jesus lived by faith and won by faith, as all humans must. So this author goes on to write:

- Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours **He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given** Him. He was **acquainted with the character of His Father**; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By **faith He rested in Him** whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, **the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor**. (The Desire of Ages 756, emphasis mine).

Christ overcame as a human who lived in trust based on evidence, experience, truth, reality of who God is.

But the question is, if Jesus could not see through the portals of the tomb, what was the basis of these comments:

- For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will **be three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and **on the third day be raised to life**. (Matthew 16:21 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the **third day he will be raised to life**." And the disciples were filled with grief. (Matthew 17:22–23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

If you believe the commentary that on the cross Jesus could not see through the portals of the tomb, then what do we make of these Bible verses?

One option is to believe the commentary is wrong, it is just that person's view of things, but since the Bible is our standard of faith, not a commentary, and it clearly teaches Jesus did accurately predict His death and resurrection that He must have been able to see through the portals of the tomb.

However, I believe this conclusion would be wrong. I believe both the Bible and the commentary are true—how? Because Jesus did not make His description and prediction on His death and resurrection by looking through time and seeing through special prophecy future events. No, He made His prediction based on knowing how design law works. He understood the nature and character of sin, that sin causes death, that humankind is infected with the spirit of fear that must be eliminated and removed and when it is and the spirit of love and trust is restored, the spirit of life that emanates from God, then the natural result is life, resurrection. So He predicts not based on prophetic view through time, but on the knowledge of design law and reality.

Just as everyone of you can predict what will happen if I let go of a pen—it will fall, even though that is a future event, you can predict it accurately because you understand the law of gravity. Thus Jesus knew exactly what He came to do and what would happen when He succeeded.

THURSDAY

Jesus despite being crucified is still concerned with others and ensures that His mother is cared for.

What does this teach us about God?

comeandreason MINISTRIES
4922 La Collina Way, Ste 100, Ooltewah, TN 37363
comeandreason.com
requests@comeandreason.com

2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 13
Epilogue: Knowing Jesus and His Word

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The title for this week's lesson is, **Knowing Jesus and His Word**, what does this mean to you?

Is there a difference between knowing Jesus and His Word and knowing the Bible, or knowing theology, or knowing the doctrines of the church?

Read our memory verse:

- You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39 NKJV).

Was the problem these religious leaders had that they were not Bible students, that they had given up reading the Bible for novels or other entertainment?

If they were faithful Bible students, and let's add to that, not only faithful Bible students but faithful church attenders and also faithful tithe payers, if they were faithful in all of this, what was their problem?

Is it still possible today that there are people who read the Bible, diligently searching the Scriptures, are faithful church attenders, and faithful tithe payers but fail to know Jesus and His Word?

- "Not everyone who says **to me**, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. Many will say **to me** on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in **your name**, and in **your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you**. Away from me, you **evildoers**!' (Matthew 7:21–23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

How is this possible? How is it possible for people to be faithful students of the Bible, to claim Jesus as their Savior, to work actively and faithfully in ministry and be an evildoer?

Because their faith, their belief, their commitment, their Bible reading is processed through lies, they have rejected the truth of who Jesus is and have preferred a false Christ in his place. They reject the truth of God as Creator and prefer a god who is like them in character, who makes up rules and uses power to punish rule-breakers. Thus they use the words of Jesus but the methods and character of Satan.

Read first paragraph,

- John's Gospel, like Mark's, ends with a meeting in Galilee. This final lesson on John deals with that meeting but integrates it with the theme of how we know Jesus and the Word of God—a concept that runs through the fourth Gospel. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 104).

Is the "Word of God" words?

Is there power in the words?

Do we need to have the right words in order to experience the power of God or to know God?

Do we need to pray with the right words, not in the name of Jesus, but of Joshua, well not Joshua, but Yashua?

If we think the power is in the words do we enter into superstition, into witchcraft, and sorcery seeking the right incantation?

Is the power in the words spoken, or in the *meaning* of the words?

When Paul wrote,

- I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

Was he referring to the word "gospel" that there is power in the word or in the idea, the truth, the meaning of what that word "gospel" is intended to convey?

And what if we use the word gospel but understand it to mean something other than what Paul intended, does it still contain the power of God?

When we consider the Bible, the inspired Word of God—is the power in the words, or the truths, the meaning that originate in and reconnect us to God, who is the source of all truth and power?

So if Satan can get us to use the same words but change the meaning of the words he can introduce lies into our minds that cut us off from God. This is what sorcery is all about. Sorcerers are people who work to gain power over people's minds through a variety of means, but the goal is the same, to gain power over minds. In ancient times they used various hallucinogens, the proverbial witches brew, to make people more susceptible to mind control, in our day such chemicals can be used, but more often mind control is pursued through propaganda, which includes changing the meaning of words to cause confusion and interfere with people being able to tell what is real from fantasy in order to interfere with people being able to discern truth from lies, good from evil.

Do we believe the words of the Bible are inspired or the prophets who wrote the Bible were inspired with truth and they chose the words to convey those truths and thus it is the ideas, the meaning, the truths in the Bible that are inspired not the words?

Do we recognize words are not reality, they are symbols of communication that convey concepts—and the concepts conveyed may be true or false. Thus the power again is not in the words, but the meaning being conveyed.

For instance when you see the letters TREE you are not seeing a plant, a tree, you are seeing a symbolic representation of a tree. You can not get life sustaining nutritious by reading the words, apple, walnuts, and avocados. The words are not the reality and do not provide any life-giving power. In order to gain the energy, nutrition, and life from the food one must actually eat it, take it into their body.

Likewise, the words truth, love, righteousness, God, Jesus, do not contain any life-giving power they are symbolic representations of reality—but in order to benefit one must actually partake of the reality to which those words are representing.

Imagine the physical starvation, suffering, and death that you could cause if you got people to believe that health came from getting together to read about food, and sing songs about food, but they don't actually eat food. Or, if they believe that they must eat something but you get them to replace real fruit with wax fruit.

This was the problem with the Jews in Christ's day—they read the words, but never understood the meaning and replaced the true meaning with falsehoods, thus they took into their minds and hearts the words of Scripture but none of its power because they took in lies—false meanings, the words had their true meaning replaced with a lie.

This has happened in Christianity when Christians replace the truth of God's law being design law with the lie that God's law functions like human law. We read the words of Scripture but fail to understand the truth those words are intended to convey, and we end up with a form of godliness without power—until we return to accept and ingest the true meaning—then we experience the power of God; the truth really does set us free!

We do not believe there is power in syllables or words, but in the truth, in the meaning, and thus it is okay to replace Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew words with English, German, French and other language words as long as one brings the most accurate meaning across. It is the truth that is inspired and which contains the power, not the words.

Consider these historical quotes, do you agree?

- Merely to hear or to **read the word** is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures **must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him.** By earnest

attention and **prayerful** thought he **must learn the meaning of the words of truth,** and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles (*Christ's Object Lessons,* 59, emphasis mine).

- The Bible is written by inspired men, **but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God**. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p. 21, emphasis mine).

- **It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired**. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is **imbued with thoughts**. But **the words and thoughts receive the impress of the individual mind**. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p. 21, emphasis mine).

So what is the Word of God? First and foremost it is Jesus—Jesus is the Word made flesh—He is God and from Him truth originates and emanates. And the Bible contains divine truth. These divinely inspired truths were revealed to the Bible writers and the writers chose the words and expressions to convey the truths. If we want to know the Word of God we must go beyond the syllables to find the divine truths, the reality-based meaning contained within the writings, within the stories and events recorded.

And to do that we must incorporate and integrate all the truth God reveals to us and God reveals truth in Scripture—so we must always include Scripture. But the Scripture teaches God reveals truth in two other threads, two other modes, means, or places:

- Science and nature—the laws the cosmos, this planet, and life is built upon, the design laws. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:20 God's divine nature is revealed in what He has made, or the psalmist, the heavens declare the glory of God.
- Experience—taste and see that the Lord is good.

The problem with much of modern Christianity is that it has divorced the Bible from reality, from nature and God's design laws built into reality, and from our experiences—the way reality actually works. And this results in reading the Bible in a fantastical light, through the light of Roman law, imposed law, imperialism, and many teach a false punishing god who is like Satan in character.

Read second and third paragraph,

- Though they were with Jesus more than three years, the disciples were still greatly unprepared for the Crucifixion and Resurrection, even though Jesus had told them again and again what would happen.
  Unfortunately, they didn't take Him at His word. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 104).

Does this tempt us to look back at them and feel sadness for them, "Poor disciples, why couldn't they just take Jesus at His word?"

But do we apply it to ourselves? Are we ready for the final events that are about to come upon the world? Are we taking Jesus at His word or are we falling into similar traps the disciples did?

What does it mean "They didn't take Him at His word."?

What does it mean to take someone at their word?

Is the lesson suggesting that if Jesus said it, we should believe it, not doubt it, and not question it?

Hmmm….

When Jesus came to Abraham and told him that He was going to destroy Sodom, did Abraham simply take Him at His word—"God has said it, I believe it, that settles it." Or did Abraham start questioning—humbly and respectfully to be sure, but did he question? And Abraham is called a friend of God. What about Moses when God told Him He was going to wipe out the people and start over? And also later when God told Moses he could not go into the promised land, did Moses simply say "—"God has said it, I believe it, that settles it." Or did Moses ask questions, and Moses is called a friend of God.

Does God want us to simply hear the words He has spoken and do them, or to ask questions, to seek to clarify, to comprehend the true meaning?

Let's check a little church history about the problem of taking Jesus at His word.

In 831 Frankish abbot Paschasius Radbertus released a paper entitled *De corpore et sanguine Christi* (Concerning Christ's Body and Blood). According to former Secretary of Education and historian William Bennett from his book, *Tried by Fire: The Story of Christianity's First Thousand Years:*

> "Radbertus concluded that since God is truth and cannot lie, Jesus' declaration that the elements of the bread and wine used in communion were his body and blood and must be taken literally. For Radbertus, the consecration of the elements mystically transformed the bread and wine into the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ." (Bennett, William, *Tried By Fire: The Story of Christianity's First Thousand Years.* Nelson Books, Nashville, TN, 2016).

And from this paper came the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, that when a person takes the communion wafer and swallows it, it mystically, magically, transforms into the actual flesh of Jesus.

For over 800 years, no one, Apostle, prophet, pope, or peasant believed such an idea, but in the mid 9th century this idea came forward, based on what? On an abbot who took Jesus at His word, literally taking the words spoken concretely and failing to understand the true meaning conveyed in the words.

This came from the inability of people to see past words, symbols, metaphor to reality, to the truth the words symbolically represent and instead taking words literally.

The disciples were doing the opposite, they were failing to realize Jesus was being literal, was telling them what was going to happen to Him in reality. But the truth He was telling them was too distressing so they either didn't believe it, or interpreted it in some way that meant something different than what Jesus meant.

What is the lesson? We must seek the enlightening presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that inspired the Bible writers with the truth that they communicated in their words so that when we read it we can understand the true meaning behind the words.

And truth builds on truth, establishing foundational truths that are testable truths are essential in rightly understanding the Bible. What are some foundational truths that impact what meaning we derive from the Bible?

- How we understand God's law—which determines how we understand God's character and methods
    - If we believe God's law functions like human law then we always conclude God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as just punishment for sin and create theologies to hide and protect us from God. If we embrace the truth that God's laws are design laws and return to Creator worship, then we realize that pain suffering and death originate in breaking the laws of life and severing our connection with God. Then our theologies are focused on advancing the truth about God and removing the barriers that Satan has placed between us and God, restoring trust in God, opening ourselves fully to God so we can experience His healing and recreative presence restoring the image of God in us.
- How we understand God's character and methods
    - God is love and is the source of life; death comes out from sin and breaking away from God. God's actions are always for the healing and restoration of His creation. Thus any interpretation that suggests God is the one who destroys, is the source or cause of eternal death—wages of sin death—is a lie and we can reject such interpretations of the Biblical record.
- The various design laws themselves, like truth, love, liberty, worship, exertion etc.
    - If theologies teach ideas that violate these design laws we can reject them. Such as the law of liberty; love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. God cannot achieve His goal of restoring us to love, trust, friendship, loyalty by threatening to kill us if we do not love and trust Him. Thus the Bible teaches God works "not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord" Zech 4:6. This is testable, we can test our theologies and interpretations of Scripture against this.
- The method one uses to determine truth—is it prayerful, humble examination of the evidence in harmony with truth thus far understood, exercising one's reasoning ability to integrate the various threads of evidence into harmonized comprehension; or is it by praying long and hard for a warm feeling despite what the evidence reveals?

- What do we prioritize in our understanding of Scripture? Is it the claims and proclamations or the actions, achievements, accomplishments of God in history?
    - Do we ignore the evidences of God's actions through history and instead focus on the places where God is proclaiming? Or do we require our understanding of God's proclamations and declarations to be harmonized with His actions in history?
    - The Bible says "God is love" but this text alone, without the historical evidence of God's actions through time, particularly in the life of Jesus Christ is meaningless. It is the accomplishments, the actions of God that are the most persuasive evidences, not the syllables spoken. Thus, Jesus is the Word made flesh—Jesus in living action is how we understand God, how we see the truth.
- Do we prioritize miracles and wonders over evidence, facts, and testable truths?
- Do we integrate the entire inspired record or base our beliefs on a little bit here and there?
    - One of the things I have found to be a source of conflict, disagreement with those who hold to the penal model is that often those models are built in limited data, Scripture without science/nature and experience, or a few verses of the inspired record not balanced and harmonized with others. The more pieces of the puzzle you can bring into place the clearer the picture becomes.
- Preconceived ideas or biases which are assumed to be true that obstruct or prevent us from understanding the real truth. For the disciples they believed things like sickness was punishment from God. God governs with might and power and the Messiah is coming to overthrow Rome and establish Himself on David's throne and rule with a rod of iron.
    - Do we have biases about the events leading up to the return of Jesus that could blind us to what is actually happening?
- Others?

Read the fourth paragraph,

- We today can be in danger of doing the same thing: **hearing or even reading the Word of God but not listening to it, not abiding in it, and not obeying it**. That is, **not accepting it** as the light that should guide our thoughts and actions. This, unfortunately, is where, perhaps unwittingly, too many Christians are. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 104, emphasis mine).

You see the portions I highlighted—it struck me quite profoundly, why did the authors not include in this list, "not understanding, not comprehending, not seeking the true meaning, not reasoning?" As God has said, "Come let us reason together though your sins are like scarlet they will be white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18). It is by reasoning out the truth with God that we are cleansed from sin.

Could one of the traps of Satan be to get people to be very religious and even read the Bible but to take it literally, as it reads, without seeking the meaning, the divine truth contained within and thereby deceive people through their reading of the Bible? Or replace the true meaning with false meanings of those words—thus believing because the book said so, not because it is so.

I want to suggest the danger is in reading the Bible without a humble surrendered heart to God that genuinely desires to know the meaning, the divine truth brought by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

When we approach the Bible like a code book, with the belief it is God's list of rules for us to obey, we close our minds to the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit and end up legalistic religionists just like the Jews who crucified Christ.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus after His resurrection when He meets the disciples on the beach and His conversation with Peter in which Jesus asks Peter three times if Peter loves Him.

What do you understand this conversation is about? Why is it included in Scripture? What are we to learn from this? Does it tell us anything about the character of God? Does it tell us anything about God's methods? Does it tell us anything about our human nature and what we need for salvation?

Let's read this encounter and I want you to think—what is revealed, what is evidenced, what truths are contained in this account, what are we seeing and what are we not seeing?

- When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"
  "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."
  Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."
  Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"
  He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."
  Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."
  The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"
  Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."
  Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:15-19 NIV84).

What do you see, learn, understand from this story?

- Perhaps the most obvious lesson and reason this is included in Scripture is to assure the church, the believers, that Jesus accepts Peter back into fellowship and recommissions him as His representative, ambassador, Apostle. So, one reason this story is here is so that all Christians through history can know that Peter was reconciled to Jesus and his ministry was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and his writings are inspired and trustworthy.

- Do we learn anything about the character of God? God is gracious, merciful, forgiving and longs for reconciliation with us even when we sin, when we act selfishly, when we willfully choose what we know is wrong, God is longing to restore us to sonship with Him. As Paul wrote God is for us—always for us.
- Did Peter need this experience? Why?
    - What had his actions done to him?
    - Had his denial of Jesus caused Jesus to love him less?
    - Had Jesus become Peter's enemy?
    - Was there some anger or wrath or legal demand that Jesus had that needed to be ventilated and expiated so that Peter could be reconciled to Jesus?
    - Or was Jesus always on Peter's side, always for Peter?
    - So Peter's sin did not change Jesus. But did it do something to Peter? What?
    - Did it cause him to experience fear, guilt, shame, doubt, worry, dread, apprehension, inadequacy? Could his sin cause him to doubt whether he could be accepted back? Could his sin cause him to consider that Jesus might have a right to be mad at him and expect some punitive action from Jesus?
    - Did Peter need to have his guilt, shame, fears, doubts, and all such consequences of his sin removed from his heart and mind? Do you see this happening in their interaction?
- Was Peter fully restored and reconciled to Jesus? Was Peter saved after his denial and sin?
    - Did you find anything in this encounter of a penal legal nature? Do you find Peter asking Jesus to apply His blood to Peter's record in heaven to pay for the sin that he had committed?
    - Understand what this reveals—it reveals reality, the problem of sin, which is a condition of being, fear and selfishness, which manifested in Peter when he chose to respond to the temptation of fear by acting selfishly and denying Jesus. And fear is only overcome by love, perfect love casts out fear. And Peter's guilt and shame is removed by experiencing the truth of who Jesus is, and surrendering himself in trust and he is reconciled, reborn, no longer trusting in self to stand up and do right, but humbly submitted to Jesus.

Read the bottom question,

- Why is humility so key in anyone seeking to know the Lord? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 105).

As I was reading the lesson for this week I just happened to read the following in the book *The Desire of Ages*, consider this in light of the question, it is commenting on Jesus' warning to beware the leaven of the Pharisees:

- The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was the product **of self-seeking**. The **glorification of themselves** was the object of their lives. It was this that led them to **pervert and misapply** the Scriptures, and **blinded them** to the purpose of Christ's mission. This **subtle evil even the disciples** of Christ were in danger of cherishing. Those who classed themselves with the followers of Jesus, but who had not left all in order to become His disciples, were influenced in

a great degree by the reasoning of the Pharisees. They were often vacillating between faith and unbelief, and they did not discern the treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ. Even the disciples, though outwardly they had left all for Jesus' sake, **had not in heart ceased to seek great things for themselves. It was this spirit** that prompted the strife as to who should be greatest. **It was this that came between them and Christ**, making them so little in sympathy with His mission of **self-sacrifice**, so slow to comprehend **the mystery of redemption**. As leaven, if left to complete its work, will cause corruption and decay, **so does the self-seeking spirit, cherished, work the defilement and ruin of the soul**. (The Desire of Ages p. 409, emphasis mine).

MONDAY

Read John 21:20-23:

- Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

  Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" (John 21:20-23 NIV84).

What do you understand is going on here? What is revealed? What are the lessons for us?

Is there an almost irresistible temptation to look at what others are doing, to compare self to others, to investigate the mission, calling, and mission of others?

What is the problem with doing so?

- Can incite jealousy, envy, and competition, division, and strife
- Can divert us from the mission God has called for us
- Takes our focus off of Jesus and we lose sight of where He is leading
- By beholding we are changed, and if we don't remain focused on Jesus and fulfilling His calling for our lives then we interfere with His plan to transform and heal us as well as whatever the mission He has for us

Other concerns?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Light and Darkness, what do these terms mean in the context of good and evil, righteousness and sin, salvation and damnation?

Light is a symbol of truth, of being enlightened, of understanding reality, the way things actually are; darkness is a symbol of ignorance, confusion, of falsehood, fantasy, fiction, myth, and fable.

God lives in unapproachable light—this isn't about photons, it is about truth, infinite truth and it is unapproachable by finite beings because we can never assimilate, process, contain, all knowledge, all truth. While we can advance in the truth, grow in the truth, move forward in the truth, we will never approach infinity, there will always be more for us to learn, discover, and advance in.

But Jesus said,

- The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22, 23).

What does this mean? Is the eye, the lamp, the light? No, it is not the light, it is not the truth, but the medium through which the light or truth shines.

Jesus is telling us that if something is wrong with the faculties that are designed to recognize, understand, process, and receive the truth, then rather than being enlightened, one will not only remain in the dark, but also the previous understanding (light) they had will prevent them from seeing new light.

So how exactly does heavenly light become darkness to people? How does truth that was once believed become lies that prevent one from understanding further truth?

In 5 CE, when Jesus was just a toddler, it was heavenly truth (light) that the Messiah who was promised to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15) and who would descend through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was soon to be revealed to the world and start His earthly ministry.

But since 33 CE, after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, is it still heavenly light—truth—that the Messiah is going to be born in Israel, that the Messiah is yet to come?

If one rejected the truth that Jesus is the fulfillment of those promises, if one rejects the truth that Jesus is the unfolding and realization of those promises then those very truths become darkness to those who have rejected Jesus.

If someone today rejects Jesus as Messiah and clings to the Old Testament prophecies about a Messiah who they believe is yet to be born in Bethlehem, are they in the light or are they in darkness?

Because the eyes (minds) of those who rejected Jesus were biased, prejudiced, selfish, and preferred the lies to the truth, the light was rejected and did not "enlighten" those who crucified Jesus Likewise today, all who reject advancing truth will find that previous truth has, in fact, become darkness (falsehood) to them. And until they accept the truth that they are currently resisting they will remain in the falsehood of presenting a truth from the past which is not truth for today.

This has happened throughout human history when people discover a truth appropriate for their time in history but do not advance in the unfolding truth.

Can you think of any examples of this?

One example of this in the Adventist Church is how the message of the three angels of Revelation 14 was initially presented as the heavenly light shown down upon Adventist reformers, but as the truth was advancing, many in leadership rejected the advancing light at the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis and, thus, the truth has become darkness to them.

In our magazine The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels, we describe in detail what we understand to be the unfolding truth of these messages. The truth that was rejected by leadership in 1888 was the truth about God's law being design law—the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate, and that the Ten Commandment law was not always in existence but was added by God as a gracious therapeutic tool specifically designed for human sinners.

But if one rejects the advancing light, if one understands God's law to be imposed rules, the kind of laws that sinful humans make up, then one not only ends up worshiping a creature instead of the Creator, but they also interpret Scripture, including the three angels, via human legal systems—heavenly courtrooms, legal records, legal judgments, legal payments, inflicted punishments, etc., and thus the light becomes darkness.

However, when we return to worshiping the Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then one reads the three angels as they are supposed to be read—God's final warning to the world of how reality works and what happens to those who reject Him and His design laws for life and the light does its job, it enlightens and ennobles those who accept it

The high points of the 3 angels' messages are:

- The central thread of the messages is about worship.
- The first angel focuses on the eternal good news, which is the good news about God that is true in eternity past as well as eternity future—that God is not like Satan has alleged Him to be. He is the God who creates reality, whose laws are design laws, the protocols life exists and operates upon. We are called back to worship Him as Creator, and we are to stop worshiping a creature in the place of the Creator, and, thereby, give glory to God, for the hour in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God—the hour of *His* judgment has come!

- When we recognize the truth about God, we realize the system of imposed law with a punishing god is the fallen system of Babylon, the system of confusion that has resulted in the more than 41,000 different Christian groups arguing over whose doctrines are right, whose creeds are correct, whose fundamental beliefs are accurate. We are called to come out of that worldly way of thinking and functioning and return to worshiping our Creator by living in harmony with His designs for life (i.e., have His living law written upon our hearts and minds—Hebrews 8:10). When we return to design law understanding there is unity rather than division. Human laws cause arguments over such things like should marijuana be legal, for medical uses only or recreational uses? Can people grow their own or should we regulate it and tax it? How much can one produce, should we fine people who sell without a license? But no humans argue over whether we can pass laws to make marijuana healthy or not—it is what it is, it is either healthy or harmful and our laws cannot change the reality of what it is. Design law understanding always brings unity, imposed law always causes division.
- But if we don't return to design law, if we instead reject the light and cling to the imposed-law lies, then, via the law of worship (by beholding we are changed; 2 Corinthians 3:18), we become like the false creature-god we worship and are marked in our characters (foreheads) and works (hands) to be like the beastly god we worship and …
- Via the law of liberty, God sets us free to reap that which we have sown into our hearts, minds, and souls. After long, patient, gracious, merciful interventions by God, when people ultimately reject His truth and love, God gives them freedom and lets them go to reap the results of their own choices (Galatians 6:8). He stops using His power to protect them from what sin does, and this is known as God's wrath (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28). When God no longer shields people from the devastation of breaking His design laws, then they reap the suffering that unremedied sin brings.
- And via the law of love and truth, when the wicked stand in God's life-giving glory, the eternal fires of infinite truth and love that flow out from God like a river of flames (Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:29), the unsaved come into full awareness of their own selfishness, guilt, shame, and evil and they can no longer hide from the reality of who they have chosen to become and what they have done to others. And the unremoved sin in them causes them to suffer and flee from existence. They choose to die rather than live in God's presence. But the memory of their condition and choices remain forever as lessons for all the righteous.

This is the God of reality restoring all things back into harmony with how He constructed life to exist and operate, back into harmony with Himself and His design laws for life. And this is the message of light to enlighten the world but I becomes a message of darkness when it is presented through human law with a dictator god who is having legal tribunals and uses his power to torture and kill.

WEDNESDAY

The title for the day is Theology from "Above" or From "Below"

What does this suggest to you?

Read the first paragraph,

- This man came to Jesus, the Light of the world, but he had made up his mind to believe only if Jesus healed his child. We could say this man's theology was a "theology from below." Theology from below sets rules and standards for God and His Word. Human ideas, as flawed and as limited and as subjective as they are, become the final authority on how people interpret the Word of God. What a dangerous trap to fall into! (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 108).

Is there anything more human, more corrosive, more destructive to our theology than replacing the truth of God's design law with human imposed law? There are many historical quotations that document how Christianity accepted Roman law in place of God's law. I encourage you to check out our magazine, The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ which is filled with references, here are two:

- The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God,** and men are **led to worship the creature rather than the Creator,** may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator,** and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers (*The Great Controversy,* x.1.emphasis mine).

- **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God.** Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being. All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of the laws that He has established. And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. He **publishes His law** and the penalty that will follow the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it

> if they will. … **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord** (*Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 3. p. 161, emphasis mine).

THURSDAY

What have you found in your experience that helps you abide in Christ?

FRIDAY

Question 3 asks,

- "Why is it usually difficult to lay aside self as the arbiter of truth?" (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 109).

Do you find this a good question or is it a flawed question?

What did Paul mean when he wrote in Romans 14:5 that every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind?

Or Hebrews 5:14 that the mature have developed by practice the ability to discern good from evil, truth from falsehood?

What do these texts mean? That we think or don't think, that we reason or don't reason?

The question is flawed because it advances Satan's imposed law lie way of approaching things.

According to dictionary.com an arbiter is:

- a person empowered to decide matters at issue; judge; umpire.
- a person who has the sole or absolute power of judging or determining.

This is how human authority works, a ruling power *determining* what is true or not true, balls or strikes, guilt or innocence. Because the lie about God's law is accepted, many conclude that it is presumptuous for us to be arbiters of truth, that only God can decide what is true or not. But this is a subtle deception.

Truth is truth and our perspectives, beliefs, understandings never determine what is true or not true—we decide in governance of ourselves what we believe is true or not. We each must decide what we will believe. The truth is reality itself, the way things are, and we absolutely cannot change that. But each of us has the power to decide what we will believe and we are either developing minds that love

truth, are advancing in truth, want to comprehend and embrace truth, and thus are developing the ability to differentiate truth from falsehood, or we are not. And in fact truth has no saving power on a person unless they determine for themselves it is truth and choose to believe and apply it. We must be fully persuaded in our own minds of the truth it is the only way we can be won to trust and it is through trust that we are healed, saved, transformed.

One of the ways the devil tricks people into not developing the discernment skills, not maturing, is by such ideas as are imbedded in this question. We are not arbiters of truth, we are not to think, reason, question, we are simply to take God's word as it reads and believe because the Bible said so, or God said so, or Jesus said so, or the prophet said so, or the pastor, priest or teacher said so. But this is not what God wants nor what the Bible teaches.

So, I believe people who write such questions do so in all innocence, without any evil intention, this is an artifact of ignorance, of believing a lie, but they introduce a falsehood and advance false principles. And this is exactly why every person must think for themselves, even the apostle Peter had to be corrected by Paul.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PODCAST—Designed4More: Please share our new podcast with others. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net

South Africa: The following titles are translated into Afrikaans and new blogs added regularly. See website main menu > Languages > Afrikaans, or if in South Africa, order by email a free a hard copy: southafrica@comeandreason.com

- **The Atonement through the Seven Levels of Moral Decision Making**
- **Codependency**
- All 10 **Come and Reason Tracts**
- **The Wedding of Christ to His Bride**
- **Cosmic Conflict Over God's Character Bible Study Guide**
- **The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ**
- **Job** pamphlet

C&R SA has created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group. If you would like to join**:** **https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0**